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Kara L. McCormack

Candidate

American Studies

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

A. Gabriel Melendez, Chairperson

Rebecca Schreiber

Paul Andrew Hutton

Michael Trujillo

IMAGINING “THE TOWN TOO TOUGH TO DIE”:
TOURISM, PRESERVATION,
AND HISTORY IN TOMBSTONE, ARIZONA

by

KARA L. MCCORMACK

B.A., Journalism, New York University, 1989
M.A., American Studies, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 2004

DISSERTATION

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Requirements for the Degree of

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**IMAGINING “THE TOWN TOO TOUGH TO DIE”:
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at the ways popular culture, preservation, and economic exigencies continually circulate and interact in Tombstone, Arizona; the ways tourists make meaning from the site; the importance of the concepts of history and authenticity; and the resonance of the Earp Myth and the Mythic West worldwide. Tombstone’s place within that myth cannot be understated, as it has come to signify for many the ideas wrapped up in the myth as a whole. On a more basic level, Tombstone fits within wider trends in historic preservation and heritage sites that are central to an analysis of the power and consumption of narratives of the past, the importance and strength of tourist dollars, the centrality of popular culture to our understandings of history, and the link between the manipulation of history and place.

This paper demonstrates that Tombstone, Arizona, is but one of many elements in the larger Mythic West that continue to circulate and resonate with consumers of popular culture. As a mythic site, Tombstone works in specific ways—helping audiences to continually “relive” their frontier past; upholding gender-, class-, and race-normative

ideologies; and perpetuating a certain brand of U.S. history, and the region that has become ever more meaningful in the retelling of that history in particular ways. As a tourist site, Tombstone offers an ordering narrative to the story of the Old West, but it also has become yet another example of the promotion of simplified history. Further, it is a site of contestation and struggle—struggles to remain viable and relevant; contestations around historical accuracy and authenticity; efforts to cash in on a frontier past that is based more in the popular imagination than in the complex history of the American West.

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Legend Begins

In 1877, mine prospector Edward Lawrence “Ed” Schieffelin set out from Fort Huachuca in the Dragoon Mountains in southeast Arizona Territory in search of silver, encouraged by stories of a previous prospector named Frederick Brunckow, a German émigré who found silver in the same area decades earlier.¹ As Schieffelin headed east into dangerous Apache territory, he was told by skeptics that all he’d find would be his own tombstone. Instead, he found silver, called the strike Tombstone in response to his critics, and the area went on to become one of the fastest-growing silver mining towns in the West. So it begins.

Of course the story of the area starts long before this moment. Apaches had been living on this land for centuries before Ed Schieffelin made his discovery. Francisco Vázquez de Coronado brought his expedition through the San Pedro Valley in 1540, and a few Spanish settlers resided there for close to three hundred years before Arizona came under Mexican rule in 1821. Most of modern-day Arizona was acquired by the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, and the Gadsden Purchase pushed the U.S. border to its current limits in the Southwest in 1853. But the official story begins with Schieffelin staking his claim and naming the place Tombstone. Considered the origin story of the city, the founding of Tombstone by Schieffelin is as important to the Tombstone Legend as what would become known as the “Gunfight at the O.K. Corral.” With the Schieffelin story, Tombstone finds its place among the legends of riches and romance that circulate about the broader West.

After christening the Tombstone Mine and the Grave Yard Mine in August 1877, Ed joined forces with his brother Al and their associate Richard Gird to stake more claims. The Tombstone Mining District was formally organized on 5 April 1878. Situated twenty-five miles from the Mexico border and sixty miles from the New Mexico line, it became famous in those days because of the millions of dollars in silver that were being extracted from her mines. Frank Waters reminds us that, “Tombstone was not a cowboy town like Dodge or Wichita. It prospered from its mines” (Waters, 88). Hundreds and then thousands of men seeking their fortune poured into the area. “From a few hundred fortune hunters huddling in tents, wagons, old adobes and ramshackle wooden buildings,” Waters explains, “Tombstone leaped upon the map as a full-fledged town.” Its population soared from two thousand in 1878 to six thousand a year later, rivaling Tucson, the largest city in the territory and the Pima County seat (Waters, 87).

In November 1878, five months prior to the official founding of the town, a stage line called the Tucson and Tombstone Express started carrying travelers between these two bustling towns for ten dollars, fifteen dollars round trip (Schillingberg, 81). In addition to miners, the promise of riches and a growing population attracted lumber companies, real estate moguls, lawyers, doctors, and shopkeepers. Soon grand hotels and restaurants were opening in the central business district now known as Allen Street: “With quick prosperity, the town bustled with life,” writes Waters. “The Grand, Occidental, and Cosmopolitan hotels were modern and comfortable. . . . The stores filled with silks and satins” (Waters, 89). Newcomers saw a town of paradoxes, teetering between ramshackle and refined, a town where wine, champagne, and a variety of mixed drinks were as popular among patrons as beer and “shots of red-eye” (Waters, 82).

Waters describes the saloons and gambling halls in Tombstone as being difficult to outshine: “The long bars were polished mahogany; the floors were laid with Brussels carpets; a piano kept accompaniment to the click of ivory roulette balls, the clatter of dice in chuck-a-luck boxes, the clink of gold and silver” (Waters, 89). Indeed, Allen Barra portrays “the mining camp that four years earlier had consisted of canvas and adobe” as now having “French restaurants, oyster bars, tennis courts, a bowling alley, and ice cream parlors” (Barra 1998, 95).

Fast-growing Tombstone had its problems too. Mining towns like Tombstone had a large number of male citizens whose pursuits after work were dubious. Saloons, gambling halls, burlesque shows, and prostitution were all hallmarks of this burgeoning town. The preponderance of drinking establishments and the pace at which the town expanded led to some altercations early on in Tombstone’s history. By the time Wyatt Earp, his brothers James and Virgil, and their wives arrived in Tombstone at the end of 1879, attracted by the promise of riches and opportunity, Tombstone already had a rowdy reputation. But this was not unusual for a frontier town. In fact, Casey Tefertiller suggests that, “For the men and women with frontier experience, this was business as usual, no wilder than most mining towns and certainly not as wicked as Dodge [Kansas] with its city-of-sin atmosphere” (Tefertiller 1997, 39). Typical as Tombstone was, law and order were hard to come by in this newly founded town. In an effort to curb the crime in Tombstone, the city council passed an ordinance in April 1880 prohibiting anyone from carrying firearms within city limits. Virgil, who had already served as a deputy in Yavapai County and constable in Prescott, was appointed deputy U.S. marshal of southern Arizona when the brothers stopped in Tucson. Virgil would be appointed town

marshal of Tombstone in June 1881. Wyatt had a history of being a lawman but had no intention of signing on for that type of work in Tombstone. He originally planned to start a stagecoach business in Tombstone, but instead worked for stagecoaches like Wells Fargo as an armed guard. James tended bar. Morgan arrived in the summer of 1880 and all the brothers staked claims in hopes of benefiting from the wealth of the mines.

While the Earps were making lives for themselves in Tombstone, a group of outlaws was gaining traction in the southeast corner of the territory. Run out of the West Texas plains by the Texas Rangers, “the rootless ex-cowhands and saddle tramps” found themselves heading west toward small towns in Arizona that had a “relative lack of law enforcement” (Barra 1998, 103). These cattle rustlers came to be collectively known by their former profession as cow-boys or Cowboys. Within a short amount of time in this new country, “the rustlers forged friendships and alliances with local ranchers Newman Haynes ‘Old Man’ Clanton and the McLaury brothers, Frank and Tom” (Barra, 1998, 103).² Here then are the Cowboys of the Earp Legend, the men who would come to be linked with the outlaws in the battle at the O.K. Corral. Also apparent in the alliance between the Clantons and the Cowboys are the origins of the rift between the Earps on the one hand and the Cowboys/Clantons on the other.

The Earps were both lawmen and businessmen—at least they wanted to be, and in many ways identified with the forces of incorporation that were transforming the Old West. They were “unabashed Republicans in Democratic country” (Barra 1998, 103). While the Cowboys—as cattle rustlers and outlaws—were not necessarily models of the Democratic ideal, they were associated with those who favored rural agrarianism in opposition to northern Republican capitalism. These political ideologies seem, on one

level at least, to have fueled the enmity between the Earps (and their friend John “Doc” Holliday, who arrived in Tombstone in 1880) and the Clantons that engendered that famous gun battle behind the O.K. Corral. Cochise County Sheriff John Behan was also a Democrat who, by most accounts, tended to overlook the illegal acts for which the Cowboys, the Clantons, and the McLaurys were known. This, in addition to Wyatt having an affair with Behan’s mistress, Josephine Marcus, also has been seen as central to antagonisms between these two bands of men.

On the morning of 26 October 1881, Ike Clanton—after a long night of drinking and rabble rousing—was seen on Tombstone’s streets with a gun in violation of city ordinance, verbally threatening the Earp brothers and Doc Holliday. He did so to anyone who would listen to him, in the streets, at various saloons, and other establishments around town. As Barra writes, “Practically before a cock could crow on the morning of October 26, a sizable portion of Tombstone’s population knew that Ike Clanton had not only threatened to kill Doc Holliday but the town marshal [Virgil Earp] and his brothers” (Barra 1998, 108). By the afternoon, Ike’s brother Billy, their friends Tom and Frank McLaury and Billy Claiborne were also spotted in the streets of Tombstone, presumably to support Ike in opposition to the Earp clan. At around 2:45 that day, with the knowledge that the Cowboys were waiting at the O.K. Corral and with dozens of townspeople watching, “the Earps and Holliday begin their walk—one that would be imitated by so many movie and TV actors that it would become a ritual of Hollywood westerns” (Barra 1998, 173). Under threat, Claiborne ran off first, then Ike. Apparently intending to disarm the Cowboys, the Earps ended up in a bloody battle with the remaining gang members,

killing Frank and Tom McLaury and Billy Clanton. Morgan, Virgil, and Holliday were all wounded. Wyatt remained unharmed.

After the street fight came the Earp hearing (known as the Spicer Hearing, named for the Justice of the Peace who heard the case, Wells Spicer) and more famously the Earp Vendetta Ride, during which Wyatt, now a U.S. marshal, Doc Holliday, and a number of deputized posse members sought revenge, at first for the attempted assassination of Wyatt's brother Virgil in December 1881 and later for the murder of his brother Morgan in March 1882 by pursuing known Cowboys throughout Cochise County. During this revenge ride, Cowboys Johnny Ringo and Curly Bill Brocius were killed.

After the Earps left Tombstone, the town was struck by two fires and floods in the early 1880s; add to this the falling price of silver, and Tombstone's economy was on a downward spiral. By 1890, the population was one-third what it had been in its peak years and Tombstone became but a shadow of its former glory. As Eric Clements writes, "Tombstone was a nineteenth-century frontier bonanza silver camp that boomed and busted within a decade" (Clements 2003, 15). The people left behind—unwilling to see Tombstone become a ghost town like so many other mining districts in the West—were forced to find ways to keep the town afloat. They marketed Tombstone as a retirement community and later as a warm, dry place where tuberculosis sufferers could convalesce. But it was not enough. The removal of the county seat to Bisbee in 1929 made saving the town an even greater imperative. Townspeople began to look toward their past to save their future.

Despite the colorful years and richness of Tombstone's history that preceded the street fight, it and its aftermath have come to define Tombstone, Arizona, in the present

day. Hollywood, Wyatt Earp, and the people of Tombstone all saw to that. Richard Slotkin writes about the gunfight that, “The national fame of that incident was itself an artifact of Hollywood culture. Neither Earp nor the gunfight had enjoyed any great notoriety outside of Arizona until 1920, when the aged Wyatt appeared on a movie lot in Pasadena hoping to cash in on the enthusiasm for ‘authentic’ western figures” (Slotkin 1998, 384). As Barra points out, Slotkin is slightly off in this assessment, since the gunfight had been widely reported after the incident. But Slotkin does point to the fact that the story of Tombstone and Wyatt Earp has been constructed, retooled, and romanticized in the years long since either might have had any real viability. The efforts to preserve Tombstone made by townspeople from the mid-twentieth century into the twenty-first, the use of Wyatt Earp and the gunfight by Hollywood, and the ways the Earp Myth and the Mythic West more generally have flowed to nations around the world are the focus of this dissertation.

Most works about Tombstone focus on the Earps and the gunfight and on the subsequent trials and tribulations of the main characters involved. Some authors, in an effort to de-center that event, have focused on Tombstone’s silver mining history instead. Interestingly, few works have critically examined Tombstone as a tourist destination, and none has been written on modern-day Tombstone in the last forty years. While Tombstone’s constructed history was the focus of Odie B. Faulk’s treatment of the town, he wrote in 1972. In the ensuing four decades, Tombstone has ostensibly become even more Disneyfied, and is under constant scrutiny in its attempt to lure tourist dollars. In fact, the town’s seemingly singular focus on tourism endangered its designation as a National Historic Landmark District in 2004. Interestingly, all of the preservation efforts

taken on by the town *publicly* express a commitment to safeguarding the “authentic” and historical. Not so conspicuous, however, is how preservationists also consciously work to commodify a contrived and exaggerated past—based on western myth—in an effort to entice tourists.

The lasting image of Wyatt Earp as the quintessential western lawman and of Tombstone’s sustainability is embedded in a romanticized past that undergirds conceptions of what makes America America: freedom, fortitude, (white) masculinity, and individualism. Tombstone exemplifies the idea that these values can be experienced through landscape, the built environment, and performance. In fact, heritage sites and open-air museums are very much engaged in the process of constructing meaningful pasts to express the ideologies of the present. Indeed, in Tombstone, where a number of fires and floods ravaged the town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, decay and disinterest left Tombstone on the verge of becoming a ghost town until the 1940s. As enthusiasts sought to reinvigorate the town and investors sought to profit from renewed interest in America’s history as constructed through images of the American West, Tombstone began to transform into the old, wild mining town of its past based on what many believed were the most important components of its own history. In this case, revelry and raucousness were highlighted; downplayed (though not entirely absent) were signifiers of a town as much on the cusp of civility as any other boomtown of the Old West.

Even at times when Tombstone as a signifier of the Old West loses some credibility—as with *True West* editor Bob Boze Bell in the past few years—it still remains dominant in imaginings of the Old West by visitors, as well as by those who have

never been there. Tombstone is central to the relationship between the real and imagined West; it is evocative both of history and mythology—two components of the West that are inseparable in the popular imagination. As a space that rests easily between the old, “savage” West and the new, “civilized” West, Tombstone represents an articulation of societal progress so central to modernist notions of the American nation. That it (mostly) succeeds in offering a visual construction of the themes embodied by the Mythic West—similar to western films and television shows but more powerful in its ability to add a third dimension of experience to these visual representations—adds to Tombstone’s power as a monument to progress, fortitude, and freedom. When the Earp brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Clanton clan shot it out on the streets of Tombstone, the news of the event spread as far as New York City—evidence of the spectacular nature of the episode to those living outside the region. By now, the history of the town and the ways the town is imagined are so enmeshed as to make disentangling the two not impossible per se, but irrelevant to the resonance of the town as a tourist destination.

My focus for the purposes of this project is not necessarily on debunking the Tombstone Myth or setting the record straight, so to speak, as has been done before. I am more interested in looking at the ways the town has evolved in the twentieth century, how it reconstructed itself in the image of a “Wild West” town based more on popular culture than on its own more complex history, how it has been criticized for sacrificing historic integrity for the sake of remaining a viable tourist destination that meets the expectations of its visitors. As Faulk laments, “Promoters have come to the city to cash in on the glories of the West that never was. Artifacts long since abandoned suddenly were transformed into ‘pioneer treasures’ to be viewed for a fee. Pistols acquired anywhere in

the West became, if not Wyatt's own handgun, at least that of Doc Holliday. The tourist pays to see a plastic replica of Tombstone in 1881" (Faulk 1972, 207). While Faulk dismisses the notion that Tombstone was a violent mining town in the 1880s, which of course it was, the complexities of that violence, as well as the town's own history—which goes far beyond this one thirty-second event in 1881—remain on the periphery of that which is presented to tourists.

The fact that people visit Tombstone at all means it offers them something beyond simplified history—and beyond pure entertainment. While Tombstone celebrates a violent as opposed to bucolic past, perhaps it nonetheless serves to assuage what Michael Johnson calls the "postfrontier anxiety" brought about by the realities of encroaching modernity and the loss of the "wilderness" that so riddle nostalgic imaginings of the West. Or perhaps in its celebration of white masculine violence and wildness, we can explore ideas of ritual and redemption, of subversion and reification of the dominant power structure. Through this analysis, I hope to expose not only how preservation efforts in Tombstone and the recreation of an imagined past highlight the competing interests of boosters, preservationists, and residents of the town, but also why this reconstructed, simplified history of Tombstone—as the epitome of the Wild West—resonates with both its visitors and its own townspeople.

II. The Quest for Authenticity

Up to five hundred thousand people visit Tombstone every year, demonstrating the powerful relationship the present has with the past. Visitors hope to "experience" history in this Old West town. At the same time, Tombstone's authenticity as a historic space has

been in constant question. Many visitors believe Tombstone offers an authentic representation of its own past and that of the American West as a whole. Others see Tombstone as inauthentic, superficial, offering only a performative version of a more profound history that is lost in the translation. Tombstone's historic buildings, historic reenactments, and newly constructed façades and signage built to replicate historic Tombstone call forth the images of the Mythic West made familiar through a century of movie and television westerns. The *concept* of authenticity is the vehicle through which townspeople and visitors engage with the ideologies embodied by the Mythic West—those of American virtue, fortitude, and freedom. The *experience* of authenticity is constructed through an amalgam of landscape, preservation, performance, and references to popular culture. How the concept and the experience are negotiated by Tombstone and its visitors is vital to understanding the place Tombstone maintains in the popular imagination.

The concept of authenticity as experienced by tourists and presented by the spaces hoping to entice them has received much attention by scholars in the past thirty years. Some scholars have been critical of tourists, seeing them as being blindly and excitedly lured by the hyperreal and ascribing authenticity to those experiences that are manufactured and synthetic.³ Umberto Eco believes Americans are so seduced by the simulated, that though “the American imagination demands the real thing,” it “must fabricate the absolute fake” to attain it (Eco 1986, 7). Indeed, according to Eco and others, “in hyperreality, the reproduction is better than the original” (Bruner 1994, 397).

More recently, however, academics have sought to explore the concept of authenticity more fully, understanding it as socially constructed, carrying with it a variety

of meanings for different people under different circumstances. Edward Bruner argues that all culture is continually invented and reinvented and that we need to transcend “such dichotomies as original/copy and authentic/inauthentic,” especially since in such constructions, one term is privileged over the other (1994, 398). Writing specifically about Lincoln’s New Salem, a heritage site in Illinois that celebrates the life of Abraham Lincoln, Bruner explores the concept of “authentic reproduction” as at first oxymoronic, but then as encompassing the many ways visitors to New Salem develop meaning from the site. Bruner identifies four ways in which the term *authenticity* can be defined: verisimilitude, whereby the site gives the appearance of the historical moment claimed; genuineness, whereby the site is a “complete and immaculate simulation, one that is historically accurate and true”; original, as opposed to a copy, in which case a reproduction could not be authentic but perhaps a few original items could lend authenticity to a reproduction; and duly authorized, certified, or legitimized, by the state or the nation. This final definition points to the question of who has the authority to authenticate a site, to tell the story. All of these conceptions of authenticity are very much present in modern-day Tombstone.

Authenticity figures heavily in the success of Tombstone as a tourist destination, but what makes it authentic is fluid. While many challenge the site’s realness (Is Boothill Graveyard “real”? Does the dirt-less Allen Street make the site inauthentic? Do tongue-in-cheek performances minimize the seriousness of the site, rendering it less authentic?), others are interested in learning about their past and accept the site as authentic in that it is an historical site—one authorized by the National Park Service as historically significant—even as they enjoy its entertainment value. Still others do not visit

Tombstone in search of this idea called authenticity but are more interested in “having fun” by participating somehow in the pageantry of the Wild West. Here authenticity lies in how closely Tombstone meets the imaginings of these visitors, whose ideas have been fortified through popular culture. In other words, while authenticity in expectation and experience are important—the town must meet tourists’ expectations of what a real Old West town *is*—historic authenticity seems less so, even as assessments about the site’s “realness” continually circulate within and around Tombstone.

The concept of authenticity acts as an imperative marketing tool for the owners of the historic sites in Tombstone. For example, Helldorado Days advertises Tombstone as the “most authentic western town in America”; the Bird Cage Theatre advertises itself as “Tombstone’s most authentic attraction”; and the Tombstone County Courthouse Museum is widely considered the space that offers the most “authentic look at the Wild Wild West” and where those who are looking for “authentic western American history” “won’t have to look much farther than this amazingly preserved site.”⁴ Doc Holliday’s Gunfight Palace asserts on its website that “We give you a magnificent history lesson and reenact actual shootings and killings that took place here back in the wild days as well as their back stories.” Of course Doc Holliday’s Gunfight Palace is not an original to Old Tombstone; it was built in 2011 and is only suggestive of original sites in town.⁵

The *appearance* of authenticity—verisimilitude—seems to be the most important component leading to an “authentic” experience for tourists, and townspeople play on this appearance of authenticity in their representation the town. In many ways, the commercialism in Tombstone has become part of its appeal—performance, entertainment, sepia-toned photographs are all part of the show and have been part of

Tombstone for so long that if anyone tried to eradicate them in the name of authenticity, the risk would be tourists might no longer be interested. Authenticity of the space is greatly if not entirely constructed through visitors' and townspeople's knowledge of the Old West based on popular culture. Ironically, restoration can often lead to accusations of inauthenticity, as demonstrated through the town's continual assertion that this is a real town, not a movie set. It is important to keep these notions of authenticity present as we travel through Tombstone. While it is impossible to grasp the extent to which each visitor believes Tombstone to be authentic—that is, original or plausible, suggestive of authenticity or a realistic replication—the concept is continually enacted on its streets and in its buildings, whether historic or merely evocative of history.

III. The Tombstone Mystique

There are a number of overarching questions that have guided this study. First, it was important to investigate how Tombstone, in its quest for revitalization, has negotiated between historic preservation/historic integrity and meeting the expectations of tourists. In what ways has popular culture influenced both the ways Tombstone constructed and maintains itself and the expectations of tourists? How have the expectations of tourists been translated into the public image of Tombstone? It is also important to look at the relationship historically between civic leaders/boosters and townspeople. How have varying motivations and competing interests played out in the preservation of the historic district? What is the relationship between these various groups today? We must be able to situate Tombstone within wider trends in historic preservation efforts and heritage sites

that are central to an analysis of the power of narratives of the past, the importance and strength of tourist dollars, and the link between the manipulation of history and place.

Finally, we must ask, why does it work? Why do tourists visit Tombstone and what prompts people to move there? The celebration of violence and wildness cannot be downplayed in terms of its lure. Is the superficial performance and celebration of masculine violence and wildness subversive or does it work in service of hegemonic processes? What ideological work does performing life on the periphery do? Further, has Tombstone maintained its popularity throughout the twentieth century or has it ebbed and flowed? And finally, why has Tombstone managed to distinguish itself as unique among other mining towns in the region? When did this distinction materialize? What—in essence—is the Tombstone Mystique?

Informing this project have been a number of different theoretical frameworks and fields, all of which are intertwined within the larger issues of the West as history, myth, and place. These fields include western history (including the Mythic West) and the field that has come to be known as “Earpiana”; critical regionalism, specifically the work of Chris Wilson and Kenneth Frampton; cultural memory, including the work in commemoration, heritage sites, and public history done by Mike Wallace, Michael Kammen, Edward Tabor Linenthal, and Marita Sturken; tourism studies through the work of Adrian Franklin, Hal Rothman, Edward Bruner, and Dean MacCannell; and popular culture and the pop culture West. In this latter field, the work of Paul Andrew Hutton, Richard Slotkin, Stuart Hall, Fredric Jameson, and Dutch American studies scholar Rob Kroes greatly informs this project.

Beginning with Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* in 1893 and continuing through the 1950s with Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* and into the 1980s with Patricia Nelson Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest*, inquiries into the significance of the American West to U.S. culture have been the principal enterprise of the historical profession for well over a century. Turner's vision of the settlement of the American West was romanticized and popularized at the time by Buffalo Bill Cody and Theodore Roosevelt, dime novelists, fiction writers, and artists, and later by film and television producers. Despite the challenges to this romantic vision by scholars, efforts to include voices that had been left out of his narrative, and attempts to downplay or even disparage the significance of the mythic West, popular culture and collective memory have ensured that Buffalo Bill's and Roosevelt's romantic version of the West stands as the most widely accepted account of the nation's frontier history.

The reason the myth of the American West works is that it does particular ideological work, reinforcing and reacting to certain power dynamics; reflecting, perpetuating, and responding to shifting political, cultural, and social values and principles, as ideas about American history, the American experience, and American identity change. The Mythic West is the focus of many scholars who are trying to tease out its function and significance to audiences and consumers, what it has meant to them over time and under different political and social circumstances, and why it has been so resilient. Tombstone's viability as a tourist destination means it is as wrapped up in notions of the Mythic West as Monument Valley and Buffalo Bill. Part of the goal of this project has been to explore the ways Tombstone caters to that myth, offering visitors a glimpse at both the romance and the violence that comprise conceptions of the western

frontier.

IV. Methodology

This study has involved a number of research methodologies. An analysis of archival material helped shed light on the ways preservation efforts have been discussed and debated starting in the 1950s right up to the present day. Issues of the *Tombstone Epitaph*—Tombstone’s oldest continuously running newspaper, established in 1880—and issues of the *Tombstone News*, Tombstone’s current newspaper, shed light on the ways tourism and the concept of history continue to inform and impact the town. Newspapers were and still are an essential element in pushing particular political and cultural agendas. By discussing, dissecting, and defending different social issues, newspaper editors have been important agents in shaping the opinion of their constituencies. In Tombstone, editors of the *Epitaph* have used their position to encourage—among other things—civic boosterism that would be realized in the form of preservation and tourism. Newspaper archives offer a glimpse into the ways editors and readers discussed the necessities of crafting and marketing a public identity—and what that identity would constitute—in a public forum. By perusing newspaper articles, editorials, and letters, I gained an understanding of the exigencies that prompted such a move, the debates between civic boosters and townspeople that ensued, and the decisions that were made and by whom to pursue historic preservation and heritage tourism as the primary means to prevent economic collapse.

In addition to archival research to understand the history of preservation and the importance of narrativizing the past in this old mining town, I used the anthropological

method of participant observation as a tool for examining the meaning visitors and townspeople make of the built environment and the landscape surrounding Tombstone. My numerous visits to Tombstone enabled me to experience the site as a participant: visit museums, tourist attractions, and restaurants; view performances and reenactments; take photographs; and purchase souvenirs. It also allowed me to observe the ways other visitors engage with the space and the ways those who live and work there engage these visitors. Throughout the course of this project, I found that visitors and residents alike freely discussed their connection to Tombstone with me, offering their opinion on the attractions, leisure activities (like sitting at the Crystal Palace Saloon for a beer), reenactments, historical significance, and general attitude of the town. The conversations I had at various places in town with a number of visitors and townspeople gave me even further insight into the motivations for journeying to and living in Tombstone. Many visited more than once—some every year. Others visited then moved their families there. Epistemologically, my analyses are very much entrenched in my own conceptions of the space, of the ways visitors' responses to what they were experiencing could be read based on my own responses, of what numerous tourism and cultural studies scholars have said about tourists and meaning-making through the consumption of cultural productions.

In addition, this paper calls upon extensive analysis of film and television and theories of the dialog that takes place between producer and consumer to grasp the power and resonance of the Mythic West as an articulation of those values seen as essential to the American character. Tombstone is the realization of Hollywood fantasies, where residents and tourists can take part in the West of the imagination as seen in popular films and other pop culture productions. Hollywood, in other words, is key and central to

Tombstone's success. If Tombstone constructed itself as a frontier town based on popular culture representations of itself, and if tourists' expectations of Tombstone are formulated through representations of Tombstone in popular culture like films, television series, and literature, then it is necessary to see how the town has been imagined within the realm of popular culture. It also seems fair to assume that western films as a genre (not just those films about Tombstone) serve to inform the ways Tombstone maintains itself as a Wild West town and set the expectations of visitors. An analysis of films about Tombstone and Wyatt Earp prior to 1951 like *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and more recent films like *Tombstone* (1993) and *Wyatt Earp* (1994), as well as a survey of western films as a group—especially those films that perpetuate notions of the “Wild” West—heavily inform this project.

Chapter 1 maps out the touristic experience in Tombstone, focusing specifically on the importance and centrality of the concept of history to Tombstone's sustainability. Using the Tombstone Courthouse Museum as a metaphor for the ways history is enacted and utilized in the town, its location off the main street of the historic district seems to help define this building as the space in which “true” history wins out over the “performative” history beyond its walls. The history of the courthouse museum underscores the imperatives of economics and heritage history to Tombstone. In the historic district, history and entertainment are co-constitutive, inextricably linked to the narrative that has come to define Tombstone and the Old West in the popular imagination. This chapter also explores the ways that historical authenticity is continually called into question in this space.

Chapter 2 traces the history of preservation efforts in Tombstone from the late 1940s to the present day, demonstrating how boosters marketed the town based on popular versions of itself sometimes at the expense of its own historic integrity. In its constant quest to meet the expectations of tourists, Tombstone must also meet the demands of its own citizens as well as follow the rules set out by the National Park Service. This negotiation has seen constant struggle ever since the Tombstone Restoration Commission was established in 1949 and has attracted almost constant criticism. But it also has resulted in continued resonance of the place to hundreds of thousands of visitors, who perpetuate a special place for Tombstone in the popular imagination. Authenticity seems to continually be rebuffed by entertainment and the two have had a precarious relationship throughout their co-habitation in the city. This negotiation and their centrality to Tombstone's sustainability are also tackled in this chapter.

Chapter 3 explores the ways Wyatt Earp and the famous showdown in October of 1881 have been represented in film and television throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The films chosen for analysis represent the different iterations of Wyatt Earp through the last sixty-five years and the broad appeal and power he as symbol has had in both expressing and shaping perceptions of the West, law and authority, and the nation itself. Wyatt Earp and his place in the Mythic West hold different meanings for different people. He has been both continually reinvented and steadfast to specific attitudes and beliefs of American culture. This chapter seeks to expose how, as a contested figure, he has been able to maintain social significance over generations.

Chapter 4 focuses on the flow of cultural ideas wrapped up in the myth of the West from the United States to the world and back again, and the transformations that

occur through that process. The chapter demonstrates how audiences/consumers around the world have made sense of the western myth generally and Tombstone, Arizona, more specifically through their consumption of popular culture and public space. If the frontier myth is central to conceptions of the United States, and Tombstone is the living embodiment of that myth, then the ways these films and spaces are consumed and recontextualized globally speaks to the power and resilience of these myths for worldwide audiences. Ultimately, the global circulation and consumption of the Mythic West challenges traditional conceptions of the ways the U.S. West informs American cultural identity, specifically that the West's relevance lies solely in the story of the American nation or in the experience of the American people.

This paper demonstrates that Tombstone, Arizona, is but one of many elements in the larger Mythic West that continue to circulate and resonate with consumers of popular culture. As a mythic site, Tombstone works in specific ways—helping audiences to continually “relive” their frontier past; upholding gender-, class-, and race-normative ideologies; and perpetuating a certain brand of U.S. history, and the region that has become ever more meaningful in the retelling of that history in particular ways. As a tourist site, Tombstone offers an ordering narrative to the story of the Old West. Tombstone brings its visitors on a mythic journey through the Old West, but it also has become yet another example of the promotion of simplified history. Further, it is a site of contestation and struggle—struggles to remain viable and relevant; contestations around historical accuracy and authenticity; efforts to cash in on a frontier past that is based more in the popular imagination than in the complex history of the American West.

In the end, this is a project about why Tombstone matters. In Tombstone, the dominant narrative of its past demonstrates which part of the past is worth saving, worth promoting, and worth consuming. The dialogic relationship that has developed between the keepers of history in Tombstone, the producers of the Pop Culture West in Hollywood and worldwide, and the consumers of these productions—whether film viewers, travelers to Tombstone, or visitors to western themed towns in countries around the globe—is central to the sustainability of the place as fundamental to imaginings of the Mythic West; as a tourist destination; and as a living, breathing town.

CHAPTER ONE
“A Nationally Significant Historic Place”: History and Historicity in Tombstone’s Historic District

Modern-day Tombstone, Arizona, is a contradiction in terms. It bills itself as a town where time has stopped. In Tombstone, it’s always 1881, the most famous, and some would argue most important, year in the town’s history. Tombstone “performs” its history on a daily basis and pitches its past to tourists who have come to the historic district to experience and relive the fantasy of the Wild West. Make-believe shoot-’em-ups, barroom brawls, and public drunkenness keep the tourists entertained, as do the reenactments of the “Gunfight at the O.K. Corral” and other street performances that go on each day. There is history here—after all, the battle outside the O.K. Corral is an actual historic event and the town is a historic landmark district, designated by the U.S. Department of Interior in 1961 as a nationally significant historic place, one “possess[ing] exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States” (National Park Service, www.nps.gov). But history in and of itself seems almost secondary. While it is important to tourists and residents alike—acting to legitimize the town’s very existence—the performance, the entertainment seem to trump history altogether. As one cowboy performer outside the O.K. Corral remarked to a tourist walking by: “This is Tombstone, there’s no history here!”

Indeed, though fashioned after itself in the 1880s, Tombstone has the feel of a western movie set, one in which performance and reenactments draw thousands of visitors on an annual basis. At the same time, the town’s status as a historical landmark district is the progenitor of performance and must coexist with the town’s more performative elements. Tombstone is only 4.3 square miles, with the Tombstone Historic

Landmark District occupying only forty-two acres of that land at the town's center. But the historic landmark district is also the central business district, one that promotes souvenirs as enthusiastically as it does historic spaces. Gunfights and brawls, performances of public drunkenness and subversion define the streets of Tombstone, both within the popular imagination and in this living monument to the Old West.

One block from the main street of Tombstone's historic district stands a building that many believe is the only place that presents the town's "true" history to visitors: the Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park. Through preservation efforts in the 1950s, the building was salvaged from destruction, turned into a museum, and designated a state park in 1959. In 2010, the Arizona State Parks Board voted to close the courthouse due to state budget shortfalls. Acknowledging that this site represents what many believe is the most authentic articulation of Tombstone's history, and with a keen understanding of the importance of that history to the town's survival, Tombstone officials worked diligently with the state to prevent the closing of the museum, and operations were transferred to the town in April of that year.

The history of the courthouse museum—as both courthouse and museum, as vendor of "true" history within its walls as "performative" history goes on without—underscores the imperatives of economics and heritage history to Tombstone. In the historic district, history and entertainment are co-constitutive, inextricably linked to the narrative that has come to define Tombstone and the Old West in the popular imagination. This chapter takes us on a tour of the historic district, pointing to the main tourist attractions as one drives southeast along Arizona State Road 80 and onto Allen Street, Tombstone's central business, historic, and tourist district, where performances

and souvenir shops charm visitors. It then takes us off the main drag to the Tombstone Courthouse Museum, the site many believe offers the most neutral and accurate representation of Tombstone's past. Authenticity seems to continually be rebuffed by entertainment and the two have had a precarious relationship throughout their co-habitation in the city. The importance and centrality of both history and performance to Tombstone's ongoing survival are the focus of this chapter.

I. Tombstone's Historic Landmark District

Called by the Tombstone Chamber of Commerce "a living testament to the Old West" and known as "the Town too Tough to Die," Tombstone, Arizona, is off the beaten path: visitors must drive twenty-five miles south of I-10, from Benson, Arizona, on Arizona State Route 80 through the small town of St. David and not much else to get there. It is a destination—not merely a place one visits on the way to somewhere else (although many do go further south to Bisbee). Once tourists drive into Tombstone, they are rewarded with a surreal experience. They are transported into another time, 1880s Tombstone—through an odd combination of history and kitsch, heritage site and theme park. Tourists visit Tombstone to experience how life was in this Old West mining town, and Tombstone may be the best extant example of that historical time period. Historic sites intermingle with performative displays, all of which serve to set such locations apart, mark them as distinct from the modern, and make real notions of the rustic and wild Old West.

The brown sign on the outskirts of Tombstone declaring the town a historic landmark signifies the site as significant. As sociologist John Urry argues, "The tourist

gaze is directed to features of landscape or townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary” (2002, 3). Urry also explains that touristic behavior as “the pleasurability of seeing or gazing upon the different and unusual, as a contrast to the familiarity of every day life.” He goes on to note, “Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is some anticipation. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce the gaze” (2002, 3). Tombstone is indeed both out of the ordinary and the actualization of tourists’ constructed ideas about the late nineteenth-century Mythic West spoon fed to them by the popular media for decades.

Before arriving in the historic district, SR 80 passes Boothill Graveyard, one of the most popular places in Tombstone that blends the historic with the entertaining. As it says in the “Descriptive list of the more than 250 graves” brochure that they give out at the site, “Because of the many violent deaths of the early days, the cemetery became known as Boothill Graveyard. It is possibly a true symbol of this roaring mining town of the early 1880s. Buried here are outlaws with their victims, suicides, and hangings, legal and otherwise, along with the hardy citizens and refined element of Tombstone’s first days.” The cemetery was originally named Tombstone Graveyard and was neglected after the town built a new graveyard in another location in 1884. In the 1920s, the city took on the project of restoring the graveyard to its original state. It was named Boothill Graveyard after Boot Hill Cemetery in Dodge City, Kansas, which had been attracting tourists for years. While the cemetery was reconstructed and named in a conscious effort to attract tourists to Tombstone, the graveyard is real (on the attraction’s website, it says

“Actual graveyard”) and many of the people who were buried there have marked graves (the original grave markers were made of wood, but the markers are now made of steel). The three men killed at the O.K. Corral in 1881—Billy Clanton, Frank McLaury, and Tom McLaury—are all buried at the Boothill Graveyard. The fact that the site was uncared for for decades underscores how secondary the gunfight was to the history of the town prior to the 1930s.

Tourists pour into the cemetery grounds to meander among the graves. They follow the guidebook with names and descriptions of everyone in the graveyard, taking pictures of markers possibly of someone with the same last name or of all the “Unknowns” (which one visitor joked must be the “Smith” of the Southwest). In fact, despite the literal morbidity of the site, people pose and laugh and smile as much as they do at any other site in town. Some of the gravesites are marked with small crosses with a name and a short description (such as “Miles Sweeney, Murdered” and “May Doody, Diphtheria”); others have full headstones, a few with quirkier descriptions that are the focus of many a photograph. These include a marker that reads, “Here lies George Johnson, hanged by mistake. 1882. He was right, we was wrong, but we strung him up and now he’s gone” and another that reads “Here lies Lester Moore, four slugs from a .44. No Les, no more.”⁶ The Lester Moore headstone is by far the most popular, and has also been reproduced for purchase in the gift shop on the cemetery grounds as salt and pepper shakers, banks, sew-on patches, magnets, key chains, t-shirts, shot glasses, mugs, and baseball caps.

