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## The Revival Western and

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The Revival Western and *Dead Man*:

Challenging Neoliberal Violences

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

I create a dialogue between films credited with reviving the Western film genre in the early 1990's. I examine spatial representations in a group of films I label "the revival westerns": Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990), Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992), and George P. Cosmatos' *Tombstone* (1993). Through the use of extreme long shots, characters demonstrating a confined sense of place, and continuity editing, the revival westerns erect a concentrically scaled conception of space and place and maintain a linear temporality. However, I offer Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) as an intervention that reassembles these spatial and temporal notions. *Dead Man*'s abstinence from the extreme long shot, elliptical editing, and multiple, simultaneous, and rearrangeable narratives, envisions space as a uniting presence that precedes and always exists in place, as well as beyond it, realizing place as part of a trans-scalar assemblage and time as non-linear. These spatiotemporal alternatives unmoor the stasis and fixity associated with the revival westerns' notion of space, place, and time. This spatial and temporal dialogue is then contextualized within the social anxieties and economic violences employed during the neoliberal boom of the 1980's and early 1990's. I analyze *Dead Man*'s trans-scalar assemblage and non-linearity through the ecocritical lenses of Jane Bennett's "thing power" and Rob Nixon's "slow violence" to comprehend how *Dead Man* promotes a structure to enable greater social and ecological care.

## INTRODUCTION

While several film scholars have examined the revival of the revisionist western of the 1990s to determine its place in the western genre, the primary discourse does not examine the films' allegorical relevance to their socioeconomic moment. My thesis examines the competing conceptions of space, place, and time in what I am labelling the revival westerns of the early 1990s as a reflection of neoliberal spatiotemporal logic that structures social and environmental relationships in the late twentieth century. The three earliest films I discuss—*Dances With Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990), *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992), and *Tombstone* (George P. Cosmatos, 1993)—erect a concentric model of space and a linear conception of time through their use of the extreme long shot and continuity editing. The result presents a fixed ontology with clear binaries between: space and place, past and present, and self and “other.” However, Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) intervenes upon the revival westerns' spatiotemporal rationalization. *Dead Man* uses elliptical editing and recursive dialogue to make spatial and temporal scales ambiguous. The film's ambiguity presents multiple, simultaneous, and rearrangeable narratives that offer space as a trans-scalar assemblage and time as non-linear, suggesting ontological plurality and relationality. Reading these films through ecocritical theory illuminates the socioeconomic and ecological violences of neoliberal globalization, while also revealing potentials for care. My theoretical method introduces a lens to view these films that was unavailable at the time of their release, extending the discourse from the aesthetic to the socioeconomic, from genre to relationality.

As a genre preoccupied with relationships between space and place, the western is an ideal site to examine how spatiotemporal logic structures relationships. According to R. Philip Loy: “[I]n the middle quarter of the twentieth century Westerns reflected, reinforced and helped to shape values, attitudes and behavior patterns” (3). During the period of the classical western, not all but many of these films, some of the best examples being *The Big Trail* (Raoul Walsh, 1930) and *Union Pacific* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1939), portray narratives of Manifest Destiny. A lone, masculine individual protagonist carves out the seemingly boundless space of the western frontier as he overcomes harsh environmental conditions and threats from Native Americans and bandits. The central figures of classical westerns “represent[] the American ideal” of American exceptionalism that overcomes threats found in unknown frontier spaces and exerts a mastery over the space itself (Williams 93-95). The classical western’s valorization of American values through a heroic figure that offers justice in wide, open, and wild frontier came to reflect a sense of moral superiority to the national identity during the early twentieth century. Yet, the western was not immune to countercultural challenges to the status quo during the revolutionary social movements of the 1960s. The 1950s through the 1970s produced what is referred to as the revisionist western, aptly named because these westerns sought to challenge notions of American exceptionalism found in Manifest Destiny and the lone masculine hero by presenting violences upon Native American and female characters. The revisionist western offers protagonists who do not present resolute moral goodness. While the revisionist western attempted to complicate the classical western’s devotion to American exceptionalism, both movements reflect the cultural impulse of their own historical moment.

Eventually, the popularity and production of westerns began to wane. Multiple western scholars have cited a myriad of causes for the declining popularity of the genre in the 1980s. Richard Slotkin claims that “recent Westerns had largely failed ‘to creat[e] ... *the illusion of historicity,*’” while Jane and Michael Stern assert that the western was an unnecessary genre because President Reagan was “a cowboy hero leading the country” (Keller 241, 240). Finally, others claim “the critical and commercial failure of Michael Cimino’s *Heaven’s Gate* in 1980,” was the bandit that left the western genre bleeding out in the town square with two gun shots in the back (Nelson xiv). The decline of the western genre in the 1980s was eliminated by the financial and critical successes of the early 1990s westerns. The renaissance of the western revived the genre, and their success in light of the previous decade’s poor reception of the genre, makes the revival westerns ideal for locating the spatiotemporal logic of neoliberal globalization. Similar to most westerns before them, the revival westerns and *Dead Man* are set during industrial modernity in the late nineteenth century or very early twentieth century, but the focus of my examination is how these films allegorize their present historical moment in the late twentieth century. My dialogic analysis examines the composition, form, narrative, and characters in my selected works to recognize and define competing spatiotemporal ontologies. I examine three westerns as part of the revival westerns: *Dances with Wolves*, *Unforgiven*, and *Tombstone*. I then put the revival westerns in dialogue with *Dead Man*, which I read as an intervention.

The revival westerns’ rationalize space into a concentric spatiality that equates space with emptiness and place with the fullness of community in a binary relationship occurring in a linear temporality that isolates present from past and future. While several scholars of the western have



discussed the value of space to the genre because of its association with freedom and Manifest Destiny, most do not explicitly distinguish space from place in an oppositional binary. The extreme long shots of the landscape in the revival westerns are not only a trope of the genre that dates back to the classical western period of the early 20th century, but they also situate the landscape of the West as space, offering it as a picturesque still landscape. I lean on western scholar Phillip French's study of the genre, *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre*, to explain the relationship between space and place in the concentric model. French explains that the western frontier is pictured as a boundlessly awesome landscape that also serves allegorical dramatic purposes to reflect changes in the protagonist, while towns are contrasted as sites of community and belonging (105-107). For French, there is a clear distinction between space and place, but my intervention makes their distinction more explicit and extends the current discourse by clarifying their hierarchical opposition. The revival westerns' extreme long shot emphasizes depth and horizontality to elicit a sense of boundlessness of space, but within the community of place, the composition is far more intimate because the frame does not extend beyond a long shot. The compositional contrast clearly delineates space as the outside that surrounds place as the inside in a circular fashion. Because space is rendered static and empty, it becomes a consumable image for characters and spectators.

Similar to the separation and hierarchy between space and place that is composed by concentric spatiality, linear temporality privileges the present with superiority over the past and future. The primary focus of discourse surrounding the revival westerns aims at their attempted historicity which realizes the objectifying nature of their linear temporality. Linear temporality is a rationalization of time that views it as a single succession of present moments that develop a

history. In “Historical Discourse and American Identity in Westerns since the Regan Era,” Alexandra Keller posits that the revival of the western in the early 1990s offers varying relations to western history. She concludes that the revival westerns present a pretense of historical and generic authenticity because they do not attempt to challenge the hegemonic discourses that construct history (243-245). I agree with her critique of the films’ desire for authenticity and extend her argument because it reveals linear temporality’s problems. These films treat the past as an epistemological object. The past of the American West is portrayed as an “other” that is outside the present place for the self, marrying concentric spatiality’s opposition between space and place with “othering” distinctions of past to the present.

Unlike the focus on generic and historical authenticity in the revival westerns, the extant scholarship surrounding *Dead Man* primarily attends to situate its postmodern aesthetics within the genre. Several scholars cite *Dead Man*’s elliptical editing as an example of the film’s postmodern aesthetic; consequently, this makes time a pivotal theme in the film and one that should be read non-linearly, acting as circular, rearrangeable, and expanding and contracting. As a result, I interpret this as an alternative temporal ontology to the revival westerns with the help of Melinda Szaloky’s article “a tale N/nobody can tell.”<sup>1</sup> Szaloky suggests that *Dead Man* is a strong revisionist western because it presents alternatives for the genre that are realized in the “portrayal of the West as a hallucinatory netherworld” that upends the singularity of master narratives found in the western and history (66). Szaloky frames the film’s historiographic critique through a narrative simultaneity that results from the protagonist’s simultaneous characterization of “dreaming / dying / dead” throughout the film (68). My thesis fully agrees

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviated title. Szaloky, Melinda. “a tale N/nobody can tell: the return of a repressed western history in Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man*”. *Westerns: Films Through History*, editor Janet Walker. Routledge, 2001, p. 47-70.

with Szaloky's postmodern reading of *Dead Man*, and I extend her arguments by examining the multiple temporal structures of the various narrative frames. This non-linear temporality directly complicates and challenges the successive linearity of time in the revival westerns.

The film's ambiguous simultaneity, however, is not just temporal but also spatial. While I am not the first to approach the topic of space in *Dead Man*, no other scholars have explicitly extended the simultaneous multiplicity of time onto the film's spatial frames in a manner that challenges the space and place dialectic. My interpretation of *Dead Man* recognizes the complications of the space and place binary by offering space as trans-scalar assemblage. In this form, space has multiple simultaneous frames due to the heterogeneous relations space constantly creates, challenging the singularity of the concentric model of space. I complicate Ryan Blum's arguments from "Anxious Latitudes" in which he recognizes the "assembled nature" of social space in this film (4).<sup>2</sup> Blum uses characters to divide the film into multiple spaces where the town of Machine is an exploitative place that consumes the frontier space in the film (59-60, 61, 63). He also explains that these spaces are in opposition and their contest critiques Manifest Destiny. The way Blum divides space in the film is akin to the way I recognize space and place's opposition in the concentric model. However, I wish to challenge and complicate Blum's reading because his interpretation addresses only a single linear narrative in a material spatial frame. This reading ignores the multiple rearrangeable narratives realized in the film's non-linear temporality that I prove through my engagement with Szaloky. Each spatial frame that exists in the film carries its own unique set of character and environmental relations

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviated title. Blum, Ryan. "Anxious Latitudes: Heterotopias, Subduction Zones, and the Historic-Spatial Configurations within *Dead Man*". *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 27, No. 1, March 2010, p. 55-66.

that exist simultaneously. *Dead Man* not only critiques Manifest Destiny, but also affirms spatiotemporal plurality and relationality via trans-scalar spatial assemblage, destabilizing the singular spatial definitions of the landscape and the town of Machine.

I find Blum's division of space to be more applicable to the revival westerns than *Dead Man*, as he applies it, but his rationalization of space draws attention to the various contexts in which space and place are being theorized at the latter stages of the twentieth century. Henri Lefebvre's seminal text *The Production of Space* offers his hypothesis that "(social) space is a (social) product," which, he adds, is constituted by "*spatial practice*, which embraces production and reproduction" (30, 33). That is to say, there are various spaces designated for specific behavior within a given living space, a site of community, that are imbued with regulatory order via normalizing practices that are repeated over time. For Lefebvre, a consequence "is that (physical) natural space is disappearing. ... [N]atural space will soon be lost to view. ... Nature is also becoming lost to thought" (30-31). He explains that the social production of space is deviating a sense of belonging away from a material sense of belonging that derives from lived environments (31). While I do not wholly disagree with Lefebvre's argument, my analysis of concentric spatiality will reveal a symbiotic relationship between the social processes and material environments rather than extinction of the latter to constitute fixity. Mostly, I do not rely directly upon Lefebvre because I depart from his work terminologically. Lefebvre dispels the binary terms of space and place due to his goal of bridging disparate abstract and material notions of space while articulating the various social spaces within a given community, or place. Because his work is constrained to the social bounds of place, he does not require nor utilize the terminology required to differentiate places of society from spaces beyond such practices.

Similarly, and writing during the same moment, Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* asserts "place is the empty grid over which practice occurs while space is what is created by practice" (Cresswell 70). In other words, place is the ecology of everyday living for a person or a community that has previously erected "structures" that are then manipulated to create space (70). Again, where I depart from Certeau's argument, is the constraint of his focus to everyday practices that constitute social spaces within a place. I use the same terms, but use them inversely. Place is the natural and produced environment for a community that is made possible by the expanse of space.

Lefebvre and Certeau's limited focus on divisions within place does not provide the framework or proper terminology to understand how concentric space separates places from the space that lies beyond, either in the western frontier or across the globe. To draw out the consequences of the opposition constituted by the concentric model of space in the revival westerns, I rely on definitions of place from Marxist geographers David Harvey and Doreen Massey who are also interested in the spatiality of globalization. In "From Space to Place and Back Again," Harvey explains that place relies upon a geographic and temporal fixity to "secure a defensible space" (292-93). Harvey notes that place forms a physically and socially bounded presence that is meant to permanently preserve stable society from existential threats to the individual and social organization. To Harvey, late twentieth century notions of place delineate an inside and outside. I use Harvey's definition of place to explain how the fortifications and signs in the revival westerns evoke the boundary that separates the town, as place, from frontier space. While the former, promises peace and permanence for the towns and inhabiting characters, the latter evokes a threatening vast emptiness. I rely on Massey's discussion of place

to explain how this spatial binary constructs problematic self and other relationships. Massey explains that these place-based notions of separation and permanence cultivate singular fixed identities in *Space, Place, and Gender* (152). The singularity of place is transferred onto the sense of identity that the occupants derive from conceiving place in this way. Together, these definitions of place provide my lens to understand the ontological consequences of concentric spatiality. The fixed binary between space and place in the revival westerns reduces self and “other” relationships to singular, fixed, and clearly oppositional identifications, recognizable in the failed transformations of all three films’ protagonists. In the same manner that place is privileged over space in the composition, the homogeneous flattening of space cultivates hierarchical social relationships between the self in place over the perceived “other” from space.

While the “No Firearms” signs in the revival westerns serve to cultivate a hierarchy between self and “other” between place and space, they also centralize authority in a fashion that creates a social hierarchy within place. In *Unforgiven* and *Tombstone*, the lawman in the towns display signs on the geographical boundary of town to specifically mark the point of separation between place and space, while also revealing social organizations within place, determining who may enter and who may possess a firearm inside of place. Mary Ann Doane’s study of the rationalization of time and space in cinema in “Scale and the Negotiation of ‘Real’ and ‘Unreal’ Space in the Cinema” is valuable for recognizing how boundaries erect place in the revival westerns. Doane explains that the cinematic frame serves a dual functionality, expelling any ambiguity of unseen space beyond the frame while offering the visibility of what is on screen as the totality of importance (70). Similarly, the border of the town functions to expel any unwanted intrusion from a perceived threatening other and provide the bounds of social and

financial activity for the town. Consequently, enforcing the boundary also designates distinctions of mastery and control that are not assigned to all the characters that occupy place.

To return to Massey and Harvey, both offer the aforementioned opposition of space and place as problematic, a conclusion with which I agree, and I use their proposed solutions in space's relational nature to comprehend spatial assemblage in *Dead Man*. I argue that *Dead Man* conceives of space as multiple and dynamic, disrupting the ontological fixity of space on which the revival films' concentric spatial model relies. In *for space*, Massey conceives of space as a site of heterogeneous relationships of multiple histories, experiences, and perceptions that come into contact between various people (9). Unlike the revival westerns, Massey offers space as a site of multiplicity because its boundless nature offers dynamic spontaneous interactions. I utilize Massey's definitions to recognize *Dead Man*'s space, depicted through compressed intimate shots, as a site of multiplicity because William Blake (Johnny Depp) and Nobody's (Gary Farmer) interactions in space open up multiple narratives. I also return to Harvey because he reveals the film's space to be not just the site of interactive multiplicity, but also ontological potentiality. I lean on Harvey's definition of "relational space" from his tripartite of space in "Space as a Keyword" to understand that space does not have a single, universal framework, but rather, multiple spatial frames determined by the various relationships that exist within a given space (123-24). Harvey's relational space is valuable in that it illustrates space as ontologically multiple because it constantly redefines its frames due to ever changing social and environmental relationships, recognizable in Jarmusch's noncontiguous multiple settings. While I use Harvey and Massey to challenge the revival westerns with multiplicity, it is necessary to understand how this multiplicity extends to all beings that exist within space.

To fully understand *Dead Man*'s spatial intervention upon the concentric spatiality, I turn to Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* to comprehend the multiplicity afforded by trans-scalar assemblage. Bennett's theory of "thing-power" serves as a metaphor for space in *Dead Man* and offers an explanation of how the ontological plurality of space extends to all beings in a relational, powerful, multiplicity (3). Bennett attempts to complicate the "life-matter binary" via thing-power (20). Thing-power is an internal force that maintains being in all bodies and a force that allows all bodies to affectively act on one another across space (3). The external force of thing-power is not a product of subjective agency but merely a result physical arrangement across space (3, 9). Therefore, Bennett realizes that it is spatial relations of human and non-human beings that not only determine spatial frames, but also constitute relations that enable beings to act upon one another. Bennett conceives of thing-power as an outside that is inside all being, and I use this understanding as a metaphor for space in *Dead Man*. The dynamic multiplicity of space exists in all places and central characters, offering space as an outside that is inside, exceeding binary and scaled boundaries of place, becoming trans-scalar. Space, as preceding and exceeding place, becomes an assemblage, which Bennett defines as an, "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts" (23). I contend the spatial assemblage of *Dead Man* expresses a dynamic flux of ever-changing relationships between characters and environmental elements, through which the multiple shifting spatial frames realize multiple narratives making space and character identities plural. This plurality problematizes the ontological singularity in favor of relationality.

The competing singular and plural spatial ontologies between these films are also married with complimentary temporal ontologies; the concentric model of space in the revival westerns is



upheld through linear temporality, while *Dead Man* recognizes trans-scalar spatial assemblage alongside non-linear temporality. I formulate elements of these temporal distinctions through the lens of Stephen Kern's study of temporal conceptions from the late nineteenth century.

Returning to the foundation of these distinctions elucidates key qualities of this temporal opposition that persists a century later in my selected works. Kern explains that in 1884, the standardization of time created a universalizing, homogeneous temporal conception (12, 13).