Further along SR 80 toward the historic district is the renovated Wyatt Earp house, outside of which stands an impressive bronze statue of Wyatt Earp that was

commissioned by the house's owners and unveiled in 2008 at a "major event" in November of that year. Sculpted by artist Tim Trask and called "Stepping Into Legend," the statue, according to the press release of the event, "shows Wyatt Earp poised to take that first stride toward the notorious OK Corral, where the most famous Old West gun battle took place. Wearing a flat-brimmed cowboy hat, his steely eyes are sharply focused with courage and determination. No other depiction of Wyatt Earp is as haunting or as evocative as Trask's timeless bronze sculpture" (PRWEB 2008, under "Wyatt Earp's Return to Tombstone"). Ironically, because it is not situated within the historic district, the house is easy to miss. And while the interior has been renovated, the space is used as an art gallery for local artists attempting to capture the romance and wildness of Old Tombstone and the events of the gunfight rather than as a museumized site highlighting the ways Wyatt Earp and his common-law wife Celia Ann Mattie Blaylock may have lived. The home does not get a lot of foot traffic according to owner Liz Allen, and the statue of Wyatt was meant to draw more people to the site (Littlejohn 2008).

Unfortunately, that objective has not been realized.

Just a few blocks away from the Wyatt Earp House is Tombstone's National Historic Landmark District, lying between East Allen Street and East Toughnut Street and South Second Street and South Sixth Street. Allen Street is closed off to drivers from Second Street to Sixth Street, again marking it as a tourist site, both historical and consumer-driven. There are horse-drawn carriages that travel up and down Allen Street, providing tours to the town's landmarks and attractions and a lesson about their historical significance. On either side of Allen Street are wooden sidewalks and wooden and brick buildings reminiscent of the Old West. There are a number of saloons—both historical,

like Big Nose Kate's, named for Mary Katherine Horony Cummings, the common-law wife of John "Doc" Holliday and originally the Grand Hotel, and the Crystal Palace, rebuilt and named in July 1882 after the building saw total destruction by fire in May of that year; and modern, like Doc Holliday's Saloon, which opened in 2011. Gun shops; smoke shops; photography studios where tourists can get sepia-toned photos of themselves dressed in period costume with "wanted" stamped across the top; and a plethora of shops selling turquoise and silver jewelry, "western" wear, and the typical tourist souvenirs (postcards, shot glasses, t-shirts, mugs, key chains, magnets, etc.) line the street. Depending on the day, the street is bustling with tourists clamoring for space along the wooden planks to people watch, eat ice cream, read the *Tombstone Epitaph* (a souvenir reprint of the original 1881 reports of the "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral"), and take pictures of the scene—as well as of the locals dressed in period costume who walk among the visitors.

It is not unusual to see people dressed in period costume—as perhaps gunslingers, maybe outlaws. On a recent visit, three such men are asked who employs them—the city? an individual tourist site? They say that while they do volunteer at the OK Corral, they are dressed this way because this is just how they dress. They claim that the people walking around town in 1880s dress are locals who actually dress and behave as though they live in 1880s Tombstone (although, of course, there is electricity and running water in twenty-first century Tombstone). Interestingly, these three men are all recent émigrés to the city: one is a retired schoolteacher, one a recent high school graduate from Tucson, one a New Englander who teaches at the local high school. All have arrived within the previous three years. All first visited as tourists and decided to

stay—extending their touristic experiences, one might say, by actually *becoming part of* the touristic experience—taking sociologist Adrian Franklin’s idea of tourism being infused in the everyday to a new level. Franklin argues that tourism is the space in which “fantasy has become an important social practice” (2003, 2). Indeed, tourism to a great extent is absorbed into the daily life of Tombstone. In his discussion about Boston, Franklin posits that, “the every day world is increasingly indistinguishable from the touristic world” (2003, 4–5). In Tombstone, the public, touristic identity is in fact the identity of the city itself.

Because “the streets get rolled up at five o’clock,” the Crystal Palace Saloon is a welcoming, open, site. A man in a cowboy hat sidles up to the bar so he can ask one of the barmaids—who are dressed like women of the evening, in feather boas, bustiers, and lots of lace—for a t-shirt that says “Crystal Palace: Good Whiskey and Tolerable Water.” Victor Turner’s (1969) concept of *communitas*—whereby new sets of relationships, unmediated togetherness, and “normal” hierarchical structures are suspended and a community of shared experience develops—is demonstrated throughout the site. Angela and Darren, truck drivers from Oregon, start talking to me without provocation, and even buy a round of drinks. They say that they travel all over the United States, and rarely have two days off at the same time. When they do, they come to Tombstone. This is their third time visiting the town. They cannot articulate why they come back every year beyond saying that they “just love it here.” They love the excitement, the carnivalesque, the historical. While we are seated at the bar, a man dressed like an 1880s cowboy comes in and orders a drink. According to Angela, this happens all the time: tourists ask to take pictures, but these people are just the locals. This is simply how they are. In other words,

the residents both mark themselves as and are marked as tourist attractions, and the tourists respond by taking pictures of them.

Gunfight reenactments are a standard in Tombstone. On this day, dozens of tourists along Allen Street witness the shooting of Marshal White in 1880. The reenactment is meant to be both historical and entertaining, with exaggerated movements and clown-like performances. When the outlaws are shot down, the crowd cheers and applauds. When the performance shifts to one of a ladies' fashion show, the crowd slowly disperses. It is interesting to note this relatively genteel demonstration of womanhood in the 1880s; the actual lives of women on the frontier were far more complex. Firstly, as William Shillingberg explains, women found life in Tombstone particularly restrictive: "A caste system was rigidly based on their husbands' occupations. Wives of superintendents seldom mingled with those of common miners, and wives of gamblers and saloonkeepers enjoyed fewer contacts beyond their own circle" (1999, 105). Beyond this regimented class structure, women were barred by custom from saloons and gambling halls and the town offered few other amusements. To pass the time, "Women formed clubs to discuss the latest eastern and California literary periodicals, helping break the cycle of work and boredom" (Shillingberg 1999, 105). But for some women, these activities offered no real comfort: "Saloonman Tom Corrigan's wife twice attempted suicide. A badly aimed pistol shot to the head forced surgeons to remove her right eye. Whether the bleakness of frontier life or her husband's violent domestic habits drove her to despair was not reported" (Shillingberg 1999, 105).

While it may have been somewhat historically accurate, women dressed in the "latest" fashion of the time are clearly not what most people come to Tombstone to see. It

is the gunfights, the outlaws, the “wildness” of Tombstone that is the major attraction. While found in the National Register of Historic Places, thereby marked as a place of national *historic* significance, Tombstone also is humorous and entertaining. Old photographs around town reveal that the space *looks* like it did in the 1880s, yet it has a Disneyland quality to it. It is this blend that attracts tourists: One father brought his son here last year because he wanted him to get a sense of history; they came back this year because his son had had so much fun.

The most famous event in Tombstone’s history is the street fight that has come to be known as the “Gunfight at the OK Corral.” This event is reenacted every day at two o’clock for approximately two hundred and fifty spectators. It is by far the most anticipated event of the day. Before the actual show begins, people start pouring into the corral to stake their place in what they believe will be the spot of the reenactment. Here there are mannequins that are automated to reenact the gun battle whenever a button off to the side is pushed. While everyone is waiting, someone pushes the button, and everyone watches the mannequin reenactment in silence, some reluctantly taking photos of this relatively unlively and unengaging event. When it ends, someone remarks “Is that it?” expressing disappointment at paying \$7.50 for a live show and being met with this. This situation exemplifies Urry’s theory of anticipation as part of the tourist experience. Sighting sociologist Colin Campbell, Urry argues that, “satisfaction stems from anticipation, from imaginative pleasure-seeking. ... [People] seek to experience ‘in reality’ the pleasurable dramas they have already experienced in their imagination. However, since ‘reality’ rarely provides the perfected pleasures encountered in daydreams, each purchase leads to disillusionment.” Urry relates this to tourism; in fact,

he calls tourism the “paradigm case” of Campbell’s contemporary consumerism argument (2002, 13).

Thankfully, this mechanical reenactment is not what the audience has paid for—it is still fifteen minutes to show time. The live event takes place in two parts: the first a comedic performance of a “possible” fight between locals and interlopers in the 1880s West; the second, the “historical and award-winning reenactment” of the Gunfight at the OK Corral. While the performance is amateurish and rough at spots, the audience continually shoots photographs of the players. When the Earps and Doc Holliday shoot their adversaries dead, the players stand still for a few moments, posing to allow tourists to snap even more pictures. At the end of the show, audience members are invited to join the players to take still more photographs. Clearly, capturing the moment at which law wins out over lawlessness through photography is seen by both the actors and the audience as imperative to the Tombstone experience.

II. Tombstone Courthouse Museum

According to a brochure given out at various motels and other establishments around town, produced by Tombstone’s merchants, Tombstone is “The Town that is a Museum, A Museum that is a Town.” The Tombstone merchant brochure goes on:

Truly a Historical American Landmark, Tombstone is America’s best example of our 1880 western heritage. The American West is well preserved in Tombstone’s original 1880’s buildings and artifacts featured in numerous Tombstone museums... Tombstone’s merchants take pride in keeping their town as authentic as it was 100 years ago, giving the millions of visitors a real look back into the wild west as it really was.

To that end, all shops and businesses subscribe to the look and feel of the Old West through their signage and the overall rusticity of their spaces. Among the myriad souvenir shops and western-themed saloons are situated a number museums, or at least sites that are just as interested in promoting history as they are consumer goods. The *Tombstone Epitaph* offices, the Fly Photography Studio at the O.K. Corral, and the Bird Cage Theatre all promote museumized historical representations of Tombstone. In addition, Schieffelin Hall, the Rose Tree Museum, Pioneer Home Museum, and the Tombstone Western Heritage Museum are open as museums for visitors. Perhaps the most notable museum in Tombstone is the Tombstone Courthouse Museum, which is not on Allen Street, but on East Toughnut Street, a bit outside the main tourist area. While most tourists spend their time wandering up and down Allen Street, some venture slightly off the beaten path to get a taste of what some consider the most authentic history of Tombstone.

The courthouse in western lore is synonymous with stability and authority. It is where countless marshals, sheriffs, and judges in both the real and pop culture West have successfully saved towns and communities from the unruliness of renegades for decades. It is central to an understanding of the ways authority and order were utilized to eradicate lawlessness as the West became more and more tame and civilized. It is synonymous with fictional western characters like Marshall Will Kane (*High Noon*, 1954) and Sheriff John T. Chance (*Rio Bravo*, 1959). It lives in historic western figures like Pat Garrett, Bat Masterson, and Wild Bill Hickok. And, of course, Wyatt Earp. As Scott Simmon argues, in a discussion of the different representations of the “Gunfight at the O.K. Corral” in

movie westerns, “the locale for the West’s true power struggle was never the street, but the courthouse” (2003, 277).

Tombstone’s Cochise County Courthouse, built in 1882 to serve Cochise County, of which Tombstone was the seat at the time, is now a historic museum. Sold to the city of Tombstone in 1942 by Cochise County for \$1, the building sat idle and in disrepair for more than a decade. The building was saved from impending destruction in 1955—a moment that marked a resurgence in historic preservation throughout the United States—by the Tombstone Restoration Commission, led by Edna Landin, president of the commission. Through a fundraising campaign that drew national attention, Landin—also former president of the Chamber of Commerce—was instrumental in the renovation of the courthouse, its new life as a museum, and the campaign for the building to be accepted as an Arizona state park by the newly established Arizona State Parks Board.

The courthouse became a state park in 1959, only the second site to be named a state park in Arizona. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, and is one of the oldest courthouses still standing in the state. “[I]f the county government was to be accorded the authority and respect that it needed to effectively govern,” argues architectural historian Al Larson, “an impressive building was needed to help in that regard—to represent the authority and power of the state as well as those in authority in the county” (1999, 22). Indeed, the Cochise County Courthouse’s red brick façade, heavy redwood frame, high ceilings, and large wood doors all serve to represent the supremacy and command bestowed upon lawmakers in the late nineteenth century. In this space, visitors can explore a relatively neutral historic narrative of Tombstone—with varying interpretations of the events of the famous battle outside the O.K. Corral, favorable

exhibits on Apache heroes Cochise and Geronimo, and even an exhibit in the old courtroom about water rights and the deportation of striking mine workers from Bisbee to New Mexico in 1917—narratives altogether absent from the “history” performed outside. It is clear that history is important in this space. The courthouse’s own history, the history of the town, the history of the territory—which all come together under this one roof—demonstrate the importance of “real,” authentic history to Tombstone, at least in this small corner of the historic district.

Indeed, there seems to be consensus around the idea that the most genuine history of Tombstone is presented within the courthouse. Said to offer “tourists accurate, historical information on an Old West town as steeped in myth as it is history” (Thompson and Sandell 2010), the courthouse is touted even by the Arizona Park Commission as presenting the most authentic representation of Tombstone’s past: “Get a glimpse of the true old West at Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park. Built in 1882 in the shape of a Roman cross, the two-story Victorian structure once housed the offices of the sheriff, recorder, treasurer, board of supervisors, jail, and courtrooms of Cochise County” (Arizona Park Commission). These claims of accurate and true history reinforce the courthouse’s supremacy as both an institution of law and a vendor of the historical record.

Visitors to the museum meander through the courthouse offices, which not only are historical in and of themselves (the first room is that of the county sheriff, in which one can view the purchase deed for the building, among other artifacts), but also have now become purveyors of history. The sheriff’s office leads into a larger room with a display of Wyatt Earp and his second (common-law) wife Celia Ann Mattie Blaylock.

Tourists see photographs of Earp and Blaylock, his razor, and other personal effects. For a man whose life is vital to the existence and survival of Tombstone as a tourist destination, the exhibit is relatively small and unimpressive. Among the other exhibits in this room—none of which seems to trump the other in importance—is a look at the history of Fort Huachuca, the camp turned fort whose proximity to silver mines allowed for the city of Tombstone to be established. Ed Schieffelin, the town’s founder, used the camp as a base from which to explore the surrounding area, which was considered inhospitable to white settlers because of the “hostile” Apache presence. Schieffelin found silver about twenty-five miles from the camp, and decided to stake a claim. He called the town “Tombstone” because he was told that all he would find in “those hills” would be his own tombstone. This story is repeated over and over throughout modern-day Tombstone, reminding visitors that the place was indeed forbidding for white prospectors and settlers, a public identity that has allowed the town of Tombstone to become inextricable from the very concept of the “Wild West.”

Further along in this room of the museum, visitors are introduced to Cochise and Geronimo—given far more complimentary assessments than they are in other historic sites in town (the *Epitaph* offices, for example). There is a display on Native life as well, possibly the only one in the town that attempts to accurately illustrate life pre-Tombstone. The Historama site on Allen Street—a multimedia exhibit and film about the history of Tombstone—does begin with a look at Native life before Schieffelin founded the mining camp and the town itself, but reproduces tired stereotypes of Indians by pushing ideas of pre-civilized, hostile Native people in the area. Further, focus on Native people in this exhibit ends with the founding of Tombstone.

In fact, the representation of Native people in the presentation and performance of 1881 Tombstone is ambiguous at best. The Apache presence in the area is central to the founding narrative of Tombstone, after all, Ed Schieffelin was meant to meet his doom in his search for silver because of the Apaches. The county in which Tombstone resides was established in 1881 and named for Cochise, the Chiricahua Apache war chief now buried in the Dragoon Mountains northeast of town. It is interesting that the county would be named for such a formidable foe of white American settlers. Perhaps because his surrender in 1872 allowed for further white settlement in the area, naming the county for him was a celebration of “progress.” But Cochise’s part in the narrative of Tombstone essentially ends at the naming of the county.

Geronimo, the Apache warrior who fought with Cochise (his father-in-law) against Mexican and U.S. troops, is also central to the history of Tombstone and the surrounding area. While often seen as a hero by his own people, he was labeled a terrorist by the United States for his raids to stop white encroachment. He was captured in 1877 by John P. Clum—who would go on to become Tombstone’s first mayor in 1881—and sent to the San Carlos Reservation with hundreds of other Apaches. Geronimo escaped five years later. By that time, Cochise County residents had already gathered in Tombstone to draft a resolution to the president demanding the complete removal of Apaches from the area. Historian Katherine Benton-Cohen explains that, “the resolution pointed to the Chiracahuas’ continued raids and evasion of troops” (2009, 69). The document also linked the Apache Indians to the “cow-boys” who had afflicted the town a few years prior. Geronimo eluded U.S. troops until his capture in 1886, when white county residents got their wish and all remaining Apaches—including those who had been living

peaceably at the San Carlos Reservation—were sent by train to “decrepit, dank facilities at Florida’s Fort Mason and Fort Pickins” (Benton-Cohen 2009, 71).

Geronimo gained some celebrity in his later years among white Americans, but remained a prisoner of war for the rest of his life. The actual removal of Apaches from the area is little discussed in the small exhibit on Apache peoples at the courthouse museum, and not at all in Tombstone’s historical production outside. Geronimo’s capture by Clum is presented through photographs at the *Epitaph* office as well as at the County Courthouse Museum. Some of the annual parades do include Native dancers in traditional dress. Otherwise, the Native presence is almost entirely reduced to one man who plays the “drunken Indian” character at the end of the Founders’ Day Parade.

The historic Chinese presence is also lacking in modern-day Tombstone. Approximately four percent of Tombstone’s population in 1882 were Chinese residents,⁷ many of whom had arrived in the United States to work on the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad through Arizona. Chinese residents in Tombstone even had their own Chinatown (called “Hoptown”), implying that the population was significant enough to warrant its own space. In the early and mid-1880s, Tombstone residents experienced what Eric Clemens calls a “fit of nativism” and, similar to their cries for the eradication of the Apaches, started an anti-Chinese movement that called for white citizens to force the Chinese out of the city. In 1880, John Clum organized the Anti-Chinese League, and the fervor again gained traction in 1886, a year that saw the creation of the “Anti-Chinese Political Party” and a boycott of Chinese laundries (Benton-Cohen 2009, 74). This anti-Chinese sentiment was reflected on the national stage with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned Chinese immigration to the

United States. So in the late nineteenth century, Chinese, not Mexicans, became the focus of anti-immigration campaigns in the West. As the nation's first "illegal immigrants," the Chinese were the focus of border patrol agents who attempted to prevent Chinese—not Mexicans—from entering the United States at the Mexican border (Benton-Cohen 2009, 77). All of these events suggest that the Chinese population in Tombstone was highly visible.

While the Native and Chinese presence is downplayed in modern-day Tombstone, the town has held an annual Salute to Buffalo Soldiers Days—at least for four years until 2012. Photographs from the event indicate African American participation in the parade in 2012, but the event is not advertised on the chamber of commerce website for the 2013 calendar of events. The event had been sponsored by the Wild West Detachment Marine Corps League of Tombstone, which also hosts the annual Wild West Days in honor of men and women of the armed forces, also in its fourth year. The Buffalo Soldiers event is fitting for Tombstone because of its proximity and relationship to Fort Huachuca, headquarters of the 10th cavalry—the "Buffalo Soldiers"—and a national historic landmark in its own right. Even with this annual event, Tombstone's diversity remains on the periphery of, if not entirely absent from, the dominant narrative of the town's history.

The lack of diversity in modern performances and representations of Tombstone highlights the notion that there can be no incorporation of Native and other non-white peoples in a "civilized" town. The narrative has been simplified and narrowed down to such a degree that there is no space for the inclusion of different cultures into the story. But as we see in how Geronimo is typically represented, as well as in the drunken Indian in the parade, the old antagonisms still get played out, just in new and different ways.

Ironically, whiteness is celebrated in new and different ways as well. In the center of the room is a large and seemingly out of place display on German western writer Karl May (1842–1912). This exhibit highlights the strong link between Germany and the Mythic West in the German imaginary. As the most widely read German author of all time, May’s novels about life in the American West of the mid- to late nineteenth century greatly influenced the ways American cowboys and Indians have been conceived in the German imagination. His two main characters are the white hero Old Shatterhand and his sidekick Winnetou, a Mescalero Apache chief. Karl May, his characters, and the romanticized Indian are still wildly popular in Germany, where “hobbyists” enthusiastically participate in *Indianer* groups, “playing Indian,” as Philip Deloria would say, and underscoring “their distance from a European history of colonization” (Sieg 2002, 217). May’s works are pivotal to the ways in which Germans have envisaged America, and an exhibit that shows his massive appeal to German audiences using the myths of the American West is definitely interesting. But there are no exhibits on the ways the Mythic West has been utilized elsewhere in the world, at the Wild West Show at EuroDisney in France, for example; or with western films (either based in the American West or similar in structure to American westerns) produced in Italy, Poland, East Germany, Russia, India, Australia, and other nations; or the ways Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral have resonated internationally.

Further, the exhibit mentions nothing of Adolf Hitler’s love of the May books as a child, or how he encouraged his officers to read May’s works. Karl May was called “Hitler’s Literary Mentor” by Klaus Mann in an article of the same name published in 1940. None of this is mentioned in the May exhibit, which celebrates the author and his

works without problematizing his reception in a divided Germany. All of this renders the exhibit's presence in a museum that celebrates Tombstone's history confusing. Perhaps it is to show the capital of the Mythic West, in which Tombstone is so central. In this way, tourists might find it interesting that the stories they themselves grew up on had their counterparts in a foreign land, written by a man who had never even visited the American West but wrote purely based on the legends he himself was exposed to as a child. They might be interested in discovering that much of German national identity resides in the myth of the American West, especially through a deeply romantic fascination with Native peoples—a phenomenon called *Indianthusiasm* by Hartmut Lutz (2002, 167). Perhaps then too, tourists would be fascinated that the town in which May grew up and where the Karl May museum currently resides—Radebeul, Germany, near Dresden—is known as “Little Tombstone.” Tourists might also be interested to know that the May exhibit was actually crafted in Radebeul at the Karl May Museum specifically for the courthouse museum in Tombstone while a Tombstone exhibit was crafted by the courthouse museum specifically for the Karl May Museum in Radebeul. Again, none of this is mentioned in the exhibit, demonstrating that simplified versions of history and biography offer only interesting glimpses into the real stories without the messiness of depth and density.

Simplified history continues throughout this room, where exhibits are small and uncomplicated. Displays about the street fight between the Earps and the Clantons get very little room at the museum. There is a small display on Doc Holliday and an exhibit of sketches giving different assessments of the “Gunfight at the O.K. Corral”—a display that takes up only one small, dark corner of the entire room. It is possible that in its efforts to offer a “true” and “accurate” history of Tombstone, the museum downplayed

this central event. While the fight is vital to the ways the town is conceived of in the popular imagination, and fundamental to the space as a tourist destination, it had little impact on the town at the time.

Other exhibits in the courthouse offer a glimpse into the lives of miners, ranchers, and pioneers, as well as the ways law and order were maintained in late nineteenth-century Tombstone. The treasurer's office, sheriff's office, and even the gallows outside have been reconceived to render Tombstone's history even more exciting for visitors. Interestingly, with all the museum's (and others') proclamations of authenticity, an "invitation to a hanging" that lures tourists to the gallows erected in the jail yard behind the courthouse firmly entrenches this space within the overall "wildness" the town of Tombstone seeks to promulgate. Indeed, the hanging to which visitors are invited is one of only two hangings that occurred at the courthouse (Wilson 2010, 42).⁸ Clearly, the museum is as invested in perpetuating certain notions of the Wild West as is the rest of the town, demonstrating how economic imperatives often render the partial truth a potentially more profitable enterprise.

In this town that is in many ways itself a museum, it is not entirely ironic that the Tombstone Courthouse Museum is integral to the historicity of Tombstone. Tombstone's entire reputation as a wild western town relies on the use of the courthouse in juxtaposition to the outlawry that Tombstone is known for. The museum offers a glimpse into the lives of Tombstone's genteel citizenry—including the material culture of pioneering white families, such as china tea sets, needlepoint, bonnets, hair pins, fans, and a bible; displays on less controversial leisure-time activities, like athletic and sporting events, lectures, theatre, socials, etc.; exhibits pointing to endeavors considered more

“wholesome fun” than “rowdy amusements,” like parades and the Tombstone City Band; and exhibits on those profit-making enterprises that were firmly planted inside the law, like ranching and mining. At the same time, however, the museum makes good use of Tombstone’s status as the quintessence of the Wild West, dedicating as much space to those “rowdy amusements” as to those considered more respectable.

This is not to say that the Cochise County Courthouse Museum is not displaying actual history. Tombstone’s history is a paradox. It was a town of contrasts. It was, in fact, both rowdy and civilized. It is to say, however, that the museum, in an effort to entice those tourists who have made their way to Tombstone based on very specific expectations of the space, is—like the rest of the town—celebrating and making good use of its raucous past. But it also maintains its seeming neutrality by showing a side of the town that is not necessarily explored outside its walls. To Tombstone residents and tourists alike, the Tombstone Courthouse Museum has become known as “the place to go to discover the facts behind the legends” (Weiland 2010).

III. The Fight to Tell Tombstone’s Past

Of course, no museum is “neutral” in its representation of events and people that shape a space, and the Tombstone Courthouse Museum is no exception. Nonetheless, visitors might be surprised to learn of the contestations that surround the museum as a site. On 15 January 2010, in an effort to close gaps in the state budget, the Arizona State Parks Board voted to close the Tombstone Courthouse Museum, along with twelve other parks. (Interestingly, seven of the parks that were slated for closing are historical state parks, including the Yuma Territorial Prison. Before reaching agreements with a number of

individual communities, the Arizona State Parks Board chose only one of the eight historic parks in Arizona to remain open—the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park.) The state “swept” money from the state parks’ operating budget to cover general government expenses, deciding to keep open only those parks deemed most economically viable. With this decision, operations were handed over to the city of Tombstone for the next three years, and the County Courthouse Museum became central to discussions not only about the narratives that are important to Tombstone’s history, but also about the importance of history itself.

Art Austin had been the Park Supervisor at the courthouse for twenty-eight years, until the state of Arizona stopped funding the park at the end of March 2010. Prior to operations for the museum being transferred to the town of Tombstone, Austin expressed his concern over Tombstone being responsible for the preservation and representation of its own history. Not trusting in the ability of the town to maintain the historic integrity of the space, Austin scoffed at the idea of authenticity anywhere in Tombstone beyond the walls of the courthouse. He says that after the release of the movies *Tombstone* in 1993 and *Wyatt Earp* in 1994, it became imperative for re-enactors outside to dress and act like the people in the movies, claiming that that is what tourists now expect.

Indeed, even almost twenty years later, the films *Tombstone* and *Wyatt Earp* largely influence the ways tourists and performers understand the town. Both movies are continuously looped on flat screen televisions at a number of the saloons on Allen Street, played throughout the day and into the evening with the sound down, to remind tourists what brought them to Tombstone in the first place. *Tombstone* and *Wyatt Earp* movie posters, hot plates with the image of Val Kilmer’s Doc Holliday, and t-shirts with the line

“Justice is Coming”—the tagline from the 1993 film—are available at many of the souvenir shops that line the street. David Wrobel reminds us that, “this phenomenon of visiting places that have been seen on the big screen is sometimes so pronounced that a historic site becomes significant as a tourist attraction largely because it has been depicted in a movie” (Wrobel 2001, 5). Wrobel discusses librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin’s contention that “the modern tourist was ... merely searching after that which he/she was expected to experience” and that “the tourist even visited sites depicted in movies and matched the actual reality of the site against the hyperreality of its celluloid presentation” (2001, 5). While Boorstin lamented the transition of “traveler” to “tourist”—a transition that he felt signaled a loss in cultural aesthetics and taste—his argument about the influence of popular culture on tourism in the creation of simulated environments is fitting. *Tombstone* and *Wyatt Earp*, as well as the many other films that crowd the history of the western genre in the twentieth century, certainly have set expectations of tourists and help set the tone for the gunfights played out on the street and at the O.K. Corral. The films dictate the speech, swagger, and costume—from hats to dusters to mustaches to bolo ties—of the performers and many of the townspeople as well.

But—as Boorstin and other scholars of tourism have argued—using these films to guide historic accuracy has not always been successful. Austin points, for example, to the use of color in both the painting of buildings and the clothing used by performers. Red, the color used in the movie *Tombstone* for sashes to indicate where one’s allegiances lie, was not a widely used color for clothing in the 1880s, according to Austin.⁹ The same is true for paints. In the 1880s, white, light gray, and buff were the most dominant colors because colorful paint was expensive and hard to come by. This does not stop buildings

in the historic district from using red and other bright colors, however, a fact that makes Austin bristle. But the continuing negotiation between tourist expectations and historic accuracy brings into stark relief how history is important but is also secondary. Franklin argues that, “the so-called ‘post-tourist’ no longer needed authentic objects to confirm their gaze but enjoyed the fakery, the games of simulation and the virtual imaginary that the thematised tourism ‘worlds’ of the 1990s provided” (2003, 9).

Other historical incongruences have caused some local strife in Tombstone, as well as endangered its designation as a National Historic Landmark District. In 2004, the National Park Service (NPS) declared the designation threatened, seeking to work with the city to develop an appropriate program of oversight and management. It’s an ongoing process, however. Former Chamber of Commerce executive director and Historic District Commission chairman Patrick Greene cites a problem with the use by local businesses in the historic district of neon signs, which, he says, keep appearing “like tribbles” (a reference to an original *Star Trek* episode, “The Trouble with Tribbles,” from 1967). Heated discussions went on as recently as May 2010 regarding this problem. Greene believes that “if neon can be seen from the historic district then the HDC does have jurisdiction” (Littlejohn 2010). He stated that “Tourism is our main economy here and people come here to see the Old West” (Littlejohn 2010).

And while Allen Street had been resurfaced—the asphalt covered—in 2006 “in a manner that is appropriate for its period of historic significance (1880–1931),” i.e., to look like a dirt road, this measure provoked controversy among visitors and townspeople as well (National Historic Landmarks Program). Tombstone’s windy days meant dirt went everywhere, into shops and eyes, all over merchandise, countertops, and artifacts.

Efforts were made to control the dust, but to no avail: “On March 30, the roads were covered with an oily substance that was supposed to dry overnight and keep the dust from blowing around. Instead, the streets stayed oily, and customers brought the mess from the streets to the stores” (*Tombstone (Ariz.) Epitaph* 2006). As Cindy Shambaugh, who works at the J. L. Silver Company and Silver Hills, proclaimed, “Students on field trips and people in wheelchairs used to go right down the middle of the road. Now, without pavement, they no longer do so. ‘Tourist-friendly’? I don’t think so” (*Tombstone Epitaph* 2006). Under increased pressure, the dirt was removed altogether in 2009 and the city continues to seek ways to comply with the NPS order. Touristic expectation and the ongoing debate about the dirt prompted one visitor to Tombstone to remark on a recent visit to the historic district, “they need to put the dirt back on the street! That [removing the dirt] was a big mistake!”

The closing off of Allen Street to car traffic in 2006 also came under fire by locals. In 2009, when then-mayor Dusty Escapule pushed for Fourth and Fifth Streets between Allen and Toughnut to be closed as well, many local business owners thought that he was only looking after his own business needs rather than being concerned with the historical authenticity of the historic district (*Tombstone Epitaph* 2009a). Greene thinks people in the town need to “understand where their bread is buttered,” and do all they can to maintain an “authentic” experience for visitors. Attempts to define what is historical and what is not while addressing the needs of both locals and tourists in this living history town sometimes results in compromises or a lack of accuracy altogether—an issue around which keepers of Tombstone’s history must be constantly vigilant.

IV. Saving Tombstone's "True" History

It is these notions of authenticity and accuracy and the constant negotiation between those invested in the town that caused some to oppose the idea of Tombstone taking over operations of the County Courthouse Museum. They feared that once Tombstone took over the site, the integrity of what they believed was the last vestige of true history in the entire town would be compromised. The town did in fact take over the museum in April of 2010. The price of admission has been raised from \$4.00 to \$5.00 per adult, hours have been extended from five to seven days a week, and volunteers have traded in their state parks uniforms for period costume—although the costume requirement has since been discontinued. No other changes are apparent—although there is a hope to create “living history” within the museum, such as trial re-enactments—a tactic that has successfully attracted tourists to Tombstone for generations (Polletta 2010). The original charter for the museum is still in tact, which means the town is prohibited from modifying anything on display or in storage in the building.

By all accounts, the transfer of operations went smoothly. The Tombstone City Council voted unanimously to enter negotiations with the state. The state entered into an agreement with the city and the city entered into an agreement with the Chamber of Commerce, which now is sole operator of the site. The museum is self-sustaining, so all monies garnered from donations and entrance fees go directly back into the operations of the museum. In fact, Moreno says the transfer and running of the museum have gone so well with the Tombstone Chamber at the helm that she does not see why anyone would be pessimistic about the transfer in the first place. Moreno's thoughts about the transfer

reveal the ways that “history” as a concept worked to motivate the town’s citizens to maintain this museum for the good of Tombstone’s own survival.

It took some campaigning on the part of the Historic District Commission and the Chamber of Commerce to get the support of the town to keep the museum open and running. What is interesting is that the museum continues to represent “true” history for both the town and tourists. There is an element of agreement that what is outside its walls is different from what is inside. Performances on Allen Street are *entertainment* while the museum is *history*. The consensus seems to be summed up well in an article about the museum on the website for the Arizona News Service: “the loss of the Courthouse is more than economic. In a town where cowboys walk the streets, gunfighters draw their weapons, and madams flirt around corners, it’s easy to step into Tombstone and get lost in the lore” (Thompson and Sandell 2010). In fact, the importance of the museum seems more metaphorical than accurate. The closing of the courthouse might not in fact have an impact on the ways tourists understand Tombstone altogether. But the discourse around the closing very much called upon the notion that the closing meant the loss of true history, and that struck a chord with the town’s residents.

The museum, according to the citizens of Tombstone and visitors alike, is an escape from the kitsch, and the loss of this site would have a tremendous impact on the legitimacy of the town as a historic landmark. “Visitors from the world over have made the iconic venue a central part of their time in Tombstone,” said Frederick Schoemehl, editor of the *Tombstone Epitaph National Edition*, a historical journal. “It is a sad and sorry state of affairs when a decision is made to close a facility so central to Western history” (Thompson and Sandell 2010). At the grand reopening ceremony of the

courthouse museum in May 2010, Reese Woodling, president of the Arizona State Parks Board, made clear the importance of keeping the courthouse open to visitors: “Without people like you [those attending the ceremony], we could not keep the past alive,” stated Woodling. “Kids need this type of place because *without history* we are missing so much” (emphasis added) (*Tombstone (Ariz.) News* 1 November 2010). While celebrating Tombstone’s “lawless” past—while promoting itself as the epitome of the Wild West of the 1880s—the reconstructed Tombstone of 1955 and 2010 also operates to reproduce notions of power and political and cultural dominance. In Tombstone’s historic district, law always wins. This may explain the importance of the county courthouse to Tombstone’s legitimacy and its centrality in the idea of maintaining the hegemonic power structure. This makes the museum essential to the town’s ongoing validity. The closing of the courthouse, then, seemed to represent, at least to some, the utter removal of history altogether from the city of Tombstone.

The “overwhelming support” by locals (as represented by those in positions of authority) of the transfer of operations to Tombstone is an example of how important history is to the town—at least to those who have been appointed the custodians of history. Maintaining its status as a historic district is vital. As Escapule stated, “By being a historic district, it is nationally and internationally advertised as a landmark place to visit. It shows it’s not a movie set or a theme park, but a real old town” (*Tombstone Epitaph* 3 April 2009). When Tombstone was designated a “Preserve America Community” by First Lady Laura Bush in late 2008, the decree was taken very seriously by the town’s history keepers and displayed prominently on the Chamber of Commerce website. The press release for the designation quoted Mrs. Bush as saying, “Preserve

America Communities demonstrate that they are committed to preserving America's heritage while ensuring a future filled with opportunities for learning and enjoyment. ... I commend you for your commitment to preserving an important part of our nation's historic past for visitors, neighbors, and, most importantly, for children." This designation is invaluable to a town whose continued existence depends on its historic integrity but whose integrity as a historic site is in constant question. Not only does Tombstone see both the history of Tombstone and history itself as imperative to its survival; its official history has been sanctioned by the state and the nation as well, evidence that the West as a metaphor for American national identity still holds immense power and credibility even as many doubt its continued salience.

At the same time, however, "true" history remains on the periphery of both the main drag and the tourists' imagination. On the one hand, the past is crucial to the town's existence. But because the "past" in Tombstone essentially means that abstracted moment in Tombstone's history around which the town has constructed its public identity—26 October 1881, the date of the "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral"—visitors encounter a carefully selected history, one that celebrates Tombstone as a Wild West town through sound bites and performance. As a museum, the Tombstone Courthouse Museum organizes the past in ways that celebrate Tombstone and make sense to visitors. Now, under the auspices of the town itself, the museum is beholden to engage in official narratives because of economic imperatives, but also because of a (white male) identity that has been purchased wholesale by those officially charged with keeping that identity alive (many of whom, not coincidentally, are recent settlers in the community).

While it may be less campy than what lies outside its doors and offers insight into those elements of the town's history that perhaps are considered less entertaining than what is celebrated in the streets and saloons on Allen Street, the Courthouse Museum still has turned to what John Dorst calls "traditionalization": "the selective reduction of a complex history to a simple, readily comprehensible set of linkages that establish legitimizing connections between present institutions and an imagined past" (1989, 182). Such selectivity is inherent in museum set up. In order to tell a story to visitors, one that will elicit certain responses, emotions, and understandings depending on the mission and motives of the creators, the story must, by design, be uncomplicated.

So the Tombstone Courthouse Museum is not neutral, as it may appear at first glance to visitors. While it may be offering a seemingly "authentic" version of the town's history—with displays about labor disputes and Native peoples as well as those about the Gunfight and Ed Schieffelin—the courthouse is as engaged in a performance of history as the entertainers on Allen Street are. All are churning out versions of Tombstone's history that sustain a public identity that is most attractive to tourists, as well as themselves. In fact, in many ways—while there are economic reasons for keeping Tombstone's past alive in terms of tourist dollars—this history seems to be of dire importance to those who live there as well. *Tombstone's* past, Tombstone's public identity, is its *people's* past, its people's identity. Once Walter Nobel Burns put ink to paper in 1927 with *Tombstone: The Iliad of the Southwest*, the Earp Myth found value. Once Edna Landin wrote about the "Town too Tough to Die" in the 1950s, the Tombstone Myth became something of substance, something worthy of "preserving" and perpetuating, using the cache of its own

past. The past became the key to Tombstone's future, and the town has been working with the understanding of that fact ever since.