The linear temporality emphasizes a universal certainty of time that provides a single temporal scale to all being that progresses successively. However, Kern discusses Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss's 1909 article "Summary Study of the Representation of Time in Religion and Magic" as a countering perspective. Hubert and Mauss found time to be "heterogeneous" and non-linear in its organization and malleability because time has a subjective malleability unique to an individual's perception (32). These two recognized that time is not a universal construct of truth; time exists through the individual and heterogeneous perceptions. *Dead Man's* temporality is non-linear and closer to Hubert and Mauss's conception. Jarmusch regularly disrupts the continuity of time with fades between scenes to suggest time is discontinuous and far more personal to Blake's perception.

While Kern provides the foundation of how this debate first defined itself, turning directly to Rob Nixon's ecological theory of "slow violence" informs how we understand *Dead Man's* non-linear temporality as ontologically simultaneous and multiple in a later historical epoch. Nixon defines slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). Nixon explains that this violence is enhanced

by the neoliberal system because it expands local points in the global network, displacing other places and people while keeping this violence out of sight. Slow violence challenges the binary distinctions that linear temporality evokes—assigning past and future as an “other” space distinct from the place of the self in the present—by suggesting that past, present, and future are always constantly in multiple relations. I read *Dead Man*’s non-linear temporality through Nixon’s slow violence. The film promotes temporal multiplicity and simultaneity of past, present, and future through the rearrange-ability of scenes across the multiple narratives. Grabbing hold of non-linear temporality realizes a temporal relationality that challenges neoliberalism’s temporal ontology that produces violences and is present in the revival westerns.

The revival westerns and *Dead Man*’s spatiotemporal logic are responses to neoliberal globalization’s newly structured relationships, but, much like the evolution of the western genre, neoliberalism is also a revision of what preceded it. Prior to the 1970s and 1980s, socioeconomic philosophy had a centralized and localized focus. From World War II to the early 1970s Keynesian economics dominated most political economic theory and policy (Jahan 54). British economist John Maynard Keynes argued in the post-Depression era that economic markets are inherently unstable and that “free markets have no self-balancing mechanisms that lead to full employment” (53). As a resolution, Keynes proposed an economic strategy that develops strong relations between the private sector and government institutions, particularly a relationship in which the government can manage and counteract any private operations that contribute to “adverse macroeconomic outcomes” (53). The government was in a position to regulate and stimulate financial markets to ease its operation and service employment. While global trade existed at the time of Keynesian economic thought, the primary focus of this

philosophy was centralized and nationalistic. Various economic markets functioned underneath the managerial capacity of the public sector to structure and control relationships within national bounds.

However, the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s ushered in a new spatialization for political and socioeconomic relationships by strengthening a structure of global networks. In 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) limited its supply of oil and raised gas prices globally. OPEC's actions ushered stagflation into the 1970s, a period of high unemployment paired with inflation. Dissent began to grow concerning the consequences and failures Keynesian economic policies; the elections of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan took hold of a growing political and economic philosophy: neoliberalism (Siddiqui 15). According to David Harvey in his text *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices ... characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2). Under neoliberalism, the role of the government and central bank shifted away from managing macroeconomic consequences towards financial deregulation to enable a free market. Neoliberal economics manufactured a global network society in service of designing a singular market and a market that facilitates free trade (19). Through both advancements in technology that facilitate greater resource extraction, production speed, and global communications and political arrangements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, neoliberalism enabled multinational corporations to extend out into foreign nations to extract resources and shift production outside of the United States (19). In Doreen Massey's text *for space*, she explains that globalizing policies and the development of multinational corporations

“evoke a powerful vision of an immense, unstructured, free unbounded space and of a glorious, complex mixity” (81). During this historical moment, economic focus shifted from an inward looking Keynesianism focused on a national economic market to an outward facing contributor to a single global market.

The 1970s not only directed economic philosophy towards a global spatiality but also global environmental concern. Early environmentalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries focused on local scopes. The primary focus of human and environment issues concerned the tension between conservation and preservation. A pivotal champion for conservation was President Theodore Roosevelt, who “aimed at preserving national parks and wildlife refuges,” and “put the government in charge of overseeing and even owning the land” (Worster 351). The governmental oversight of land was designed to maintain the wilderness in order to maximize the capability to extract natural resources. Contrastingly, conservationists found resistance from preservationists, such as John Muir, the founder of the environmental group the Sierra Club (351). Muir and other preservationists “celebrated nature in a wilder state and sought to reestablish a direct personal relationship with the non-human” (351). Contrary to the conservationists’ philosophy, preservationists advocated the care and maintenance of land for its own sake and survival. While the conservation and preservation debate institutionalized more organized forms of ecological activism and political policy, the dueling philosophies shared a localized focus of their concern. Their differing arguments offer opposing perspectives concerning how to organize human relationships with the non-human, but they appear less focused on how structured relationships with the land can impact distant ecologies.

Subsequently, the countercultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s helped extend ecological focus to a global scale. Publications, such as the *Whole Earth Catalog* founded in 1968, which featured a photograph of the Earth taken by a satellite on its first cover, sought to “promote worldly stewardship, environmentalist practices, investment in local planetary resources and infrastructure, and harmony across differences” (King 4). The increasing public focus on this reorientation spawned political action, such as the foundation of Earth Day on April 22, 1970, reoriented environmental concern from solely the local to the global as well. Similar to the spatiality of neoliberal globalization, the new environmental focus reflected a new boundlessness. Ecological crises, such as the discovery of the hole in the ozone layer in 1984 and the publication of discoveries surrounding climate change, drew attention to the lack of boundaries concerning the consequences of poor ecological care. As the arm of multinational corporations extended out across the globe to construct a networked society in the service of a single free market, ecological thinking also expanded to recognize the network of natural relationships between places across global space.

While neoliberalism and environmentalism share a shift in their spatial conception during the historical moment, the January 2, 1989, *Time Magazine* cover, which named “Endangered Earth” as the “Planet of the Year,” reveals anxieties about this the new global perspective. The cover of the issue features an image of a human-sized planet Earth wrapped in a net while sitting on the shoreline of a beach during sunset (*fig. 1.1*). The image directly reflects the content of the accompanying article written by Thomas Sancton which aims at exposing, “the causes and effects of the problems that threaten the earth” which he identifies as “global, and ... must be attacked globally” (30). The Earth wrapped in a net and stranded on the beach, similar to a

whale or dolphin washed ashore in a fishing net, allegorizes Sancton's claims that human production processes and disregard for the non-human environment are endangering the totality of the Earth. The sunset in the background illustrates his claim that the sun is setting on opportunities to free the Earth from the damaging effects of ecological disregard. The background punctuates his aforementioned words: not only do humans need to attack problems globally, but they also need to attack them now.

Aside from the cover photo's relation to the article's content, the imagery of the constraining net and setting sun express additional anxieties about alienation and a contracted temporality. The rope tied into knots over the entirety of the globe mirrors both the neoliberal global network that links corporations to areas of foreign resource extraction and production and the global relationship of ecosystems that can positively or negatively influence one another. While the net links a variety of different and separated places across the globe, the rope is securely tied into knots, suggesting these relationships are direct, static, and stable. Spatially, the image of the net reveals two problems of globalization. Firstly, political and financial relationships are not stable; the volatility of the market seen in the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s and unstable political relationships amid the Cold War demonstrate that global relationships are fluid, dynamic, and ever-shifting. Secondly, neoliberalism's attempts to stabilize this network, evident in their attempt to fashion a single global market while ignoring the dynamism of social and ecological relationships alienates people and places. They fall through the noticeable holes in the net. Temporally, the cover image portrays a contracted temporal focus that unsuccessfully regards future consequences. The depth in the cover image is intensified by the water visible between the frontally lit globe in the foreground and the sun

setting on the horizon in the background, capturing the reactionary nature of political responses to catastrophes such as the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. Responses from Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush's administrations directed their attention towards containment and clean-up efforts, but they did not seek preventative measures to potentially limit future similar incidents. The emphasis on immediacy and reactions illustrates that ecological policy during this moment was limited to the well-lit, proximate foreground, but seemingly disconnected from the impending sunset that will create dark consequences, impairing the world as it was seen and understood.

Instead of evaluating industrial modernity's conception of space, place, and time through a neoliberal lens, the revival westerns and *Dead Man* are responses to the social and ecological violences reflected in *Time Magazine's* 1989 cover. Through my selected sources and methods, I pull out the qualities inherent to the concentric model of space in the revival westerns that mirror neoliberalism's spatial framework as a singular, bounded, and fixed ontology that violently erects and maintains binary distinctions, displacing people locally and globally. Linear temporality helps ground these distinctions as homogenous, universal, permanent structures as a justification to these violent presuppositions. However, *Dead Man's* intervention of the revival western offers relationality as a promising challenge to the problems of concentric notions of space via trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality. This spatiotemporal ontology privileges multiplicity, simultaneity, and plurality, and recognizes relations rather than separation. I conclude that this spatiotemporal ontological intervention reassembles conceptions that fuel neoliberal socioeconomic and ecological violences towards more positive potentials.

In Chapter 1, I focus solely on the revival westerns. I closely read scenes through all three films to locate the separation of space and place in the composition, mise-en-scène, and character relationships in the films. The use of the extreme long shot makes frontier space a consumable object for characters in the film, narratively and allegorically to constitute the characters' identities. This mode of consumption is shared by the spectator. In both cases, space is ordered as beneath place and the self that is supposed to belong in place. The pattern of hierarchy is then traced through the social organization of these cinematic places. I analyze the linear temporality that is evident in the continuity editing of the revival westerns and contain dialogue that is focused on the fixity of permanence. Next, I examine how these films offer complexity with heterogeneous protagonists but complicate their character creation by explaining the homogenous depictions of the characters that results from the fixed structures of concentric spatiality and linear temporality. Finally, I contend that while neoliberal globalization contends to evidence a heterogeneous, decentered network, it actually exemplifies the binary opposition of this spatiotemporal logic. Neoliberalism determines a hierarchy among nations through a single market that displaces people from their homes and their relationships with the land. Similarly, political responses to ecological crises of the 1980s and early 1990s display a focus on proximate spatial impact and immediate temporal impact, limiting the possibility of social and environmental care.

In Chapter 2, I examine the plurality and care possible in *Dead Man*'s presentation of trans-scalar spatial assemblage and non-linear temporality. I begin by analyzing the film's critique of the extreme long shot in the opening sequence, reading it as a negative commentary on the effects of Manifest Destiny on Native Americans. I then explain how Jarmusch's multiple



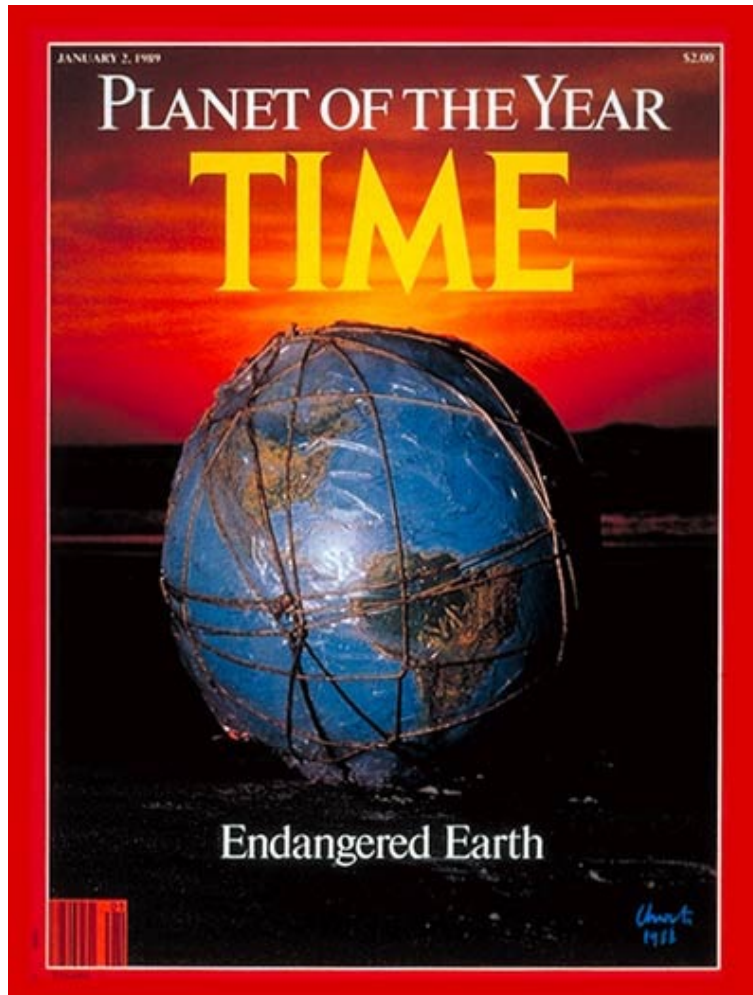
shooting locations and elliptical editing negate any contiguity and cultivate spatial ambiguity. The elliptical editing also eschews continuity in favor of a non-linear temporality. The spatial ambiguity allows for multiple narrative readings of dying/dead/dreaming that simultaneously occur and loosen the rationalization of space to a point that understands space's plurality. As a result, space is understood to transcend oppositional boundaries of space and place, existing as a trans-scalar assemblage. I press this spatial multiplicity against heterogeneous conceptions of neoliberalism to further emphasize the centralized structure of neoliberalism that alienates places and communities. The dialogue and narrative structure of the film proposes a simultaneity of past, present, and future, circularity and malleable nature of time, and its ability to expand and contract. I measure non-linearity's potentials against the concepts of time shared by neoliberalism and environmental activists to expose their shared focus on immediate consequences. *Dead Man's* non-linear temporality is examined as an alternative framework to better attend to the modern environmental movement's aim of expanding prolonged global ecological care.

In the Epilogue, I connect the critical evaluation of these chapters to outline the contemporary relevancy of this study and questions left unanswered because they exceed the scope of this thesis. Presently, political pundits demonize globalization, blaming it for the perceived issues facing American citizens, particularly the American workforce. The demonization of globalization is used to justify growing nationalist sentiment that is calling for the strengthening of local and national boundaries. Similarly, ecocinema and other environmental activist media are working towards increasing ecological care across a global and temporal spectrum. However, not only is growing nationalism presenting a hurdle for this aim,

but environmentalists are advocating the quickening approach of a catastrophic environmental event. Instead of trying to expand the temporal imaginary of the public, advocates are rhetorically attempting to initiate future consequences into the present, both privileging the present and opening up to greater skepticism. Returning to the westerns of the 1990s, a moment when neoliberal globalization was rapidly growing, I offer an understanding of how spatiotemporal logic organizes social and ecological relationships in an ineffective and harmful hierarchy. I conclude that trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality provide a new logic that can offer a more beneficial form of globalization that produces care with a greater relationality. I acknowledge that examining only these four films, and only the western genre, does not provide a complete picture of the spatiotemporal anxieties and possibilities during this moment, especially since the emerging postmodern aesthetics of the 1990s differ so greatly in other cinematic genres and mediums. I end my thesis by directing attention towards new avenues and questions to consider to further develop a new framework for space and time that develop care.

In summation, approaching the westerns of the 1990s through ecocritical theory extends the scholarship on these films beyond the current discursive focus on the past, either in western history, western genre, or both. My work with the revival westerns and *Dead Man* illuminates the ontological tensions competing during this historical moment of neoliberal globalization. My thesis relies on previous understandings of the landscape in the western to clearly define space and place as they are realized in the early 1990s revival westerns. The devotion to historicity in these films transposes the dichotomous “othering” process between space and place, self and “other,” onto time as well, signaling a preoccupation with singularity and divisions in a

concentric model of space and linear temporality. I argue this ontology supports the hegemonic master narrative that neoliberalism uses to justify socioeconomic and ecological violences created in global expansion. However, *Dead Man* revises the genre's revival by presenting alternatives. I take seriously the postmodern aesthetics and multiple simultaneous narratives available in the film's ambiguity, drawing trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality from them. Alternatives, I argue, offer ontological plurality and relationality as potential interventions to neoliberalism's problematic distinctions and displacements. Rising nationalism in contemporary politics blames globalism for current societal ills. The focus of this thesis is to examine the 1990s westerns' depiction of spatiality and temporality to convey the broad term globalization is not the problem, and the solution is not to re-stabilize national and local boundaries of place. To carry out this solution not only exacerbates the issues within neoliberal globalization but also hinders the ability to properly execute global ecological and social care. Discovering an alternative spatial and temporal logic can potentially offer a framework to redesign globalization that is more inclusive, supportive, and caring, benefiting people and the environment alike.



**Figure 1.1** Gianfranco Gorgoni's Endangered Earth (*Time*, 1989). Magazine Cover. "Planet of the Year: Endangered Earth". January, 2nd, 1989, Vol. 133, Issue 1.

**CHAPTER ONE:**

**THE REVIVAL WESTERNS, CONCENTRIC SPACE,  
LINEAR TEMPORALITY, AND NEOLIBERAL DISPLACEMENT**

Freedom is a very good horse to ride, but to ride somewhere.

—David Harvey, repurposing the words of Matthew Arnold  
in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (6)

In the epigraph above, David Harvey illuminates the contradictions and pitfalls of neoliberalism. This metaphor is intriguing because it displays the point of contact between neoliberalism and western imagery. The connection between these registers is found in the reference to the “good horse to ride,” which is not necessarily the vehicle of political economy but does appear to conjure the image of the trusty steed of a western cinematic hero. For the western genre, “freedom” was promised in the vast, wide open spaces that were available to American settlers traveling west in pursuit of Manifest Destiny. Neoliberalism promises freedom in the supposedly free market and promotes individuality that is supposed to deliver economic prosperity. However, the final words in the epigraph, “but to ride somewhere,” illustrate that neoliberalism, similar to space, is valuable only so far as it delivers the promised eventual destination, a place where the values of this journey can pause, flourish, and erect permanence. This epigraph conjoins the spatiotemporal logic of the western and neoliberalism, much in the same way that this chapter will draw out how the former allegorizes the latter’s organization of time and space during globalization.

This metaphor, this point of convergence, demands an analysis of the western genre that elucidates the spatiotemporal ontology of neoliberalism and its consequences. While neoliberalism emerged politically in the 1970s under President Carter's administration, globalization began to surge during the 1980s and 1990s under the reigns of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Therefore, the prime sources for this analysis are what I have categorized as the revival westerns: *Dances with Wolves*, *Unforgiven*, and *Tombstone*. All three films were being produced and released during the implementation of this political economic philosophy. The bulk of academic scholarship surrounding these works focuses primarily on their desired historical or generic authenticity but does not fully bear out their allegorical potential for their historical moment. This chapter serves to fill that gap.