Edna Landin's efforts to save the County Courthouse were just the beginning of a lifelong commitment to preserving Tombstone for touristic consumption. Her and others' endeavors to preserve Tombstone reached a fevered pitch in the early 1950s—at the same time as a zealous preservation movement nationwide and renewed interest in domestic tourism that set its sights toward the West. Preservation work in Tombstone is never idle and continues today through constant vigilance and performance on the town's streets. Preservation and performance—as well as the different ways these have been viewed and criticized by outsiders—are the focus of next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
A Monument to the Old West:
Preservation and Performance in Tombstone, Arizona

In 1951, Clayton A. Smith, editor of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, set about to convince the citizens of Tombstone, Arizona, that restoring the fronts of buildings on Allen Street in the center of town would help make Tombstone the tourist attraction in the West that Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, had become in the East (Martin 1951, 16). At his urging within the pages of the *Epitaph*, civic-minded boosters and townspeople began to reconstruct Tombstone—in the image of what was popularly seen as its former glory and based on representations that had been popularized in novels, movies, and television series for decades. The town was already drawing tourists every October to its “Helldorado Days” (named after the 1928 book of the same name by Billy Breakenridge)—Tombstone’s oldest festival, starting in 1929, celebrating the town’s “wild” western history. While considered a success in its first year, Helldorado Days lost its luster after only a few years and was discontinued in 1932.¹⁰ The celebration had a resurgence in the late 1940s, along with a swell in domestic tourism, especially in the U.S. West, giving Smith and other promoters in 1951 reason to seek to commodify and market Tombstone’s public identity year-round by transforming the town to best fit the traditional narrative of the Wild West.

As Smith’s nod to Colonial Williamsburg indicates, preservation of the nation’s history was well underway by 1951. Tombstone’s own efforts reflect a national trend mid-century to preserve heritage for touristic consumption. After years of struggle, Tombstone was hungry for the monies promised by the surge in domestic tourism post-World War II, and began a decades’ long endeavor to present the Tombstone of the 1880s

to visitors. In its quest to meet the expectations of tourists, Tombstone has also had to meet the demands of its own citizens as well as follow the rules set out by the National Park Service in order to maintain the historic district designation it worked so hard to gain. This negotiation has seen continuous struggle ever since the Tombstone Restoration Commission was established in 1949 and has attracted almost constant criticism. But it also has resulted in building a tenacious and unwavering commitment on the part of townspeople to see Tombstone survive, for travelers and for themselves, for years to come. These preservation efforts, the attempts to meet the demands of tourists and townspeople, and the performances that are so innate to Tombstone's lure are the focus of this chapter.

I. Designating the Past: Preservation in the United States

The preservation of America's past has been a continuing endeavor—traditionally by white elites—since as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Beginning with efforts to preserve George Washington's Revolutionary War headquarters in Newburgh, New York—which became the nation's first publicly operated historic site in 1850—and Ann Pamela Cunningham's efforts in Virginia to preserve Mount Vernon in 1853, elite white Americans have a long history of attempting to preserve the nation's heritage. "Like other historical disciplines," architectural historian Mitchell Schwarzer contends, "historic preservation emerged in the United States during the nineteenth century as an attempt to establish national identity through cultural affiliation to past events, sites, and buildings" (1994, 2). These early efforts focused on those buildings that symbolized the "birth of the nation" based on the American Revolution and the ideologies of independence and

individual liberty essential to the ways that cause was remembered. Historic preservation was typically the concern of wealthy private citizens and societies, usually composed of and headed up by women (Howe 1990, 31). It was not until the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906 that the federal government became involved with preserving what were interpreted as important artifacts of the nation's history. Through the Department of the Interior, the federal government "preserved sites and buildings on public land that were deemed to be of greatest importance to the ideal of national permanence and western development" (Schwarzer 1994, 4). While these efforts first focused on archaeological ruins and military sites, the Historic Sites Act of 1935 "expanded these efforts to include historic buildings and sites on private property. Its objective, like that of the Antiquities Act, was to feature broad aspects of the monumental historic life of the American nation" (Schwarzer 1994, 4). As symbols of the "timeless stability of American ideals," these historic sites and buildings were deemed worthy of preservation by those interested in safeguarding "shrines of transcendent significance to the nation" (Morley 2006, 2-3). These "shrines" were seen as foundational to the nation's heritage, acting as tangible incarnations of the so-called traditions and customs that undergird the ways the nation is popularly imagined.

Notions of what constitutes *heritage* are as flexible and fluid as what that heritage itself entails. *Merriam-Webster* defines *heritage* as "a property that transcends to an heir; something transmitted or acquired from a predecessor, as in *legacy* or *tradition*; or something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth, a *birthright*." It is important to highlight the notions of "natural" and "birthright" in these definitions, as though historical events, people, and places are both the result of and result in U.S.

exceptionalism, the qualities of which are passed on from one generation to the next. In fact, the terms *heritage* and *history* are often used interchangeably—indicating the common idea that the nation’s history is entirely intertwined with the national, official story—its heritage—promoting romanticized notions of the character of the American nation. What is considered the nation’s heritage speaks greatly not only to the ways Americans and history keepers understand, construct, and make use of the past in contemporary society but also to how these history keepers wish to define themselves, their region, and their country based on that past. What is seen as usable or valuable is preserved; what is preserved becomes valuable. Heritage, in other words, by the very fact that it is being preserved, is considered valuable and worthy of being preserved. What is “valuable,” “worthy,” and “significant” of course is completely subjective. And those who get to decide occupy a specific position within certain communities.

Pierre Bourdieu argues that the taste of a society is the taste of the ruling class, that it is learned and not innate, that the value of an object is imposed upon rather than emanating from within.¹¹ How historical objects are imbued with local, regional, or national value has everything to do with those citizens who have declared themselves the arbiters of local, regional, or national history. Economist Randall Mason proposes that the number of people invested in a particular object of heritage is directly related to the importance that object seems to demand: “The variety of values ascribed to any particular heritage object—economic value, aesthetic value, cultural value, political value, educational value—is matched by the variety of stakeholders participating in the heritage conservation process. Balancing these values is one of the most difficult challenges in making conservation decisions that satisfy the needs of many stakeholders” (1998, 2). He

also claims that, “‘heritage’ is an essentially collective and public notion. Though heritage is certainly valued by individuals, its *raison d’être* is, by definition, to sustain a sphere of public interest and public good” (ibid., 3). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall contends that British Heritage (with a capital “h”) has a particular emphasis in preservation:

The works and artefacts [*sic*] so conserved appear to be ‘of value’ primarily in relation to the past. To be validated, they must be placed alongside what has been authorised as ‘valuable’ on already established grounds in relation to the unfolding of the ‘national story’ whose terms we already know. The Heritage thus becomes the material embodiment of the spirit of the nation, a collective representation of the British version of *tradition*, a concept pivotal to the lexicon of English virtues. (2005, 24)

Hall’s remarks are easily applied to notions of tradition and heritage in America as well.

The idea of heritage as embodying the spirit of the nation is still the foundation for the National Historic Landmarks Program, which currently states on its website, “*National Historic Landmarks* are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places bear this national distinction” (National Park Service). Further,

Designation programs, such as the National Historic Landmarks Program, are intended to encourage preservation of historic sites. While the guidelines of different designation programs vary, designated sites must possess historic integrity. In other words, these should be places that are relatively unchanged since the period when the historic event associated with this site occurred. Designation, which often provides an historic site with protection, helps ensure the preservation of historic places. (National Park Service, under “Page 2: What is a designation program?”)

Historic integrity is defined as “the ability of a property to convey its historical associations or attributes” evaluating properties based on seven criteria: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Interestingly, sites must already

be preserved in order to be designated historically significant, while the designation itself is necessary to ensure preservation (National Park Service, under “Page 3: What is a ‘high degree of integrity’ and why is it a key requirement for NHL designation?”).

Exposing the underlying factors that inculcate certain beliefs in the American public, that lead to certain histories to be told and retold—including contests for power, reification of hegemony, challenges to dominant narratives, and debates over who get to be what historian Michael Kammen calls “custodians of tradition”—is the primary objective of the field of cultural memory. As Kammen explains, “Public memory, which contains a slowly shifting configuration of traditions, is ideologically important because it shapes a nation’s ethos and sense of identity. That explains, at least in part, why memory is always selective and so often contested” (1991, 13).

Contestation and struggle are central to cultural memory scholarship. Kammen explains that although “there have been a great many political conflicts concerning American traditions, ultimately there is a powerful tendency in the United States to depoliticize traditions for the sake of ‘reconciliation.’ Consequently, the politics of culture in this country has everything to do with the process of contestation *and* with the subsequent quest for reconciliation. Memory is more likely to be activated by contestation and amnesia is more likely to be induced by the desire for reconciliation” (1991, 13).

Memory and amnesia shape the ways simple stories replace complex events and circumstances in popular history. Kammen also offers some insight into the ways “tradition” functions in our society, arguing that a certain amount of tradition “can supply the basis for social cohesion, especially in a nation so heterogeneous as the United States. Where religious, ethnic, and regional diversity are such centripetal forces, a sense of

nationality and of its symptomatic ‘official culture’ can be useful” (1991, 5). However, if we are to look at the use of traditions more critically, we find that they “are commonly relied upon by those who possess the power to achieve an illusion of social consensus. Such people invoke legitimacy of an artificially constructed past in order to buttress presentist assumptions and the authority of regime” (Kammen 1991, 5). Again, we are faced with contests for the power to tell the nation’s history. By exposing the underlying ideologies that form the foundation for much historical narrative, these scholars are very much entrenched in the same sort of debunking that new western historians participate in.

While early genteel activists fought to preserve sites associated with great events like the American Revolution or great men like the nation’s forefathers, later efforts focused on preserving sites on a broader—if not always more pedestrian—scale that celebrated the tenacity of larger segments of the public, leading to historic districts and “open-air” museum towns (Wallace 1996, 4). These spaces were still considered fundamental to understandings of the nation, but by the 1920s, “corporate capital led a return to the past”: business leaders were the new keepers of history, becoming increasingly “involved in bringing history to the masses” (Wallace 1996, 9). Automobile mogul Henry Ford, for example, funded the construction of Greenfield Village in Michigan, a hodgepodge of historic structures that included a little red schoolhouse, slave cabins, a courthouse, a windmill from Cape Cod, an old inn, a New Hampshire firehouse, a Massachusetts shoe shop, and other symbols of early American life. In keeping with the missions of other heritage sites, Greenfield Village still markets itself as “a celebration of people—people whose unbridled optimism came to define modern-day America” (The Henry Ford Village, under “About”). Ford’s celebration of the Common Man over those

considered “great” was in fact a rejection of the “approach of exalting famous patriots and patrician elites. Indeed, he banished upper class homes, lawyers’ offices, and banks from his village.” Instead, Greenfield Village “paid homage to blacksmiths, machinists, and frontier farmers, celebrated craft skills and domestic labor, recalled old social customs like square dancing and folk fiddling, and praised the ‘timeless and dateless’ pioneer virtues of hard work, discipline, frugality, and self-reliance” (Wallace 1996, 12). Similar commemorations to the folk can be seen at Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts and the Heritage Village Museum in Sharonville, Ohio.

Taking Ford’s vision to the next level was American industrialist John D. Rockefeller, who funded the rebuilding of Colonial Williamsburg in the 1920s and 1930s. Unlike Ford, Rockefeller was not interested in merely assembling historic structures that did not necessarily share a common space in history, but rather in restoring “a complete area and free[ing] it entirely from alien or inharmonious surroundings” (Wallace 1996, 15). Rockefeller believed that “to undertake to preserve a single building when its environment has changed and is no longer in keeping, has always seemed to me unsatisfactory—much less worthwhile” (Wallace 1996, 15). As historian Mike Wallace contends, “Colonial Williamsburg flows from this perspective. It does not simply borrow and display a historical aura, it embodies a vision of total social order” (ibid.). Colonial Williamsburg also offered not simply a(n) (e)motionless historical museumized site but an interactive space where visitors could “fully experience lifestyles and social patterns of the Colonial era” and link those lifestyles with the broader ideals of the American nation (Morley 2006, 2). Even today these ideals remain the backbone of the museum’s mission: “Here we interpret the origins of the idea of America, conceived decades before the

American Revolution. The Colonial Williamsburg story of a revolutionary city tells how diverse peoples, having different and sometimes conflicting ambitions, evolved into a society that valued liberty and equality. Americans cherish these values as a birthright, even when their promise remains unfulfilled” (Colonial Williamsburg website, under “About Us, a Center for History and Citizenship”).

The experiential component to Colonial Williamsburg set it apart in the early decades of the twentieth century from other open-air museums. Since at least the 1940s, Colonial Williamsburg has not only displayed artifacts and reconstructed buildings but also reenacted (performed) the ways people lived in Virginia in the eighteenth century through “interpreters” who dress in period costume, tell stories, and demonstrate everyday activities. How the past is “interpreted” has directly influenced how the space has been understood—and appreciated—by visitors. The encompassing learning experience offered by Colonial Williamsburg proved entertaining, popular, and profitable. Soon, Colonial Williamsburg “exemplified the economic potential of historic preservation,” demonstrating the attraction of history to tourists whose vacation dollars in Colonial Williamsburg “became the main support for the real town of Williamsburg,” a result that many other towns around the country were eager to emulate (Morley 2006, 2).

Of course, Williamsburg might not have been the most reliable model for historic accuracy in preservation. Wallace underscores that Rockefeller’s conception of the space did not include representations of the working class, and there was “absolutely no reference to the fact that half of eighteenth-century Williamsburg’s population had been black slaves.” Unlike Ford’s Greenfield Village, Colonial Williamsburg, “commemorated the planter elite, portrayed as the progenitors of timeless ideas and values, the cradle of

the Americanism that Rockefeller and the corporate elite inherited and guarded” (Wallace 1996, 14). Williamsburg presented a sterile, tidy version of the eighteenth century—free from not only the odors of an actual colonial town but all the cultural and social messiness that defined the era as well. As Wallace states, “Williamsburg’s order flows from the top down. It is a corporate world: Planned, orderly, tidy...” presided over by “intelligent and gentile patrician elites” (ibid., 15).

The construction of Colonial Williamsburg fits nicely within the context of the nation’s fascination and preoccupation with history and heritage, and, as Wallace demonstrates, underscores where history and ahistory collide, where an obsession with heritage and an utterly cavalier attitude toward fact and multivocality meet within American popular historical culture. It seems that Americans have been more interested in the legacy of their past than the past itself. As Americans have flocked to constructed heritage sites, they participate in a wider contestation about what constitutes history and who gets to decide. Popular history allows consumers to maintain distance from actual events, glossing over the parts of the story that do not quite work with the ways people had wished life had been. “Historicide” is Wallace’s term for the killing of true history and replacing it with a history that is either not true or not complete, or both.¹²

Kammen posits a similar theory about popular history. He contends that “heritage seems to be very nearly a euphemism for selective memory because it entails, in functional terms, what history has customarily meant in everyday practice: namely, that portion of the past perceived by a segment of society as significant at any given moment in time. ...In still other situations heritage is virtually intended as an antidote to historical actuality, or else it passes as sugar-coated history” (1991, 625). He demonstrates how

historical sites market themselves as more memorable vendors of history than what can be learned from the printed page. In fact, historical sites depend on the marketability of experiential learning from “living history museums”: “hands-on heritage-as-history guarantees enjoyment, unlike the deadly dull sort of history that is dispensed in the classroom, the library, and via the medium of print” (ibid., 626). History as experienced entertainment has become the cornerstone of heritage sites nationwide and essential to the ways young and old Americans alike seem to prefer their history lessons.

Cultural historian Marita Sturken labels those who consume distanced experiences at heritage sites “tourists of history,” people who both feel a connection to and maintain a distance from an actual event—a position that she defines as touristic and uncritical. As she says, “The mode of the tourist, with its innocent pose and distanced position, evokes the American citizen who participates uncritically in a culture in which notions of good and evil are used to define complex conflicts and tensions” (2007, 10). (In Tombstone, visitors might be labeled “tourists of popular culture,” those who participate uncritically in a historical narrative they’ve experienced through film and television shows.) While Sturken is specifically discussing what are widely considered sites of collective or national trauma, Wallace demonstrates that history museums, heritage sites, and even theme parks work much in the same way. As Wallace says, “Much of this interest [in public historical culture], to be sure, is quite compatible with an ahistorical bent. These various pasts ... are often imagined as unproblematic givens—an inert bundle of things that happened, dead events. These pasts remain segregated from the present” (1996, x). Further, the distance maintained by consumers has also allowed for large gaps or even distortions in the “history” that is presented.

Similar distortions and distanced experiences can be found at heritage sites throughout the West. The ways that the Alamo has been interpreted at the site itself seems inextricable from the ways it has been represented in popular culture. In other words, it is not solely the actual site that serves as a site of struggle. Edward Tabor Linenthal traces the struggle over not only what the Alamo has meant to twentieth-century Americans but also who “owns” the right and power to make that determination. From the Daughters of the Republic of Texas to the League of United Latin American Citizens, Linenthal demonstrates the contestation over the official history of the battle of the Alamo—with the DRT holding the reins and only reluctantly incorporating the Tejano presence into the story. In this same tradition, cultural historian Richard Flores seeks to unravel the dominant narratives that circulate around the story of the Alamo not only to expose alternative accounts but also to explore the history of those enlisted to guard the Alamo’s heritage and represent that heritage to the world. Official histories and cultural memory fuel much of the debate around the Alamo, as Flores demonstrates. Flores examines how the Alamo’s transformation into an American cultural icon helped to shape social, economic, and political relations between Anglo and Mexican Texans from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. He first looks at the ways attempts by heritage society members (what Linenthal calls “guardians of patriotic orthodoxy”) and political leaders to define the Alamo as a place reflected struggles within Texas society over the place and status of Tejanos and Anglos. He then explores how representations of the Alamo in popular culture have advanced deeply racialized, ambiguous, and utterly constructed understandings of the place’s history—similar, as we have seen, to the ways Tombstone itself has been remembered. Flores’s analysis sheds new light on the ways

“Remember the Alamo” has been summoned to incite certain ideas of the history of Texas—a trajectory that can be traced in films about the battle as well.¹³

The contestations and debates circulating around heritage sites did not prevent these spaces of public history from finding numerous benefactors eager to contribute to the preservation of local histories for both the maintenance of a cultural patrimony and the injection of much needed tourist dollars into local economies. In fact, the sites’ lack of historical integrity might be the very reason for their popularity—for, as with all cultural productions, consumers/audiences respond to those messages that resonate with them (and oppose or dismiss outright those that do not). If tourists are looking for spaces that reproduce their understandings of history and their nation, then the spaces themselves must deliver these messages to be successful. Possibly the largest attraction to these sites is their appeal to nostalgia (Kammen 1991, 626). These spaces offered and still offer visitors who long for a romanticized, simpler past a means of escape from the ills of the modern world. And if these sites could do so while also entertaining their visitors, then they would be even more prosperous. Colonial Williamsburg became central to understandings by other communities throughout the country of how to meld preservation and enjoyment into a marketable package. Indeed, Colonial Williamsburg (along with Charleston, South Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana) became the model for economically beneficial preservation efforts nationwide as other cities and towns established zoning ordinances for the creation of historic districts with the goal of attracting travelers. As Clayton Smith’s reference at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, Colonial Williamsburg served as the inspiration for Tombstone’s historic

preservation efforts in the early 1950s, along with their bid to attract more visitors to the town on a regular basis, an objective shared with other communities across the country.

It's fortunate then that most of these preservation efforts coincided in the twentieth century with—or indeed contributed to—a surge in tourism in the United States, especially in the West. With war in Europe disrupting travel overseas, Americans were seeking to spend their leisure time and money closer to home. Improved roadways, greater availability of automobiles, acceptance of the five-day workweek, and the promotion of national parks contributed to an ever-more profitable tourist industry (Ryan and Schlup 2006, 377). Of course, it would not be an American pastime without being imbued with nationalistic meaning: Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt declared 1940 “Travel America Year.” And in 1941, “the Department of Interior’s U.S. Travel Bureau listed the defense of democracy as one of the potential outcomes of American travel” (ibid.).

II. The Journey Westward: Tourists Head West

The desire to escape the modern world propelled many, mostly white middle-class Americans westward. In fact, in the early decades of the twentieth century, “one of the fastest-growing industries in the West was tourism” (Morley 2006, 10). At a time when Americans were celebrating progress, they were also wistfully nostalgic about America’s past, and struggling to define the American experience. They looked toward the West, to the region that had pulled them for decades, the region that at once signified progress and conquest, to find the meaning of American culture. Michael Johnson explains that, “With the closing of the frontier came an opening of attention, a nervous alertness as to what that event portended. The turn of the century betokened a turn of attitude William Cronon

summarizes in a single sentence: ‘The wastelands that had once seemed worthless had for some people come to seem almost beyond price’” (Johnson 2007, 204). The feeling became what Johnson calls “postfrontier anxiety,” by which Americans were becoming increasingly critical of the urban industrial complex and nostalgic for the lost “wilderness.”

While the natural wonders of the region were popular destinations, the initiation of “safeguarding by the federal government of sites and structures relating to westward expansion—such as prairie log cabins, marked river passings, Indian battle sites, and places of mining and prospecting—denoted the permanence of the epic American quest for territorial growth” and by the 1950s, “tourists came seeking something distinctively western” (Schwarzer 1994, 4; Morley 2006, 10). In other words, “tourists to the West wanted to see the ‘Wild West’ of popular culture” and “western city councils, tourist bureaus, private developers, and businesspeople happily obliged, creating tourist destinations to cater to people seeking the ‘authentic’ Wild West” (Morley 2006, 10).

This moment in the history of historic preservation and of tourism in the United States marks the beginning of Tombstone’s own historic preservation efforts, an attempt to benefit from tourists’ desire for wild western experiences and to spend the money Tombstone desperately needed to survive. Heavily involved in the makeover were the members of the Tombstone Restoration Commission, which was established in 1949. The Restoration Commission was central to Tombstone’s renewal as a wild western town. As Billy G. Garrett and James W. Garrison state in their *Plan for the Creation of a Historic Environment in Tombstone, Arizona*, “Organization of [the Tombstone Restoration Commission] symbolized the beginning of a third major growth period in the city’s

history. But this time silver ore was not being sought.” Like so many other towns throughout the western United States mid-century, “Tombstone’s businessmen and women were in search of tourist dollars. Hoping to capitalize on a growing interest in the West and on their city’s well known past, they began a concerted effort to preserve and protect the oldest of Tombstone’s buildings” (Garrett and Garrison 1972, iii).

III. Preserving and Promoting Tombstone’s Past

Tombstone’s restoration commission began this endeavor with fervor and clear intent.

Among the objectives set out by the commission in their articles of incorporation in 1949 was to

restore the exteriors of all buildings in the City of Tombstone in the areas bounded by Toughnut Street on the South and Fremont Street on the North, Third Street on the West and Sixth Street on the East, both sides of said streets inclusive, to the style and architecture prevalent in and around Tombstone, Arizona, in the 1880’s so that the City of Tombstone may become a monument to the Old West. (Garrett and Garrison 1972, 23)

In addition, the commission set out to “control the construction of buildings in the City of Tombstone in the future so that all such buildings will be erected with a front having a style of architecture similar to that of the 1880’s, within the above described area,” an objective that points to the restrictive nature of preservation efforts in the twentieth century. Ultimately, the commission was intent on “promot[ing] and advanc[ing] a western atmosphere in keeping with the 1880’s and the general idea of restoration of the City of Tombstone to those times” (Garrett and Garrison 1972, 23). By March of 1951, the restoration of Tombstone’s historic places was underway:

TOMBSTONE—C. M. Palmer Jr., president of the Tombstone Restoration Commission, states they plan to restore specific historic places in

Tombstone as funds are available. The town claims the distinction of being the first and last of the American frontiers. Coronado came through in 1540. Barely more than a half a century ago Tombstone helped close the last of the lawless frontier when it tamed the Apaches and renegade white men. Many of its original buildings still stand. Tourists visit Tombstone to see the old west, especially the Helldorado re-enactment. (*Desert* magazine March 1951, 31)

While the claim that Tombstone helped “tame the Apaches and renegade white men” plays neatly into fantasies about the westward movement, this news item illustrates the centrality of Tombstone to notions of the Wild West by that time.

The commission was responsible for drafting City Ordinance No. 146 to establish a restoration zone and a zoning commission that required new buildings to conform to the city atmosphere that prevailed in 1883. The ordinance was passed 10 April 1954 and amended in 1964 and again in 1972 as notions of what constituted “restoration” and “preservation” shifted. Under the leadership of the next commission president, Edna Landin (1955 to 1960), the commission also raised the funds necessary to purchase the Cochise County Courthouse, which was turned over to the Arizona State Parks Board and opened as Arizona’s first operational state park on 1 August 1959, with the state taking over full operation on 1 July 1960. The commission then went to work to preserve the area surrounding the courthouse. On 4 July 1961, the Department of the Interior declared the streets and buildings surrounding the courthouse a National Historic Landmark District.

While it seems that the commission had been interested in preserving the integrity of the town as the epitome of the Old West, emphasizing law and authority as well as gentility, the DOI noted Tombstone’s “lawlessness” in its proclamation, reifying and perpetuating the idea that Tombstone’s constructed image typified the “Wild West”:

“Tombstone is one of the best preserved specimens of the rugged frontier town of the 1870s and ’80s. Site of one of the West’s richest silver strikes and the ‘gunfight at the OK Corral,’ Tombstone epitomizes the legendary reputation of the ‘Wild West’ and lawlessness of the 19th century mining camps” (National Park Service website, under “Tombstone Historic District”). Despite first-hand accounts of the town being as much on the verge of “civility” as any other town in the West, with churches, schools, libraries and “other refinements of civilization” dotting the landscape almost since the town’s founding, it is the violence and unruliness that is the focus of the myth surrounding Tombstone even when other parts to Tombstone’s story are presented alongside them (Faulk 1972, 130).

Edna Landin’s role in the narrative of Tombstone’s restoration is interesting for a number of reasons. She moved to Tombstone from Ohio with her husband Ted just five years before becoming president of the Chamber of Commerce, a position that is appointed by the mayor. In this position, and as president of the restoration commission, Landin was one of those given the responsibility of determining the public identity of Tombstone—an identity that would, if successful, bring financial stability and growth to the town. Like so many civic boosters in the United States in the 1950s, Landin understood the currency that history could hold for Tombstone—and spent her entire tenure as president of the commission committed to demonstrating the historical legitimacy of the Cochise County Courthouse and the town more generally. She is remembered as a “prolific correspondent and fundraiser establishing a friendly working relationship with the Governor and many state legislators.” She also served on the Tombstone City Council from 1958 to 1960. She was honored in 1956 as “Woman of the

Year of Tombstone” and even has a city park named in her honor. In 2010, she was inducted into the Tombstone Founders’ Day Hall of Fame.¹⁴

Landin’s eastern roots situate her within the wider trend of whom tourism scholar Hal Rothman calls “neo-natives,” “those who are attracted to the places that have become tourist towns by the traits of the transformed place” and then become supposed experts and defenders of the culture and history of the region (Rothman 1998, 102). Imagining the West through nostalgia and romanticism, these white newcomers hoped to preserve essentially the white history of the region (with the possible exception of reducing non-whites to quaint and colorful additions to the traditional story) for the consumption of future white tourists. While Tombstone as a tourist destination and historic space had not yet been fully realized when Landin and her husband relocated there (although Tombstone had had some success with their annual Helldorado Days), its identity was already well planted within the public imagination—an identity that not only attracted the Landins to Tombstone but also impelled Edna to perpetuate that identity through historic preservation and tourism. Landin wanted Tombstone to become the Tombstone of her fantasy, most likely based on pop cultural representations of the town already widely known by the 1950s, and she worked tirelessly to have that fantasy become reality. Her story mirrors that of the executive director of the Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the Historic District Commission from May 2009 to December 2010, Patrick K. Greene, who also moved to Tombstone with his family from Ohio only a few years before being appointed to these positions by the mayor. In these roles, Greene, like Landin, was required to continually negotiate the interests of the townspeople, local businesses, and tourists, privileging business and tourism as keys to the town’s success.

Landin had a tremendous impact on the refacing of Tombstone in the 1950s and putting the town on the map for both tourists and historians. At one point, she penned an ode to Tombstone, “Tombstone Arizona *The Town too Tough to Die.” Her romantic attitude toward her adopted home is clearly articulated in this sixty-line poem, which traces the tumultuous history of Tombstone and led to it securing the moniker noted in the title:

Why is Tombstone Arizona called “The Town Too Tough to Die”?
Well Dear friends, if you will listen, we will tell you the reason why.
In '78 when it was founded, for its worth of silver ore,
People flocked here by the thousands, to partake in Nature’s store.

Just like insets at a picnic, all came here to get their share
Of the spoils, that Mother Nature did so lavishly prepare.
Came the miner with his pickaxe, the assayer to appraise,
The bank to store the treasure and the preacher, souls to save.

That was the pioneer spirit that gave birth to this fair town,
But soon there followed others, like termites, to tear down.
All in quest of easy money, gamblers, harlots, outlaws rough,
Wrote their page in Tombstone’s history, made its reputation tough.

.....

Landin takes her readers through the floods and fires, the bust of the mines, the Great Depression, and the removal of the county seat to Bisbee in 1929.

Gradually these great walls crumbled, almost a ghost town it became,
Living only in the memory of its fabulous early fame.
From 15,000 to 400, its population dropped,
Until by Father Aull it was rediscovered and the decline immediately stopped.

The death of Father Aull brought further decline to the town. But the Tombstone Restoration Commission brought renewed hope:

Now for its great temerity, to stand the gaff of time,

While still it has some landmarks, a new venture is in line.
To restore the town of Tombstone, as the “Frontier of the West”,
Where the pioneering spirit still heaves in many a breast.

....

With all the grief this town has had, and it surely is no lie;
It necessarily must be tough, or certainly, it would die.
But Tombstone is Americana, our heritage of the Old West;
For posterity it must be preserved as the LAST FRONTIER OF THE
WEST. (fol. 464, box 23, RG 2, Medigovich Collection, Arizona
Historical Society)

As part of the efforts referenced in the poem, Landin embarked on countless letter-writing campaigns, often, for example, petitioning studios to film their western films and television shows in Tombstone. She appealed to producers’ nostalgia for the Old West as well as to their presumed interest in preserving its history. In a letter dated 11 February 1959 to Desilu Studios—where the *Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* was filmed—Landin highlighted not only the “authenticity of locale” to be found in Tombstone but also that the studio would be helping to restore “this ‘Last Frontier of the Old West’ as a part of our American heritage.” She also pointed out that it would not be necessary for the studio to build and erect sets specifically for the purposes of filming westerns, as they could use the buildings that were already well in tact in the town.

Landin received a number of replies from studios. In response to one such plea by Landin to Wyatt Earp Enterprises, Inc., creators of the television show “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp” on ABC, the producers wrote a letter dated 16 March 1959:

Dear Mrs. Landin:

... I wish it were possible to shoot THE LIFE AND LEGEND OF WYATT EARP in Tombstone, with the main advantages you mentioned, but it is out of the question because of the very great expense it would

entail on our part, and because the shows consist of interior and exterior shots. ...

I wish we might be of greater help in your fine project to restore Tombstone, but it is simply beyond our means.

...

Sincerely, Robert F. Sisk, s/lb.

(fol. 464, box 23, RG 2, Medigovich Collection, Arizona Historical Society)

In her attempts to attract Hollywood to Tombstone, Landin assumed historic preservation was one of the goals of western film and television show producers, an assumption that seemed to be proved false again and again. She also unironically promoted Tombstone as both authentic *and* like a movie set, playing into an idea explored by scholars and filmmakers in the latter decades of the twentieth century that critiqued popular images of the American West as two-dimensional and artificial.¹⁵ The connection between authenticity and performance of authenticity—perhaps not in films and television shows but on the streets of the town for the entertainment of visitors—became a reality less than a decade after Landin’s efforts to make Tombstone a Hollywood movie set. Performance, in fact, is now central to the popularity of Tombstone as a tourist destination. Landin may not have envisioned the extent to which performance would define the town; she did, however, imagine that Hollywood and popular culture would allow Tombstone to survive at a moment when the town could offer few other commodities besides the Wild West.

As late as 1965, years after stepping down as president of the Tombstone Restoration commission, Landin was still championing Tombstone as “the Town too Tough to Die.” In *Desert Magazine* in January of that year, Landin authored an article titled “The Legend Lives,” which mirrors the poem she wrote earlier explaining the

tenacity and temerity of this town—preserved and surviving “without Federal aid”—that had so many times been on the brink of extinction. Laying out Tombstone’s history of silver mining, floods, and fires—and without mentioning Wyatt Earp or the O.K. Corral once—Landin describes Tombstone’s many ups and downs, how it “almost died” by 1890, after the fires and the first flood; by 1909, after another fire and flood; by 1929, when the county seat was moved from Tombstone to Bisbee; and again by 1947, when Father Roger Aull, a retired priest who opened a clinic for respiratory ailments, died and the clinic was closed.¹⁶ She credits “civic-minded citizens” and the Tombstone Restoration Commission with keeping the town afloat through their preservation efforts. “But,” she says, “Tombstone does not live in the past alone. Located on U.S. Highway 80, it attracts motorists who wish to relive, in an authentic natural setting, a bit of the Old West. But most importantly, Western history here is still being made by self-sufficient citizens justly proud of their ‘Town Too Tough To Die.’”

She was also still active in ensuring the cooperation of local businesses in efforts to craft a Tombstone authentic to its 1880s appearance. In a “suggested letter to brewers in restoration zoning area” dated 10 September 1965, Landin credits the Tombstone Restoration Commission for creating a “world-wide tourist attraction” as a result of their “preserving and restoring our historic land-marks as a ‘Showcase of the Old West.’” To retain the town’s status as a registered national historic landmark, “we must continue to retain the flavor of the Old West.” She goes on: “The purpose of this letter is to ask your cooperation by changing your local signs to conform with the types of lettering, etc. of the 1880s, so outlined in the enclosed copy of our Restoration Zoning Ordinance No. 146. ... Just as we have had the support of other distributors, we feel sure we may count on yours

too and if you desire suggestions for type of sign, lettering, etc., I'll be happy to submit some sketches for your consideration" (fol. 465, box 23, RG 2, Medigovich Collection, Arizona Historical Society). Her request for the support of local businesses in crafting this Old West town has been repeated by others in positions of power ever since.

Preservation efforts continued in the 1960s with a privately owned and funded preservation group in Tombstone, Historic Tombstone Adventures (HTA). HTA was organized in 1963 by "some wealthy socialites from Detroit" to restore some of the buildings and sites in the city. Harold O. Love, an affluent Detroit tax attorney, visited Tombstone in 1963 and, deciding that, "Tombstone is choice-cut Americana," he saw investment potential in this small western town. He rounded up some of his friends—"other non-boot-and-saddle types"—and began buying up famous landmarks around town (Ellis 1966, R6). By the time *Life* magazine was spotlighting Love's efforts in 1966, he and his friends had already spent more than \$2 million on preservation and revitalization projects in Tombstone, purchasing the O.K. Corral, Schieffelin Hall, Fly's Photo Studio, and the Crystal Palace Saloon. "I would like to control all of Allen Street," he is quoted as saying by *Life* writer William S. Ellis, as he attempted to profit from Tombstone's history (Ellis 1966, R6). He also later bought the Tombstone *Epitaph*, which he recrafted into a marketing vehicle highlighting the town's history to attract tourists to the town.

In his restoration efforts, Love felt historic accuracy was imperative, hiring John Gilchriese, then field historian at the University of Arizona and expert on Tombstone history. They used old photographs as guides for their projects—reconstructing the buildings' exteriors and interiors, even moving structures, to "best approximate more closely" the ways the sites had been "when the Clantons ranged along the east wall [of

Fly's Photo Studio] awaiting the Earps" (Palmer 1963, 21). Love's vision for Tombstone was squarely situated in the October 1881 gunfight (one year before a fire destroyed many of the structures in town) and he worked tirelessly—with the oversight and approval of the Tombstone Restoration Commission—to realize that vision. As with Edna Landin, Love recreated the town based on his notion of what Tombstone should be like—constructed based on a specific history, and, no doubt, on his interactions with popular culture at the time. He told *Life* writer William S. Ellis that he would “like to see everything on Allen Street either restored or removed. Especially, he emphasized, *that*—and frowned out the window at a large neon sign across the street, screaming in multicolored mockery: PIZZA” (Ellis 1966, R6). In 1983, Gov. Bruce Babbitt named Love Arizona's Ambassador of Tourism. Like Edna Landin, Love was inducted into the Founders' Day Hall of Fame in 2010. He was honored for his preservation efforts and his “enduring affection” for the town.

Despite his attention to historic detail, Love's refacing of the Crystal Palace Saloon caused some controversy. His focus on crafting the town to look like it might have in Wyatt Earp's time resulted in his attaching a façade to the saloon based on photos taken before the structure burned down in May 1882. The structure to which the façade was affixed, however, was built in the fall of 1882. It was, therefore, already a historic building without need for a renovation. “Too much emphasis has been put on a single event rather than on the entire period. ... If preservation of Tombstone's historic character is important to the community and the nation, why was it necessary to deface a genuine historic property?” ask Garrett and Garrison in their research report from 1972. “The answer is not to be found in the owner's purpose, but in a very limited interpretation of

restoration work” (Garrett and Garrison 1972, 28).

A decade later, the Tombstone Restoration Commission was still hard at work securing Tombstone’s place as a tourist destination for wild western enthusiasts. By this point, the president was Theda Medigovich, who spearheaded a fund-raising and membership drive in 1974 in preparation for the nation’s bicentennial. Medigovich wrote a brochure as part of the effort that reiterated Tombstone’s place in the lore of the Old West and the Old West’s place in the history of the United States: “Tombstone is an integral part of the Nations Bicentennial as the winning of the West was of fundamental importance to the United States in the years after the Civil War.” In addition to drawing the link between the story of the West and the dominant narrative of the nation, she also appealed to Americans’ romance with the West: “Stories of this saga are the myths of our culture. The characters are as legendary as any the world over. Cowboy or miner, sodbuster or frontier wife, the efforts of these men and women tempered the American character and left an impression which is felt in our time.” Then, in all capitals:

“TOMBSTONE IS A LIVING MONUMENT TO THIS PAST! IT IS THE BLOODSTAINED, POWDER-MARKED ORIGINAL! A REAL WESTERN TOWN WHOSE OLD STILL STANDING ADOBE BUILDINGS WATCHED A BYGONE ERA OF WESTERN HISTORY IN THE MAKING!” (fol. 463, box 23, RG 2, Medigovich Collection, Arizona Historical Society)

Medigovich’s appeal came on the heels of Garrett and Garrison’s *Plan for the Creation of a Historic Environment in Tombstone, Arizona*, published in December 1972. Even after almost twenty years of preservation and restoration work in Tombstone, the town’s history keepers found it imperative to push further. Garrett and Garrison’s work is

an exhaustive look at Tombstone's history, its preservation efforts, and plans for future preservation. In it they ask two questions: "First, whether or not Tombstone's restoration is essential to the city's economy. Second, the extent to which restoration will affect development of other kinds of community activity." Their answer: "Every analysis which has been done on Tombstone's economy during the last ten years states that tourism is basic to the city's economy" (Garrett and Garrison 1972, 35).

Clearly there was a tremendous push in the early 1970s to bump up restoration in Tombstone. This was mostly due to the fact that the number of visitors to Tombstone was less than in the 1960s. The efforts were known as "the Master Plan" and included such items as "moving telephone/electric wires underground, installing gas lamps, restoring façades of buildings to their 1885 lights, restoring the firehouse, putting dirt on Allen Street, etc." The purpose of this drive was to *improve* the experience of tourists coming to Tombstone—in other words, to construct a town that better fit with the expectations of the visitors. At the same time, historic preservationists were also impelled to ensure the continued livability of the town. Because Tombstone is unique in that it is a living community, the wider goal of Garrett and Garrison's report was to "suggest means not merely for the use and preservation of historic material, but means also for the integration of that material with the community's larger purposes" (1972, iii).

While the report does offer other ideas for industry in Tombstone beyond tourism—such as marketing itself as a retirement community, a motion picture production community, and a health resort town—it also makes plain that tourism is central to the city's economy, and, in fact, is the most important industry for Tombstone's continued viability. Further, because "for most people the accepted 'myth' of Tombstone

is one of lynchings, gunfights, hangings, and a town ‘too tough to die’ in the face of enormous economic and social changes which in many cases have removed settlements from the southwestern desert,” a continued focus on the town’s raucous past had to remain a constant. In addition, the townspeople needed to work together to create a total experience for tourists. Garrett and Garrison point out that in 1972, “the expectations of most people are often unfulfilled because of the district’s appearance. Tombstone does not quite look like a ‘monument to the Old West’” (Garret and Garrison 1972, v E2). It was up to the local citizens to come together to create that environment for the sake of the town’s survival. Shop owners were asked to change signage to conform to that of the 1880s, homeowners were asked to change paint colors, and, despite some criticism, more and more people started dressing in the style of 1880s clothing.

IV. Performers of History

Many citizens did heed the call to participate in protecting the historic and cultural integrity of the town, doing more than just dressing the part to attract tourists. Many joined performance troupes, re-enactors preserving Tombstone’s history through theatrical display. The Tombstone Vigilantes (founded in 1948 and incorporated in 1954) and Tombstone’s Wild Bunch (established in 1972) have had a hand in recreating Tombstone in the image of its former glory—all with an eye toward attracting tourist dollars to ensure the town’s ongoing survival. These groups are still active in Tombstone, a town that has come to be known for the gunfights and other performances on its streets. Performance is the most exacting way Tombstone is set apart from other western heritage towns. It is the point at which Tombstone’s authenticity is both reproduced and

questioned. It has attracted visitors for decades, but has also welcomed scorn and criticism from journalists, historians, and even tourists and townspeople, who feel it has cheapened Tombstone's historic integrity.

The Tombstone Vigilantes were established in 1948. According to their website, "since their inception they have been dedicated to keeping the historical town of Tombstone alive through reenacting events of the era. Every member is a volunteer who selflessly gives of their time to not only keep Tombstone's history alive but to raise funds for worthy causes" (Tombstone Vigilantes website, under "News"). They were proclaimed the "Ambassadors of Tombstone" in 1994 by then-mayor Alex Gradillas because so much of their work takes them to towns all around the West. This moniker is a point of honor for the Vigilantes, who proudly display it on their website.

The Vigilantes were the first group to perform history on a regular basis in Tombstone. (Helldorado Days had parades and reenactments but occurred only in October every year.) While preservation efforts were part of a necessary drive to attract tourists to the area, performance on Tombstone's streets has been disparaged since at least as early as 1956. An article published in the literary journal *Prairie Schooner* scoffs at Tombstone for its use of performance to commemorate and celebrate its violent past:

The Western brand of antiquarianism that deals mainly with the commemoration (or least, tongue-in-cheek acknowledgement) of violence and sudden death is perhaps centered in the town of Tombstone, Arizona, the one-time "Helldorado" of the silver-boom days. Thus, Tombstone is seemingly peopled with incurable, trigger-happy romantics who read (or write) endless pulp stories about the Wild West; who dress, upon the slightest provocation, in cowboy clothes of the 19th century; who are possessed, for one reason or another, with the folklore of the gunmen hero-villains: Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Buckskin Frank Leslie, and Johnny Ringo. (Michaelson 1956, 56)

The author concedes that this violent past is a “commodity to exploit” to attract tourists, but he also laments the loss of Tombstone’s former glorious self: “Of course, the vitality, the *elan*, that sparked Tombstone in the 1880’s is gone forever. In its place is this warmed-over masquerade by service-club members who dress in the garments of dead heroes, hoping to capture somehow the flavor of times gone by. Mainly, they keep alive the Earp-Clanton mythology to attract tourists” (Michaelson 1956, 57). Speaking specifically about the Vigilantes—calling them “the trigger-happy boys of Tombstone”—the author derides the troupe for its nostalgic enthusiasm for the Old West: “At the drop of a ten-gallon Stetson or less, the Vigilantes will drop all their business chores and re-enact the Earp-Clanton gunfight at the old O.K. corral, using, to be sure, blanks in their Frontier-type Colts” (ibid.). The article was written before Edna Landin succeeded in revitalizing the County Courthouse and other historic sites, efforts lauded by the author. But his distaste in the performative element of Tombstone—even at that early date—is clear.

The Tombstone Vigilantes are still very much a part of the landscape of Tombstone. They perform mock hangings and historical shootings on the second, fourth, and fifth Sundays of every month (each Sunday known as “Vigilante Sunday”) on Allen Street. According to their website, “the mock hangings are especially fun for the tourists. An unsuspecting victim is tried, convicted and then hung [*sic*] by one of the Vigilante members within seconds of them meeting and, for a donation the victim can get a picture taken while in the noose surrounded by their captors” (Tombstone Vigilantes website, under “News”).

That visitors enjoy being convicted and hanged for a crime is particularly

interesting in light of theories surrounding the power of ritualized violence and the carnivalesque in the narrative of the Wild West, conceptions to which Tombstone is central. Violence and wildness are fundamental to Tombstone's existence and viability as a tourist destination. Performances of violence—gunfight reenactments, public hangings, and barroom brawls—serve to deprivilege the authoritative voice of hegemony on the one hand while reinscribing the importance and centrality of authority and law on the other; in Tombstone, lawmen always win. Even the name of this troupe is telling: vigilantes occupy the periphery of organized society, stepping in to impart justice when the institutions of law are too inept to do so. But in Tombstone, not only do these Vigilantes work inside the parameters of society; they also privilege the tenets and principles of that society. Indeed, the Vigilantes are very much involved in their community. In addition to helping to organize Ed Schieffelin Days, Wyatt Earp Days, and Helldorado Days every year, as well as their own event known as Vigilante Days, they also donate monies collected during private events to “worthy causes throughout Tombstone” (Tombstone Vigilantes website, under “News”).

Another reenactment troupe in Tombstone is the Wild Bunch, organized by Ben Traywick, who would go on to be Tombstone historian for almost forty years. Traywick's story is similar to other keepers of history in Tombstone. He was passing through Tombstone in 1968 when he decided to move his family there from California. Believing that the town's “true history wasn't being told,” he organized the Wild Bunch in 1971 to add to the number of groups performing Tombstone's past for the entertainment and education of visitors (Cole 2012). From the onset, Traywick's group performed with an emphasis on “historically correct productions.” His wife Marie was also involved,

forming the “ladies’ version” of the Wild Bunch known as the Hell’s Belles. Traywick played Wyatt Earp in reenactments of the gunfight for the next twenty years. The troupe performs the famous battle at the O.K. Corral “based on testimony given by Wyatt Earp at the inquest following the famous gunfight” (Wild Bunch and Hell’s Belles website). They also perform in the annual “Rendezvous of Gunfighters,” a celebration of Tombstone’s wild western past that features gunfighter groups from around the country.

Traywick was named Tombstone City Historian in 1971, a post he held for thirty-nine years. His position as both performer of history and purveyor of history is not necessarily unique in Tombstone. Performance and “pedagogy” are inextricable in this space. While the Wild Bunch—like the Tombstone Vigilantes—contributes to a number of Tombstone charities, Traywick’s objective seems to always have been to promote the town to tourists. “‘The Wild Bunch gave Tombstone’s tourism a tremendous boost,’ Ben said. ‘We’re known internationally and have been featured on *Good Morning America* five times and have appeared in more than 200 films.’” (Cole 2012). In fact, the Wild Bunch and other reenactors and performers are what give Tombstone its particular brand of westernness. While preservationists in Tombstone in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s gave the town its appearance, the performers have given the town its ambiance and made the place come alive for visitors for decades. They are what make Tombstone a viable tourist destination.

The various performances that take place on Tombstone’s streets and in some of its establishments (Helldorado Town, for example, which is like a small Wild West theme park) have, as we have seen, been criticized since the 1950s. The criticisms endure, as many believe these performances delegitimize Tombstone as a historical site. A

historian in Lincoln, New Mexico, for example, disparages Tombstone's performative elements as disrespectful to the town's history. "In Lincoln," he says, "we respect our history." Even Tombstone's own historians note the impact of popular culture on the integrity of the reenactments, including Hollis Cook, former manager of the Tombstone Courthouse for Arizona State Parks who now leads walking tours in town: "Cook's favorite Hollywood history rewrite involves the 1993 [film] *Tombstone*, in which narrator Robert Mitchum spins some tale about the Red Sash Gang and how 'they wore red sashes to identify themselves to other gang members.' 'Utter nonsense!' sputters Cook. ... Nevertheless, he says, the power of Hollywood is such that within a week of the movie's release, Tombstone's gunfight re-enactment troupes were wearing—yes—red sashes. 'And these reenactors take great pride in getting their costumes right, shooting the right number of shots. Hollywood,' he says, 'creates history. Experts get it wrong'" (Sorenson 2006).

Despite the criticism, Traywick has been pleased with the successes the Wild Bunch has seen, but "believes there's a lot more that Tombstone could be doing to attract tourism. 'We're sitting on a gold mine here, but we need to exploit it,' he said. 'If we could all work together and do that, there's so much more we could be doing for this town'" (Cole 2012). Traywick retired as Tombstone City Historian at "high noon" on 26 October 2011, the one hundred thirtieth anniversary of the Earp-Clanton gunfight. At the celebration, he encouraged the townspeople to continue to push this town's past:

As I depart I would leave this thought with you all. If not for our history and some of the people who were here—we would be just another small town in the high desert. People come to Tombstone to see the last big boom town and to feel a kinship with those who made it famous. They do not come here to see motorized vehicles. They come here to get away from

them. ... Preserve the town's history and Tombstone will always be here.
Remember the magic words; Tombstone, OK Corral, Earp and Holliday.
(Littlejohn 28 May 2010)

His parting words point to the ongoing struggles in the town to maintain its Old West identity. There has not always been total consensus among the town's residents about what Tombstone is all about. It is not merely a tourist destination, but also a living place, with all the trappings of a modern town. When the Historic District Commission was established in 1949, the board of directors declared that responsibility for the restoration efforts must fall in part on the entire citizenry of Tombstone. A concerted effort was both necessary and expected in order for Tombstone to survive. Restoration efforts in Tombstone have been under continual attack since the establishment of the Tombstone Restoration Commission. As early as 1955, journalist Don Dederer called the creation of Boothill Graveyard "not restoration" but "chicanery." Presaging Traywick's ideas, Dederer recommended that "What Tombstone needs most of all is unity. Is the old town to be restored, or is it to continue as a cheap burlesque of the past? ... Tombstone also needs the support of all of Arizona, but the town hasn't proved it deserves it yet" (Dederer 1955).

This last comment is particularly prescient in light of the fact that Tombstone has not made *True West* magazine's list of America's top ten western cities for the last three years. "Though the town cries foul, *True West* claims that the city's departure from the Top 10 is the result of several factors, among which is the notion that Tombstone has lost some of its authenticity over the last year" (Alfin 2010).¹⁷ Indeed, in 2004, the National Park Service declared Tombstone's historic designation threatened, and sought to work

with the community to develop an appropriate program of oversight and management.

Among the alterations to the district that the National Park Service cited as “inappropriate” were placing “historic” dates on new buildings; failing to distinguish new construction from historic structures; building incompatible additions to existing historic structures and new incompatible buildings within the historic district; using illuminated signage, including blinking lights surrounding historic signs; and installing hitching rails and Spanish tile-covered store porches when such architectural features never existed within Tombstone (Pallock 2005).

The “threatened” status was downgraded to “watch” after town officials took steps to respond to NPS’s demands. As reported in the *Tombstone Epitaph*, “One way town officials saved themselves was by putting dirt on the streets to give visitors a more authentic experience. Last year [in 2009], Mayor Dusty Escapule ordered the dirt removed, a major setback according to *True West* magazine” (Alfin 2010). But *True West* magazine editor Bob Boze Bell also cited Tombstone’s unprofessional application as reason for passing them over. “He and his staff did not see an effort made in Tombstone’s application ... In light of both the perceived changes to the city and their underwhelming application, Bell says that Tombstone’s overall effort this year fell short of expectations and caused Tombstone to be lost among the other competitors for the Top 10 slots.” Bell does have a positive outlook for Tombstone’s future: “‘We love Tombstone; that is not the issue,’ Bell said. ‘But sometimes you have to tell a member of your family that they need to shape up’” (Alfin 2010). The magazine showed this adoration in 2011 and 2012 when they named Tombstone as one of the “Towns to Watch.” They noted specifically the town’s struggles with historic accuracy over the years but that their efforts to improve

were not going unnoticed:

One hundred-thirty years after the famous gunfight, Tombstone continues to be a tusslin' town. Historians and merchants seem to be in a constant battle over preservation and accuracy, and tourism and money. But folks, led by the city and the chamber of commerce, came together in 2010 to reopen the 1882 courthouse, which the state had closed due to budget cuts. Tombstone is, once again, the "Town Too Tough to Die" (*True West* magazine 2011).

Despite this recognition, the "snub" still "irked" locals, and in 2012, Bell was still citing Tombstone's issues with historical authenticity as contributing to the exclusion. City clerk and manager George Barnes, in response to the omission, was determined to hire a promotions manager to help publicize Tombstone to *True West* editors in a way that would see them included on this list in the future (Nedakai 2012).

V. Tombstone's Future

Much of the scholarship around tourism in the West explores the intersection of cultural memory, myth, and history—as well as contestation, economic exigencies, and environmental and cultural degradation—and casts a critical eye toward the sites to which millions of Americans and those from around the world flock each year. Chris Wilson's Santa Fe; Hal Rothman's Las Vegas, Nevada; Mike Wallace's Disneyland; Bonnie Christensen's Red Lodge, Montana—these and other sites in the West share a common legacy. Each in its growth as a lure for tourists has had a detrimental impact on local cultures and communities enticed by the hope of economic benefit only to discover that they have become commodities sold to an insatiable consumer. This negotiation between economic imperative and commodification of identity and space, which tourist towns must manage, is what Hal Rothman calls the "devil's bargain." As he sees it, although

tourism promises to uplift those places that have not kept pace with the postindustrial world, it usually does not meet the expectations of communities and regions that utilize it as an economic strategy. Public identity is very much entrenched in ideas of particular versions of the past, and explorations into the ways these versions ebb and flow and the ways tourist towns and sites react and reflect these shifts is imperative to a full understanding of the way the myth of the West continues to function in American culture.

Tombstone is very much a part of this overall negotiation between historic authenticity and economic exigency. In its constant quest to meet the expectations of tourists, it must also meet the expectations of its own citizens. This negotiation has seen continued struggle ever since the Tombstone Restoration Commission was established in 1949. Today Tombstone must fight against criticisms of a town whose heyday is long past. Perhaps epitomizing the ways the town has lost some of its luster in recent years, the park named for Edna Landin—Landin Park—had gone into disarray over the past years and has been well known for suspicious drug activity. The land was owned by Edna Landin and donated to the city in the 1950s “as a place where residents and visitors could congregate for picnics or social gatherings” (Bayley 2009). In 2009, the city was determined to revitalize the park, installing picnic tables and landscaping the area—mostly to make it a “safer environment” for residents and visitors. The city also intended to use part of the space for impounded vehicles, making it necessary for twenty-four hour security. It is not out of step with the “wild western” history of the place to require guards with bullet-proof jackets to ensure this public park would not fall further into the hands of outlaws. It does, however, seem incongruous with a tourist town bent on attracting families to spend money in a safe—albeit performatively unruly—environment.

But there is some hope for Tombstone, if we are to understand the tenacity of the town and its inhabitants, who are as interested in securing their future as they are in restoring their past. The constant controversy around Tombstone's authenticity may be exactly why the town continues to be a successful tourist destination. When something goes awry, when someone criticizes the place as inaccurately portraying its own history, Tombstone's citizens seem to fight even harder for what it sees as its rightful place as America's most quintessential western town. Tombstone historian Hollis Cook—whose skepticism about Tombstone rivals that of other historians of the town—says “Tombstone is something to cherish. ‘Tombstone is really about the only game in town, if you're going to look for an Old West town,’ says Cook. ‘There really aren't many places left.’” In fact, “I really think if you brought Wyatt Earp back ... I think he would recognize it” (Sorenson 2006).

The portrayal of Earp on Tombstone's streets is rivaled by his portrayal in film and television throughout the twentieth century. And much like the performances in Old Tombstone, Earp himself has not escaped controversy and scrutiny, as his representation on the big and small screens attests. Wyatt Earp and the gunfight have been reinterpreted and reimagined countless times as attitudes about law and authority, redemptive violence, and vigilante justice have changed. The next chapter offers a discussion of these different iterations of the Earp myth and demonstrates the inextricable link between popular portrayals of Earp and the gunfight and the ways audiences have imagined the town of Tombstone and the Old West over time.

CHAPTER THREE
Hollywood, Historicity, and the Enduring Earp Myth:
Popular Culture and the Continued Vitality of Tombstone

In his article “Showdown at the Hollywood Corral: Wyatt Earp and the Movies,” historian Paul Andrew Hutton argues that the “beauty” of the story of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral—why it has resonated for so long for so many—lies “in its simplicity.”

Artfully weaving historical fact with Hollywood legend, he goes on:

A man who devoted his life to the law moves west in hopes of putting his past behind him and starting over with his family in a frontier boomtown. The town proves turbulent and lawless ... [and] the ex-lawman is forced to once again pin on a badge. The outlaws murder his brother. Stricken, the marshal nevertheless confronts them in *the classic showdown*, kills them all, and rides out of town leaving law and order in his wake. (Hutton 1995, 1)

It is the abiding tale of the victory of law over lawlessness, of good over evil, that has come to define the winning of the West in the popular imagination. It is why Wyatt Earp and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral continue to be meaningful well over a century after the event itself. It is a story that has kept readers, moviegoers, and television-show watchers enamored and entertained for nearly one hundred years.

But the story of Wyatt Earp and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral is more than the sum of its parts. While Earp has come to symbolize the white male fantasy of the archetypal western lawman, for many, the event has come to define, not just Tombstone where the gunfight took place, but the whole of the Old West—the region that Robert Athearn calls “the most American part of America” (1953). The public is familiar with Wyatt and the gunfight primarily because of the products of popular culture that have followed in a steady stream almost since the event happened—from novels and biographies to films and television shows. This is, in fact, how most people have come to

understand the West as a whole. “For over two centuries,” Richard Aquila observes, “the West has been an extremely popular and profitable subject of popular culture. ... Although western images in popular culture have varied greatly, one thing has remained constant. Whether fact or fiction, story or place, the ‘pop culture West’ has struck a responsive chord in audiences of every generation” (1998, 1). In fact, the relationship between popular cultural productions of Wyatt Earp and the West and the ways visitors understand the city of Tombstone is so strong, it is impossible to disentangle the two. The endurance of the Earp saga has given Tombstone its own viability, as tourists attempt to turn their two-dimensional observations into lived experiences.

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways Wyatt Earp and the gunfight have been represented, interpreted, and reimagined in film and television throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Wyatt Earp and his place in the Mythic West hold different meanings for different people. He has been both continually reinvented and steadfast to specific attitudes and beliefs of American culture. This chapter will demonstrate the inextricable link between popular portrayals of Earp and the gunfight and the ways audiences have imagined Tombstone and the West over time. In this framework, and similar to Tombstone itself, seeming historicity is essential to the success of these films while historical accuracy has not been as important as the fluidity of the main tenets of the narrative. The chapter will also demonstrate that because he is such a contested figure, Earp has managed to maintain social significance for almost a hundred years.

The films and television shows chosen for analysis represent the different versions of Wyatt Earp through the last seventy years and the broad appeal and power he as symbol has had in expressing and shaping perceptions of the West, law and authority, and

the nation itself. Beginning with *My Darling Clementine*, widely hailed as the best rendering of the Earp story, and ending with *Tombstone* and *Wyatt Earp*, the two films that figure most heavily in Tombstone's current public identity and may have single-handedly kept Tombstone the vital tourist destination it is today, these films and television shows—analyzed in chronological order—are quintessential Earp or lawman narratives that best illustrate the ways the story has functioned over time. My analysis relies on those films seen as classic to the genre as well as on those films resting just outside that norm, as those films that are not part of the classic western category have much to say about the ways producers envisioned Wyatt Earp as western hero or antihero and the ways audiences, even those that helped develop cult followings for these productions years after their release, accepted or made use of these interpretations.

While not every film in the analysis is specifically about Wyatt Earp, they all evoke the man and his position as *the* western lawman, whether idealized or vilified. They also all evoke the gunfight, a battle between two men or two factions of men as an allegory for nationalist ideals that celebrate law and order, masculinity, “civilization,” and institutions of incorporation—although sometimes his story has been used to denigrate these same institutions. It is difficult to point to any western produced since the mid-twentieth century without seeing the Earp story embedded in its plot. As historian Allen Barra argues, “Earp’s image so dominates the western that it’s practically impossible to mention a western made since the mid-1930s that can’t be connected in some way either with Earp’s real life story or with another Earp movie.” And historian Jeff Morey “swears he can connect any movie ever made in Hollywood with Wyatt Earp in less than six moves” (Barra 1998, 6).

These films also express specific ideas and attitudes about what the Earp and western myths have meant over time. That films and TV shows have relied on the Earp saga and the various events that shaped his life—most notably his time in Tombstone and the famous gun battle—speaks to the centrality of Earp to popular conceptions of the West and those ideals embodied by its myth: individualism, masculinity, and social progress—while also resisting the strict conventions and restraints brought on by that progress. Many of these pop cultural productions reproduce Manifest Destiny, equating the development of the nation with an orthodoxy of social triumph—a success story of how “civilization” won out over “savagery.” Other productions offer a sharp critique of the movement west, representing the “civilizing” process as one predicated on violence and corruption. Still others attempt to reveal the ersatz nature of the traditional narrative, exposing the two dimensionality of the western myth and the ways people engage with both the story and the region itself.

The epoch generally represented in popular culture (the 1880s) is also looked on with nostalgia, typically by white easterners, for the Old West as it is imagined to have been before the shuttling in of the modern age. Films and television shows situated in this era reveal both a celebration of westward expansion and a sentimental yearning for what was lost in the transition. Wyatt Earp has managed to teeter easily between the Old and the New—representing both the excitement and white masculine ideal of the Old West and the civilized nature of law and order of the New West. While “progress” has typically meant a celebration of law and authority, the Earp story has also been used to represent the greed and corruption sometimes associated with those same institutions, exposing the ambivalence or outright antagonism many have felt toward those in positions of power,

particularly in films produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The films and television shows in this chapter reveal how this simple story has a number of complex uses. From classic westerns to science fiction, Earp and the gunfight continue to resonate as the story has been shaped and reshaped to make sense to different audiences at different times.

No matter what the interpretation, the town of Tombstone relies heavily on the popularity of the most famous thirty seconds in its history. The link between popular culture and Tombstone is so strong that representations of Wyatt Earp—and the West itself—are imperative to its ongoing survival. The major tenets of the western have everything to do with how visitors interpret and experience the site. The town utilizes and benefits from the romance popular culture provides knowing that large segments of the American public continue to be captivated by the Earp Myth. An analysis of films that depict Wyatt Earp specifically—as well as some that reflect on what constitutes a true western hero or what purpose the Mythic West serves—is imperative to our understandings of modern-day Tombstone, whose sustainability is inextricably linked to the ways Earp and the wider West are conceived of and celebrated in the popular imagination.

I. The Hollywood Western and the Myth of Historicity

The Hollywood western, a nostalgic eulogy to the early days of the “untamed” American frontier (most often defined in these films as the boundary between “civilization” and the “wilderness”), is the focus of much scholarship. Academics hoping to uncover the reasons the western has captivated audiences so strongly and for so long have contributed thousands of pages of research to the field. John Lenihan contends that the movie western

maintained its popularity throughout times of decline in movie attendance because no other genre was “more involved with fundamental American beliefs about individualism and social progress” (1980, 4). Stanley Corkin argues that “the Western has the mythic power to define the past not simply as a body of material and ideological events that are recognizable and subject to analysis but as a triumphal moment when a compendium of quintessentially American traditions took hold” (2004, 21). These scholars and others maintain that westerns have been and remain popular because they articulate notions of a collective American past, one that offers a sense of national identity based on the perception of a shared commitment to basic American values.

Still other scholars argue that, in addition to their reflection of what are often touted as traditional American principles, another reason westerns have remained popular with audiences is the inherent “historical” quality they possess. In fact, it is the historical element of westerns that is perhaps their most exacting quality. It is not, for example, the West of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries that is the focus of most western films (although some westerns are set in more contemporary times). Because it attempts to place itself within a historical context (typically the late 1800s), the Hollywood western is viewed by audiences as being a historical record and inherently important to the construction of a meaningful past. Indeed, Jim Kitses insists that “the Western *is* American history” (1998, 21). History in the western film, then, is essential to its sustained importance to audiences who continue to seek to understand what it means to be an American.

There is an innate paradox imbedded in western films and notions of the West itself. Despite their historicity—or the perception that the films are historically

authentic—these films do not need to be factual to be meaningful to those who view them. What is more important is that they *seem* historically authentic—the definition of which has everything to do with how the West of the 1880s has been represented to audiences over time. Aquila argues that “it doesn’t matter what the actual West is like, what took place there, or what exists there. What matters is what people *believe* the West is like, took place and exists there” (1998, 12). In other words, “history” and “authenticity” are fluid concepts according to the beliefs and expectations of audiences. Raymond Durnat and Scott Simmon assert that producers of westerns are less concerned with historical accuracy than with creating films that signify something enduring about America’s true character: “Indeed, the genre is quite conscious—often pompously conscious—of representing America’s essence. If it falsifies the ‘little’ details of history, it’s only to show more clearly the crucial and underlying truths” (1998, 12).

David Pierson posits that western films and television shows are popular because their historicity lends them an air of authenticity. Again, whether they are historically precise is less important than the impression that they are to audiences who have formed ideas of what is “historically authentic” or “accurate” based on previously consumed productions of the pop culture West. Nonetheless, Pierson says, “Verisimilitude to historical events adds dramatic intensity to both fictional and nonfictional programs; in this way, history serves as a prime legitimator for audiences to invest their viewing time” (2005, 286). In explaining the process through which notions of what is historically accurate were solidified, Richard Slotkin stresses that

what became essential to the creation of an illusion of authenticity and historicity was . . . the establishment of a set of habitual associations between image and idea that would ultimately constitute a code or

language of cinematic symbols, understood by both filmmaker and audience as referring to or symbolizing “the historical West” or “the real thing.” (1998, 237)

In other words, audiences develop a familiarity with the “history” of the region through their consumption of films and television shows. Through repetition, audiences become “attached” to certain devices and tropes that they then associate with the now-normalized signs of historical authenticity.¹⁸ They then demand that all subsequent productions align with their expectations. Alexandra Keller similarly argues that it is the *resemblance* to authenticity claimed by westerns—not necessarily historical accuracy—that has given these films currency in American culture. She explains that, “whether or not Westerns referred to actual events and people, they claimed an affinity with authenticity through an explicit grounding in ‘History,’ not in all individual texts but in the genre as a whole” (2005, 241).

We see a similar importance in the idea of history to understanding Tombstone. Tourists become familiar with the history of the Old West and of Tombstone through the consumption of popular culture. That is to say, tourist expectations of what constitutes an “authentic western town” are most often built on images and ideas that audiences have seen in the movies. Slotkin calls this “the dilemma of authenticity.” The dilemma is that both authenticity and fantasy must co-exist in this paradigm. As Slotkin writes,

Cultural tradition defined “the West” as both an actual place with a real history and as a mythic space populated by projective fantasies. Expectations about Western stories were therefore contradictory: they had to seem in some way realistic or “authentic” while at the same time conforming to ideas of setting, costume, and heroic behavior derived from literary fantasy. (1998, 235)

This is a paradox, to be sure: Audiences and tourists demand *both* fantasy and authenticity in their experiences, in fact now the two may be seen as inextricably linked. Filmmakers and the history keepers in Tombstone must meet that demand if they are to be successful. Divergence from Hollywood's version of the Old West in the town of Tombstone may be met with a less than enthusiastic response, while divergence from what is considered "historically authentic" in western films may be met with a similar reaction. Slotkin cautions that a filmmaker may find "that his license for invention might be circumscribed by the public's well-formed notions of what an 'authentic' Western story or setting had to be" (1998, 235). This is why films about the West, those specifically about Tombstone and those about the West in general, have had and continue to have a tremendous impact on the way Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, the gunfight, and the town of Tombstone are conceived and celebrated in the national imaginary.

As much as westerns situate themselves into an historical context, they also reflect historical attitudes—both of the West of the popular imagination and of culture and society at the moment the film is being made. In other words, westerns can be seen both as narrativizing presumably actual events and situations from the past, and as representative of the cultural attitudes and beliefs that are held at the particular time of the film's production. The malleability of the western along with its traditional archetypal images of the frontier, individualism, masculinity, racial conflict, law and order, resistance to modernity (while attempting to "tame" the "wilderness"), and the role of the gunfighter as hero allow it to be used to different purposes at different times, whether in emphasizing the value of honor and sacrifice, as did the westerns of the 1940s and 1950s,

or in articulating a more pragmatic, less romantic view of the American West, as did the westerns of the 1960s and 1970s.

A number of scholars have explored this link between the history of westerns and changing attitudes, beliefs, and values of the culture at large.¹⁹ Michael Coyne exposes the western film as a vital medium for examining the shifts and transformations in political, racial, sexual, social, and religious attitudes throughout the twentieth century. He focuses on a small sampling of westerns to show how they articulated attitudes about such issues as labor strife, miscegenation, gender and sexuality, the Cold War, McCarthyism, Vietnam, and new-found feelings of alienation in the 1970s. His work traces the trajectory of westerns from epics of national triumph to dystopic visions of life in the United States. The ideology of the western film is often taken to task by Coyne, who, like other historians of the U.S. West, see that these films and other productions of the pop culture West articulate certain ideas of what the ideal American citizen should look like and the means by which—presumably—this ideal American citizen should maintain his (emphasis on “his”) position within the hegemony. Coyne states that “The Hollywood Western codified American identity as mainly white and male, largely accepted racial supremacy as given, romanticized aggressive masculinity, and, ultimately, eulogized resistance to regulated society as the truest mark of manhood” (1997, 15). Similarly, John Lenihan analyzes five hundred westerns produced during the Cold War to show “how a particular form [of movie production] is modified in accordance with the constantly changing concerns and attitudes of a society” (1980, 4). Lenihan’s work reveals how the Korean and Vietnam Wars, McCarthyism, the arms race, and race issues influenced the

way the genre articulated standard representations of the West (such as the image of the frontier, individualism, and the role of the gunfighter as hero).

Stanley Corkin also examines the historical significance of the western, specifically those produced between the end of World War II and the dawn of the war in Vietnam—the time when Westerns reached their height in popularity. Corkin attempts to situate the western within wider cultural and political shifts that reflected and informed both national sentiment and public policy throughout the early years of the Cold War. Central to Corkin’s argument is the notion that “these films metaphorically narrate the relationship between the United States and the world” (2004, 3). Concentrating on the political and social climates of the era, and delving into matters of gender, family, religion, and race, Corkin effectively reads the significance of westerns at a time when Americans were attempting to define the parameters of Americanness against a backdrop of U.S. hegemony on the global stage, the threat of communism and nuclear war, and evolving family dynamics within America’s borders.

Even with the revisionist westerns of the late 1960s through the early 2000s, the genre still has something to say about the nation’s past and the ways that past has impacted the present, perhaps even more so. These films demonstrate that with each new generation, there is something vital in the mythic West that calls for continued reference and allusion. Even with Coyne’s dismissal of more recent westerns,²⁰ and despite the exhausted tendency to place this genre on its deathbed, westerns persist. They may be prone in recent years to representing a more pluralistic idea of the West than previous films²¹; they may be set in the twentieth century West²²; or they may show a more ambiguous relationship between violence and redemption/ regeneration.²³ But they are

still involved with the production and consumption of the meaning of the American West—a place, a history, and a myth wrought with tireless messages and significance, even today.

Indeed, the number of western films that dot the filmic landscape is dizzying, and every one influences the ways the West of the late nineteenth century is understood and the meaning of the region today. From the *Great Train Robbery* (1903) to *Stagecoach* (1939) to *Shane* (1951) to *Unforgiven* (1992) to *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) to the remake of *True Grit* (2010) to *Cowboys and Aliens* (2011), westerns remain one of the most enduring of American genres. Within this corpus, Wyatt Earp and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral have proved persistent themes for seventy-five years. Wyatt's popular characterization as the epitome of the western hero and the fact that the historic battle behind the O.K. Corral is imbued with the characteristics of an ancient morality play have meant that both the man and the event have served well the devices essential to the western genre. Further, and perhaps more significantly, the Earp Myth has remained a powerful narrative in communicating the ideals that throughout the century have nourished and bolstered the way many Americans see themselves and their nation.

II. Authenticity and Invention in *My Darling Clementine* (1946)—the Most Enduring Portrayal of the Earp Saga

While a number of films about the Earps and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral were produced prior to 1946,²⁴ the commercial and critical success of *My Darling Clementine* (1946) meant it had by far the most influence on the way Wyatt Earp was conceived by the wider public up to that point. Paul Hutton calls the film “the finest telling of the Earp

saga” (1995, 12). Because of its popularity, it heavily influenced all Earp films that came after and was instrumental in solidifying the Earp Myth in the popular imagination. Even though the filmmakers claimed historic authenticity, the film was based on a book that itself was not historically accurate. Nonetheless, the film’s devices helped concretize the ways the Earp story and the western hero have been imagined ever since. The film also helped set the stage for a Tombstone readying itself for public consumption. For these reasons, the plot line and setting, the intentions of the filmmaker, and the influence of previous works all deserve in-depth exploration.

Directed by John Ford, *My Darling Clementine* opens with Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) and his brothers Morgan, Virgil, and James (Ward Bond, Tim Holt, and Don Garner, respectively) are attempting to drive a herd of cattle across the Arizona desert to California. Wyatt meets Old Man Clanton (Walter Brennan) and his son Ike (Grant Withers), who offer to buy the cattle from Wyatt at less than what they are worth. Wyatt refuses, and this immediately sets an oppositional tone between the Clantons and the Earps for the remainder of the film. Wyatt asks if there is a town close by and Clanton tells him that Tombstone is just over the rise. Wyatt, Virgil, and Morgan head to Tombstone while James stays behind to watch over the camp and the cattle until they return.

The Earps’ arrival in Tombstone is marred by conflict in the town’s streets. The brothers find themselves in the middle of a melee as someone starts shooting a gun from the street in every direction and the town’s inhabitants are under threat. No one can stop the gunman from shooting his weapon until Wyatt boldly approaches and manages to subdue the troublemaker, immediately identified as a Native American man who has had

too much to drink—a familiar stereotype.²⁵ Wyatt's bravery is met with veneration by the townspeople and an offer to become the town marshal, which Wyatt turns down. He reconsiders after he and his brothers ride back to their campsite to find their cattle have been stolen and their brother James murdered. Determined to find James's killer, Wyatt decides to take the job as marshal. As such, he becomes the central figure in attempts to bring law and order to Tombstone.

Wyatt meets Doc Holliday (Victor Mature), and they develop a bond that remains the focus of the film. A turning point occurs when Wyatt discovers that Holliday's girlfriend Chihuahua—a prostitute and barmaid²⁶—is wearing a silver piece that belonged to James. He demands to know where she got it, and she confesses that Billy Clanton (John Ireland) gave it to her, thereby incriminating the Clantons in James's murder. Billy Clanton overhears the conversation and flees with Virgil in pursuit. Virgil is fatally shot and left in the streets of Tombstone by Old Man Clanton, who challenges the other Earp brothers to meet at sunrise for a gunfight at the O.K. Corral. The gun battle marks the climax of the film, with history sealing the fate of the Clanton clan. The Earps' victory and the Clantons' defeat mark the moment in the film when law is indeed and finally triumphant over lawlessness, and the West changes from Old to New. In this same scene, Doc Holliday is killed, which serves an interesting purpose. Holliday is essential to the narrative: it is Doc's former fiancée Clementine who brings both tension and resolve to the plot, while it is his relationship with Chihuahua that leads to the defining moment in the film. With Doc being so crucial to the story, his death is imperative to the establishment of Wyatt as the hero both of the film and of the West itself. Doc's death means that Wyatt's position as the quintessential western lawman remains intact.

The final scene shows Wyatt and Morgan on their way out of town to California, their original destination. Wyatt sees Clementine, whose significance to the larger narrative of the settlement of the West is revealed in these final moments: she is staying in Tombstone to be the new schoolmarm. Like the half-constructed church tower and the gunfight, Clementine symbolizes the transition that is taking place in the West, a transition cultivated through the institutions of the larger nation: church, school, and the law. And as the quintessential western hero, Wyatt must leave. His work is done and he is now needed elsewhere. “If justice and order did not continually demand his protection,” Robert Warshow writes about the gunfighter in traditional westerns, “he [the Westerner] would be without a calling. Indeed, we come upon him often in just that situation, as the reign of law settles over the West and he is forced to see that his day is over; those are the pictures which end with his death or with his departure for some remote frontier” (1962, 140). While Wyatt seems mournful, he speeds out of town on a galloping horse, without looking back. The imperatives of the genre and of history demand that Wyatt Earp of both the film and the popular imagination move forward, further west, leaving civilization along the way.

Given these familiar tropes, the film was a critical and commercial success. The film is based on the book *Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal* (1931) by Stuart N. Lake, and is far from an accurate representation of the events leading up to the famous gunfight. Lake had intended to ghostwrite Earp’s memoirs as dictated by Earp himself, but his subject was less than loquacious and Lake took sweeping liberties in the narrative. While written as though it were a direct transcription of Earp’s dictation, Lake made up dialog and events and wrote them as if they had actually happened. In the foreword to the work, Lake

deceptively claims that, “Since Wyatt Earp has so long been a myth to lovers of the Old West, it is no more than fair to state definitively that this biography is in no part a mythic tale” (1931, viii). He also writes that, “Wyatt Earp was persuaded to devote the closing months of his long life to the narration of his full story, to a firsthand and a factual account of his career. It is upon this account that the succeeding pages are entirely based” (ibid.). Neither of these statements is true, but that did not prevent the work from serving as the basis of *My Darling Clementine* and later idealized works about Wyatt Earp.