The revival westerns use composition and geographical boundary markers in the mise-en-scène to distinguish space from place in a concentric spatial model that affirms an ontology of fixity and separation that I will connect to industrial modernity and the genre's form. This separation is compounded by a linear temporality exhibited in continuity editing and linear narratives that distinguish space from place, past from present, and self from "other" by way of a homogenous successive conception of time. I will then compare the revival westerns' spatiotemporal logic to their historical moment of neoliberal globalization in the 1980s which produced socioeconomic violences of alienation and displacement, both locally and globally, while also problematically limiting ecological concern to a contracted present moment and place.

### **Concentric Spatiality, Linear Temporality, and Composing Opposition**

*Dances With Wolves*, *Unforgiven*, and *Tombstone* were all released within a four-year period between 1990 and 1993. As a result, plenty of scholars discuss these films when focusing on the resurgence of the western genre in the early 1990s. And yet, the existing discourse has not explicitly addressed a primary thread that runs through these different reiterations or returns of the genre, their organizations of space and time. All three share a concentric spatial model and linear temporality. The absence of this shared spatiotemporal logic in the analyses of these films prompts important questions. How does concentric spatiality position space to place? How does time's linearity constitute or result from this spatial model, and what does that mean for relationships between past and present?

Before I address the revival westerns' spatial logic, it proves necessary to attend to modernity's spatial relationships and how these films from the neoliberal moment portray and restructure spatial conceptions. Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time & Space: 1880-1918* is a historical accounting of space and time during modernity. In this text, he offers the foundations of experience for modernity, "[a]s the economy in every country centralized, people clustered in cities. ... [T]he railroads destroyed some of the quaintness and isolation of rural areas" (33). While taken from his discussion of time, one can recognize the spatiality of modernity. In economically developed places, focus shifted towards connection and universality, a developing homogeneity that produced anxiety in isolated places. The American western frontier was seen as an antidote to this centralization, which offered, according to Fredrick Jackson Turner,

"an open frontier ... [that] leveled religious, social, and political hierarchies. ... Continuous social dislocation made it impossible to maintain the fixed social order of the older Eastern cities" (164).

Relying upon Turner's thesis, the western genre, both classical and revisionist westerns alike, portray modernity's conception of freedom and prosperity available in the open space of the western frontier. The extreme long shot has been an integral western aesthetic composition since the genre's earliest years. The horizontality and depth to extreme long shots of the frontier landscape presented a space without centralized social order, full of potential for new social structures, untouched resources for survival, and a sanctuary to escape alienation and limitations of eastern cities. The classical western's celebration of Manifest Destiny and the revisionist western's challenge to such American exceptionalism offered narratives that featured places, such as homes or towns, as a part of this open space. The desire to expand American moral superiority or critique racial and gendered hierarchies present places as lacking physical bounds, offering a spatial openness to society that may render transformation. The lack of clear borders to the towns or fences around homes in these westerns depict these social hubs as a part of frontier space. However, the revival westerns of the 1990s refrain from a narrative of westward expansion. They set their narrative during the close of the western frontier. Instead of offering open and unfixed places, the revival westerns design an alternative conception in the West: concentric spatiality.

The concentric spatial arrangement in the revival westerns is offered audibly in narration and visually in the composition of these works. When Lieutenant Dunbar (Kevin Costner) first arrives at Fort Hayes, viewers see and hear the first depiction of the West in *Dances with Wolves*—and consequently in any of my selected works—as he is riding his steed, Cisco, into the fort. The spectator can see the sprawling prairie and distant mountains, slightly out of focus in the



background, illustrating the space of the western frontier. In this moment, the film cuts and the camera is tilted up towards Dunbar sitting in his saddle, only the sky is now behind Dunbar, the plains and mountains ejected from the frame. The camera slowly pans to follow Dunbar's entry into the fort. The frame is filled by houses and stations all facing inwards. In the foreground, inside the fort, people are selling animal hides and building with various materials, while the prairie and hills reside in the background (*fig. 2.1*). Dunbar describes this immediate presentation of Fort Hayes as "a tiny island of men and materials, surrounded by a never-ending sea of prairie." The formal cut via editing and the graphic cut offered by the sky signal a break, a separation, between the space Dunbar rides in from and the place of the fort where he arrives. The shape of this separation is offered in Dunbar's narration: A "tiny island" proposes a circular shape to place that is surrounded by space (*fig. 2.2*). Place, then, is represented as both surrounded by and isolated from space. This image is introduced by the inward facing structures on the edge of the fort and reinforced later when Dunbar first sees the Sioux community. When he first discovers the Sioux village, the camera looks over Dunbar's shoulder in a high angle shot to reveal, again, the teepees constructed in a large circular shape using the river on one side and the mountains in the background to help establish the bounds of this circular shape to place. Thus, the film separates space in a concentric fashion.

While not the first western released in 1990, the critical and financial success of *Dances with Wolves* has led Andrew Patrick Nelson, Alexandra Keller, and other scholars to credit the film with reviving this cycle of the genre, and ultimately, this circular separation of space and place is visually reinforced throughout other westerns of this moment (Nelson XV, Keller 240). However, the concentric model of space is not just a physical and graphic organization, but also a

conceptual one. Concentric spatiality clearly distinguishes inside from outside. The establishing shot of Big Whiskey in *Unforgiven* displays the town in an extreme long shot; the town is dwarfed vertically by the massive snow-capped mountains in the background and horizontally by the rolling hills to either side of the wide shot. The establishing shot also offers spatiotemporal specificity with its chyron: “Big Whiskey Wyoming, 1880.” The buildings that face each other constitute the particular local place of Big Whiskey that is inside the space of Wyoming, figured in the engulfing verticality and horizontality of the frontier, which is itself within the larger regional space of the West. This succession of place into larger scales that move from local to global evokes a series of scaled relationships of inside and outside with a particular place at the center (*fig. 2.3*). While inside one another, these various strata of place are envisaged separately.

Yet, it is not just enough to recognize the distinction of space and place in this model. The revival westerns define space and place through the cinematic frame in a particular fashion. For this purpose, it is best to turn to Mary Ann Doane’s “Scale and the Negotiation of ‘Real’ and ‘Unreal’ Space in the Cinema.” Doane traces the history, effects, and repercussions of “‘man as measure’ ... the incessant rationalization of time and space” into and throughout cinema, looking at relationships between cinematic and spectatorial bodies and the frame in early cinema of attractions, classical Hollywood, and contemporary films (Doane 68). Most significant here is her explication of the cinematic frame’s compositional role: “[T]he frame ... acts both as an edge or border ... and as an apparent container” (70). What is most important for Doane, and what I will borrow from her analysis, is that the cinematic frame serves a dual function as border and container. While she does not address the western directly, her spatial analysis of cinema offers a lens to understand how extreme long shots of the frontier in the revival westerns treat the

landscape as an “aesthetic object” (Buscombe 118). In *Dances with Wolves*, when Timmons (Robert Pastorelli) is escorting Dunbar to Fort Sedgwick, the film offers a montage of extreme long shots of the traveling pair. In one shot, the wagon, horses, and men begin in a long shot that zooms out into an extreme long shot that peers over the top of the mesas and dried riverbeds that surround the men. This composition visualizes the “astonishment” and “vastness” of space that Phillip French argues is the western landscape (105). The cliffs of the mesas appear to blend into the skyline, realizing Dunbar’s “never-ending sea.” However, this extreme scale makes the movement in the frame indiscernible. The distant perspective cultivates a picturesque quality because its extremity nullifies “the frame ... as an edge or border (against the abyss outside it)” (Doane 70). The embrace of the abyss, which the revival westerns depict as the boundlessness of western frontier space, renders the dynamism of human and non-human life in the frame to a stillness that suggests an emptiness to space, despite the plentitude of land that fills the frame as a container. The mobility that announces the presence of Dunbar and Timmons in this space is extinguished, and their indiscernible presence paired with the static rocky environment produces an image devoid of activity, submitting dynamism to human activity and presence.

The characterization of the space of the West as a boundless, empty, lifelessness without the manifestation of humans embarking on a destined westward bound journey is unique to the revival westerns. The extreme long shot was used prolifically throughout the history of the genre, but it held different consequences. Throughout the history of the genre, many westerns have reinforced the narrative of Manifest Destiny which relies upon the western frontier as a container, full of resources, space to pause, and possibility. These westerns defined western

space as a fullness, the frontier was a space of never ending “plentitude” (French 105). The revival westerns, contrastingly, offer frontier space as an empty abyss because of their historical setting during the close of the westward expansion. The revival westerns contract the value of spatial organization from boundless potentials of open spaces to the borders and edges that are perceived necessary to realize said potentials. The close of the West in the revival westerns implies that the promises of the frontier’s plentitude have been extracted, and consequently, the promised potentials of new resources for a new life are intended to be realized, the space of the frontier has presumably been emptied into an abyss.

The empty, static, boundlessness of space is what objectifies space and makes it consumable for diegetic characters. *Tombstone* also employs the extreme long shot, best exemplified when Wyatt Earp (Kurt Russell) and Josephine (Dana Delaney) are running their horses. They are riding through a field, almost covered by the tall grass and dwarfed by the tall trees and towering mountains in the background. During his discussion of Anthony Mann’s *Man of the West* (1958), French declares: “the land itself seems to determine and reflect the film’s dramatic development” (108). That is to say, the setting in a western serves an allegorical function of “dramatic development and moral progress” within the film; the relationship between landscape and character can complicate the perception of the protagonist, dramatize a conflict against an antagonist, or redesign character relationships (109). For this scene in *Tombstone*, it is the latter. The beauty of this scene allegorizes the beauty Wyatt recognizes in Josephine in this moment. They are consuming the landscape physically for a pleasurable ride, but just as Wyatt declares that Josephine’s mare is “in heat,” the beauty of the landscape and their playful chase allegorizes their attraction and budding romance. Thus, the characters appear to consume the

landscape, in a sense, to produce dramatic narrative significance. That is not to say that consumption generally is violent or problematic, indeed consumption is necessary for survival and comfort. What is problematic is the manner in which the extreme long shots and setting homogenize and flatten frontier space, the outside, into an “other” without regard for the animals and environments in their own right. The lush hills and well-kept horses stand less on their own and more as props to foreshadow human narrative development. The environment and non-human life in this frontier space are rendered an empty abyss that only derives meaning from their relationship to human characters in the film, subjugated to human consumption of space.

While the revival westerns define space as vast, empty, static, and outside, place is defined against space as the center, the inside. Not only can place and society exert mastery over space in resource consumption, but it can also fix itself in opposition to the unknown or unwanted qualities of space. In *Tombstone*, shots within the town only fall within the spectrum of extreme close-up and long shot. For example, in an earlier scene in the film when the Earps first arrive in the town of Tombstone, there is a long shot of tall buildings that fill the vertical edges of the frame, while countless people are running through the streets. In later shots, diverse characters wearing dirty ranching jeans and colored shirts are juxtaposed against the Earps who are adorned in fine white-collared suits with vests, suggesting place is “community ... a sense of on-going life” (French 109). The discernible difference in costuming implies that Tombstone has its own history, roles, and development that has begun before the Earps’ entry into the town. The vibrancy of their attire, the polychromatic interior of Tombstone, fills the frame with aesthetically pleasing, diverse human presence and constructions, visualizing “places as internally heterogeneous ... and dynamic” (Harvey 294). The composition signals Doane’s

declaration of the cinematic frame, “as an apparent container (of the plentitude of objects and people within it)” (70). The idea of frame as container portrays a fullness of place, a fullness that derives from community.

Yet, it is imperative to remember that the frame is still also a border—what is negated by the horizontality of the extreme long shot—because this diversity of place is not as heterogeneous as one might presume. In the revival westerns, place is a desired fullness that is heavily regulated and bounded by both the geography and community of place. In *Tombstone*, when Virgil Earp (Sam Elliott) feels compelled to take on the role of sheriff after Curly Bill (Powers Boothe), the leader of the Cowboys kills the previous sheriff, he immediately institutes a no firearms policy for the town. Virgil first announces his new social role not through verbal declarations in the dialogue, but rather, through a sign he posts inside of town. Then Virgil proclaims to Wyatt that “law and order” is what will ensure the familial and communal “we’s” place in Tombstone. Community protects and bounds place in an attempt to ensure its preservation. While the previous sheriff’s declaration, “We don’t want any trouble in here” applied to the confines of the saloon, Virgil’s new firearms policy extends the protective sentiment and his regulatory authority to the limits of the town.

To comprehend the motivation that drives boundary construction, I rely upon Doreen Massey and David Harvey. Both are social geographers who address space and place during neoliberal globalization at the time of these films’ release. While their theorizations of space pertain to neoliberalism, I use their understanding of place during modernity and the close of the twentieth century to dissect the spatialization of the West and open up these films’ allegorical capacities for my conclusion. Massey notes in her book *for space* that during modernity,

“‘Places’ came to be seen as bounded, with their own internally generated authenticities” (64). That is to say, people designed structures to erect boundaries of place, geographically and conceptually, to construct “fixed ... bounded [and] enclosed” centers for community (*Gender* 168). In David Harvey’s article “From Space to Place and Back Again,” he adds that fixed spatial boundaries are fundamentally linked to safety; the fixity of place is designed to preserve a place and the people that belong to it (292). So, too, do the revival westerns use signs in the mise-en-scène to regulate the intrusion of “others” and behavior within place for the safety of the “‘community’” (292). The “no firearms” signs in the revival westerns visualize Harvey and Massey’s arguments that place is a social process; it is a process of regulation, control, and exclusion that fixes and locates the particular boundaries within the spatial map in an attempt to ensure a given community’s preservation. The boundaries and fixity of place indicate a socially regulated hierarchy that values place more than the space that lies beyond its boundaries. In *Unforgiven*, the sheriff Little Bill (Gene Hackman) has multiple signs posted on the edge of town that read: “Ordinance 14: No Firearms Beyond this Point” (*fig. 2.4*). The fact that these signs are posted at the edge of town, not only signals his desire for a “community building spirit,” but also to geographically mark and fix boundaries that note where and how that community is to exist (Buscombe, *Unforgiven*, 36).

While visualizing place’s relationship to space in the diegesis of the revival westerns should be understood as filling a container and regulating it with a border, the representational space of the frame also brings to light spectatorial consumption of western space. In *Unforgiven*, when Will (Clint Eastwood) and Ned (Morgan Freeman) are venturing to meet the Schofield Kid (Jaimz Woolvett), the two are framed in an extreme long shot riding through a wheat field. In

this scene, the non-human life in space is not entirely static. The wheat in the foreground is moving in the wind, while the two men, now tiny silhouettes, slowly move across the horizon. The minimized, indiscernible representations of the men makes them unintelligible because of their distance, a separation that “others” space. The “othering” of space is vital for its consumption. The spectator’s primary identification with the camera is placed in the swaying wheat, while Will and Ned are separated from the spectator as two silhouettes riding along a static golden plain. The consumable effect of this scene is best understood through Scott MacDonald’s discussion of the American West in *The Garden in the Machine*, a theoretical examination of the environment in media. While MacDonald’s analysis of the genre focuses on independent and experimental media, his remarks concerning commercial media—of which the revival westerns are certainly part—and his assertions regarding the place of consumers recognizes the problems of this distancing (91). The “othering” of this distance and separation derives from the sense that “our ‘place,’” as spectators, “is simply to consume whatever modern commerce makes available (including ... geographic locales)” (91). This consumption is possible because of Hollywood’s consumption of the West for (re)production, understood not only in the survival of the genre for over a century, but also in the repetition of the extreme long shot, which had become a trope by the early 1990s. The extreme long shot of the revival westerns offers an aesthetically objectifying “otherness” to be gazed upon. Spectators admire its beauty. Similar to the examples from *Dances with Wolves* and *Tombstone*, this scene appears to make space static to emphasize its beauty in its vast, boundless, emptiness to be consumed by the spectator.



Such separation and then consumption realizes the problematic relationship between space and place in the concentric spatial model. In her book *Passionate Detachments*, Amy Rust describes the cinematic zoom in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971) as a figure for “capitalist extension” and “environmental intension” through Martin Heidegger’s notions of “enframing” and its “saving power” (120).<sup>3</sup> She explains that for both space and characters, the “zoom ... figures ... meetings and departures, since it, too, renders proximity amidst distance” (117). This understanding of the zoom is valuable because zooms traditionally begin with a long shot and move to a close up, or vice versa. The movement of the lens unites and distinguishes proximal and distant. If the zoom were exercised in the revival westerns, this would help realize the relationality of space and place. However, because the extreme long shots are static, horizontal pans, or the final position of a zoom out (from long shot to extreme long shot), the separation between proximal and distant is both preserved and underscored in this composition. The negation of the zoom in these shots then portrays the landscape as a static, separate, empty space that visualizes what Heidegger terms “the standing reserve” (11). The standing reserve makes “everything ... ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand” and organized in a way that precipitates “enframing,” a “gathering together” and “setting upon” that pulls resources to the service of the concentric center of place (13). For place to enframe space, place has to have a determinable edge for this centrifugal pull. The formal consumption of the landscape by filmmaker and spectator is figured by the aforementioned soldiers at Fort Hayes who display the bones and hides of animals and chopped wood. Space is objectified and subjugated to the service of place, narratively and formally.

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<sup>3</sup> Abbreviated title. Rust, Amy. *Passionate Detachments: Technologies of Vision and Violence in American Cinema, 1967-1974*. SUNY Press, 2017.

Akin to the way concentric space distinguishes and separates space from place, linear temporality does the same to past and present. The concentric spatial model in the revival westerns relies on a linear temporality. Place is not solely a spatial project; it is also realized through the films' narrative structure and continuity editing which presents a single notion of time that progresses linearly in a shared direction towards the future. Similar to Massey's analysis of place's boundaries, Harvey comments on place's fixity, but he recognizes that fixity is temporal as well as spatial. Time produces Harvey's second component of place: "an entirety or 'permanence' occurring within and transformative of the construction of space-time" of a given place (Harvey 294). In other words, place relies on this notion of time as a continuum to offer the fixity of permanence as not only a possibility, but also a necessity for place formation.