Of course, romanticizing the West and western heroes was nothing new in 1946. Dime novels (none of which ever featured Wyatt Earp) and Wild West shows were wildly popular precursors to the cult of Wyatt Earp that blew up in the late 1920s. Released four years before Lake’s biography was Walter Noble Burns’s *Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest* (1927). Labeling Earp the “Lion of the West,” Burns crafted what Casey Tefertiller classifies as “a triumph of blood and thunder” that captivated a wide audience “looking for heroes” (1999, xvi). Lake’s *Frontier Marshal* followed in that tradition, providing audiences during a tumultuous time with a comforting portrayal of a simpler time where the good guys could rid a town of the bad guys before heading on to their next adventure. Both works cast Earp as the ideal hero who brought law and order to Tombstone and the wider Southwest, but while Burns did not collaborate with Earp on his book, Lake cashed in on the idea that his work was written with Earp at his side. Of course to the historian, historical accuracy is imperative; to the filmmaker and filmgoer, however, historical accuracy is less important than the *impression* of historical accuracy, as has already been discussed. Despite the licenses Lake took, or perhaps because of them, his book was wildly popular and launched Wyatt Earp as the classic western

lawman and hero he became. The book also served to bolster the historical authenticity of films that used it as the basis for their narratives despite its less-than-accurate portrayal of events.

To that end, John Ford credits Stuart Lake at the beginning of the film, saying that it is “Based on a book by Stuart N. Lake.” The referent for the film, in other words, is a book that could be considered as much fiction as nonfiction. But a semblance to “history” and “authenticity” are still imperative to the success of the film to both producer and audiences—although maybe not to everyone. On the one hand, screenwriter Winston Miller declared that, “We made the whole thing up as we went along. . . . I wasn’t interested in how the West really was, I was writing a movie” (Hutton 1995, 13). On the other hand, John Ford was very interested in proclaiming authenticity when it came to the story—as already evidenced by the credit to Lake in the film as well as his remarks about the film to the press. As Hutton writes, “Ford claimed to have known Wyatt Earp when Ford was a prop boy first working for the studios. He liked the old man and would often bring him coffee and ply him with questions about his frontier days. Earp, Ford later recalled, ‘told me about the fight at the O.K. Corral. So in *My Darling Clementine*, we did it exactly the way it had been’” (ibid.). Ford must have realized that declaring that this film was an accurate representation of the man and the event was crucial to the legitimacy of the film. If accuracy or authenticity were not important—to the writer, director, producers, and audiences—why use Wyatt Earp and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral as the foundation for the story? But the storyline does veer from historical fact: among other inaccuracies, Wyatt’s (older) brother James actually died in 1926; Old Man Clanton had died two months before the O.K. Corral confrontation; and Doc Holliday was a dentist

not a surgeon, and died six years after the gunfight of tuberculosis. Further, as Allen Barra points out, the events in Ford's film do not even mirror those in Lake's book—"bearing little resemblance to even that already bowdlerized version" (Barra 1998, 349)—which at the outset explains that the members of Earp's travel party consisted of his brothers Virgil and James and their families—not just the brothers and not Morgan, who joined them later (Lake 1931, 230).

To complicate matters, despite asserting that the film was "exactly the way it had been," Ford also admitted that the film was meant to be pure entertainment to film historian Jon Tuska, who asked Ford why he hadn't shot the film the way it actually happened: "Did you like the film?" [Ford] sputtered, and when Tuska admitted it was one of his favorites, Ford shot back, "What more do you want?" This exchange, recounted by western historian John Mack Faragher, led Tuska to conclude that "Ford didn't give a damn for the messy historical facts. What mattered in *My Darling Clementine* was the historical interpretation, the meaning that Ford gave to his story about the coming of civilization to the West" (Faragher 1999, 158). Screenwriter Miller was being honest in his comments to the media, perhaps not entirely understanding the importance of historical authenticity to the success of a film set in the past. Ford, it seems, was well aware of the legitimizing power of authenticity to audiences who had certain expectations of what western history should "look" like. In fact, Ford's elicitation of historical accuracy and authenticity is similar to that of Lake in his insistence that *Frontier Marshal* was based on words spoken by Earp himself. Ford understood that the film needed to be entertaining to win over audiences. But he (and Lake) also implied in his attempts to historically authenticate the film that the film needed to be historically

authentic as well. It is this constant back and forth between what actually happened and what needed to happen in the film to make it successful—between fact and fiction—that is at the heart of the film and the genre as a whole, as well as the town of Tombstone as a sustainable and viable tourist destination.

A number of western historians criticize these popular cultural interpretations of the westward movement for perpetuating two-dimensional and often damaging representations of the West. This work, known as “New Western History,” became popular in the 1980s, particularly with the scholarship of historians Patricia Nelson Limerick and Richard White. Limerick, for example, laments the ways “conquest” has been reduced in popular culture to “stereotypes of noble savages and noble pioneers struggling quaintly in the wilderness,” and how, while the “subject of slavery was the domain of serious scholars and the occasion for sober reflection; the subject of conquest was the domain of mass entertainment and the occasion for lighthearted national escapism” (Limerick 1987, 19). Michael Johnson demonstrates the devastating legacy that the swirl of myths, obsession with and subsequent subjugation of the wild, and an ambivalent ideology of conquest has had on the regional and cultural landscape of the West. Johnson illuminates the ways opposing myths and binary understandings (noble savage/“red devil,” wild/tame, utopia/wasteland) of the area defined and still define the way the West is constructed not only in the popular imagination but in real terms as well, as seen in degraded wilderness, decreased natural resources, and suburban sprawl (Johnson 2007).

These lamentations may speak precisely to the idea that the inherent historicity of these films means they are more readily accepted as historically accurate by audiences. In

other words, the use of “history” in these films is both problematic, as expressed by New Western Historians, and the reason for their resilience. Some scholars point out that these films are not necessarily meant to be historically accurate. “It is essential, of course, when viewing a film of such mythic purity and narrative power,” Hutton says, “to suspend cynicism as well as any regard for historical accuracy, remembering that Ford is presenting the absolute essence of the frontier myth and not a history lesson” (1995, 13). This is true, but to Ford, the historical element of his western was imperative to its potency. And to audiences, westerns by their nature are already always historical, or based in history, at least in time and space if not in narrative. “In classical Westerns,” Keller explains, a “seamless, totalizing presentation is achieved through a realist aesthetic that naturalizes information so that it *appears* historically accurate, even if it is not. Despite—indeed because of—this exterior appeal to apparently genuine detail and the monolithic, inviolate discourse of History itself, the Western is the bearer of its own seamless authenticity” (Keller 2005, 241). So by being a western—in other words, by depicting events and focusing on heroes significant to both the region’s and the nation’s past—a film validates itself, serving to further solidify conceptions of a collective culture and bolstering the ideologies seen as foundational to American culture.

It is true that *My Darling Clementine* is riddled with historical inaccuracies, a few of which have already been mentioned, and the details surrounding the actual gunfight are complex—despite the “simplicity” of the story as relayed through popular culture. It may be useful to think about how those differences function to create meaning of the event and the man for audiences. For example, it is interesting that this version of the dispute revolves around the plundering of the Earps’ cattle and the murder of their young brother

James by the Clanton clan rather than simply the possession of firearms within the town's borders—or even the broader issue of opposing political ideologies that is often cited as foundational to the historic battle. It is imperative for the trajectory of the plot that there be a definitive line drawn between the morality of the Earps and the depravity of the Clantons. Apparently political differences are not adequate enough to prompt “the ultimate showdown.” While in real life, allegiances formed on both sides, causing questions to circulate around the motivation of the Earps and Holliday to this day, Ford's re-imagining leaves no ambiguity around who were the good guys and who were the bad guys.

Further, despite its reflection on the historic figure of Wyatt Earp and Ford's declaration that the film depicts the events of the gunfight “exactly the way it had been,” *My Darling Clementine* is based on a book whose author fabricated much of the story and the dialog and was “made up” by a screenwriter and production house that needed a powerful story to sell to film-goers of the 1940s. In fact, because it is based on a work that is itself not based on the real history of Wyatt Earp, the film is—in Jean Baudrillard's term—a simulacrum, a film based on a book that itself had little basis in fact. Even Baudrillard might observe that westerns are the quintessential simulation, in which the *representation* of the West is more significant, more meaningful, than the West itself. Baudrillard might also observe that, similarly to westerns, the town of Tombstone has become the “hyperreal” (again using his word), the space in which simulating that which is simulated in western films and television shows defines the experience tourists expect when they visit. According to Baudrillard, the term *hyperreality* is used to describe a hypothetical inability of consciousness to differentiate between what is real and what is

fantasy (1981). The popular media familiarize the public with both the history of Tombstone and what they can expect when they visit Tombstone. The multiple representations of Wyatt and the gunfight in popular culture have radically shaped and reshaped the original event and person in the minds of audiences to the point of defining the experience—or notions of authenticity and “realness”—to visitors to the town where the event took place. *My Darling Clementine*'s success speaks to its power—as a shaper of the Earp Myth and as a definer of the town of Tombstone itself. The film was pivotal in solidifying the popularity of Wyatt Earp as the quintessential frontier lawman and his place in movies and television shows for the next fifty years.

III. Further Popularizing the Earp Myth: *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* (1955) Comes to the Small Screen

The link among popular culture, history, and myth was more fully cemented throughout the 1950s, when the western—both film and television—was at its height in popularity. *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*, starring Hugh O'Brien, premiered on ABC on 6 September 1955 (the same year *Gunsmoke* premiered on CBS and Frontierland opened in Disneyland). Its unprecedented success meant, according to Hutton, it “was most instrumental in permanently fixing Wyatt Earp as the prototypical frontier lawman in the national, if not international, consciousness” (Hutton 1995, 14). *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* utilized similar tropes and devices as *My Darling Clementine*, was again based on Stuart Lake's *Frontier Marshal*, and similarly attempted to historically authenticate itself while articulating the ideological underpinnings of the Earp Myth. And

like *My Darling Clementine*, *Life and Legend* created a mystique around the narrative that helped Tombstone regenerate itself in that same timeframe.

The series traced Wyatt's adventures from Wichita to Dodge to Tombstone, ending with the direct aftermath of the gunfight. Although the series consciously relied on history as its authenticating foundation, "the O'Brien series was steeped in Hollywood's unique version of western history" (Hutton 1995, 14). Like *My Darling Clementine*, the series was based on Stuart Lake's biography of Earp and was heavily invested in the Earp myth. Ironically, Lake's book "subsequently became the authority for nearly all the film portraits of Earp," writes historian John Mack Faragher. "Acknowledging Lake's biography on screen lent a kind of historical authenticity to these films, but the trouble was that the book was an imaginative hoax, a fabrication mixed with just enough fact to lend it credibility" (1999, 154).

Understanding the importance of history as a legitimizer, Hugh O'Brien made the most of the connection he now had with the famed lawman. "With the exception of Stuart Lake, who wrote the book upon which our own story is based,' O'Brien declared, 'I don't think anybody is closer to Wyatt than I am. Lake lived with Wyatt for four years before Earp died, but I know a lot about Wyatt too. I don't mean just facts, I mean what he stood for and what he'd do under certain circumstances" (Hutton 1995, 14). Like John Ford before him, O'Brien felt it imperative to articulate a connection to the real Wyatt Earp. In this way, he could legitimize and authenticate his portrayal of the man as legitimate and authentic. The popularity of the series demonstrates, as Hutton believes, that he "obviously succeeded" (ibid.).

The television series did make great use of the western myth as well as western

history, tugging on romantic heartstrings of its audience and their nostalgia for the Old West. The theme song for the show set the tone:

...

The West it was lawless
But one man was flawless
And his is the story you'll hear.

Wyatt Earp, Wyatt Earp, brave courageous and bold.
Long live his fame and long live his glory
And long may his story be told.²⁷

...

Similarly, the opening voiceover for the first episode laid the foundation for the promise of Wyatt Earp as the western lawman and hero audiences expected:

This is the beginning of the story of Wyatt Earp, the greatest of the old fighting peace officers, a real western hero. So great was his character and so complete his skill at living with danger that he became a legend in his own lifetime. In the hard world of the western frontier, with all its bad men and outlaws, Wyatt Earp became the peacemaker. As a marshal, he went up against the worst of them. And the stories they tell about him are doubly fabulous because they're true.²⁸

Again, we see the insistence by producers that the show is based on fact. At the same time, Hutton admonishes viewers and scholars from absorbing the series as true history: “Despite its calculated historicity, the *Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* was always mass-marketed entertainment, meant to sell a sponsor’s product, not provide a history lesson” (Hutton 1995, 14). Indeed, over the years, many journalists and historians have attempted to “set the story straight.” Despite these efforts, the portrayal of Wyatt Earp as the quintessential western lawman and hero in *Life and Legend* has survived.

One of the most interesting aspects of the story, however—both historically and in

film—is its equivocal attitude toward law and authority. While reifying the dominance of law and authority on the one hand, the Earp narrative also safely reproduces suspicion and contempt toward a corrupt or ineffective government on the other, through such historical figures as Sheriff John Behan as well as countless fictional characters in western films and television shows who help maintain this ambivalence. In Episode 1 of the *Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*, “Wyatt Earp Becomes a Marshall,” for example, the “good” lawman Wyatt is clearly juxtaposed with the “bad” judge who lets the brother/accomplice of a murderer leave town with a monetary fine and a slap on the wrist. While Wyatt may come across as self-righteous in his attempt to clear the town of its criminal component (some might say he was “butting in” when there already was a capable if not fully “good” marshal in town), his position as hero—and as the representation of Wyatt Earp, widely understood as the hero—serves to excuse him from contempt by audiences. We also see in *My Darling Clementine* and repeated in subsequent films the ambivalence of Earp himself of becoming a lawman, doing so only after extenuating circumstances force him to take on that role.

Ambivalence toward law and authority has remained a theme in films and television shows about the Earp legend as well as in Tombstone itself, which banks heavily on tourists’ desire to “play” outlawry and disorder while celebrating the law and authority embodied in the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral narrative. As the famous battle is continually reenacted on the streets of modern-day Tombstone, subversive components are continually expunged. Tourists enjoy challenging the dominance of authority on the one hand, but also are comforted with the constant reassertion of authority and control on the other. The frontier more often than not celebrated what philosophy and law professor

Cheney Ryan calls the “vigilante tradition” of people’s justice. Vigilante justice subverts the law and order ideal, in which Earp was firmly entrenched. “As historians of American violence have shown, there has always been a ‘vigilante’ strain in American life that people have always found both disturbing and attractive, a strain that does not eschew violence per se but doubts whether formal law is ever adequate to achieve it” (Ryan 2009, 870). Tension between the ineffectiveness of socio-legal institutions and the desire for justice on the part of the principal characters is a central motif in many westerns. This ambiguity is seen in the representations of Wyatt Earp throughout the twentieth century. As the “outsider,” he stands separate from the dominant power structure set up in conceptions of law and authority that constitute those on the “inside.” This binary shows him as critical and effective while the institutions of law and authority are shown as corrupt and impotent. But Earp also embodies the traits of a renegade, a man who relies on vigilante justice to shuffle in the civilizing elements the Old West desperately needed. If he can be celebrated as a lawman of integrity, he can also be vilified as a violent and self-serving bully with vested interests in corrupt moneymaking businesses of the West.

The continued debate over Earp’s character by film and television producers (as well as journalists and historians) may currently be indicative of a pendulum shift in attitudes toward institutions of law and authority. The conservatism of the modern-day Tea Party could find foundation in this theme—as have groups subscribing to both anti-government/authority and pro-“traditional” values in the past—but that does not mean Earp loses his power as a western hero. In fact, the dualism that represents him as both insider and outsider, as part of the establishment and on the outside of that establishment, makes him a hero from many different perspectives. By using Tombstone as the starting

point for these films, a place not yet situated within the confines of society, the audience is already embarking on a narrative for empire and social progress. A former mining camp, the town epitomizes the moment on the verge of civilization, with the gunfight the landmark moment when law and order are victorious over outlawry. Skepticism toward law, celebration of vigilante justice, and the welcoming of a civilized West can all be sufficiently and unironically embodied in the representation of Wyatt Earp.

IV. Reimagining the Myth: Revisionists Take On the Earp Narrative

While some films questioning the major tenets of Manifest Destiny as well as the ideals of masculinity and redemptive violence had been produced in the 1940s and 1950s, ambivalence about law and authority, violence, and the masculine ideal are major themes of western films after the 1950s. So-called “revisionist” westerns of the 1960s and 1970s began to challenge the dominant romantic version of westward expansion, and explored the darker side of the progression west. While, as Hutton points out, some of these films were not successful, others were indeed successful or have since developed “cult” followings that keep those productions that point to a shift in attitudes about the “creation myth” of America afloat. These films were very much a product of their time, when distrust in government and challenges to hegemony were gaining momentum. The “Man with No Name” series starring Clint Eastwood and directed by Sergio Leone is often cited as a prime example of revisionist westerns from the time.²⁹ This trend has continued through the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

Throughout this time Earp has remained a central, if more ambiguous, figure. In his analysis of *Hour of the Gun* (1967), Hutton quotes director John Sturges as saying

“Western characters must not be glamorized,” this, Hutton points out, after his very romanticized account of Earp in *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957).³⁰ Because *Hour of the Gun* begins with the gunfight and moves on to depict the revenge mission on which Wyatt embarked after the street fight, it necessarily depicts a side of Wyatt Earp that is more sinister than previously explored by Hollywood. But even with this in-depth look at Earp’s character, in this film, Hutton argues, “Wyatt Earp nevertheless remains a powerful symbol of the law. It is from that perspective that we observe his moral suicide in *Hour of the Gun*. It remains a powerful interpretation of the Earp legend, and a film that fits perfectly with the alienation and mistrust of a deeply divided America in the late 1960s” (1995, 24).

Star Trek’s “Spectre of the Gun” (1968) is yet another example of the ways the Earp Myth was retooled in the late 1960s. While at first glance not a western, *Star Trek* and other science fiction productions utilize similar tropes essential to the western (not to mention the appeal science fiction and westerns have to male audiences). This particular episode sheds more light on the ways Earp has been conceived in the popular imagination, utopian and dystopian visions of the future of the West as myth, and how notions of violence and masculinity get entangled and disentangled in a western milieu. Because westerns deal with the past and science fiction with the future, the concept of history takes on different meanings in both genres, even when science fiction retools those stories that have been central to frontier narratives. Science fiction not only has drawn from narratives of the frontier to develop visions of the future; it also draws on specific tropes of the genre to offer a critique of the past and the ideologies of the present. As William H. Katerberg argues, “For any redemptive project to succeed, whether as a

historical narrative, a utopian vision, or a social-political movement, it must address the injustices of the past and find ways to work through, overcome, and transcend them” (2008, 35). “Spectre of the Gun” uses the trappings of the western as a starting point for taking on the “burdens of western history,” underscoring the two-dimensionality of the Earp story and exposing the old triumphal frontier myth as one based on violence and conquest.³¹

V. *Star Trek*’s “Spectre of the Gun” (1968): Violence and the Burden of Western History

The American television series *Star Trek* offers a utopian vision of an America predicated on the American values of individualism and freedom, where the projects of colonialism, westward expansion, and exploration (without the messiness of mistreatment, corruption, or genocide) are successful and fruitful. The celebration of technological progress and Edenic nostalgia co-exist in *Star Trek*’s vision of the future. In making great use of the western myth, the series also problematizes some of the central tenets of that myth.

The episode “Spectre of the Gun” (1968) demonstrates shifting imaginings of the Earp Myth already tackled by Hollywood film. It attempts to expose the dark underbelly of both the Earp Myth and the Mythic West, offering a critique of the ways this western hero has been celebrated and of the violence that underpins his story, both historically and in popular culture. In this future, the story of Wyatt Earp becomes a death sentence for the crew of the Starship Enterprise, and their revision of history makes a bold statement about that past, their present, and our future. Called “artistically and historically worthless” by Allen Barra, the episode nevertheless “shows how deeply the Earp story and the gunfight

in back of the O.K. Corral had become ingrained in the imagination of the American people” and was seen by a wider public “than any Earp program ever broadcast on TV” (Barra 1998, 360). “Spectre of the Gun” manages to critique both the ideologies that were vital to westward expansion and the concepts that are fundamental to the imagined West. It also consciously takes to task the tropes of the western genre, most centrally the idea of redemptive violence.

In the episode, Captain Kirk and his crew (Spock, Dr. McCoy, Mr. Scott, and Chekov) attempt to make contact with the Melkotians, the xenophobic inhabitants of the Theta Kiokis II system. The crew is warned to leave the territory, but Kirk ignores the warning and proceeds to enter orbit and send a landing party anyway. The angered Melkotians choose to punish the crew by forcing them to reenact the famous Gunfight at the O.K. Corral—the constructed memory of which the Melkotians have crafted from Kirk’s mind. The crew is immediately transported to what appears to be a stage set for a B-movie western—two-dimensional, without depth or realism. It is a frightening, barren and bizarre landscape, under a blood-red sky—here to be as unsettling as the arid landscape of the true West. They do not yet realize that they will be playing out the gunfight. For now, they only understand that they have been placed in what the Melkotians believe to be the Wild West. “Obviously this represents the Melkotians’ concept of an American frontier town circa 1880,” Spock observes. Because the memory is taken from Kirk’s mind, however, the set actually represents the way both Kirk and the Melkotians understand the Old West. Kirk says, “My ancestors pioneered the American frontier,” to which Spock responds, “Yes, the violence of your own heritage is to be the pattern of our execution.”

The crew realizes that the scene is set on 26 October 1881, the day of the historic gunfight. They now begin to appreciate the Melkotians' intention. Kirk and the crew are to play the Cowboys, the losers of the historic battle and the archetypal bad guys in the American mind. Kirk says, "We are the Clantons. And if this is a replay of history..." "history cannot be changed," says Spock, meaning the outcome of the reenactment has been set. While it makes sense that the crew would play the part of the Cowboys in this scene—it is a punishment after all—the fight also disrupts the traditional binary of hero and villain for the audience. As the audience of *Star Trek* is meant to identify with the crew, this scene sets the sympathy of the audience squarely with the Cowboys—the men typically understood as outlaws, as the instigators of the fight, as deserving of their fate. The fact that the crew is linked in this episode with the losers of the fight serves to create an ambiguity around the purity of motivation of "the good guys" in this ultimate showdown, those men who are widely considered the heroes of the narrative, the Earps and Doc Holliday. If the heroes are made out to be the villains, then steadfast notions of good and evil begin to unravel.

Mid-way through the episode, Chekov as Billy Claiborne dies. This is disruptive because in the historical narrative, Claiborne does not die at the O.K. Corral. The notion of history, then, has shifted. History can no longer be relied on or used to predict the outcome of the reenactment. Spock realizes that "where the laws do not operate, there is no reality. All of this is unreal." Notions of constructed history, and in many ways, constructed reality—specifically of the American West—are at the heart of this episode. The crew's only chance at survival, then, is to keep in mind that nothing in this space is real, including the bullets that would be used against them during the gunfight. Because

Spock is the only character who can maintain such knowledge, he performs the “Vulcan Mind Meld” on the other members of the crew, hypnotizing them into maintaining the belief that this world is not real. During this scene, he repeats the most poignant statements in the episode: “The bullets are not real. They are illusions only. Shadows, without substance... nothing but ghosts of reality. They are lies, falsehoods... spectres, without body.” These statements might just as well be said about Tombstone, Arizona, where the tension between fact and fiction is continually reproduced. Herein lies the critique of the ways audiences have recycled and consumed imaginings of an unreal West for centuries.

The climax of the episode is the showdown. The scene is ominous, with a black background, an eerie wind, an emotionless Earp faction. The Earps and Doc Holliday are menacing, dressed all in black—attire that codes the wearer in earlier westerns as the “bad guy.” Once the crew is able to maintain the belief that the bullets are not real, they are able to survive a barrage of gunfire, unharmed. In the final moments of the scene, Kirk has the opportunity to kill Wyatt Earp, but he does not—a harsh critique on the way violence is glorified in the narrative of the Old West. Intrigued by Kirk’s display of mercy, the leader of the Melkotians asks why he did not kill Earp: “Is this the way of your kind?” Kirk answers, “It is. We fight only when there is no choice.” This show of clemency opens the Melkotians up to allowing further peaceful contact with the “vast alliance of fellow creatures” of whom Kirk spoke.

The lines spoken by Kirk and the crew throughout the episode are saturated with meaning about the significance of violence and redemption in the narrative of the Old West. Further, the episode is a rewriting of the good versus evil narrative that has come to

define the “ultimate showdown” as represented through the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral and the ways the Earps and Doc Holliday are understood in the popular imagination. Situated firmly within the revisionist westerns of the late 1960s, “Spectre of the Gun” reminds its audience of the constructedness of notions of the American West, of the ambiguity of the good versus evil paradigm, and of the destructive (not regenerative) qualities of violence—a violence so often celebrated in the narratives of the American West. Rather than representing the West as the place of redemption and renewal and of the production and perpetuation of democratic ideals, this episode shows the Old West as a place of archaic ideas where reckless and meaningless violence and force were used to impose certain ideologies on subordinate populations. At the same time, the episode underscores the two-dimensionality of understandings of the Old West, with continual references to the unreal, to illusion, to a lack of substance in the ways the West is imagined and represented. The episode is an interesting intervention in the discussion of how violence on the American frontier is interpreted, and of the importance of history to our understandings of both the past and the present.

Unlike other films or television shows about Wyatt Earp, science fiction allows *Star Trek* to veer more pointedly away from historical accuracy to offer a decidedly critical analysis of conceptions of Earp, of violence, of the Old West, and of the meanings of these issues in the present day. At the same time, the episode celebrates the underlying ideologies on which the mythic West is predicated—social progress and a better life. If, as literary critic and science fiction writer Samuel Delany argues, “SF is not about the future” but “is in dialogue with the present,” and, as urban historian Carl Abbott contends, “to engage the present is invariably to engage understandings of the past,” then

“Spectre of the Gun” offers a vision an unfortunately violent past, a utopian future, and a present that can see this progression through (Abbott 2006, 1).

VI. *Westworld* (1973): The Heroic Gunslinger Makes a Comeback

Some filmmakers of the early 1970s continued their assault on Wyatt Earp as seen in the film *Doc* (1971), called “truly awful” by Hutton. According to Hutton, “Harris Yulin's Earp is a self-righteous, totally hypocritical sadist with a delightfully Nixonian vision of the law that is totally self-serving” (1995, 15). *Doc* failed at the box office, which Hutton argues indicates that while there may have been a general sense of anomie and alienation in the 1970s, audiences still wanted to revel in the traditional, romanticized story of the Old West. As Faragher contends, “Although all westerns are concerned with history, no one goes to the movies for a cynical history lesson” (1999, 160). Faragher concludes that “the revisionist Earp films, which clearly reject the progressive interpretations of Stuart Lake and John Ford, have little to offer in their place. Mired in the disillusionment of their own times, they find nothing significant to say about the American past” (ibid.).

Reviving traditional conceptions of the gunslinger as hero, masculinity, and redemptive violence is Michael Crichton's *Westworld*, released in 1973. Unlike “Spectre of the Gun,” a science fiction production that offers a distinct critique of the notion of redemptive violence in the Earp saga and the construction of the history of the West itself, *Westworld* ends up reproducing and celebrating those elements central to the western ideal. In this film, science fiction and the frontier myth are entangled in a fantasyland gone awry. The film exposes the constructed and violent nature of the Mythic West but also relies heavily on those themes that made the western genre popular. While

this film is not specifically about Tombstone or Wyatt Earp, it does make use of the street fight between the gunslinger and the outlaw that is central to traditional renditions of the Earp story. It also sheds light on the shifting and varying ways the West (both mythic and historical) was conceived in the early 1970s.

Westworld follows ill-fated visitors to an amusement park who desire to live out their fantasies in another time and place. Ironically called “the vacation of the future today,” this amusement park for adults (run by the company Delos) offers its customers the opportunity to visit one of three historic destinations: Westernworld, which reconstructs life in the “Old West” (widely understood and seen here as the West of the 1880s); Medievalworld; and Romanworld. The desire to go back in time and space and live out certain fantasies of violence and recklessness seen as subversive to the normative confines of society reveals anxieties about the fast-paced, technologically driven world outside the confines of the park. The different “worlds” are populated by androids that visitors can kill without fear of actually causing harm. This technology also allows visitors to have what is superficially considered an authentic experience in whatever world they’ve chosen. In Westernworld, an outlaw android (Yul Brynner) is programmed to start duels with the guests—offering them a more “realistic” interaction with the space based on their expectations. If he is shot and “killed,” he is reconditioned and out on the street the next day, thus allowing guests to live out a violent (white male) fantasy without repercussion—but also without the redemptive quality that many scholars argue is imperative for the audience to align themselves with the western hero. In some ways, the violence in *Westworld* is meaningless, not regenerative—although the end of the film offers a chance at regeneration for the lead character, Pete.

In *Westernworld*, Pete (Richard Benjamin) and John (James Brolin) continually negotiate between authenticity and reality, between what is expected in the real world and what is expected in this construction of the Old West. Throughout the film, Pete, who, unlike John, has not visited *Westernworld* before, must get instructed on the ways both of the Old West and of proper masculine behavior. As in so many articulations of the West of the 1880s, in *Westernworld*, the Old West and masculinity are co-constitutive. Pete's normative masculinity seems to be in constant question—remedied only by the experiences unfolding in the masculinist milieu of the 1880s West. For example, when Pete orders a martini at the saloon, he's glared at by the bartender and told they only have whiskey. When Pete complains about the rugged unpleasantness of the accommodations, asking "We're paying \$1,000 a day for this?" John answers, "It's authentic, the West of the 1880s." "Well, at least they could have made it a little bit more comfortable," Pete says. "That's the point," John responds. "This is really the way it was!" This exchange reveals both Pete's effete nature—some would argue a result of living in a modern, disinfected, disconnected world—and the ways that authenticity gets skewed in the film.

The idea of reality is brought up a number of times. The movie opens with a reporter outside the Delos park interviewing visitors on their experience. One exchange unfolds this way:

Announcer: "And you sir?"

Man: "I'm Ted Mann. I'm a stockbroker from St. Louis."

Announcer: "Which world did you just come from, sir?"

Man: "Oh, you're not going to believe this but I've just been the sheriff of *Westernworld* for the last two weeks!"

Announcer: “Did it seem real to you sir?”

Man: “It’s the realest thing I’ve ever done.”

The notions of realism and authenticity are imperative to the experiences of the guests—much as they are in spaces like Tombstone. But authenticity is disrupted in the film whenever a scene cuts to the central control room, in which electrical engineers manage and direct what happens out on the streets. This disruption reminds the audience—perhaps unnecessarily—that these worlds are completely manufactured. Reminders of the constructedness of the experience are juxtaposed with the constant encouragement to believe in the authenticity of the place. Of course, the “authenticity” is at a safe distance from any dangers a real western gunslinger might have encountered in the Old West. This distance also works to sustain Pete’s feminized character.

Performative danger becomes true danger when the androids inevitably rebel and start killing the guests. When the danger becomes real, Pete is transformed, finally exhibiting the masculine traits he’d been lacking all along. Many of the workers and guests are killed while others frantically run for their lives. Rather than flee the conflict going on in the streets, Pete stays on, vowing to kill Brynner’s renegade android before heading to safety—which he does. In this way, the film offers some redemption to Pete—but not in the same way so many other westerns do. The hero of classic western film is typically redeemed through actions that come to the aid of broader society and unambiguously place him in the realm of “good” in the battle between good and evil so often depicted in these films. In *Westworld*, however, Pete is really redeemed in terms of normative gender codes—regaining the masculinity lost in the antiseptic modern age—through violence, both real and unreal.

In many respects, Pete is similar to William Munny, Clint Eastwood's character in *Unforgiven* (1992), who has seemingly relinquished some of the supposed masculine trappings of a gunfighter (drinking, straight-shooting, and controlling a horse) only to have this masculinity restored at the movie's end by going on a murderous rampage in the town of Big Whiskey in retaliation for the torture and murder of his partner, Ned Logan (Morgan Freeman). While revealing the underbelly of the western myth, both films reproduce those elements of the story that fit in with the larger cosmology of the Old West—the imperatives of masculinity and regeneration of the hero through violence. As science fiction, *Westworld* manages to expose anxieties around technology and the crisis of masculinity in the modern world. As a western, the film also delivers a commentary on notions of authenticity both in the construction of the mythic West and—interestingly—in the construction of touristic experiences as lived yet distanced, as “authentic” yet unreal, as “wild” yet tidy. In this way, *Westworld* is firmly entrenched in the context of “revisionist” westerns that many argue began with the production of *High Noon* (1952).

The film also provides a filmic experience (and commentary on that experience) similar to the kind of experience many visitors to Tombstone bring to the site. Like the tourists of the Delos amusement park in *Westworld*, visitors to Tombstone arrive with the desire to re-enact the 1880s as they understand it to have been based on their interaction with popular culture. Like Tombstone, the worlds of *Westworld* are simulacra—recreations of, in the case of *Westernworld*, not the West as it actually was, but a replica of the West as seen in westerns throughout the twentieth century. John and Pete base the authenticity of their experience in *Westernworld* on their understanding of the period and the place as developed through their engagement with popular culture. And like

Tombstone, Westernworld must continually create a world that visitors expect. If being sheriff in Westernworld is not the “realist thing” Ted Mann has ever done, if the room John and Pete stay in were not “really the way it was,” then visitors would stop visiting the site. The fact that there is an opportunity for Pete to triumph over the evil android outlaw and reclaim his masculinity—the purpose of the trip to Delos in the first place—is just the resolution of the typical western narrative, the icing on the cake, so to speak. It is the dream of every visitor to Tombstone as well: the promise of playing out the Earp narrative—being at once both renegade and upholder of the law, ridding the space of its savage element—all from the safe distance of a simulated, “hyperreal” experience.

VII. *Tombstone* (1993) and *Wyatt Earp* (1994): Reviving Tombstone and Wyatt Earp

The release of two films about Wyatt Earp and the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral in the early 1990s—*Tombstone* (1993) and *Wyatt Earp* (1994)—reinvigorated the significance of history and the pop culture West and renewed interest in Tombstone for thousands of people who visit there every year. These two films did little to “revise” the genre or reflect consciously on notions of masculinity and violence that define the western film but were imperative to renewing interest in Wyatt Earp and the town of Tombstone for more modern audiences. In fact, these films may be the two biggest reasons for the town of Tombstone’s continued vitality.

Like many of its predecessors, historic authenticity (both in its adherence to the tropes of the genre and in its devotion to accurately depicting the events) is fundamental to the presentation of the Earps, the town, and the Tombstone gunfight in the 1993 film *Tombstone*, directed by George B. Cosmatos and starring Kurt Russell and Val Kilmer.

The film opens with a sepia-toned, fast-paced introduction choreographed to saloon-style piano music. The sequence provides a summary of recent events in Tombstone and the Arizona Territory that lead up to the narrative starting point of the film: the arrival of the Earp brothers to Arizona. Voiced by western film legend Robert Mitchum, the introductory recitation explains that the end of the Civil War and resulting economic explosion brought a great migration west. This introduction is also meant to explain why Wyatt Earp as lawman is essential to the taming of the town of Tombstone and the West as a whole. Mitchum explains:

Farmers, ranchers, prospectors, killers, and thieves seek their fortunes. Cattle drovers turn cow towns into armed camps, with murder rates higher than those of modern-day New York or Los Angeles. Out of this chaos comes legendary lawman Wyatt Earp, retiring his badge and gun to start a peaceful life ... Tombstone becomes the 'queen of the boomtowns, where the latest Paris fashions are sold from the back of wagons. Attracted to this atmosphere of greed, over one hundred exiled Texas outlaws banned together to form the ruthless gang recognized by the red sashes they wear. They emerge as the earliest example of organized crime in America. They call themselves, "the Cowboys."

At this point, a cowboy faces the camera and shoots his pistol directly at the audience—a shot many may recognize from the 1903 film *The Great Train Robbery*. In fact, many of the shots in this opening sequence are lifted from that earlier film. Intertextuality—the complex interrelationship between texts, and the shaping of meaning of one text by others—is important to this film; it is essential to all westerns in maintaining certain codes and significations of meaning for audiences. The borrowing of shots from what is widely considered the first western film ever produced—and the use of Mitchum to narrate this opening sequence—lends *Tombstone* an air of authenticity. Intertexting in *Tombstone* goes beyond the genre itself as well: this opening sequence also connects the

violence of the frontier to modern-day concerns of urban criminality. As Hutton argues, the audience is expected—whether consciously or not—to link the red sashes that identify the outlaw set in the film to the colors worn by gang members in inner city Los Angeles in the early 1990s (Hutton 1995, 30). Wyatt Earp’s vigilante justice, then, as represented in this film (like so many films before it), may be an answer to what seems to be an ineffective and impotent institutional legal apparatus.

If this introduction does not fully convince the audience that the “Cowboys” are coldblooded murderous desperados, the next scene further solidifies this characterization. The audience is brought to a Mexican wedding at a nameless border town. Johnny Ringo (Michael Biehn) and Curly Bill Brocius (Powers Boothe) ride into the plaza with their outlaw posse—red sashes visible—and shoot up the party after accusing the groom of killing two Cowboys. They are impervious to the screams of crying women and children; Ringo even shoots the priest as he quotes “Revelations” and prays for all of their souls.

The scene then cuts to the train station in Tucson. Wyatt (Kurt Russell), his brothers Virgil (Sam Elliott) and Morgan (Bill Paxton), and their wives have arrived by rail to continue on to the boomtown of Tombstone to start a new life. Wyatt’s reputation as a lawman precedes him and he is immediately approached by the U.S. marshal to join up with the law. As in *My Darling Clementine*, Wyatt refuses; he is too excited to be with his family and start a business in Tombstone. (Despite his refusal to become a lawman in Tombstone throughout the first half of the film, Wyatt continuously interferes when outlawry is afoot, pistol-whipping those men in town he feels are deserving of it. A certain amount of sanctimonious hypocrisy is very much a part of Wyatt’s personality, a trait common among his representations in film and television throughout the twentieth

century.) Before moving through the depot, Wyatt makes his family stop to look at their reflection in a store window, the picture of the perfect and peaceful life he's expecting. This shot thus begins a relatively syrupy rendering of the traditional story of Wyatt Earp and the gunfight—with the exception of the final third of the film, which presents the vengeful aftermath of the street fight. In fact, according to this film, it is through this rampage that Wyatt's mythic status as the lawman of the West is developed.

While it is clear that *Tombstone* was meant to provide a more accurate representation of Wyatt's time in Tombstone, the film relies heavily on mythic styling, resulting in an almost cloying interpretation of the events. There is a constant establishment of the juxtaposition between the "good guys" and the "bad guys" through actions and behaviors coded as either polished and civilized or vulgar and unrefined. For example, after the drunk and rowdy Cowboys shoot their pistols at the actors during a performance at the Birdcage Theatre, the Earp brothers have an existential discussion about God and death provoked by the performance of a scene from *Faust* that same night. The Earps and Doc Holliday (Val Kilmer) are presented as firmly entrenched in bourgeois aesthetics while the Cowboys are completely uncouth—with the exception of Johnny Ringo, who is clearly cultured and well educated. Doc and Ringo go head to head in an intellectual battle at a saloon in Tombstone—both speaking Latin. "Obviously Mr. Ringo is an educated man," says Holliday. "Now I really hate him." The enmity between them is unambiguously articulated here, a hostility that follows the two throughout the remainder of the film.

In another cue taken from *My Darling Clementine* (and yet another example of intertextuality), Curly Bill starts shooting haphazardly in the town streets, not because he

is drunk but because he has been smoking opium with the Chinese (the only time the Chinese—who were a large part of the population of Tombstone in the 1880s—are presented in the film or any of the productions presented in this study).³² No one is bold enough to challenge and stop Brocius, not even Sheriff Behan, who claims “this isn’t a county matter; it’s a town matter.” The town marshal finally and reluctantly confronts Brocius, but is shot and killed. Wyatt is then forced to take care of things and take Brocius into custody. Doc, Virgil, and Morgan come to Wyatt’s aid to ensure no further trouble ensues. Interestingly, despite his willingness to get involved, Wyatt is still reluctant to become a lawman. His brother Virgil is the first of the brothers to feel obligated to impart some order on the town. Virgil becomes the town marshal, declares weapons illegal within the town’s borders, and begins to bring some sense of refinement to Tombstone. Morgan agrees with Virgil’s intentions and decides to help him. Wyatt, however, continues to resist pinning on the badge—right up to the moment of the famous showdown. In fact, Wyatt argues with his brothers and Doc as they walk toward the O.K. Corral that fighting the Cowboys “over a misdemeanor” (carrying firearms) is not worth the risk. In this film, Wyatt’s assessment of the situation may be right. Beyond carrying firearms within town limits and Brocius killing Marshal White, the only crimes the Cowboys as a unified gang seem to have committed have been a denunciation of the confines of civilized society, exhibited by their being constantly drunk, causing trouble, smoking opium, and perhaps getting emotional over card games. Virgil counters Wyatt, “You’re damn right I’ll risk it. They’re breaking the law.” So Wyatt, the quintessential law enforcer and archetypal western hero, is hesitant till moments before the gunfight. In this film, Virgil is the ultimate lawman; the promise of an ordered and civilized society

rests with him. It is quite a shift from the Wyatt of *My Darling Clementine*; while Fonda's Wyatt was initially uncertain about becoming a lawman, he does so within the first fifteen minutes of the film. Despite his reluctance, Russell's Wyatt is still the star of this film and still revered as the hero of the Old West.

The Earp Myth is solidified in *Tombstone* not through the gunfight, but in its wake, when Wyatt goes on a mission to avenge the death of his brother Morgan, who is killed in retaliation of the gunfight the O.K. Corral, and the maiming of Virgil, who had been shot in the arm. Wyatt now becomes a deputy U.S. marshal—not to bring civilization to the Old West as has been the overarching theme of this tale, but to bring wrath and punishment to those who wronged his family. Wyatt vows to kill anyone he sees wearing a red sash, telling Ike Clanton to let all the cowboys know, “the law is coming! You tell them I'm coming! And Hell's coming with me!” He and Doc and some reformed Cowboys join forces to administer “frontier justice” in an attempt to clear the territory of lawlessness and brutality. Earp's vendetta ride, as shown in John Sturges's *Hour of the Gun* (1967) and now in *Tombstone* (and only glimpsed in *Wyatt Earp*), depends heavily on Earp's ambiguity as an officer of the law—on his dual persona as both insider lawman and outsider gunslinger—for as one (*Hour of the Gun*) offers a critique of such violence, the other (*Tombstone*) celebrates that violence as the moment when the West was won and Earp became a western hero.

Wyatt Earp defends the dominant power structure constituted by institutions of law and order, domesticity, and capitalism—affirming the basic values of American society. Interestingly, he does so (to borrow a phrase from Richard Slotkin) *in the style of* an outlaw, but not so much by “always criticizing the costs of progress and often

attacking the excesses of the privileged class,” as Slotkin argues the outlaw does (1992, 154). If Earp’s legendary status is solidified through his vendetta ride, as *Tombstone* seems to suggest, then this status is set by both upholding the law and stepping outside of its confines. He uses vigilante justice as a means to sustain bourgeois aesthetics. Legitimizing violence and condemning it, at once lawman and outlaw—herein lies Earp’s resilience.

In the final moments of the film, we hear another voice-over by Robert Mitchum wrapping up the Earp tale. He tells the audience that Wyatt and Josephine Marcus (Dana Delany)—the mistress of John Behan when she first arrived in Tombstone—“embarked on a series of adventures” (presumably after Wyatt abandoned Mattie Blaylock, his common-law wife who suffered from addiction and who, Mitchum reveals, died of a drug overdose). According to this sentimental denouement, Wyatt and Josephine “never left each others’ side” over the forty-seven years until Wyatt’s death in 1929. The audience is told that movie legend Tom Mix was a pallbearer at Wyatt’s funeral—an interesting moment when the friendship of a western film star serves to legitimize Wyatt’s life as a western lawman. The final words, “And Tom Mix wept,” further solidify the relationship between movie star and western legend—between Hollywood and history. They also serve to establish the film’s historicity, and Wyatt’s status in the popular imagination.

People tend to reference *Tombstone* more than *Wyatt Earp*, which failed at the box office but is the more historically accurate of the two films. “Lawrence Kasdan’s *Wyatt Earp* is as self-important as *Tombstone* is unpretentious,” Faragher argues (1999, 160). “Crawling along for more than three hours, it tells viewers far more than they ever wanted to know about Earp. The filmmakers clearly did their research well, taking their

commitment to history seriously. Too seriously” (ibid.). Faragher makes clear that the significance of the Earp story lies far more in the meanings it articulates than in the “messy historical facts.” He calls *Wyatt Earp* “lifeless,” claiming that while it loads “us down with facts, it presents very little of what Earp’s life might have *meant* and finally has nothing important to say” (ibid.).

Tombstone was a box-office success, not despite but most probably because of the grittier personification of the famous lawman. Both films set out to demystify the standard portrayal of Earp, and in the process, create a character that resonated with audiences of the 1990s. Hutton writes that the writers and directors working on *Tombstone* and *Wyatt Earp* “were determined to expose the darker truth about Earp’s career. Their revisionism came too late for the more truthful Earp they presented was not shocking to 1990s audiences. ... Earp’s murderous vendetta against the Tombstone cowboys actually proved a satisfying tonic to modern audiences fearful of rising crime rates and frustrated by legal red tape” (Hutton 1995, 30). Philip Deloria argues that *Tombstone* “reasserts the primacy of white male violence and the uninverted western, suggesting that traditional masculinity is the underpinning for the ‘family values’ on which society is founded” (1995, 1197). As it remained true to the tropes of the western genre, *Tombstone* also presented a Wyatt Earp that made sense to modern audiences. Earp has always served to assuage the fears of a criminal faction that eschewed the rules of civilized society. While exposing the bloodier side of westward expansion and frontier justice, the Earp Myth has also managed to reify order and authority as necessary to the progress of the nation.

Despite the fact that this film and its contemporary *Wyatt Earp* were produced almost twenty years ago, the influence of these films on the ways the place and the event are understood in the popular imagination cannot be understated. In fact, for those experiencing the town of Tombstone today, these two films stand as the most dominant representations of the town. When asked what they think of when they hear the word “Tombstone,” many people make reference to the movies.³³ “I’m your huckleberry” (possibly the most famous line from the 1993 film—spoken by Kilmer’s Holliday) is often invoked along with mentions of “Val Kilmer,” and “the movie” (meaning the movie *Tombstone*). Some people even watch the films before visiting Tombstone to learn the “history” of the town and to get an idea of what to expect when they arrive.³⁴

Beyond setting expectations for those planning to visit the town, both films are central to the ways the town of Tombstone represents itself to visitors. Both films are on continuous loop at a number of the saloons and restaurants in Tombstone. Many souvenirs (hot plates, t-shirts, shot glasses, mugs, souvenir ceramic plates, etc.) bear the likeness of the actors who played the main characters in the films—most notably Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday. Movie posters for both films are seen in the saloons, restaurants, and shops that line Allen Street. References to the films throughout the town of Tombstone and in the minds of the public underscore the importance of popular culture in crafting and perpetuating perceptions and understandings of the town and its history. These pop cultural productions set the expectations of visitors—as well as of non-visitors who simply have heard about Tombstone—that the town must then negotiate. It is imperative that Tombstone measures up to those expectations: Tombstone must “do” the

West better than other western towns. At the same time, Tombstone must also maintain the historical integrity of the space.

VIII. Wyatt Earp as Every Western Hero

As we have seen, the simplicity of the Earp story has allowed for its continued recitation over the last seven decades. But the cultural and social underpinnings of the story are far from simple. In fact, the depth of the story has allowed Wyatt to be reformulated as representing both insider and outsider; both lawman and vigilante; and in some cases, both savior and murderer. Despite these varying interpretations, Wyatt remains the quintessential western hero—a hero whose shortcomings can be forgiven if he continually rids the West of its savage elements. Every hero of western film can in some way reflect back to him. The same is true for the town of Tombstone. Wyatt put Tombstone on the map; popular culture has kept it there. It now is considered by many to be the quintessential western town, the reflection of which can be seen in every western film and television show produced in the last seventy years.

All of these films—from *My Darling Clementine* to *Westworld* to *Tombstone*—inform the ways visitors experience the actual town of Tombstone, and what they expect to find there. These films also, in turn, inform the ways the town of Tombstone lives up to those expectations. Popular culture has reflected the romance the public has had with Wyatt Earp over the decades. At different times throughout the history of his celebrity, he has been depicted in different ways, with different facets of his character coming in and going out of the fore. But the meaning of Wyatt Earp in western lore remains intact. Clearly the man and the event still make sense—his legend easily reinterpreted to reflect

shifting attitudes about law and authority, about modern society, about the West itself. As we shall see in the next chapter, the lure of the Mythic West and the Earp saga reaches beyond U.S. borders to create a cross-cultural space that makes sense to people throughout the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

Global Round-Up!: Tombstone, the Mythic West, and the World

On 22 May 1880, the *Leeds (England) Mercury* printed an article on page one entitled “The New El Dorado: Tombstone in Arizona.” While the unnamed reporter admits that such a moniker might typically connote a town in the “process of decay, that its hills are deserted and its houses in ruins, and that the dead in its cemeteries outnumber the living in its streets,” nothing, he says, could be further from the truth: “despite its lugubrious title,” the “picture is not in shadow but in sunshine. Tombstone is in its infancy of its growth. It has only just sprung into being. It is a germ of prosperity, and from its development great results are expected.” The article is one of the first accounts in a British newspaper of the riches in silver awaiting miners and prospectors in the hills surrounding Tombstone, Arizona. The piece has a number of the elements that Londoners had already come to know of the American West: the extreme temperatures found in the desert (while noting that Tombstone’s elevation of about five thousand feet keeps it cooler than Tucson—“pronounced Took-sohn”), the aridity of the area, and of course a discussion of the gambling houses and saloons that had popped up within a year of the town’s founding.

British newspapers also reported on the fires that wreaked havoc on Tombstone in the 1880s. *The Bristol (England) Mercury and Daily Post*, for example, contained an item in its “News of the Day” section reporting that, “Destructive fires have occurred at Leadville, Colorado, and at Tombstone, Arizona. Losses nearly one million dollars.” In September 1883, an article entitled “American Cow-Boys” appeared in the *Hadderfield (West Yorkshire, England) Daily Chronicle* that clarifies for its readers

what the term “cow-boy” means in the United States. It quotes first mayor of Tombstone and former editor of the *Tombstone Epitaph* John P. Clum, who describes cowboys (as well as editors and “a few other renegades”) as “the classes who principally amuse themselves with revolvers, bowie knives, and shot-guns in that quarter of the States.” The author of the article goes on to further define cowboys as “persons who are employed in driving vast herds of cattle from the grazing grounds of the South to the great markets of Kansas, St. Louis, and Cincinnati.” In an attempt to explain the cowboys’ reputation, the author writes, “The fact that they are employed only half the year in the regular occupation of cattle-driving may help to account for this other fact, that they are given on occasion to train-wrecking and similar desperate diversions. Such indeed is the reputation they have acquired, that cow-boy, as used in America, is synonymous with desperado.” The author then recounts a story about “Curley [*sic*] Bill” Brocius, the outlaw who shot Fred White, first town marshal of Tombstone and known ally of the Earp brothers, on the town’s streets in 1880; had participated in the assassination of Wyatt Earp’s brother Morgan in March 1882; and was said to be killed by Wyatt Earp that same month—according to Wyatt himself.³⁵ The story about Brocius in the article recounts an event that does not seem plausible, as it states that Brocius was killed in Shakespeare, New Mexico, in October 1882 by a man named “Wallace” (perhaps Jim Wallace, a friend of Brocius and fellow desperado) in retaliation for Brocius killing Wallace’s friend “Barter” (perhaps Richard “Rattlesnake Dick” Barter, a horse rustler in California who was killed in 1859 by a sherriff. J. Boggs). The validity of the story notwithstanding, the article is interesting in that it perpetuates specific ideas about the American West to Britons and

two of the names mentioned have direct connections to Wyatt Earp and the Tombstone, Arizona, of the early 1880s, though Tombstone is not at all the focus of the piece.

Three years later, in 1886, Buffalo Bill Cody was invited to perform with his Wild West show at London's American Exhibition in the Earls Court exhibition complex. A number of London's elite visited Cody's encampment prior to the show's opening, including the Prince of Wales, and many more attended the show itself, including Queen Victoria, who stood and bowed during the opening ceremony when a rider entered the arena with the American flag. When Buffalo Bill's Wild West performed for the Queen's Jubilee Day celebrations, the event was attended by an assortment of heads of state, various princes and princesses, and of course England's royal family. Over the course of the next number of years, the Wild West show traveled through France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, playing to crowds as large as ten thousand for up to eight days in major cities. "By the time Cody returned to England for another command performance for Queen Victoria," Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes explain, "his show had earned a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic for its 'authentic' representation of the American West and for inspiring dreams of freedom in European societies that seemed locked into class-based social hierarchies" (2005, 4).

Capitalizing on Cody's success in Europe, German author Karl May completed his two-thousand-page "Winnetou" series in 1893, portraying a western adventure specifically for German audiences, "in which a German immigrant to the American West, Old Shatterhand, out-lassos, out-hunts, out-shoots and finally out-wits Yankees and Indians alike." In Lone Ranger style, May included a faithful Native "sidekick" for Old

Shatterhand named Winnetou, “the stoical ‘red gentleman.’” By doing so, “May had created both a patriotic epic and a popular monument to the Native American race” (“Ich bin ein Cowboy” 2001). With 80 million copies of his work in circulation, translated into more than thirty languages, and a number of film adaptations of his novels, Karl May is arguably the most popular German novelist of all time. As such, “May’s works, since their inception, have generated a whole culture industry that almost obsessively reiterates and thereby reproduces the idea of a special affinity between Germans and Native Americans based on shared experience” (Zantop 2002, 4).

These examples demonstrate that, just as within the United States, the late nineteenth century saw the western myth being exported to millions outside of the borders of the nation, carrying with it notions of, as Richard Slotkin puts it, “wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self-reliant individual to thrust his way to the top” (1973, 5). These ideas are as vast as the West itself, so big in fact, that they have been embraced worldwide. From rodeos staged throughout the world to western films produced in Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, India, and Australia to hobbyist groups throughout Europe to the Wild West show at Disneyland in Paris and Westernland at Tokyo Disney to German-owned Apache Spirit Ranch in Arizona, the idea of the West has been appropriated on a global scale. That the U.S. West has become a global space speaks to its adaptability and salience to people who do not necessarily have a physical connection or cultural attachment to the United States.

This chapter explores the fluidity of the Mythic West, the imaginings of which easily flow among the nations of the world. The chapter focuses on the flow of cultural ideas wrapped up in the myth of the West from the United States to the world and back

again, and the transformations that occur through that process. It uncovers the powerful influence of the imagined West on audiences throughout the world and how those audiences translate and transform the meanings and messages embodied in representations of the American West, articulating both responses to the American nation and their own cultural attitudes and ideologies.

The chapter demonstrates how audiences/consumers around the world have made sense of the western myth generally and Tombstone, Arizona, more specifically through their consumption of popular culture and public space. In an effort to rein in the many ways the Mythic West is appropriated and reconfigured globally, this chapter examines non-U.S. western films, through which international filmmakers convey their interpretations of and international audiences work through their understandings of the Mythic West, and western-themed towns and destinations, built environments that articulate the western myth in three dimensions, utilizing a similar structural apparatus as the town of Tombstone itself.

If the frontier myth is central to conceptions of the United States, and Tombstone is the living embodiment of that myth, then the ways these films and spaces are read, recontextualized, and consumed globally speaks to the power and resilience of these myths for worldwide audiences. Ultimately, the global circulation and consumption of the Mythic West challenges traditional conceptions of the ways the U.S. West informs American cultural identity, specifically that the West's relevance lies solely in the story of the American nation or in the experience of the American people.

I. The Concept of Freedom in Representations of the Mythic West

Fundamental to the power of the Mythic West worldwide is the concept of “freedom.”

Dutch American studies scholar Rob Kroes argues the centrality of the concept of freedom in regard to popular culture consumption in two ways: freedom in the reception

of these productions by global audiences and consumers (as opposed to the forcing of

U.S. culture onto unsuspecting nations outside the United States), and freedom as the

central tenet in representations of the Mythic West. Kroes stresses that there is self-

determination, choice, in the reception of these cultural productions, that the U.S. culture

industries are not wielding all the power. This freedom extends to the ways non-U.S.

consumers of representations of America rework and retool the messages and meanings.

“Whatever the words one uses to describe what happens at the point of reception, words

such as hybridization or creolization,” he argues, “current views agree on a freedom of

reception, a freedom to re-semanticize and re-contextualize meaningful messages

reaching audiences across national and cultural borders” (Kroes 2006, para. 10). While

some believe that the circulation and consumption of American cultural artifacts globally

is an imposition of power by the American culture industries, others find that consumers

of U.S. culture worldwide are choosing which productions to consume based on a number

of different, complex factors that cannot necessarily be reduced to cultural imperialism.

The idea of the power dynamics involved in popular culture production and

consumption is discussed by cultural theorist Stuart Hall in his “Notes on Deconstructing

the Popular” (1981). Stressing that popular culture is not simply either the site in which a

dominant culture impresses its ideologies on the unengaged “masses” nor the site in

which the working classes resist the dominant structure altogether, Hall insists on popular

culture as the site of struggle, of transformation. He says, “Popular culture is neither, in a ‘pure’ sense, the popular traditions of resistance to [the] processes [of reform and transformation of the working class]; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked” (2009, 509). He emphasizes that popular culture is a *process*, a constant tension between dominant and subordinate forms, one in which the categories of culture (popular and nonpopular) are fluid and flexible, as “some things are actively preferred so that others can be dethroned...,” one whose “main focus of attention is the relation between culture and questions of hegemony” (ibid., 513).

Hall also offers a theory to understanding the processes at work in the transformation at the point of reception to make cultural products meaningful for their audiences. He argues that “transformation is at the heart of the study of popular culture. ... the active work on existing traditions and activities, their active reworking, so that they come out a different way” (2009, 509). In an earlier essay, “Encoding/Decoding” (first published in 1973), Hall discusses his ideas of transformation and interpretation, suggesting a four-stage framework in which the process of communication takes place: production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction. For Hall, each stage is relatively autonomous, with its own limits and possibilities. At the production stage, producers encode messages: “The object of these practices,” he says, “is meanings and messages in the form of sign-vehicles of a specific kind, organized, like any form of communication or language, through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of discourse” (2000, 52). In the consumption stage, audiences decode meaning. Different audiences work within their own cinematic and cultural contexts and languages to

reorganize (or transform) the encoded messages in ways that make sense to them: “It is in the *discursive* form that the circulation of the product takes place, as well as the distribution to different audiences. Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated—transformed, again—into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective. If no ‘meaning’ is taken, there can be no ‘consumption’” (Hall 2000, 52). Moreover, “before this message can have an ‘effect’ (however defined), or satisfy a ‘need’ or be put to a ‘use,’ it must first be perceived as meaningful discourse and meaningfully de-coded” (ibid., 53). This final point might be the most important in our exploration into the ways non-U.S. audiences “read” American popular culture.

Within Hall’s circuit of communication, producers (the encoders) intend to articulate certain “preferred” or dominant meanings, which

have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized. The domains of ‘preferred meanings’ have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices, and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of ‘how things work for all practical purposes in this culture,’ the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits, and sanctions. (Hall 2000, 57)

In the decoding stage, however, there are a number of possibilities of understanding and making meaning from that which has been delivered by the dominant cultural apparatus: the dominant-hegemonic position, when the viewer takes the connoted meaning full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded; the negotiated position in which consumers who, while understanding what has been dominantly defined and professionally signified—and even accept that these definitions and significations work from an abstract, grand level—work from a negotiated perspective to “make [their] own ground rules” that make more sense to them on the local

level; and the oppositional position, in which consumers understand the dominant code, but may decode it in a globally contrary way (Hall 2000, 59–61). These different levels of meaning-making by consumers allow for a number of interpretations of cultural productions outside the confines of the encoded message. In other words, audiences in the United States and audiences abroad have a number of different ways of decoding messages and meanings encoded by producers. It is in these ways that audiences find significance and resonance in productions of American popular culture.

In his own discussion of the ways meaning is made by consumers, cultural theorist Fredric Jameson argues that popular culture performs ideological work by offering some sort of symbolic satisfaction, what he calls a “fantasy bribe” or a representation of utopian fantasy or envy. According to Jameson, reification and utopia in popular cultural production functions to both express and suppress social anxieties and paradoxes, “giving voice” to the fantasies of the collective, the “people,” while at the same time “managing” the ironies of hegemony (Jameson 1992). Similarly, Kroes argues that the United States as a mythic site links “fictitious wish fulfillment [for non-U.S. consumers]... to goods sold in the market” (2006, para.17). Here the concept of freedom returns, but we are no longer discussing the term as in “choice” in *reception* of American popular culture. Freedom is also the powerful theme that underlies *representations* of American culture as a whole.

The idea that U.S. culture represented “freedom” was taken up by the U.S. government in the early decades of the Cold War. In *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, Penny Von Eschen demonstrates the role that jazz and jazz musicians had in promoting freedom and individuality as distinctly American values

worldwide. Von Eschen points out that jazz offered America a response to the cultural patrimony of other countries, specifically Russia, which excelled at the traditional performing arts of ballet and classical music. While jazz may have come to embody the trappings of modernism evident in the other arts, its structural freedom and encouragement of individual expression served to parallel the freedom of speech and democratic values the United States claimed it encouraged at home and abroad—sharply contrasting itself with totalitarian or communist regimes. Of course, the fact that black jazz musicians were called upon to act as the ambassadors of American democracy in the midst of the black freedom struggles of the 1950s and 1960s was paradoxical, to say the least. But that jazz was the vehicle through which the United States decided to promote itself illustrates the imperatives of the concept of “freedom” to winning the Cold War. While the Mythic West had already been consumed on a global scale in the decades prior to the Cold War, the fact that it and the United States more broadly were conceived of as spaces of “freedom” was very much a product of the efforts of the U.S. State Department in the 1950s and 1960s.

In “American Pop Penetrates Worldwide,” journalists Paul Farhi and Megan Rosenfeld describe American popular culture as reflecting “appealing themes and myths of the United States itself: individuality, wealth, progress, tolerance, optimism” and these myths account for the appeal of American popular culture (1998, A1). They quote sociologist Todd Gitlin as saying “We [the United States culture industries] are good at producing themes and story lines that appeal to a global sensibility: freedom, freedom of movement, freedom from family, from place, from earth, from roles. And speed—the

rapidity of movement, of images, the intensity of kinetic experience. . . . They want the sense of motion, and the sense of private utopia” (ibid.).

“Freedom” as the concept that marks the representation of these cultural productions points to specific questions around how international audiences are “reading” these productions and reinterpreting them to make sense in their own cultures. In other words, because “forces of globalization have allowed America to project itself more forcefully across the world than any other contemporary nation,” Kroes believes there are “crucial questions of mediation and reception, questions to do with the manifold ways in which people at the receiving end recontextualize American culture as it reaches them” that must be addressed (2006, para. 16). Kroes’s point is that American culture is both crucial to and secondary in the ways people around the world reinterpret the messages it transmits. Kroes strongly asserts that European appropriation of American culture has everything to do with their notions of their own national identity and less to do with their perceptions of the United States. Mary Yoko Brannen has a similar perspective: “I posit that what is missing in our knowledge base is an understanding of the process of recontextualization—how transferred organizational assets, including the notion of foreignness, take on new meanings in distinct cultural contexts. In order to understand recontextualization, we need to not only examine the process of transnational transmission but also develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of host country reception” (2004, 595). Brannen claims that semiotics—images, symbols, behaviors, practices, etc.—“directly affects how foreignness and firm assets are both perceived and received in their new environments” (ibid.). She says that “semantic fit” is imperative to the transnational reception of firm assets.

The idea of “freedom” is fundamental in symbolic representations of the American West, arguably one of the most dominant ways the United States is depicted worldwide. In fact, many of the ideologies wrapped up in the Mythic West—freedom, individual fortitude, masculinity—have come to define America itself. It is true that many see the Mythic West as being a distinctly American notion based on the perceived national experience of the American people. These scholars seem to agree that the reason the myth of the American West works in the United States is that it functions in particularly ideological ways, reinforcing and reacting to certain power dynamics; reflecting, perpetuating, and responding to shifting political, cultural, and social values and principles, as ideas about American history, the American experience, and American identity change. As Brian Dippie argues, “National myths—even more than heroes, who serve as examples—are instructional devices that, indirectly and painlessly, instill in the citizens those values and beliefs that constitute their country’s tradition. ... No other area in the United States rivals the trans-Mississippi West as a breeding ground of national myths” (1994, 3). Despite the contention that the American West is the story of the American nation or articulates purely American experience, the narrative and its ideological elements have resonated worldwide. As Michael Steiner reminds us, “Endlessly malleable for every need, the frontier has far more power as an ongoing story than it did as an actual experience” (1998, 5). And by Patricia Limerick’s account, “the idea of the frontier and the pioneer have clearly become a kind of multicultural common property, a joint-stock company of the imagination” (ibid.).

The worldwide consumption of popular culture productions of the American West belies these arguments. Not only are international audiences and travelers intrigued with

images of the West, but they are also employing the central precepts of the Mythic West in these new cultural contexts. As the arguments of Kroes, Hall, and Jameson indicate, international producers and consumers are making use of those parts of the narrative that resonate the most to them, retooling and reinterpreting them in ways that make sense. There is indeed an element of connecting the Mythic West with notions of freedom and resistance, but transformations and recontextualizations are the larger part of the story. Indeed, some of these productions offer critiques of as well as tributes to American culture. Whatever is going on, these ideas are all very much a part of a discussion of the ways the American West generally and the story of Tombstone, Arizona, more specifically have been transmitted, received, and transformed internationally. The continuing fascination with the American West as a mythic space is evident in the myriad ways the myth circulates on a global scale.

II. The Frontier Myth and International Cinema

One of the principal ways people in different nation-states consume images of the American West has been and continues to be through film. In 1906, the first French western, *Le Cowboy*, was produced by French director Joë (Jean) Hamman (Scheie 2011, 201). A western produced in France as early as 1906 might sound surprising. But it seems that westerns have always-already been a transnational project: Japanese director Akira Kurosawa and American and Italian filmmakers traded plot lines throughout the 1960s; American actor Clint Eastwood starred in Italian director Sergio Leone's "Man with No Name" series—all shot in Spain; French actor Pierre Brice played the Mescalero Apache Chief Winnetou in the German films of the 1960s adapted from the books of German

author Karl May; American singer and actor Dean Reed starred in a number of East German westerns in the 1970s; and Yugoslav actor Gojko Mitic portrayed Native Americans fighting white villains in East German “Indianerfilme.”

Western film scholars have debated the value of westerns produced outside the United States for decades. British scholar Edward Buscombe, like other scholars of westerns, has argued that each western film is more a derivative of the Hollywood films that came before it than of historic events. Buscombe tells us that “The Western’s narrative structure and motifs are seen to derive less from any real world than from the economic and artistic imperatives of Hollywood, each film finding its plausibility in terms of reference in the audience’s previous experience of the genre” (1988, 13). Essentially Buscombe is arguing that (American) audiences’ “experience” of the West through Hollywood westerns is the basis for their expectations of subsequent films in the genre. In the foreword to *The BFI Companion to the Western* by Richard Schickel, however, the contention is that “experience”—that is, actual collective memory of experience, authentic recall of the events that led to the settlement of the West—is essential for audiences to connect to the stories presented in westerns. (ibid., 11). Schickel argues that one would have to be part of an American culture whose forebears actually settled the West in order to understand the narratives of the western. But Buscombe’s assertion that western film is actually the product of earlier Hollywood versions of the West and not necessarily of history contradicts this idea. In Buscombe’s interpretation, “experience” takes on a different meaning. One need only have the “experience” of viewing the West through Hollywood (or international) cinema to feel emotionally connected to the ethos that the West has come to represent. Experiencing the

Hollywood West in this case could have more resonance with audiences—both in the United States and worldwide. In other words, being an American has nothing to do with it. The Mythic West and the western, therefore, can be and have been given meaning by audiences outside of the United States. Given the multinational appeal of the western—and the ideologies perpetuated by the Mythic West—it is not ironic that the British Film Institute would publish the seminal work on what many consider to be the quintessential American film genre.

Buscombe explores the cross-cultural component of westerns in his discussion of westerns produced outside of the United States in the 1960s: “There were British westerns shot in Spain, American westerns shot in Israel, German westerns shot in Yugoslavia” (1988, 51). While these westerns are seen by Buscombe as new twists to old stories as opposed to stories that resonated with the audiences of those particular cultures, he does concede in a later work about Polish western posters that international westerns appealed to international audiences because they included “notions or issues familiar to them” (Buscombe and Murloy 1999, 51). Western film scholar Christopher Frayling similarly argues that the context within which each non-U.S. film was made (cinematic tradition, social and cultural ideologies, cultural belief language) informed the production of the films as well as made them meaningful to audiences in specific nations (Frayling 1998, 10). For example, specifically European themes played a key role in the revival of German westerns of the 1960s and 1970s: the noble savage, the theme of gold or the mighty dollar as a neglected symbol of the implications of the western myth (ibid., 29).

In his quest to show how the cultural context within which these films were made informs the films as much or more than the American cultural component, Frayling goes

into detail about why Germans connected so readily with the myth of the West and with the Indian, especially the influence of our old friend Karl May. May's novels about life in the American West of the mid- to late nineteenth century greatly influenced the ways that Native Americans were conceived in the German imagination. Of course, German nationalism (and white colonialism) is at the heart of May's tales. In fact, as Hartmut Lutz points out, "Even the Indian protagonist Winnetou is remarkably bourgeois and 'German' in character. This comes as no surprise since Karl May casts him as having received a thoroughly humanist education from one Klekhi-petra, a German immigrant." Lutz argues that the relationship between Old Shatterhand and Winnetou is the most significant aspect of May's works: Shatterhand loves Winnetou, argues Lutz, "precisely *because* he is German," further solidifying the bond between modern German and pre-modern indigene in the mind of the German public (Lutz 2002, 177).

Frayling also goes into detail about the "Italianization" of the western, and the ways that Italian history, Italian culture, and Italian cinema not only greatly influenced the production of Italian westerns, but made them meaningful to Italian audiences. "Perhaps it is politically significant," he writes, "that Italy, like Japan and Germany, should produce 'westerns' in which the hero lives on his wits, prefers survival to honour [*sic*], revenge to social morality, and has little faith in the 'progressive' aspects of the era in which he lives—this is an atmosphere of extreme brutality: for all three were defeated nations in the Second World War. 'Axis westerns' so to speak" (Frayling 1998, 65).

It seems clear that while a deep knowledge of Hollywood westerns had to be present, European filmmakers were developing and exploring their own genre, one of critical cinema—using the western as a basis for the formula while deconstructing and

commenting on the ideologies and conventions of the original. Many non-U.S. filmmakers envisioned a more egalitarian nation built on socialist ideals, all of which flew in the face of U.S. hegemony and the traditional ideologies espoused by U.S. westerns of individual fortitude and freedom. These filmmakers were disrupting traditional American ideals by engaging with the codes already disseminated by Hollywood. But the fact that they were using the western film as the genre through which to articulate these ideas cannot be denied. It could be said, then, that these filmmakers were involved in a dialog with their American filmmaking predecessors rather than an outright rejection of American values. Similar critiques were being expressed in American westerns in the same time period. In fact, U.S. westerns had been toying with the ethics of society through the construct of the western hero for decades before Sergio Leone took this moral ambiguity to a more complex level.

These European entries into the western film genre might have been playing off the hypocrisy of the morality play so often seen in earlier U.S. westerns when the idea of regenerative violence was more concretized—although, by 1962, as Robert Warshow observed, “The westerner at his best exhibits a moral ambiguity which darkens his image and saves him from absurdity” (1962, 142).

In many ways, though, non-U.S. westerns aided the progression and evolution of the genre by heightening the violence aesthetic and producing heroes that did not fit easily within the good-evil binary. Buscombe credits the revival of the western genre in the 1960s to directors, writers, and audiences outside the United States. Frayling also makes this argument, stating that the “significant resurgence in popularity of the (American) western film” revealed in the 1967 Hollywood production total (thirty-seven),

“was largely due to the impact of the international western. ...The popularity of Leone’s westerns not only created a commercial demand which made possible the production of large budget westerns in the post-1966 period, but also ... may have influenced the content and style of several of the more successful Hollywood ‘neo-westerns’” (Frayling 1998, 50). Buscombe mentions Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa, specifically *Seven Samurai* (1954), which was remade into the *Magnificent Seven* (1960), and *Yojimbo* (1961), which was used as the basis of *Fistful of Dollars* (1964); westerns produced by Sergio Leone; and the German Winnetou films based on the novels of Karl May (Buscombe 1988, 48). He highlights the aesthetic of violence of, specifically, Italian westerns, saying “Italian directors displayed a fascination with the violence which was inherent in the dramatic tensions the Western had traditionally explored. ... This was developed by the Italians into a fully-fledged obsession, taken to extremes of parodic excess...” (ibid., 49).³⁶

Violence, whether regenerative or purely poetic, is a large component of non-U.S. western films of this time period—taking their cue from the ways violence had been glorified in traditional narratives and representations of the westward movement in the United States. Richard Slotkin argues that “The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation; but the means to that regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience” (Slotkin 1973, 5). Will Wright contends that “in spite of its actual and more prolonged adventure, the East[ern United States] could never match the social turmoil of the West as a context for fiction, and more precisely, as a ground for myth. The

real but limited use of violence to settle differences in the West is simply the final rationale for the transformation of a historical period into a mythical realm in which significant social conflicts and abrupt, clear resolutions can be made both believable and meaningful in a readily understandable way” (Wright 1977, 6). The violence on the frontier translated into stylistically excessive and artistic violence on the screen. Sergio Leone made this approach to western filmmaking famous and its use has been employed ever since.

In 2011, French film students at Ecole Supérieure des métiers artistiques (ESMA) in Toulouse, France, garnered international attention for their animated tribute to (Italian) spaghetti westerns with their short film *Little Tombstone*, a film that uses Tombstone, Arizona, as the archetypal setting for violence and corruption in the Old West. The film is critically acclaimed, winning awards in France, Italy, Spain, Slovakia, England, Argentina, Tokyo, China, Korea, Bulgaria, and the United States (www.little-tombstone.com). *Little Tombstone* marks a return to the aesthetic violence so often utilized in westerns of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly spaghetti westerns produced in Italy but also referenced in Mexican-American filmmaker Robert Rodriguez’s *El Mariachi* trilogy, released in the 1990s and 2000s. (The third in this series, *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, is a clear nod to Sergio Leone and his film *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), and is described by Rodriguez as the *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* of his trilogy (Ebert 2003).)

The aesthetic of violence captured by Leone and Rodriguez is nothing new to Japanese filmmakers, whose samurai films have brought blood spatter and mutilation in technicolor to Japanese audiences over the last five decades. In 2007, a western-style film

was produced in Japan that has been playing at theatres there ever since. *Sukiyaki Western Django*, directed by Japanese horror movie maker Takashi Miike, relies on the aesthetic violence and poetics of Leone's *Man with No Name* series.³⁷ But it also bases its narrative on Japanese history and symbols that draw from Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* films. Its name is even a combination of Japanese cuisine (sukiyaki) and the film *Django*, a spaghetti western directed by Italian director Sergio Corbucci, released in 1966. This cultural mingling is important as we attempt to understand how these tropes resonate with Japanese audiences, but it is also seamless.

Borrowing from Samurai tradition, the film is inspired by the historical rivalry between the imperial family (Genji) and the samurai clans (Heike) beginning in the eighth century. *Sukiyaki Western Django* is set "a few hundred years after the Genpei War," a conflict in the late twelfth century that saw the defeat of the samurai and the rise of the Shogunate (military dictators). Utilizing a similar plot line to Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961) and Leone's *Fistful of Dollars* (Leone's western remake of *Yojimbo*, released in 1964), a lone gunman comes upon a remote mountain town named "Yuta" in "Nevata" where two gangs—the Whites and the Reds—remain faithful to political factions that seem irrelevant in this isolated space. Another key component to the rivalry is the treasure said to be hidden somewhere in town. Each gang attempts to win the loyalty of the quick-drawing gunman, who ends up playing both sides in an attempt to rescue a female gunslinger, now prostitute, and her son, mute from the trauma of seeing his father killed.

The film beautifully melds western and samurai signifiers—gunslingers engage in battle with swordsman well versed in *Kenjutsu*, the Japanese art of the sword—in this story of a moment in Japanese history when the old ways met the new. As the trailer—

which makes use of similar intertitles to Leone's *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and the French short film *Little Tombstone*, such as "the Gunslinger," "the Red," "the White," and "the Temptress"—says, it is an "epic tale ... of lust ... and greed."³⁸ This intertextuality is clearly the result of the desire by some filmmakers to articulate their reverence for other filmmakers they respect. But for audiences, the aesthetics of violence serve to reference notions of redemption and regeneration promised through western film and the Earp narrative while offering visually compelling and interesting effects. The setting may change (*The Proposition*, an Australian western written by Australian musician Nick Cave and released in 2005, is set in the Australian outback in the 1880s), but the story is familiar. With slight temporal and spacial modifications, as well as historical and traditional narratives that make sense to different audiences, the same basic storyline of vigilante justice, quick wits, and a kind heart winning out over the forces of evil survives.

Interestingly, the director of *Sukiyaki Western Django* chose to have his cast speak in broken, clumsy English and to have American filmmaker Quentin Tarantino make a guest appearance in the film. In fact, Tarantino released his own spaghetti western in December 2012 titled *Django Unchained*, which has garnered critical and popular acclaim.³⁹ Yet another example of the ways the Mythic West continues to circulate and make sense to audiences both inside and outside U.S. borders and the ways the Mythic West flows from the United States to the rest of the world and back again.