While linear temporality is not unique to the revival westerns—continuity editing and historicity has been essential to the western since its inception—the revival westerns' concentric spatial logic that composes opposition, fixity, and an alienating consumption transforms linear temporality's once unifying effects to another frame that constitutes opposition. Linear temporality is first discoverable in the narrative structure of the revival westerns. *Dances with Wolves*, *Unforgiven*, and *Tombstone* all present an arrangement in which what is on the screen is the diegetic present—with only one scene in the first film as an exception—but this organization clearly distinguishes the past from the occurring present and the unknown future, aesthetically separating out time. The problem with this design is that it relies on time's homogeneity as a universal continuum. It assumes that the diverse characters within the film not only exist in this universal temporal directionality, but they also perceive it to be such a format. This assumption singularizes distinct places and spaces. Returning to Kern's historical spatiotemporal work with

modernity, now concerning time, he articulates that multiple binary oppositions existed between “whether time was homogeneous or heterogeneous, atomistic or a flux, reversible or irreversible” (11). The linear succession of time has a homogenous singular nature, which according to Kern, is a product of its standardization in 1884 (12). This event created the twenty-four hour time cycle and “universal day” that cultivates a universal and static frame for time; it created a single temporal measurement for all places (13). In response to this temporal universalization, modernity’s thinkers sought “to affirm the reality of private time against that of a single public time and to define its nature as heterogeneous, fluid, and reversible” (34). Turning to Kern locates a genealogical origin of this temporality, but also signals the predominance of homogeneous time over heterogeneous time because of its preservation and prevalence in the 1990s revival westerns. Time’s homogeneity cuts across separate places and cultures and cultivates “othering” distinctions of time itself. The revival westerns draw upon modernity’s temporal constructs, but instead, affirm a universal temporal scale.

This conception of time is particularly interesting for the western genre because these linear narratives all occur within a past setting. *Dances with Wolves* is set in the plains of the Midwest at the end or briefly after the Civil War, *Unforgiven* is set in Wyoming in 1880, and *Tombstone* is set in the southwest in roughly 1880 (Eppinga 65). The revival westerns’ overall treatment of the historical past, both American history and the western’s history, realizes an “othering” of the past. Alexandra Keller contends the revival films are preoccupied with authenticity via ““facticity”” (Keller 241). She explains the novelty of *Dances with Wolves* was its “meticulous commitment to getting the facts about the Sioux absolutely correct” (243). Later, Keller explains that *Tombstone* seeks authenticity through “paracinematic verification,” a system

of intertextuality that pulls from other fictional narratives but presents this material in a historical rather than fictional fashion (250). This occurs in the opening montage that mixes “both real and faked silent film footage” of westerns, and in the final voiceover narration that attempts to provide the remaining facts of Wyatt Earp’s life in an attempt to “tell[] *the* authentic Earp story” (251, 250). These westerns’ desire for authenticity, akin to the extreme long shot’s aesthetic objectification and enframing of space, epistemologically objectifies the past into a homogenous, static, master-able “other.” They treat past Sioux culture, the history of people in the West, such as Wyatt Earp, and problems of Manifest Destiny as “objects” that can be fully understood, re-presented, and critiqued, while distinguishing the civility, knowledge, and superiority of the current historical moment of these films release. Linear temporality, consequently, objectifies and consumes this knowable past to privilege the place of the instantaneous present, while bounding the present moment from any instability and uncertainty of future presents in the same manner that place relates to space.

To maintain this problematic homogenous temporality, the revival westerns develop and uphold narrative continuity. In *Tombstone*, when Wyatt and his family first arrive in Tombstone and meet the county sheriff, the scene cuts to an overhead establishing shot of the town then cuts to a medium shot of the Earps meeting the town’s sheriff, too. This last shot begins with Wyatt stating: “I thought we just met the sheriff.” This dialogue accomplishes two important tasks: first, it defines the past scene as the past with the tense of his language; second, this applies an umbrella relativism to the past, occluding any ambiguity regarding the passage of time. This successive movement develops from what Gilles Deleuze terms the “any-instant-whatever” of the “movement-image” in cinema (*Movement-Image*, 6). In his text, *Cinema 1: The Movement-*

*Image*, Deleuze turns to classical Hollywood's continuity to define the movement-image as "a section which is mobile," and it "reproduces movement as a function of any-instant-whatever[,] ... as a function of equidistant instants ... that ... expresses something more profound, which is the change in duration or in the whole" (3, 5, 8). Put more simply, the movement-image is an ontology of cinema that always emphasizes the present scene that then progresses into the next present scene, equally continuous within their sequence. The present scene displayed on screen is representative of the whole of time and events, or, drawing upon Doane's spatial terminology, the movement-image's present is a temporal border that fully contains concern.

Though certainly not aesthetically indicative of the entirety of cinema during the late twentieth century, the revival westerns rely heavily on the movement-image's temporality formally, with continuity editing, but also in how the characters understand time. In Wyatt's dialogue from the aforementioned scene, the clear definition of the past exchange with the county sheriff as a past encounter offers time as a "mechanical succession of instants" giving way to the present encounter with the town sheriff (4). This giving way creates an impression of "equidistant instants" in that the amount of time that has passed is rendered irrelevant; it is merely a move from past to present without a specific reference to how much time has passed (5). The dialogue in the narrative also connects place with permanence. In *Tombstone*, county sheriff Behan (Jon Tenney) expresses that the town will be "as big as San Francisco in a few years." While this line references a spatial expansion, it assumes the permanence of place that Harvey references. Behan's declaration presumes that Tombstone will still be a prosperous growing town in the future. This is a permanence that is produced by optimistic notions of succession and development resulting from linear temporality.

## The Fixity of Place and Social Hierarchy

Concentric spatiality and linear temporality construct a spatiotemporal ontology of fixity that manufactures binary distinctions and oppositions, and since the individual is constitutive of notions of place and present, this opposition is also recognizable in character conflicts that distinguish self from “other.” One might investigate, therefore, how this spatiotemporal logic constructs identity and social relationships in the revival westerns. The revival westerns appear to complicate the fixed singular notion of place by attempting to offer multiplicity in the protagonists, offering central figures that seemingly evolve from a violent outlaw to a peaceful family man, or a white soldier to a Native American victim of westward expansion, or a selfish entrepreneur to a selfless lawman. The aforementioned duality is intended to reflect the heterogeneity cultivated by place’s diversity as a center for society, while also highlighting the perceived advanced social progressiveness of the neoliberal historical moment. Comparably, the revival westerns offer presumably ambivalent depictions of violence between characters in the films to complicate clear moral distinctions between protagonists and antagonists, reviving the critical ethic of revisionist westerns. However, the concentric spatiality and linear temporality constituted by the films’ devotion to the aesthetic impulses of classical westerns limits the revival westerns’ ability to cultivate the level of heterogeneity necessary to attend to social and ecological relationships during globalization. This spatiotemporal logic not only reinforces self and “other” oppositions across place and space, but also designs alienating social hierarchies within place.

Returning to the diverse and dynamic representations of characters in *Tombstone* from when the Earps’ first enter the town and meet Doc Holiday (Val Kilmer), the varying appearance

of people within the frame aesthetically signals an ongoing, dynamic sense of living, but also conveys varying social roles within the community that constitutes place. Wyatt and Doc are both adorned in fine, clean, multi-piece suits to signify wealth, or at least, desire for wealth and the two men's shared desire to ascend to a higher capitalist role. Contrastingly, Wyatt's brothers are dressed in nicer clothes but are still stripped of their jackets and a little dusty from their wagon ride into town, foreshadowing their readiness to get their hands "dirty," since they are willing to combat the outlaw cowboys before Wyatt agrees. Surrounding the men, we see native people wearing diverse, comfortable, loose-fitting, dirty clothes that suggest a more manual laborious trade than the investment business that Wyatt seeks. Doreen Massey argues in *Space, Place, and Gender*, a discussion concerning place's role in constructing identity, and vice versa, that place is purposefully separated from space so that it may be "defined through counterposition" (168). In other words, communities bound place so that it can be a container for heterogeneity, social diversity and peace, which defines itself against space as a static, boundless, emptiness. Similarly Yi-Fu Tuan adds, "'space' and 'place' require each other for definition," in this opposition (Tuan 6). The polychromatic costuming and racial diversity in Tombstone is designed to elicit the "vast complexity of the interlocking and articulating nets of social relations," which constitute the identity of this place (Massey 168). Unlike space, Tombstone is introduced as a harmonious and developing community. And yet, for all the potential that this dynamism contains, it is never realized within the films because identities of place, community, and the roles of individuals in the community are focused on "stability, oneness and security" (167). To this effect, the self is perceived as a "tiny island" within the community, just as place is depicted in the concentric spatial model.