While many of the western-style films produced outside of the United States mimic the themes of American westerns such as individuality, freedom, and fortitude, other western-style films—particularly those produced in the former Soviet Union—

inverted the messages and meanings of the typical American western to critique more pointedly American ideologies that U.S. westerns tended to espouse. Despite Karl May's popularity in Germany prior to World War II, in 1940, German novelist and social critic Klaus Mann proclaimed May "the cowboy mentor of the Fuhrer" (Frayling 1998, 105). Hitler was very much into the morality tales penned by May: "He was fascinated by these upright noble heroes who came up with strategy after strategy for avoiding bloodshed and doing away with the evils of the world" (ibid.). At the conclusion of World War II, DEFA (Deutsche Film AG) was founded in 1946 in the newly formed East Germany by the Soviet Military Government and remained the only film-producing entity in East Germany for more than forty years (Bock 1996, 627). DEFA was entirely subsidized and controlled by the state, and while there were no censorship rules in place *per se*, all films had to be approved by the Ministry for Culture (ibid., 628). In 1952, party leaders introduced a new doctrine in film-making: "to intensify the 'methods of socialist realism,' using 'positive heroes' and dealing more with 'problems of the German working-class movement'" (ibid.).⁴⁰

In 1961, after construction of the Berlin Wall began, party officials became less flexible—hoping to strengthen the expression both of socialist realism and anti-Americanism, banning films that did not comply. Because Karl May had been vilified in East Germany, his works were rejected and replaced with those that conformed more with the socialist realism party leaders demanded. As a result, DEFA began making *Indianerfilme*, which did not challenge Soviet directives and, in fact, whose ideological goal "was to articulate an unspoken critique of the colonialism and racism that fueled the westward expansion in the United States" (Gemünden 2002, 244). Further, Gemünden

argues, “Not surprisingly, in the DEFA films, the various responses of the Indian tribes to the ever-advancing Western frontier of the United States look like a blueprint for a better socialist Germany” (ibid., 245).

One such film is *Sons of the Great Bear* (or *Sons of the Great Mother Bear*), released in 1966 and starring Gojko Mitic, who starred in all of the *Indianerfilme* and became one of the most famous German actors of the time. The film follows Tokei-itho, chief of the Dakota tribe that has been driven from its land by self-serving and corrupt gold speculators and the U.S. military, as he leads his tribe over the border into Canada in the hope of a better life. This ending, in which chief Tokei-itho announces “farming, raising domesticated buffaloes, being blacksmiths and making plows—that’s our new path,” must have resonated strongly “in the country of workers and farmers, as the GDR liked to be called” (Gemünden 2002, 245).

Apaches (1973) is based loosely on the legend of Apache warrior Ulzana and possibly posited as a response to the Indian chief portrayed in Robert Aldrich’s film *Ulzana’s Raid* (1972), in which Ulzana and his men go on an extremely violent rampage. In the East German film, as tensions mount between the United States and Mexico in what would eventually erupt into the Mexican-American war, Ulzana sets out to avenge his tribe’s massacre at the hands of an American mining engineer. Ulzana is once again played by Gojko Mitic, whose characters offer “a fantasy designed to resonate with the commitment to antifascism, the founding principle, or foundational fiction, of the GDR” (Gemünden, 2002, 249).

Soviet westerns produced outside of East Germany elicited other tropes familiar to the genre while still promoting ideologies many interpret as being in direct opposition to

those advocated by filmmakers in the United States. *Lemonade Joe* (1964) is a Czechoslovakian film that satirizes the Hollywood western, specifically the singing cowboy movies of the 1930s. Lemonade Joe is a clean-living gun fighter who drinks only “Kolaloka” lemonade (the name very reminiscent of Coca Cola) and takes on a town full of whiskey-drinking cowboys. Ultimately, it is revealed that Lemonade Joe’s motive is not so much to purify the town and upgrade its level of morality. He is actually the regional sales representative for, son of the owner of, and heir to the Kolaloka Lemonade empire. In other words, his motives are far less altruistic than the audience is lead to believe in the beginning. The film is clearly a critique of American capitalist culture, wherein businessmen are never philanthropic and always out for themselves and their bottom line.

Still other Soviet western films utilized those themes many attach to U.S. westerns but set these films on familiar territory. *At Home Among Strangers, A Stranger Among His Own* (1973) is a Russian film that takes place directly after the Russian Civil War (which ended in 1922) and is set on the steppes of Russia but uses imagery typically seen in the Hollywood western (a train robbery, bandits, battle of good versus evil). Red Army soldier Shilov is suspected of stealing gold from the government. The gold has disappeared from an armored train car—which Shilov was charged with protecting—on its way to Moscow to help feed the starving population. When Shilov learns that bandits are responsible for the theft, he infiltrates the gang to retrieve the gold and return it to Moscow. Toward the end of this feature, Shilov has captured the leader of the bandits and is getting ready to return the gold to his superiors. The bandit leader implores Shilov to reconsider, telling him that they can split the gold between them. Shilov’s response—told

through a soliloquy espousing socialist ideology and the benefits of community and communalism—is a resounding “no” and his place as Soviet hero is secured.

The “cultural roots controversy”—whether these films can be called “westerns” or not—informs a large part of Frayling’s and other western historians’ projects: can European westerns actually be called “westerns” at all? Are they merely inauthentic parodies of the originals? (The word “ersatz” is used in Frayling’s works a number of times.) Even Akira Kurosawa—speaking about the significance of certain archetypes to certain cultures and not dismissing his abilities to create what many see as Japanese westerns—said “It is, for example, ridiculous to imagine me directing a Hollywood western. For I am Japanese...” (Frayling 1998, 150). Why, then, would westerns produced in non-U.S. countries be so popular within their country of origin? Their popularity—their resonance—speaks to the synthetic nature of the myth of the West, that the myth can be shifted and modified to fit the ideologies, attitudes, and values of other cultures. In other words, one cannot call non-U.S. westerns mere forgeries of Hollywood westerns; instead, one must see these non-U.S. westerns within the cultural contexts in which they were produced.

Of course, viewing all of these films as somehow different versions of the American western still situates the United States and “official” American values at the center of the discussion. Even in his persuasive argument about the recontextualization that has occurred in the making of films within the filmic traditions of the nations in which they were produced, Frayling relies on the idea that the narrative of westerns lies squarely in the American nation—pointing out differences while necessitating the centrality of the similarities. These filmmakers utilize their own experiences, their own

historical narratives, their own imaginings of the hero and the villain to populate their stories while utilizing the vast expanse of the American western landscape for their films' milieux. The stories around the globe are both different and the same, similar in their usage of certain tropes many identify as solidly within the U.S. western genre. Will Wright's categorization of westerns through the twentieth century offers some framework for defining the western film genre. He first discusses the "Classical Western": "the story of the lone stranger who rides into a troubled town and cleans it up, winning the respect of the townsfolk and the love of the schoolmarm" (Wright 1977, 32). He also discusses the "Vengeance Western": "Unlike the classical hero who *joins* the society because of his strength and their weakness, the vengeance hero *leaves* the society because of his strength and their weakness. Moreover, the classical hero enters his fight because of the values of society, whereas the vengeance hero *abandons* his fight because of those same values" (ibid., 59).

Wright identifies four binary oppositions that define the people of the Western Myth: inside society/outside society, good/bad, strong/weak, and wilderness/civilization. These four binaries, Wright explains, carry through all of his categorizations of westerns, but in what he calls the "Transition Theme," "there has been an important change in the relation of meaning to image in the opposition of good and bad. While the hero is still 'good,' the conceptual weight of 'bad' is now carried by the townspeople, or society, rather than by villains" (1977, 75). Finally, in the "Professional Plot," the "heroes are now professional fighters, men willing to defend society only as a job they accept for pay or for love of fighting, not from commitment to ideas of law and justice" (ibid., 85). Wright calls upon the philosopher Arthur Danto in his attempt to analyze narrative sequence in

western film and its relationship to solidifying myths. Wright forwards the theory that “all narratives both describe and explain” (1977, 125). If, as Danto argues, this is true, and “the narrative sequence is the basic form of historical explanation,” then the tropes used in U.S. westerns and those used in non-U.S. westerns are similar because the myth and the questions it tries to answer are similar. The quest to determine the relationship between the individual and society is central to all western films, within and outside of the region on which these narratives rely. But they are also all different. They may have familiar plot lines and settings, but western films produced outside the United States for non-U.S. audiences must make sense to and resonate with those audiences in order to be successful. To do so, the films must, and do, employ the cultural codes and traditions that define their own nations’ values.

III. Le Wild West en 3-D: Theme parks and western towns in Europe and Japan

While western films might be one of the most widely consumed representations of the West—both those from Hollywood and those produced in the nations in which their audiences reside—the Old West is also consumed in numerous other ways. Western-themed towns and amusement parks have been built from England to Japan, offering a third dimension to the two-dimensional imaginings of the American West. These towns and parks allow travelers to live out their wild western fantasies in much the same way Tombstone does for its own visitors.

Buffalo Bill, Mickey, and Friends: Disney Sells the Mythic West

Disney theme parks have become some of the top tourist destinations globally. According to *Travel +Leisure* magazine, as of October 2011, of the world's fifty most-visited tourist destinations, Disney World's Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida, Disneyland Park in Anaheim, California, and Tokyo Disneyland, Tokyo rank eighth, ninth, and eleventh, respectively, while Disneyland Park in France ranks seventeenth. Tokyo Disneyland attracts 14.5 million visitors per year, Disneyland Paris in France 10.5 million per year. By far the most popular attraction at Disney parks in Paris and Tokyo are the western-themed Frontierland and Westernland.

Frontierland at Disneyland Paris and Westernland at Tokyo Disney are based on Frontierland at the original Disneyland in Anaheim, California, which built-environment scholar Michael Steiner calls "the prototype for the architectural merchandising of the frontier myth" (1998, 9). It can also be called the prototype for the ways three-dimensional experience informs understandings of the frontier myth itself. The idea of the built environment affecting experience is central to understanding how western-themed sections of the Disney theme parks and western towns throughout Europe and the United States, especially Tombstone, Arizona, continue to draw visitors.

Visitors to Disneyland Paris can attend "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show with Mickey Mouse and Friends," which is currently celebrating its twentieth anniversary and is the most popular attraction at the park. The park's website tells prospective visitors that "Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, Annie Oakley and the Wild West horse riders invite spectators to take part in Disney's biggest interactive dinner show, where they can relive the taming of the Wild West alongside Mickey Mouse and Friends, Minnie, Goofy and

Chip'n'Dale.” Utilizing the romantic language familiar in representations of the Old West, the site continues:

An encounter with Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, Annie Oakley and the Rough Riders brings the audience back to the Old West. Upon arrival, guests are greeted by Mickey in the festive atmosphere of Colonel Cody's Saloon alongside Goofy Sheriff and the musicians. Guests will enjoy a bar, the 'Buffalo Bill's Store' souvenir shop and a western photo location for a memorable souvenir of this evening full of adventures and encounters. Prepare to relive the fantastic epic of the Far West! Let the show begin!

Despite, or possibly because of, stretching the historical truth by inserting Mickey Mouse and friends into the story of the settlement of the West, the site also claims that this show has welcomed more than nine million spectators since 1992. The seamless marriage of Buffalo Bill and Mickey Mouse—two of America's most popular imports—speaks volumes about the ways the Mythic West is inextricably linked to a consumer, commodity-driven culture.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West has been part of Disneyland Paris since it opened in 1992, thirty-seven years after the original Disneyland theme park opened in Anaheim, California, with Frontierland as one of its main attractions. Steiner asserts that “The transnational lure of the mythic West is embodied in the multitudes who forsake French cuisine to chow down on barbecue ribs, chili, and grits at the antler-festooned Chuckwagon Cafe or who eagerly stay at Antoine Predock's pseudo sunbaked Santa Fe Hotel, where French staff members outfitted as cowpunchers say 'howdy' at the drop of a hat” (1998, 1). While it is “a long way from Crockett's rustic stockade in Anaheim to Predock's enigmatic pueblo in Marne-la-Vallee,” Steiner argues that “both places indicate that the frontier is America's most potent myth and Disney its most effective merchandiser” (ibid., 4).

The western myth as articulated by the Disney Corporation has been equally salient in Tokyo. “Opening on a blustery day in April 1983, Tokyo Disneyland was an immediate success. Of those present—many wearing ten gallon hats and cowboy boots—patiently waited for the Western River Railroad, the Mark Twain riverboat ride, or the southern fried chicken served at the Lucky Nugget Cafe in Westernland” (Steiner 1998, 4). The conflation of signifiers of the American West with those of the American South seems inconsequential, as the overall articulation and sensation of “westernness” are what matter most.

One of the more telling examples of the experience Tokyo Disneyland is hoping to impart on its visitors comes from the Oriental Land Company, Disney’s primary partner in Tokyo and now owner of Tokyo Disneyland. The company had requested that the whole park be an exact replica of the original in Anaheim, because “we wanted the Japanese visitors to feel they were taking a foreign vacation by coming here, and to us Disneyland represents the best that America has to offer” (Brannen 2004, 593). Already well versed in American western lore as well as in the consumer world of Disney, the Japanese flock to Westernland, which, Steiner points out, “was designed to provide crowded island-bound people—especially Japanese men—with the illusion of open space and plenty of swagger-room where good always defeats evil” (1998, 4).

It is clear that the symbols that many associate with the American West have tremendous power in Japan. We must not assume that this sway is purely in reverence to the American nation. Masako Notoji claims that Disneyland Japan is a celebration of *Japanese* nationalism, a space in which to extol the virtues of Japan and appreciate how far they’ve come from the privation of war (2000, 224). Westernland allows for the

appropriation of the signifiers of freedom and masculinity, ideals that have cultural significance far beyond the borders of the United States.

Beyond Disney: Western-themed Towns in Japan and Europe

Disney's theme parks are not the only built environments celebrating the Mythic West globally. Western-themed towns claiming authentic Old West experiences for their visitors have sprung up around Europe and Asia. Modeling themselves very much after Tombstone, Arizona (some actually a combination of Disney's Frontierland and Tombstone), these towns "entertain" and "educate" their visitors about the history of the American Old West.

Tapping into Japan's desire to explore the themes bound to the Old West was Kenichi Ominami, owner of Western Village, a Wild West theme park in rural Japan in a town called Imaichi. Before the park closed in 2007, "750,000 visitors annually [took] stagecoach rides and [ate] chuckwagon barbecue" (Mulroy 1999, 48). Ominami opened the park in the 1970s on four acres of family land. The space opened as a campground, where people could fish in the fish pond, go horse-back riding, and take lasso lessons. In 1975, he expanded the ranch to what would become Western Village, with "all wooden facades, horses, and dusty thoroughfares, as though you'd stepped onto the set of a John Ford Western" (Grist 2012). Takeui Yoshida, head of Western Village's overseas marketing when the park was still operational, remarked that "The Japanese are fascinated with the idea of the U.S. West, the ingenuity of the pioneers, and the freedom and wide open spaces they sought. It's a contrast to the controlled Japanese regimen of living, where space is so carefully planned" (Mulroy 1999, 48). The dialectic of personal,

lived experience in a controlled Japan with limited space and that of the freedom and wide open spaces articulated through symbols of the American West is imperative to comprehending the impact of these symbols on Japanese visitors to Western Village, but also on Ominami himself. He explains, “When I was a child I would go to the movies and see American westerns. . . . I watched *Rawhide* on television.” Of course the Earp-Clanton fight is referenced as part of the park as well. In its own heyday, “Japanese cowboys stage[d] mock gunfights, performing a sort of Far East equivalent of the Shootout At The OK Corral. A block away, a Japanese-speaking Clint Eastwood robot [told] visitors how he ran the bad guys out of town” (Woodbury 1995). In an article by Chuck Woodbury, Ominami discusses his \$27 million replica of Mount Rushmore, which he had constructed after visiting South Dakota to buy props for Western Village after seeing *Dances with Wolves* (1990). In another example of the ways the Mythic West flows outside the United States then back again, upon hearing of the reproduction, South Dakota officials named Ominami honorary governor of South Dakota, and Rapid City and Imaichi became sister cities. Western Village closed in 2007, but ruins of its former self remain, perhaps lending it even more authenticity as a true ghost town.⁴¹

Western-themed towns are also popular in other countries, and are found throughout Europe. One such place is Laredo Western Town in Kent, England. As in Tombstone, and unlike Western Village in Japan, Laredo Western Town presents itself as faithfully representing the American past:

The town portrays the American Wild West, as it would have been in 1860 to 1890. The town has 24 buildings including Hotel, Saloon, Marshals Office, Courthouse/Church, Blacksmith, Livery, General Store, Gunsmith, Wells Fargo, Photographer, Assay Office, Bank, Doctor, Undertaker, Texas Rangers, Mining Company, Dentist, Printer, Eating House and

more, complete with Boardwalks Hitching rails and Western Street. Inside the buildings the decor is all Western, Lighting is by oil lamps and candles, wood burning stoves for cooking and heating, using all the equipment which would have been used in this period. (Laredo Western Town website.)

The town also asserts that, “Laredo Western Town is claimed to be the most authentic in ENGLAND & EUROPE” (capital letters in original). Billing itself as “the one and only true western town in the UK,” Laredo Western Town markets itself specifically for events or to studios that can film there “inside and out,” which “makes things easier” because it saves “valuable studio time” (ibid.). Their website proudly declares that it “has been used for filming with look-alikes Clint Eastwood, John Wayne, Lee Van Cleef, Steve McQueen and Yul Brynner” and can be visited by appointment only. It’s interesting how Laredo Western Town’s “authenticity” rests in the hands of “look-alikes.” Further, that this town is not really open to the public but only accessed via reservation seems to confront the basic tenets of the openness of the frontier and the freedom espoused by the frontier myth.

Another western-themed town in Britain is Deadwood Western Town, located on Wattlehurst Farm in Surrey, and, of course, named for Deadwood, South Dakota, itself a western town on the National Register of Historic Places and open for business. Unlike the original Deadwood, however, Deadwood Western Town in Surrey is a complete replica, though still claims authenticity of experience for visitors. Its logo—an American bald eagle—declares “Go Western: Line Dancing, Authentic Camping, Theme Weekends” (Deadwood Western Town website). The town was built by a “group of western re-enactors” who had hoped to recreate “a typical old west town of the 1870’s-1880’s [*sic*]” (ibid.). Visitors are welcome “on open weekends between 10 am and 5 pm,

[to] look around inside the buildings and meet the towns folk, who love to chat about the history and creation of the town” (ibid.). In addition to regular weekends, the town holds what they call “authentic weekends ... when westerners camp in authentic tents on a field just outside the town” (ibid.). Authenticity is important to the “re-enactors” at Wattlehurst Farm: “All visitors are made welcome and invited to camp over night with their authentic tents on the authentic field, or caravan on the family field!” As in Laredo Western Town in Kent, Deadwood Western Town includes a saloon, a blacksmith shop (“run by Curly Bill and Belle”), schoolhouse, a bank, gunsmiths, a Western Union, a trading post, general store, and marshal’s office. Inside the buildings, visitors “will find wood burning stoves, oil burning lamps, and general decor of how the buildings would have been back in the 1880’s” (Deadwood Western Town website). The town also presents an interesting exhibit of a “poor Irish immigrant’s encampment who migrated from his home land escaping the Great Irish Famine, 1845/1850 ‘An Gorta Mor’ [which means the Great Irish Famine in Irish] seeking fame and fortune in them thar black hill’s of Dakota!” (www.brian-betchley.co.uk/farm/Index1.htm). This is a moment in which the creators of Deadwood Western Town were claiming some legitimate personal experience, connecting with the droves of people who migrated west in the mid-nineteenth century. The town seems to be popular among British tourists. And Disney seems to be the one to trump when it comes to enjoyment and entertainment. One visitor wrote in the guestbook on the Deadwood Western Town website, in what appears to be an unironic way, “Just had the most fantastic time this weekend. My three children thought it was better than a day at Disney!!!” (Deadwood Western Town website).

In the south of France, located in the Bouches-du-Rhône region between Marseille

and Toulon, a western-themed amusement park called the O.K. Corral (“Le Monde des Tipis,” *the World of Tipis*) more specifically references Tombstone and the 1881 gun battle between the Earps and the Clantons that made the town famous. There is even a Tombstone Saloon. Unlike Laredo and Deadwood Western Towns in the UK, the O.K. Corral in France does not declare itself an “authentic” representation of the Old West, although it is a place “where the family can enjoy a return to America’s heyday.” The park in fact models itself more after Disneyland Paris, with rollercoasters, boat rides, and “Splash Mountain.” Other rides are named the Hopi Snake, the Black Eagle, Mountains of the Grand Canyon, Sitting Bull’s Teepee, the Rodeo, Crazy Horse, the Colorado Rapids, and Mexican Twist. At the same time, however, the O.K. Corral claims on its website that it does “specialize in reenactments of some famous western stories, including the gunfight at the OK Corral, which will have the youngsters enthralled” (OK Corral France website). Further, “visitors can also watch the most famous scenes of the Conquest of the West at the Silver Dollar City show area which opened in 2010” (rendezvousenfrance.com). Families are invited to stay on the park’s grounds, “in one of the teepees provided by the park [which] accommodate up to 2 adults and 4 children.” Of course, these “teepees” are equipped with modern amenities “that a Native American would be envious of (kitchen area, electric lighting, separate toilet for each teepee and a site swimming pool); you will not be without the usual creature comforts” (ibid.) The O.K. Corral theme park is approximately 484 miles from Disneyland Paris, and seems to be attempting to satisfy a desire of residents and visitors in the south of France to experience the Old West.

Similar western towns are found in Germany. Karl May's stories clearly struck a chord with the German people, who continue to flock to the Karl May Museum in his home town of Radebeul (sometimes referred to as "Little Tombstone"), which opened in 1928, and to the German town of Bad Segeberg for an annual Karl May Festival, which started in the 1950s and is visited every summer by three hundred thousand people (Galchen 2012). Radebeul is a sister city to Sierra Vista, Arizona, which is about twenty miles southwest of Tombstone. The towns participate in an exchange program in which students from Germany and from Arizona can experience each other. Interestingly, both towns survive on the tropes of the American West, so students from Radebeul bring their expectations of the West to Sierra Vista and their lived experiences back with them, while students from Sierra Vista bring their lived experiences of the West to a town that perpetuates these notions to its other German visitors. Further exemplifying the global flow of the Mythic West, a Karl May museum was opened in Tombstone, Arizona, in 2012 to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the author's death. Co-sponsored by the Karl May Foundation and German-owned vacation destination Apache Spirit Ranch, located just a few miles outside of Tombstone, the museum displays numerous artifacts of Native American life and various images of the Mythic West (Cockrum 2012).

These western-themed towns rely on built environments that are based more on romance than on reality. In his book *The Myth of Santa Fe*, Chris Wilson defines this phenomenon as romantic regionalism, which can be disrupted through critical regionalism: "If romantic regionalism earlier in the twentieth century was intertwined with the rise of the urban bourgeois and consumerism, critical regionalism reacts against the tendency to turn culture and the environment into exploitable commodities" (Wilson

1997, 304). He cites architecture critic Kenneth Frampton, crediting him for extending “the debate over critical regionalism when he charged that most of what passes for regionalism today is ‘cardboard scenographic populism’ and ‘a consumerist iconography masquerading as culture’” (ibid.). The American West as both a place and a concept has found itself caught within this paradox of romance and critique, reworking its own past and contributing to both a collective memory and a historical amnesia that has allowed it to remain resonant for decades.

In his essay, “Prospects for a Critical Regionalism,” Kenneth Frampton laments the commodification of urban space, how urban planners work under the pressure of market efficiency, constructing increasingly similar and indistinct places and buildings with no regard to local specificity. “The universal Megalopolis,” he says, “is patently antipathetic to a dense differentiation of culture. It intends, in fact, the reduction of the environment to nothing but commodity. As an abacus of development, it consists of little more than a hallucinatory landscape in which nature fuses into instrument and vice versa” (Frampton 1996, 482).

He offers critical regionalism as the simple solution, one that emphasizes local particularities in design construction: “Critical Regionalism would seem to offer the sole possibility of resisting the rapacity of this tendency. Its salient cultural precept is ‘place’ creation; the general model to be employed in all future development is the enclave, that is to say, the bounded fragment against which the ceaseless inundation of a place-less, alienating consumerism will find itself momentarily checked” (1996, 482). Frampton’s critical regionalist approach gives us a way of critically examining the ways the “West” has been constructed and represented, especially through its myth as perpetuated in

popular culture, but also, specifically to architecture as Frampton discusses it, through the myth as perpetuated in spaces themselves. Critical regionalism is resistive to these forces. Frampton explains: “Critical Regionalism is a dialectical expression. It self-consciously seeks to deconstruct universal modernism in terms of values and images which are locally cultivated, while at the same time adulterating these autochthonous elements with paradigms drawn from alien sources. . . . Critical Regionalism recognizes that no living tradition remains available to modern man other than the subtle procedures of synthetic contradiction. Any attempt to circumvent the dialectics of this creative process through eclectic procedures of historicism can only result in consumerist iconography masquerading as culture” (Frampton 1996, 472).

Steiner does similar work looking at the ways the built environment makes meaning for people who engage with it. In “Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West,” he states that “Disney realized that the lure of refabricated frontiers rested in their ability to transform abstract concepts and flat images into lived experience. He sensed that architecture, more than any other medium, sharpens vague feelings into concrete form. Cartoons and movies project two-dimensional abstractions, while people *participate* in architecture” (Steiner 1998, 6; emphasis in original). He goes on to pinpoint one of the most enduring components to all of these built western-themed towns and destinations: “Remodeling what was often a dirty, brutal, chaotic experience into the cleanest, happiest, most predictable place on earth became a mission” (ibid.). By creating these experiences for their visitors, Disneyland Paris, Tokyo Disney, Laredo Western Town, Deadwood Western Town, Radebeul, OK Corral “Le Monde des Tipis,” and Apache Spirit Ranch, much like the

actual town of Tombstone, are offering the realization of the nostalgia that makes visiting these towns so important to people in the first place. They offer comforting versions of a West that never really was—or at least one that is far less frightening, dirty, and dangerous.

IV. Return to Arizona: Apache Spirit Ranch and the Romanticized West

Back in the actual American West lies a transnational space glorifying the Old West while offering all the modern conveniences. Apache Spirit Ranch, which lies about two miles away from Tombstone, Arizona, opened in 2011 originally to cater specifically to European (more precisely, German) visitors to the Tombstone area. As a place where German fantasies about the Old West are played out on a daily basis, Apache Spirit Ranch is unique in our discussion of the global West. As outsider, it plays on romantic notions of the region; as insider, it offers entrée into a world only imagined by its visitors. While the ranch recently changed management and has expanded its services to welcome American visitors as well, the initial focus of the ranch was to allow German guests the opportunity to live out romanticized encounters with the American Southwest written about by Karl May and continually perpetuated through both American and German popular culture.

Apache Spirit Ranch owner Peter Stenger, originally from Germany, asserts that the “inspiration for the whole thing was definitely [May’s Native American character] Winnetou. Winnetou was my childhood hero, back when I used to read Karl May books. I absolutely ate them up.” It’s interesting that the owner does not evoke real images of the American West or even Hollywood westerns in his memories about images of the

American West, but German author Karl May, who had never visited the American West but only imagined it based on his own consumption of the stories of his time. Stenger's experience reading about Native American culture as imagined by Karl May was reinvigorated thirty years later, when he "had the wonderful experience of meeting a real Apache on a ranch holiday in New Mexico. We rode out together just the two of us, rounded up horses. It was like all of my Christmases coming up at once. It was at that time that I realized I wanted to experience that kind of thing more often." This is when the idea for Apache Spirit Ranch was born, "with the idea of creating our own thing and making the ranch experience available to other people, taking them back in time to the year 1881" (Apache Spirit Ranch website).

Apache Spirit Ranch, minutes from the town of Tombstone, is essentially a small-scale replica of Tombstone—with a saloon, town marshal office, post office, blacksmith shop, bank (these "offices" are actually the guest houses on the ranch), "authentic cowboy coffee by the fire" at dawn, horseback rides, and barn dances. "Our goal," says Stenger, "was that if we were going to do this, we have to do it as well as we possibly could. Sticking as closely to the original as possible, like a real western town, and therefore creating a journey back to the year 1881 for our guests. Of course, with all the modern comforts of today" (Apache Spirit Ranch website). This final point is reminiscent of the way the O.K. Corral in France markets its "teepees" as similar to Native living quarters but with all the modern amenities guests expect.

The ranch pushes its proximity to Tombstone as one reason to visit, even naming a few rooms after Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday and one building/guest house "the Cochise County Courthouse." They also have two three-course meals named for Holliday

and Earp available to guests. The ranch specifically promotes, however, its links to Native culture and history. As it states in a video on its website,

The 272-acre plot in southern Arizona is steeped in history. True Apache land. ... The guest houses are situated on sacred land, exuding the history and energy of the Wild West. The history of the Apache village comes alive when the Apaches tell tales of their forefathers, taking you into their world, the world of their ancestors Cochise and Geronimo. A traditional Pow Wow with *real* Native Americans ignites the spirit of the Wild West in you (verbal emphasis in original). (Apache Spirit Ranch website)

Authenticity of experience and legitimacy of historical context are imperative to both the owner and the visitors to this ranch. The owner of Apache Spirit Ranch also relies on notions of history and authenticity to market the destination as one of historic and “spiritual” significance: “The ranch is situated among spiritual and historic surroundings reflected in the site’s architecture and design. Not only is the history of the Wild West apparent in the land itself, but also in the careful design of everything upon it” (ibid.). Apache Spirit Ranch’s quest for authenticity was further articulated when it sponsored the Karl May museum, which opened in Tombstone in May 2012. Of course, the continual reference to stories about the West—as imagined by Karl May, who never visited the American West; by Hollywood screenwriters and producers; by filmmakers in European and other nations throughout the world; by businessmen in Japan, reenactors in Great Britain, and Walt Disney—rather than the West itself speaks volumes about notions of “authenticity” and “history” to both producers and consumers of the Mythic West worldwide.

Apache Spirit Ranch is similar to Tombstone in its commodification of the hyperreal West that Tombstone is now famous for. In many ways, Apache Spirit Ranch

offers a more “authentic Tombstone experience” than the town itself (what could be called a “hyper-authentic” experience), which arguably has been compromised for so many decades by its performative character, souvenir shops, and conspicuous reliance on popular culture for its own identity. Further, as an actual living town, with a mayor, city council, schools, and all the trappings of a living space, Tombstone must constantly answer to the needs of its own citizenry. Most important, however, is that, as a nationally recognized historic district, Tombstone must strive to legitimate its historicity or risk losing the designation. Tombstone is confined by the guidelines set up by the Department of Interior and must be so in order to remain “historically significant.” Apache Spirit Ranch has no such rules to which it must adhere beyond those guiding the expectations of its visitors; it resides outside of Tombstone and outside the limitations Tombstone must itself observe. Apache Spirit Ranch also resides inside the imagination of the people who visit there. A visitor remarked on a review site that “All the dreams of living in the time of cowboys and Indians come true at Apache Spirit Ranch. No detail has been left out. The ranch looks like a western movie town, the cowboys are the real thing and the Indians are friendly.” Again, the reference to a “western movie town” reveals the “experience” from which this reviewer bases his judgment.⁴²

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This chapter has attempted to explore the ways the Mythic West in general and Tombstone, Arizona, more specifically figure into narratives of places beyond America’s borders through film and western-theme towns and amusement parks. The concept of the

U.S. West as a space in which people from across the globe can conceptualize their own identities is not so much commonality of experience as commonality of ideologically imagined experience, and ideologically imagined opportunity. Freedom, as Kroes argues, is the one promise of America with which people around the world can identify. The U.S. West—the Old West specifically—has come to signify freedom for millions both within and without the national borders of the United States.

The ideas and practices performed around the symbols of the Old West in spaces like Tombstone, Arizona, are clearly meaningful to people outside of the United States. Masako Notoji argues that “American culture is deconstructed and recontextualized into the everyday experience of the people. American popular culture is not the monopoly of Americans; it is a medium through which people around the world constantly reorganize their individual and collective identities” (2000, 225). All of the examples in this chapter bear this out. The significance of the O.K. Corral, Tombstone, and the Mythic West are maintained globally through the connection consumers imagine they have with these spaces. These spaces still offer some wish fulfillment to the fantasies of a global community.

Tombstone and the Mythic West allow for both a sense of belonging and a sense of rebelliousness, a way to feel both connected to and distanced from something. People of other nations who subscribe to the ideologies embodied by the imagined West are not necessarily imagining a connection with the United States—though that may be part of it. They more so seem interested in imagining how the tropes of the Old West help them construct a relationship with their own pasts and with the promises of their own futures.

CONCLUSION

The Continuing Saga of Tombstone

The city of Tombstone, Arizona, and the name Wyatt Earp have become synonymous with notions of the Wild West. They both sit squarely within the way people in the United States and worldwide imagine the frontier on the verge of modernity, prosperity, and civility. In signifying the “winning of the West,” they also help people make sense of and make use of the ideological underpinnings of that narrative, as we have seen. While the history of Tombstone in its boom years is well documented, as are its efforts to remain vital in the years since, the events leading up to and following the gunfight that keeps Tombstone at the forefront of the popular imagination is far more mercurial. Though many have tried, pinpointing the “real” story of Wyatt Earp, his brothers, Doc Holliday, and the street fight outside the O.K. Corral is a seemingly futile quest. “Almost everyone knows the name of Wyatt Earp,” says Allen Barra, “but scarcely anyone knows anything about him” (1998, 6).

But what really occurred that day between the Earp and Clanton clans and what prompted the event somehow seem less important. The four previous chapters have put forth an argument about Tombstone that highlights the continued cultural significance of the space in the myth of the West, beyond what may have happened there. Over the last hundred years, Tombstone has become integral to the larger Mythic West, and its story continues to circulate and resonate with consumers of popular culture. In its quest for revitalization, Tombstone has had to negotiate among historic preservation, historic integrity, and the expectations of tourists so often influenced by films and television shows rather than by true history. Tombstone is part of wider trends in historic

preservation efforts and heritage sites that are central to an analysis of the power of narratives of the past, the importance and strength of tourist dollars, and the link between the manipulation of history and place. Each chapter within this dissertation has explored a different facet of these ideas, all of which are imperative to the sustainability and viability of Tombstone as a tourist destination and living, breathing town.

First we explored the importance of history to the tourist industry and economic viability in the town of Tombstone. By analyzing the uses of history in Tombstone, we gain a better understanding of the broader implications of performance and consumption of history in American culture. We then investigated Tombstone's preservation efforts over the past sixty years, demonstrating how the origins of those efforts were part of an overall trend in the United States to attract visitors through evocations of the past. Current performances on the town's streets for the entertainment of tourists—while continually criticized and seen as emblematic of the town's inauthenticity—are a seamless progression from the early years of preservation in the town.

Because of the inextricable link between Tombstone and the representations of Wyatt Earp, Tombstone, and the broader West in popular culture, it was necessary to explore the ways Wyatt Earp and the famous showdown have been represented in film and television throughout the twentieth century. Drawing on theories of simulacrum and hyperreality, the relationship between society and law and authority, and the importance of history and authenticity, we engaged discussions on the importance of, not just Wyatt Earp and Tombstone, Arizona, but the West itself in the popular imagination.

Finally, we explored the Mythic West as a fluid space that flows among the nations of the world and its powerful influence on people internationally. These people

have translated and transformed the meanings and messages embodied in representations of the West, articulating both responses to the American nation and their own cultural attitudes and ideologies. Ultimately, the Global West challenges traditional conceptions of cultural identity and of the West's relevance lying solely in the story of the American nation or in the experience of the American people.

The narrative circulating around the Earp Myth has grown exponentially over the last one hundred thirty years, constructing a legend far grander than the man himself. This narrative has come to define one of the most important moments in the nation's history, created "Earpania,"⁴³ helped bring visitors to Tombstone in the hundreds of thousands for decades, and kept the story alive. Tourism scholar Edward Bruner believes that recreating a journey through storytelling gives the journey meaning and is part of the ritual of travel. He argues that, "Experience may be the ultimate tourist commodity, but in itself experience is inchoate without an ordering narrative, for it is the story, the telling, that makes sense of it all, and the story is how people interpret their journey and their lives" (2004, 20). The people of Tombstone, Hollywood, and the thousands of people who visit Tombstone or any other western-themed town have perpetuated a certain narrative of the place and its history while emphasizing those parts of the story that make the most sense to them. The ordering narrative of Tombstone, beginning with the discovery of silver and the town's founding by Ed Schieffelin and ending with the "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral," continues to this day, as people continue to debate and celebrate the importance and significance of Tombstone in the narrative of the American nation.

CODA

For a man who has represented both law and vigilantism and for a town that has been teetering between “wild” and “tame” since its founding, it makes sense that contention and controversy have plagued and continue to plague that story. In this coda, I explore how Earp historians have debated the Earp legend in ways worthy of Tombstone’s wild western past. I end with the ways Tombstone is central to the border disputes that have marked the Arizona landscape in recent years. With Earp historians debunking or rebuilding the traditional saga, battling over sources, crafting elaborate hoaxes or exposing those who have done so, and taking sides in the now famous gun battle; with ongoing strife at the border and anti-immigration groups finding a voice and a home in Tombstone; and with debates around ongoing preservation efforts in Tombstone today, in many ways, what has happened since the famous gunfight is the most intriguing part of the story.

I. Travesties, Vendettas, and Revisions: Wyatt Earp Historians and the Quixotic Quest for the Truth

Earp historians have so debated and challenged the facts surrounding the story of Wyatt Earp and the famed street fight over the years that an accurate history has often been obfuscated by personal and professional motivation. “No other figure in the Western past,” contends Earp historian Gary L. Roberts, “has been so obscured by the deliberate distortion of the record, or so trivialized by mean-spirited dialogue [than Wyatt Earp]” (1998, 1). This makes understanding the events leading up to the fight and what happened the afternoon of 26 October 1881 difficult to say the least and dependent on the whims of

the people telling the tale. Early writings about Earp and the fight glorified the events and the man. Stuart Lake's biography in particular is more hagiographic than historic. Later historians—as well as John Behan's deputy Billy Breakenridge, who wrote his own account of what happened in Tombstone⁴⁴—would revise and rewrite the romantic story of Earp and the factors leading up to and following the gunfight as portrayed by Lake and film producers in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Historian Paul Hutton takes exception with those writers who have criticized previous, romantic representations of Wyatt Earp, those who “viciously assailed the historical reputation of America's favorite television and movie lawman” (1995, 15). Citing Frank L. Waters and Ed Bartholomew, Hutton believes they and others “went far beyond the mild corrective that was in order. Their Earp—a con artist, thief, and killer who hid behind the badge to commit his crimes—was in turn mindlessly copied by a generation of popular writers anxious for a sensational story or too quick to believe the worst about a popular myth” (ibid.). In *The Earp Brothers of Tombstone: The Story of Mrs. Virgil Earp*, for example, Waters begins by telling his readers that his book “is an exposé of the Tombstone travesty, laying bare under the scalpel of her merciless truths the anatomy of one of the legends contributing to the creation of a unique and wholly indigenous myth of the American West” (1960, 3). Calling the Earp story “a fictitious legend of preposterous proportions,” Waters believed—as Hutton points out—that if you debunk the Earp myth, you unravel the entire story of progress embodied by the frontier myth. By making this analogy, Waters was acknowledging that the Earp yarn is as meaningful and profound as the Mythic West itself.

More recently, two books attempting to debunk the Hollywood version of Wyatt

Earp hit bookshelves. *The Last Gunfight: The Real Story of the Shootout at the O.K. Corral—And How It Changed the American West* by former journalist Jeff Guinn (2011) and *The McLaury Brothers of Arizona: An O.K. Corral Obituary* by Paul L. Johnson (2012) have contributed to the scholarly efforts of those interested in telling a less sanguine story of the Earps and the famous gunfight. Their works have received a fair amount of attention from the press, which seems to have a limited acquaintance with the scholarship on Wyatt Earp (barring Allen Barra, himself an expert on Wyatt Earp).⁴⁵ Of course, as Hutton points out and as we have seen, writers have been interested in “telling the whole story” or “setting the record straight” for fifty years, so these books do not necessarily do anything new. They have managed, however, to recenter Wyatt Earp in the popular press. This is a man who has received public attention for a hundred and thirty years. These books and the press about them show that his story continues to resonate with the general public, whether he is lauded as the gallant lawman or criticized as the self-serving, ruthless businessman and cold-blooded killer.

Further complicating the Earp narrative—and perhaps far more sinister—has been the revelation of apocryphal or even spurious accounts by both professional and grassroots “historians” of events in Tombstone in 1881. The first of these was Lake’s *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal*. Upon its release in 1931, it was publicized and accepted as historically accurate, even after Lake admitted that it was not. “Lake clearly used many sources for his information, then credited Earp, while adding quotes Earp never said,” explains Casey Tefertiller. Lake later wrote why he chose to use such a device: “There had been so much erroneous matter printed about the Earp exploits, none ever put down in the order of cause and effect, that I was hunting for a method which would stamp mine

as authentic. Possibly it was a form of ‘cheating.’ But, when it came to the task, I decided to [employ] the direct quotation form sufficiently often to achieve my purpose” (Tefertiller 1997, 333). In other words, Lake had a specific story in mind and crediting Earp directly with the narrative legitimized his work. Despite the licenses Lake took, or perhaps because of them, his book was wildly popular and launched Wyatt Earp as the classic western lawman and hero he became.⁴⁶

Just as Lake’s work had been debunked in the years following its publication, other notable works in the Earp historiography have faced similar charges. Ironically, after generating such acclaim by supposedly shedding new light on the old story in his own work, Waters’s claim that the entire narrative for *The Earp Brothers of Tombstone* came straight from the mouth of Allie Earp has been widely discredited. Apparently, to satisfy his own motives, Waters “could not resist the temptation of altering Allie’s story” (Roberts 1999). This is particularly interesting given his propensity for describing Lake’s work as “fictitious” throughout his book (Waters 1960, 6). Bartholomew’s argument, according to Roberts, was based on “rumors, gossip, and innuendo piled on top of one another until the effect was somewhat overwhelming” (Roberts 1999).

More recently, other prominent works have been discovered to be largely works of fiction: Glenn Boyer’s *I Married Wyatt Earp: The Recollections of Josephine Sarah Marcus*, published in 1976, and *Wyatt Earp’s Tombstone Vendetta*, published in 1993.⁴⁷ Before being challenged beginning in 1994 and then seen as fraudulent (some even called it a “hoax”), *I Married Wyatt Earp* was used as a resource by other scholars and as the basis for films about the Earps following its initial publication. According to Allen Barra, Boyer’s book had been “the text quoted in virtually everything written on Wyatt Earp in

the ... two decades [after its publication]—Paula Mitchell Marks’s *And Die in the West* relies heavily on it...” (Barra 1998, 384). This despite the fact that even before publication, Boyer was less than forthcoming about his sources, telling a reporter at the *Tucson Star* at the time “that the original manuscripts were lost in ‘a messy divorce settlement’” (ibid.). Finally, Barra concludes that, “In lieu of further evidence, what we have in *I Married Wyatt Earp* is a novel with footnotes and with vocabulary and syntax altered to fit Boyer’s conception, however informed, of what Josephine, Wyatt, and others might have said” (ibid., 386).

This is a far more generous assessment than that given by western historian Jeffrey J. Morey, who publicly questioned Boyer’s integrity in an article written in 1994 entitled “The Curious Vendetta of Glenn G. Boyer.” Morey first takes to task Boyer’s 1993 work *Wyatt Earp’s Tombstone Vendetta*, a book Morey calls “so bizarre it stands as emblematic of all that is troublesome in Earp literature” (1994, 1). Boyer claims *Tombstone Vendetta* is the memoir of a journalist working for the *New York Herald* named Theodore Ten Eyck (a pseudonym, according to Boyer), who apparently was in Tombstone in 1881. Morey debunks point for point Ten Eyck’s supposed first-hand accounts, pointing to inconsistencies and falsehoods contained in the narrative. Tefertiller knew immediately that Ten Eyck was fictitious and seemed personally offended by Boyer’s use of him in his work:

I had admired his [Boyer’s] many magazine stories and *I Married Wyatt Earp*, and I told him so. He then told me about his new book *Wyatt Earp’s Tombstone Vendetta* and told me that it came from the memoirs of an Eastern journalist who came West and worked at the Tombstone *Nugget*. I planned to review the book for the San Francisco *Examiner* and began reading eagerly. When I read it, it was such a transparent fraud that I was absolutely stunned. Mr. Boyer had told me that it was written by a top-

level journalist, but this Ten Eyck character knew nothing about frontier journalism. At that point I knew I had been lied to. (Adare 1998)

While sometimes claiming Ten Eyck was a real person whose name had been changed, as he did with Tefertiller, Boyer also reveals in his foreword that, “‘in a few instances,’ he has blended other voices to form Ten Eyck's singular perspective.” And in an interview with both Tefertiller and Boyer with *Wild West* magazine in 1998, Boyer calls the use of Ten Eyck a “literary device”:

Wild West: So there was no newspaperman?

Boyer: There was a newspaperman. There were a lot of people. But there was no newspaperman by the name of Ted Ten Eyck. Nor did he work for Tombstone's *Nugget*.

WW: But in the book you actually said that it was a *Nugget* newspaperman.

Boyer: In the book I actually said so broadly, or hinted so broadly, that it is a literary device that anybody with an iota of sense recognized instantly... that this man was a composite. That's what I intended. (Adare 1998)

Boyer criticizes those who did not see his work as “creative,” referring to them as “morons,” while at the same time claiming that “writing about Earp and failing to mention me and my work is something like writing about Catholicism and neglecting to mention the Pope” (Adare 1998). In other words, referencing his work was imperative, according to him, but referencing his work also opened one up to Boyer's harsh criticism. More confusing is Boyer's own classification of the book as a “non-fiction novel” (Morey 1994). He's even referred to himself at times as a novelist, not a historian (Adare 1998).

Despite these caveats, it is difficult not to be critical of a man who had been considered one of the foremost authorities on Earp history. As Morey puts it, “It is tempting to be flip and dismissive of a book whose Library of Congress classification incessantly proclaims it as ‘Juvenile Literature,’ but Glenn G. Boyer has assumed a

position of preeminence on the subject of Wyatt Earp” (1994). The suspicion about Boyer’s most recent work opened the door for looking more deeply into his previous works, especially the extremely influential *I Married Wyatt Earp*, supposedly based on the recollections of Josephine Marcus as well as on a manuscript Boyer called the Clum manuscript, now understood to have never even existed. Boyer, for his part, has offered only hostile and puzzling responses. As Roberts contends, these questions demand a clear, if not mature, response from Boyer. Instead, “Boyer has launched an offensive designed to obscure the real issues by attacking the character, integrity, and motives of his critics. Boyer has accused them of theft and dishonesty, belittled their skill, envisioned deep-seated conspiracies to ‘get’ him, alluded to their weight and appearance, called them thieves, idiots, perverts, and drunks, and questioned their sexual orientation” (Roberts 1998).

Indeed, an interview with Tony Ortega for the *Phoenix (Ariz.) New Times* in 1998 reveals the vitriol with which Boyer and his wife Jane Candia Coleman, a western novelist, view their detractors. “Do you think Casey Tefertiller is a homosexual?” Coleman asks during a discussion between the two about the people responsible for their trouble. This after Boyer proclaims to Ortega, “What the hell business of yours is it why I said anything? ... This is an artistic effort. ... I’m not a historian, I am a storyteller.” Further, he does not “give a shit about young historians... I do not have to give a shit about young historians, middle-aged historians, old historians, dead historians, or historians who are not yet born. This is my fucking prerogative. I happen to be a literary artist performing.” Ortega remarks that, “Boyer, who has come to believe that the various cowboys aligned against the Earps in Tombstone were likely homosexuals, thinks it’s an

interesting parallel that he, as living link to the Earps, should be fending off attacks from a bunch of people he imagines to be switch-hitters, homos, and pedophiles” (Ortega 1998). Answering the allegations with character and personal attacks rather than with evidence of his legitimacy kept the controversy in the spotlight for years.

Overall, Boyer’s defense seems at best muddled and illogical. In the interview with *Wild West* magazine in 1998, Boyer was asked how claiming a pamphlet he’d written in 1966 about Doc Holliday was a hoax affected the credibility of his future, more serious work. He answered, “I don’t give a damn about the credibility about the more serious work, let’s put it that way.” He went on:

Anybody that can’t tell, if they have read much of my serious work, that it’s bona fide is a candidate for mental examination. I’ve told the truth as I’ve seen it. And let me tell you something else. Mark Twain was considered a humorist. So [*The Adventures of*] *Huckleberry Finn* was considered humor, although it’s great social commentary. But that doesn’t prevent him from writing *Joan of Arc*, does it? Or forbid him. He is the determiner of what he is going to write. . . . So I write for posterity. I’m not conscious about having engaged with anybody in the controversy about anything really. They think so. (Adare 1998)

Not only does he claim he wrote his work on Doc Holliday without knowing that he’d be taken seriously, but also claims that his misleading works were meant to expose what he apparently considered the sinister practice of historians utilizing secondary source material without investigating the accuracy of the research previous historians had done:

But the point is, if I were to say I made both of these up—and we’re talking about an assumption here, I’m not saying this—would that invalidate everything I ever wrote? That’s what you’re saying in the case of the *Illustrated Life of Doc Holliday*, which I wrote without having known I was going to ever write another thing. And it did have a serious purpose. The serious purpose was to prove that the people writing at that time copied liberally from each other without checking facts for accuracy. I

think you'll read that in my foreword. I set afoot a historical experiment, not knowing I ever intended to be anything that somebody could characterize as a historian. (Adare 1998)

If this were true, he would have had to realize how his works would be received and know that he would be considered a serious historian in order to reveal the supposedly widespread practice of “liberally” copying others’ work.

The feud between Boyer supporters (who included Tombstone city historian Ben Traywick) and Boyer detractors continued for a few years in the press and in letters among the various players, most notably between Boyer and either Tefertiller or Allen Barra, both of whom referred to *I Married Wyatt Earp* as a hoax. The climax of this drama was witnessed at what has come to be known as the Showdown at Schieffelin Hall in November 2000. This event was covered in *Wild West* magazine in February 2001 by Bob Boze Bell, but his account was perceived by a few who were there to trivialize what they consider to be a serious situation. Essentially, a number of Earp historians/writers were in Tombstone that weekend, including Gary Roberts, Casey Tefertiller, Allen Barra, Mark Dworkin, and Jeff Morey. Glenn Boyer was scheduled for a book signing at Schieffelin Hall Saturday, 4 November 2000, at one o'clock. According to witnesses, the event got heated when his most outspoken critics—Tefertiller and Barra—arrived two hours late after attending a hike and tour of Charleston, a near-by ghost town. Boyer accused the men of being cowards, threw verbal assaults at them, and finally, physically intimidated Barra, his wife, and their daughter. According to Billy Johnson, proprietor of BJ's Tombstone History Discussion Forum, which Mark Dworkin calls “easily the most popular Tombstone and Wyatt Earp Internet site,” Barra had asked Boyer to clarify a

recent post to the Internet by Boyer saying Barra and his wife were getting a divorce. At this point, “Glenn Boyer, [Tombstone writer and resident] Ron Fischer, Ben Traywick and [Boyer and Jane Coleman’s son] Danny Coleman stormed toward the now seated Barra family and surrounded them in an intimidating fashion. Glenn, Danny and possibly several other Boyer supporters were wearing guns and holsters” (Johnson 2001).

Johnson goes on:

Ron Fischer was exceptionally aggressive in his stance and body language. ...He was very close to Allen, waving his finger in Allen's face. Jonelle, Allen's wife, tried to shake Glenn’s hand but Glenn simply ignored her. ...Several members of our group, Max Roberts, Mark Dworkin, Larry Knuth and others, quickly stepped between the Barra family and the armed pack. I positioned myself between Danny Coleman and the Barra family, as I was most concerned about his unpredictability and his past history of displaying firearms. Jonelle and Maggie [Barra’s daughter] quickly departed this unsafe scene, whereupon Allen joined me in the front of the Hall. (Ibid.)

Morey remembers the intense atmosphere in the hall when he arrived upon hearing what was happening there. “What really alarmed me now, though,” he wrote on Johnson’s blog, “was Boyer’s holstered pistol on his hip. While his coat covered most of the holster, the bottom was clearly visible. ... Glenn would occasionally brush his jacket back to appear ever more menacing. Apparently, the big bold bad-man doesn’t realize that such gestures can, in themselves, be considered ‘assault’” (Morey 2000).

According to this group of witnesses, Tefertiller had been attempting to smooth things over, asking that they all call a truce, but Boyer was persistent. Morey says that at a certain point, Tefertiller became indignant: “‘You say, I MARRIED WYATT EARP is a story. We say IMWE is a story. You say WYATT EARP’S TOMBSTONE VENDETTA is a novel. We say WETV is a novel. Where do we disagree?’ Boyer seemed genuinely

thrown-off by this approach. He didn't know how to respond" (Morey 2000). Then Moyer himself was emboldened to ask about a letter Boyer had written to Earp researcher Robert Mullin in 1977 in which Boyer claimed Ten Eycke was authentic:

"Why," I asked, "did you tell Robert Mullin that Ten Eycke [*sic*] was clearly authentic?" Glenn replied that, "Ten Eycke was representative of a typical authentic frontier type." It was in that sense that "Ten Eycke" was "authentic." I was still puzzled, so I pressed on. "If that's the case," I said, "why, after my critique appeared, did you ask, in one of your responses, 'Why didn't Morey cite the many letters where Robert Mullin and I were trying to determine just who Ten Eycke was?'" Glenn considered me and falling back into the pattern of his earlier "Ten Eycke was real" scenario, said, "Yes, we were trying to learn who Ten Eycke was IN TOMBSTONE." Astonished at the mistake just made and the absurdity of his answer, I pointed my finger at Boyer and said, "But, you're Ted Ten Eycke!" Realizing his flubb, Boyer hesitated, searched for something to say and then finally muttered, "Morey you are a hopeless case!" (Morey 2000).

Finally, despite being unable to defend himself, Boyer nonetheless said he'd take the fight to his grave. By these accounts, it had been an incredibly tense and at times threatening afternoon, one in which Allen Barra and his family felt physically vulnerable and in which Boyer refused to back down and take responsibility for his actions. Johnson put the day in perspective by criticizing Bell's report of the accounts: "Contrary to the True West article written by Bob Boze Bell in the winter edition portraying the Scheffelin Hall event in a facetious and light-hearted mode, this was a very dangerous situation. Arrests could have, and probably should have, been made at this armed attempt at intimidation of the Allen Barra family" (Johnson 2001).

Tefertiller helps put Boyer's actions in the context of the field of history:

On one side, it is about the Boyer personality cult; on the other it is about truth in history. Boyer is not facing one person: he is facing off against the present and the future...For many, we see this whole situation virtually as good against evil. What Glenn Boyer has done is fabricate history, then try to cover up his fraud with horrendous personal attacks on those who

questioned him. . . . What Boyer has done is wrong in all regards. It is wrong to fabricate history; it is wrong to fabricate outrageous attacks against others. I really see no middle ground. Trying to serve as a peacemaker between good and evil is a difficult situation, particularly when evil flat-out refuses. (Tefertiller 2000).

It may be little wonder that, just as in Wyatt's time, feuds like these continue to take place in and about Tombstone, Arizona. Wyatt's life was beleaguered by such distortion during his own day; Tombstone's current performance of the events in October 1881 is still criticized as inauthentic. Earp historians lament the fact, however, that the field of history—especially that of outlaw-lawman history, which continually must legitimize itself—has been plagued by such seemingly purposeful distortions of the facts. It is also intriguing that these men become so impassioned, so involved, with Wyatt Earp, as we have seen with Lake and Waters and others, and with each other's work, to the point of heckling and almost coming to blows.

II. Vendettas and Vigilante Justice at the Border

Mirroring the battles taking place over Wyatt Earp and the gunfight has been the battle at the U.S.-Mexico border currently taking place just south of Tombstone. Calls for reinforced barriers to keep Mexican and Central American immigrants from illegally crossing the border have reached a fevered pitch in the last ten years and Tombstone is central to this ongoing dispute. The border between the United States and Mexico just thirty miles south of Tombstone is hotly contested; it's no surprise that issues surrounding "illegal" immigration and other illegal activity have found a home in this almost-border town. As the epitome of the Wild West of the late nineteenth century, Tombstone also has

come to symbolize the New West, a place characterized as inhabited by former urbanites whose connection to the region is through recreation and entertainment—although they are unlikely to position themselves in those terms. While the Mythic West has been utilized by film producers, re-enactors, hobbyists, businessmen, advertisers, marketers, sports fans, and everything in between to play on the fantasy of freedom and individual fortitude, Tombstone and its home state of Arizona have become central to notions of a closed and militaristic space unwelcoming to those seeking to make the dreams of the imagined West—of the imagined America—a reality.

The state of Arizona received international attention when its legislature passed and its governor signed into law Arizona Senate Bill 1070, the nation's strictest anti-immigration measure in recent U.S. history, on 23 April 2010. Probably the most condemned portion of the bill is that it theoretically allows law enforcement to stop people believed to be undocumented and demand proof of status without due cause. While Arizona SB 2162, which passed a week later, made it clear that police officers could check immigrant status only during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, the law received intense criticism and Arizona dealt with an almost immediate backlash principally through boycotts of the state by would-be visitors and conventioners.

Tombstone is in many ways at the crossroads of the immigration controversy. The border patrol militia group the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps (MCDC) was founded by Chris Simcox and Carmen Mercer in Tombstone, Arizona, in 2002. Simcox's initial organization was called Civil Homeland Defense, a Tombstone-based vigilante militia group that "he brags has captured more than 5,000 Mexicans and Central Americans who entered the country without visas" (Holthouse 2005). In December 2004, Simcox teamed

with Jim Gilchrist, who already headed up an organization called California Coalition for Immigration Reform, to form the Minuteman Project. While the national Minuteman Project disbanded in 2007, local chapters continue to work in their efforts to “secure” the border.

Chris Simcox is now a local celebrity. After a failed marriage in Los Angeles, he arrived in Tombstone in October 2002—no doubt drawn to the town by its popular cultural identity as a place where vigilante justice prevails—and has since become one of the best-known spokesmen for the American anti-immigrant movement. After working for a while as a gunfight show performer, he bought and became editor of the (now defunct) *Tombstone Tumbleweed* as a forum for his anti-immigration sentiments.

“ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!” he declared on the *Tumbleweed*’s front page in October 2002.

“A PUBLIC CALL TO ARMS! CITIZENS BORDER PATROL MILITIA NOW FORMING!” (Blumenthal 2003). His “call to arms” attracted the attention of Tombstone residents and people around the country, who carried pistols and donned baseball caps “emblazoned with the American flag” (ibid.). The group would patrol the area between Tombstone and Mexico, “searching for people who look like illegal immigrants. When suspected illegals are caught, Simcox says, they are ‘humanely’ placed under citizen’s arrest and turned over to the U.S. Border Patrol” (ibid.). But Simcox was never himself off the radar of local law enforcement: “In January 2003, while on patrol with Civil Homeland Defense, Simcox was arrested by federal park rangers for illegally carrying a .45-caliber semi-automatic handgun in a national park. Also in Simcox’s possession at the time of that arrest, according to police records, were a document entitled ‘Mission Plan,’ a police scanner, two walkie-talkies, and a toy figure of Wyatt Earp on horseback”

(Buchanan and Holthouse 2005). Simcox obtained national attention in 2010 when he ran against John McCain for U.S. Senate but then went on the lamb that same year to avoid being served an order of protection from his ex-wife. Despite loud criticism from civil-rights groups and all of the negative press, the group survives, now under the control of co-founder Carmen Mercer.

Carmen Mercer is a German immigrant who settled in Tombstone, Arizona, in 1992 shortly after divorcing her soldier husband. She became a U.S. citizen only after being asked to leave a local planning committee in Arizona when it was discovered that she was not. She was naturalized in 1999, almost twenty-five years after coming to the United States. She started working at the O.K. Café in 1993 and bought the restaurant in 1998, solidifying her place in the historic district and in the lore of Tombstone. She became involved with Chris Simcox in 2001 after seeing his “Enough is Enough” editorial. She says she became aware of the problems of illegal immigration only after Simcox enlightened her:

I would come home from Sierra Vista after doing my shopping at night and I would see hundreds of people walking along the San Pedro River, thinking they were tourists.... I met Chris Simcox and told him what I had seen, and he said, “You can’t really think those are tourists. Those were illegal aliens that just broke into our country.” (Lehrer 2010)

Simcox’s and Mercer’s connection was instant and they founded the Minuteman project together that same year. She has stood by Simcox over the years (there are rumors that they were a couple for a while) and contributed one thousand dollars to Simcox’s Senate campaign in 2009 (Huffington Post 2010). In 2009, she self-published a book, *America: De-Fence-Less*, in which she credits Simcox for motivating her to work against

illegal immigration: “[Simcox’s] words about our border insecurity and what needed to be done truly inspired me. From a two-person operation, we grew eventually into 12,000 volunteers in several states. Truly amazing, and proof that when Americans set their mind to do something, we can do it!” (Mercer 2009, acknowledgments).

Like Simcox, Mercer’s efforts have not been without controversy. In 2009, she was named by the Arizona attorney general as part of a property tax scam that bilked victims out of \$189 each for a property-tax reduction. After receiving hundreds of complaints about the scam, the AG filed a suit against the parties he says were involved, including Mercer, who purportedly owned the post office box used in the solicitation. Mercer claimed that she opened the P.O. box “for a friend,” and has cooperated with the attorney general’s office by turning over more than one thousand responses to the scam (Lemons 2009).

In March 2010, Mercer was widely criticized for an e-mail message she sent out to MCDC members across the country, an “urgent alert” that encouraged them to come to the border “locked and loaded” prepared to “forcefully engage” with the “criminals” who make it across the border:

President Obama and John McCain have left us no choice—this March we return to the border locked, loaded and ready to stop each and every individual we encounter along the frontier that is now more dangerous than the frontier of Afghanistan ... This operation will not be for the faint of heart. MCDC volunteers will work under an entire different SOP [standard operating procedure]; we will approach our duty as citizens as we should—we have a zero tolerance for any and all violations of our border and we will forcefully engage, detain, and defend our lives and country from the criminals who trample over our culture and laws. Long arms will be allowed and frankly, encouraged. (Scherr 2010b)

Merely a week later, on 26 March, Mercer disbanded the national MCDC, claiming she had received so many responses to her call to arms e-mail that seemed overly enthusiastic about the prospect of shooting people who attempted to cross into the United States from Mexico. She felt this exuberance was indicative of both the frustration many Americans felt at the lack of action on the part of the state and federal governments and the possibility that people would use any means necessary. Mercer denies that she meant for members to come to the border really locked and loaded, saying that that's not what the group was all about. Nonetheless, the enthusiasm on the part of some members and the criticism on the part of civil-rights groups prompted the disbandment of the MCDC. Some critics also believe she disbanded the group among allegations of fiscal mismanagement (Scherr 2010a). Mercer encouraged members to continue in their efforts and to remain committed to more localized MCDC chapters. "She said these local chapters are to follow the same guidelines as national members of MCDC, which solely consist of reporting suspicious border activity to law enforcement and never physically confronting illegal immigrants" (Lehrer 2010).

Mercer's and Simcox's efforts reveal an underbelly of Tombstone that is perhaps the most exacting quality of its public identity: vigilante justice. Despite the 1881 gun fight being revered as a moment when civilization finally came to the American West, it has been the area's "wildness" that continues to draw the attention of tourists for decades. It is not necessarily far-reaching. As Katherine Benton-Cohen reminds us, "Clear away the smoke from the OK Corral and a different Tombstone comes into view. The Saturday-matinee version has shaped popular understandings of the American West for nearly a hundred years. Yet Tombstone's real history resides firmly in a borderland world far more

complex than a simple division between good guys and bad guys” (Benton-Cohen 2009, 78).

III. Looking Ahead

Indeed, the contestations within Earp historiography and those seen at the border follow in a long history of disputes in the space that we call Tombstone, Arizona. An incredibly violent thirty seconds in October 1881 have come to define Tombstone and Wyatt Earp more than a century later. It is perhaps all of these contestations that help the man and the place remain vibrant spaces of interest and intrigue. The passion that Earp historians reveal in their verve to tell the story reflects the continued infatuation with the Mythic West both in the United States and around the world. Their shouts of authenticity and historical accuracy echo those critics have been lobbing at the city of Tombstone as a tourist destination for decades. These writers and those involved in the Minutemen project seem to be metaphorically performing the mythic battle fought between the Earps and the Clantons a century earlier. They are replaying and reinforcing ideas about white masculinity, violence, and freedom that underpin the western myth itself and that get played out daily by re-enactors and tourists on the dusty streets of Tombstone.

Violence and wildness are central to Tombstone’s existence and viability as a tourist destination. Richard Slotkin argues that “In American mythogenesis the founding fathers were not those eighteenth-century gentlemen who composed a nation at Philadelphia. Rather, they were those who...tore violently a nation from implacable and opulent wilderness” (Slotkin 1973, 5). As a result, “Regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring

metaphor of the American experience” (ibid.). Violence and wildness are crucial to Tombstone’s public identity. It makes sense that these battles take place in Tombstone, Arizona, a town whose vitality is inextricably linked to constructed notions of its wild past.

NOTES

1. In 1850, Frederick Brunckow joined the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company, a Cincinnati-based company that brought Brunckow west. Eight years later, Brunckow struck out on his own to develop his own mine, the San Pedro Silver Mine, located approximately eight miles from where Tombstone would be founded a little more than ten years later. Brunckow was discovered murdered in his cabin—the Brunckow Cabin, a site infamous for connections to a number of murdered men and a current site for ghost tours. See William B. Shillingberg, *Tombstone, A.T.: A History of Early Mining, Milling, and Mayhem* (Spokane, Wash.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1999).
2. Famous Cowboys in this area in this era include Curly Bill Brocius and Johnny Ringo.
3. See Dydia DeLyser, “Authenticity on the Ground: Engaging the Past in a California Ghost Town,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 89, no. 4 (Dec., 1999), pp.602–632. See also Erik Cohen, “Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* vol. 15, 1988, 371-386; Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976)
4. See www.helldoradodays.com; tombstonebirdcage.com; and tombstoneaz.net.
5. See Doc Holliday’s Gunfight Palace website, www.gunfightpalace.com.
6. According to former Tombstone City Historian Ben Traywick, “Lester Moore was employed as a Wells, Fargo Co. station agent in the border town of Naco. Hank Dunstan showed up to claim a package one afternoon. He received it, but it was thoroughly mangled. An argument ensued, and both Moore and Dunstan reached for their six shooters. When the smoke cleared, Les Moore lay dead behind his window with four .44 slugs in his chest. Dunstan, too, lay dying, a hole blasted through his ribs by the one shot Moore had been able to get off before he collapsed. Les Moore was given a space in Boothill and an epitaph that has made him famous: ‘HERE LIES LESTER MOORE, FOUR SLUGS FROM A 44, NO LES NO MORE.’ There is no evidence to indicate where Dunstan was buried.” Ben Traywick, “Tombstone’s Cemetery: Boothill,” *Wild West*, 12 June 2006.
7. The Cochise County census of 1882 put Tombstone’s population at 5,300; the *Tucson and Tombstone General and Business Directory* set the population at around 6,300; and an Arizona business directory estimated the population to be 6,000. Eric L. Clemens, *After the Boom in Tombstone and Jerome, Arizona: Decline in Western Resource Towns* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 135. See also Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans*, 71.
8. These two hangings resulted in the death of seven men. The first of these hangings, which occurred on 28 March 1884, was of five men convicted of murdering three men

and a woman during the Bisbee Massacre of 1883. The five men were Daniel Dowd, Omer W. “Red” Sample, James “Tex” Howard, William “Bill” Delaney, Daniel Kelly. “Old West Legends,” www.legendsofamerica.com, accessed 25 January 2013. The second hanging, on 16 November 1900, was of brothers William and Thomas Lee Halderman, who had been convicted of killing Constable Chester L. Ainsworth and wounding his deputy Teddy Moore in a brief gunfight in the Chiricahua Mountains in 1899. See R. Michael Wilson, *Legal Executions in the Western Territories, 1847–1911* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2010), 42.

9. Major Wolcott’s “Regulators,” who worked out of the Powder River area of Wyoming from 1887 to 1892, were known as the “Red Sash Gang” and did in fact wear red sashes. They had no connection to the “cow-boys” in Tombstone.

10. For Helldorado Days and the birth of Tombstone tourism, see Kevin Britz, “‘A True to Life Reproduction’: The Origin’s of Tombstone’s Helldorado Celebration,” *Journal of Arizona History*, vol. 22 (Winter 2001), pp. 369-408.

11. Pierre Bourdieu explores the connection between “taste” and the maintenance of class hierarchies and hegemonic power relations. Bourdieu argues that the class distinctions of the economy produce the symbolic distinctions of culture, which in turn legitimate the class distinctions that produced them. He demonstrates how consumption of cultural objects—how “taste” for certain cultural practices and productions (like going to museums or heritage sites)—reveals and reproduces the class system. His project is to show how taste and aesthetics, far from being innate to a particular object or a particular practice, are actually learned through the socializing institutions of the education system and social upbringing. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

12. See Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, Critical Perspectives on the Past series (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), for an in depth exploration into the ways history museums, especially “open air” history museums, Disneyland and EPCOT Center, and Ronald Reagan’s particular uses of historical narratives reveal the splice and dice approach to public history that has dominated discourses over what histories are worth preserving and telling and which ones do not fit as neatly within the metanarrative of the United States.

13. For examples of films that take a particular perspective on the battle at the Alamo, see *Martyrs of the Alamo* (1913), *The Alamo* (1960), *Seguin* (1980), and *The Alamo* (2004). Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol*. History, culture, and society series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); and Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

14. Other inductees included Tombstone’s founder Ed Schieffelin, his brother Al Schieffelin, and their partner Richard Gird; Nellie Cashman, an Irish émigrée who was the driving force behind the founding of the Catholic Church and the first hospital in

Tombstone; Ethel Macia, an active member of the Arizona Pioneer Society, the Tombstone Women's Club, and a charter member of the Tombstone Restoration Commission, helping to organize the first Helldorado in 1929; Harold O. Love, who bought and restored a number of historic buildings in Tombstone's historic district in the 1960s; and Ben Traywick, prolific researcher and writer of Tombstone history and recently retired Tombstone City Historian. See "First Annual Founder's Day Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony," *Tombstone (Ariz.) News*, <http://thetombstonenews.com/first-annual-founders-day-hall-of-fame-induction-ceremony-p2583-1.htm>.

15. This critique has been launched at Tombstone for decades, driving many in positions of power recently to assert that the town is "not a movie set" but an authentic, real, historic space. See, for example, quote by then-mayor Dusty Escapule: "We're not a movie set or something fabricated; we work hard to preserve it," in Julie Alfin, "Magazine's Omission Irks Locals," *Tombstone Epitaph*, 29 January 2010, 2.

16. See "Medicine: Revival in Tombstone," *Time*, 19 November 1945.

17. The towns that made it to *True West's* Top 10 are, from last to first, The Dalles, Oregon; Dodge City, Kansas; Lincoln, New Mexico; Cherokee Nation; Fort Pierre, South Dakota; Glenwood Springs, Colorado; Dubois, Wyoming; Fort Davis, Texas; Florence, Arizona; and Virginia City, Nevada.

18. For more on the function of repetition in popular culture, see Frederic Jameson's "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," in *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

19. See Richard Aquila (ed.), *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Jon Tuska, *The Filming of the West* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1978); and Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

20. In *The Crowded Prairie*, Coyne states: "I take little account of the success of *Dances with Wolves* (1990) or *Unforgiven* (1992), both filmed long after the Western ceased to be a vital force in American culture." Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (New York: Tauris, 1997), 6.

21. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), which traces the complex romantic and sexual relationship of two men in the West from 1963 to 1983, is an example.

22. *No Country for Old Men* (2007), *Brokeback Mountain*, and *There Will Be Blood* (2007) are all set in the twentieth-century West.

23. *Unforgiven* (1992) and the remake of *3:10 to Yuma* (2007) are examples of films that critique the redemptive quality of violence that traditionally had been celebrated in earlier westerns.

24. Films about Tombstone or Wyatt Earp before 1946 include *Law and Order* (1932), *Frontier Marshal* (1934 and again in 1939), *The Arizonian* (1935), *Law for Tombstone* (1937), *Tombstone, the Town too Tough to Die* (1942).
25. This stereotype is still referenced in modern-day Tombstone's parades and performances, in which the only Native presence is that of a drunken Indian. For more on Native American stereotypes in film, see Jacqueline Kilpatrick's *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
26. Charles Ramírez-Berg says of Chihuahua that she "is an archetypal example" of the harlot stereotype explored in his study of Latino stereotypes in film: "Without a man she is a leaf in the wind, so when Doc (Victor Mature) is out of town, she fixes her amorous attentions on Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda)... Since the harlot is a slave to her passions, her conduct is simplistically attributed to her inherent nymphomania. In true stereotypical fashion we are never provided with any deeper motivation for her actions—she is basically a sex machine innately lusting for a white male" (71). For further discussion of the trope of the Mexican woman as harlot in film, see Charles Ramírez-Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).
27. "The Legend of Wyatt Earp," music by Harry Warren; lyrics by Harold Adamson; performed by the Ken Darby Singers. This series, as the first about Wyatt Earp, became the foundational text for future television representations.
28. *Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*, "Wyatt Earp Becomes a Marshal," 6 September 1955.
29. Leone's spaghetti westerns are *Fistful of Dollars* (1964), *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966).
30. This is the first time the now famous street fight was dubbed the "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral."
31. See Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987.
32. For more on the Chinese population in Tombstone, see Katherine Benton-Cohen's *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).
33. A survey was conducted via Facebook on 10 May 2011. The question was "When you hear the words "Tombstone, Arizona," what comes to mind?" Of eleven respondents, five made reference to the 1993 film.
34. A travel blogger, writing about a visit to Tombstone, wrote "We watched the DVD *Tombstone* (Kurt Russel [sic], Val Kilmer) before the trip to know about the story." See www.travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/penguinx/sw-usa-2007/1191305700/tpod.html, accessed 10 May 2011.

35. The facts surrounding Curly Bill's death are still debated among historians as some reports indicate that he left Arizona in 1881. Wyatt Earp's assertion that he killed Brocius has never been confirmed.
36. The use of the word "parodic" exposes Buscombe's tendency to privilege American westerns over those made internationally.
37. Well-known films directed by Takashi Miike include *Audition* (1999) and *Ichi the Killer* (2001)
38. See Grady Hendrix, "How's Your Edamame, Tex?: Takashi Miike puts the Western through the cultural blender," *Slate*, 28 August 2008. To view the trailer of the film, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nluPs-nGngk>.
39. Robert Ebert, writing for the *Chicago (Ill.) Sun Times*, gave the film four out of four stars. Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian (UK)* gave the film five stars. Reviewers for the *New York Times* and *EF News International* hailed the film as well. And the American Film Institute named the film one of their top ten movies of 2012. Roger Ebert, "Faster, Quentin! Thrill! Thrill!," blogs.suntimes.com, 7 January 2013; Peter Bradshaw, "Django Unchained: First Look Review," *The Guardian (UK)*, 12 December 2012; Susan King, "AFI Announces Its Top Film and TV Programs of 2012," *Los Angeles (CA) Times*, 10 December 2012. Of course the film garnered controversy was well, possibly most notably from filmmaker Spike Lee, who wrote on his Twitter feed, "American slavery was not a Sergio Leone spaghetti western." See "Spike Lee Calls 'Django Unchained' 'Disrespectful,'" *Rollingstone*, rollingstone.com, 27 December 2012.
40. Socialist realism was the style of art that depicted and glorified the proletariat's struggle toward socialist progress.
41. See photographs of the park's rusting facades at <http://www.michaeljohngrist.com/2011/06/japans-abandoned-wild-west-town/>. It is well worth the visit.
42. Visitor reviews of the ranch on "Trip Advisor" bear this out. One reviewer comments that their stay at Apache Spirit Ranch was the "highlight of our trip to Tombstone" while another reviewer comments that this is the "best place in town... A short distance from all the fun but far enough away that it is quiet and one can relax and enjoy the good food and beauty of the desert, warm camp fires. We enjoyed the tours, horseback riding as well as a reptile exhibit and of course a gunfight." Trip Advisor, http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g31381-d2017550-Reviews-Apache_Spirit_Ranch-Tombstone_Arizona.html, accessed 10 July 2012
43. The search for information about Wyatt Earp's life by professional and grassroots historians, hobbyists and other interested parties is known as "Earpiana." I chose to tweak this term to "Earpania" to articulate the passion—the mania—that often accompanies this quest.

44. Breakenridge, who had been Sheriff John Behan's deputy, painted Wyatt Earp as a gambler, thief, and murderer, and cast himself as the hero of Tombstone. Though Wyatt spent the rest of his days protesting his portrayal in the book, the work was a success and led to the annual celebration in Tombstone named for Breakenridge's tale.

45. See "Tombstone's Truth Revealed in 'The Last Gunfight,'" *USA Today*, 14 July 2011; Glenn C. Alschuler, "Wild West Legends Take a Beating in Jeff Guinn's 'The Last Gunfight,'" *Tulsa (Okla.) World News*, 8 May 2011; Allen Barra, "O.K. Corral Is Less than Meets the Hype," *Pittsburgh (Penn.) Post-Gazette*, 22 May 2011; Edward M. Edveld, "Legend Loses its Allure in 'The Last Gunfight,'" *The Kansas City (Missouri) Star*, 13 June 2011; Allen G. Breed, "Black-and-White View of O.K. Corral Gunfight Gets Grayer," *The Denver (Colo.) Post*, 22 May 2011; and "New Epitaphs for Dead in O.K. Corral Shootout," *USA Today*, 20 May 2011.

46. Tefertiller argues that Lake's excessive use of the first person—not Wyatt Earp's own attempts at fame—are to blame for Earp's reputation for being a fanatical self-promoter. Tefertiller 1997, 333.

47. See Gary L. Roberts's "Trailing an American Mythmaker: History and Glenn G. Boyer's Tombstone Vendetta," 1998; Tony Ortega's "How the West Was Spun," *The Phoenix (Ariz.) New Times*, December 24, 1998; Jeff Sharlet's "Author's Methods Lead to Showdown Over Much-Admired Book on Old West," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 11 June 1999; Jefferson Decker's "Tombstone Blues," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 1999; Andrew Gumbel's "Historians Shoot it Out over Mrs. Earp's fake memoirs," *The (UK) Independent*, February 13, 2000; "History Expose: The Façade Behind the Front," *Tombstone Tumbleweed*, 16 March 2000; and Billy Johnson's "Showdown at Scheffelin Hall," *Old West Chronicle*, Nov/Dec 2001.

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