Massey contends difference is necessary for identity construction, and with this I agree, but concentric spatiality and linear temporality compose difference by promoting the superiority of place over space, present over past, in turn, facilitating social hierarchy inside of place. The alienation of characters in place is highlighted by the staging of these introductory shots, in which the Earps and Doc are prominently centered in the frame, while the distinguished and unidentifiable townspeople orbit around them in the background. In all three films, the protective boundaries of place are regulated and controlled by a centralized authority, be it the lawmen in *Tombstone* and *Unforgiven* or white military officers and elder men of the Sioux in *Dances with Wolves*. These contracted centers of place, either the individual or a few men, are specifically gendered male and portrayed as superiorly masterful. They occupy both the centered space of the town, the tiniest island, and are atop a hierarchical chain of influence within the community it desires to preserve. This exclusive central role presides over the boundary of place via claims to safety. Ensuring what or who enters preserves or emboldens the permanence of place by remaining peaceful. Thus, the exclusionary, alienating violences of place are both enframing and immanent. The Earps and Doc are privileged not only through their centrality in the frame, but also through their mobility to move freely throughout the town and its social distinctions. By contrast, the characters seen during the Earp's entry are narratively, spatially and socially dismissed, rendering them stagnant. Place produces identity for the self in that it provides a communal role and station, one that is unevenly distributed amongst the community.

In addition to attempting to offer place as heterogeneous, the revival westerns also offer a central protagonist that is intended to be dynamic. All three protagonists that is attempting a transformation, but similar to the fixed stagnation of the background characters and singularity of



space and linear time, this mobility stands more as a façade than an actuality. The most interesting example arises in *Unforgiven*, where the opening text explains that Will was an outlaw gunslinger and murderer until he married and had a family. Later, when he unites with the Schofield Kid to seek mortal vengeance on two cowboys, he consistently struggles to mount his horse and fire an accurate shot with the rifle. Will is offered as solely a family man, a man transformed from outlaw to father. Yet, in the climax of the film in Greeley's saloon, not only has Will seemingly remastered his aim and timing, but he also has overcome his vulnerability by killing Little Bill. These scenes illustrate the developing, successive nature of linear temporality, a continuity that offers the superiority of the present in relation to difficulty in the past and does so through the individual that has found his place. Rather than perceive this as a transformation that might imply the dynamism of identity, however, Will's own immobility is what is highlighted. Instead of evolving into a new form, he is shedding the persona he constructed for his now deceased wife. With her passing, he was able to make visible what was always present but just invisible and out of practice: his skilled violence. The implied transformation offered by *Unforgiven* is itself linear and singular, falling victim to the parameters of the film's spatiotemporal logic. Accordingly, Will's fixity that contradicts his depiction of a dynamic protagonist contributes to the "singular, fixed and static identities for places," since, as Massey argues, notions of place are constitutive of "belonging, identity and security" for the individual (Massey 168, 170). The individual protagonist, the self with whom the spectator is to identify, has a rooted permanence that both results from and contributes to the fixity of concentric space.

The revival westerns outline these failed transformations as singular identities because just as space and place are separated, Will's seemingly two personas that are intended to

complicate the singular notions of heroes in the western do not exist simultaneously. The family man and the outlaw are depicted as incommensurate identities; the two are still set in opposition in the same manner that place and the present are separated from space and the past. The greatest complication to this notion is the Dunbar / Dances with Wolves split. Some might argue that, in the middle of the film, Dunbar appears to occupy both his soldier and Sioux identity, offering a subjective multiplicity. For instance, Michael Marsden argues, “Dunbar is transformed into Dances with Wolves” and never regresses, since in the conclusion *Wind in His Hair* (Rodney A. Grant) professes his friendship and acceptance of Dances with Wolves (7). Unfortunately, this argument misreads the complications of Dunbar’s character. Yes, while at the Sioux village, he does learn their social customs, wear their dress, and speak their language fluently. However, when he returns to Fort Sedgwick for his journal and finds reinforcement platoons at the fort, he is captured and immediately speaks English. He declares himself to be Lieutenant Dunbar and proclaims: “This is my post.” Upon seeing the troops, and recognizing his role as captor, he acknowledges that the soldier fort is his place, and that they are his community, establishing his role within that social organization by announcing his rank. Therefore, he acknowledges that he has not entirely shed his identity of Dunbar, but rather, he was mirroring and appropriating the identity of the Sioux to discover a community, “a sense of place” (Massey 168). Still, the soldiers physically assault and reject Dunbar’s declarations of belonging. Dunbar is thrown back into the supply building, where he is lying on the ground, his face bloodied and blood on his hands (*fig. 2.5*). The bleeding wound on his forehead and his Sioux attire offers an image of Dances with Wolves as the victim of the white soldiers entering the West. At the same time, his light brown hair, white skin, and bloodied hands reflect Dunbar’s

role in the perpetuation of violence. Dunbar is a white soldier that requested to be stationed in the West, he is a member of the community enframing the frontier and exhibiting violence on Native Americans. The protagonist's ambiguity in this image is clearly stamped out. His refusal to reveal the location of the Sioux dispels any remaining sense of place he has at the fort. This implies that the bounded, protective, element of place is to preserve the individual in the community, and this is why at this moment he supposedly fully embraces himself as Dances with Wolves.

One can and should read this as illustrative of an authoritative and masterful mode of exception that maintains a hierarchy between the white characters and Native American characters in the film. As a white male figure, he is afforded the ability to choose between either Dunbar or Dances with Wolves, but he never wholly exhibits a simultaneous identification of both. Dunbar's vacillation of language, dress, and even name is less about complete or incomplete adoption, but instead, as a representation of the mode of exception he attempts to carve out with his identity. This is allegorized by the shot-reverse-shot stylization of Dunbar being questioned by Lieutenant Elgin (Charles Rocket). While Dunbar lies on the ground, he is isolated in the frame, and when Elgin questions him, the shot cuts to a close-up of the latter's intense expression. The vacillating frame figures his physical movement between the fort and the Sioux village and his oscillating subjective identification to and within the community. His movement between these oppositions suggests that the proposed complexity of the film actually preserves the oppositional structure of concentric spatiality and linear temporality. This is an attempt to make heterogeneous what is actually homogenous. The film wishes to offer fluidity

and complexity to identity that could challenge the bounded nature of place and the present, but actually suffers as a symptom of this design.

While the transformations of the protagonists are limited by the films' spatiotemporal logic, evidencing the fixed, singular, bounded identities of place in the concentric model and the permanence of linear temporality, the singular characters also make it easier to define "others" in the narrative. Not only does the concentric spatial logic of the revival westerns define "otherness," it also offers physical and mortal violence as the recourse to settle the perceived disruption of the intrusion from the "other" that has abandoned space to invade place. In *Unforgiven*, when English Bob (Richard Harris) arrives in Big Whiskey, Little Bill recognizes the railroad's hitman as a violent transgressor of the protective bounds of place. He confirms this by asking English Bob to relinquish or acknowledge that he is carrying a firearm. Once he declares that he does have a weapon, Little Bill states: "We don't like firearms around here" and proceeds to physically assault Little Bill. The irony is that the four deputies surrounding Little Bill are all pointing pistols and a shotgun at English Bob. So, a more accurate statement would be that "we don't like *you* possessing firearms around here." The implied you in his statement serves as a justification to Little Bill to punch and kick English Bob until he concedes, and Little Bill confines him to a jail cell for the night. Little Bill recognizes the transgression of the conceptual boundaries of his place as the emergence of a threatening "other." As Tuan explains, "[a] distinction that all people recognize is between 'us' and 'them.' We are here; we are this happy breed of men. They are there; they are not fully human and they live in that" space (50). Tuan acknowledges that place manufactures a distinction from surrounding space in a manner that composes a social "we" whom belong to a here, a place, but consequently, this defines

people that do not belong to their place as a “they,” not fully human and unable to function in their society. Later, the film shows Little Bill sending English Bob out of town; he feels compelled to expel the “other” to the space in which he belongs. This scene is valuable in that it portrays what Harvey and Massey refer to as a “‘reactionary’ notion of place” produced during the neoliberalism, a conception of place that is “introverted” and causes “reactionary” responses when the dissolution of place’s concentric bounds “produce insecurity” (Massey 151-152). Little Bill’s violence towards English Bob is portrayed as a reaction to English Bob’s entry into the town and his possession of firearms. English Bob’s presence and weaponry highlights the insecurity of Little Bill’s firearms prohibition and Big Whiskey’s physical boundaries intended to prevent an intrusion from an “other.” As a result, his transgression evokes a reactionary violence from Little Bill, a Heideggerian enframing in the sense that Little Bill confined English Bob to a jail cell. The sheriff, as a central authoritative figure, provides strict and limiting physical bounds to English Bob’s invasive “otherness,” and then expels the “other,” leaving him impotent by destroying his gun in an attempt to resettle the disrupted border.

Expelling the transgressive “other” is a process of restoring the stability that constitutes place, and what has remained somewhat implicit thus far in this analysis that now demands attention is how the revival westerns reflect their devotion to concentric spatiality by restoring place through displacement. In both *Dances with Wolves* and *Unforgiven*, the protagonists are spatially displaced from their home and community in the conclusion of the films. *Tombstone* initially appears to be an exception to spatial displacement, but, in fact, displaces Wyatt temporally. Cosmatos film offers the classically positive Hollywood ending in which Wyatt reunites with Josephine. After a montage of Wyatt riding through the spaces of the Southwest to

hunt the remaining outlaws, he arrives at a theater where Josephine is performing. The pair reunites in her dressing room and walk outside where they begin to dance in the snow. As they dance, the narrator provides a voiceover explains what will become of the pair:

Wyatt and Josephine embarked on a series of adventures. Up or down, thin or flush, in forty-seven years they never left each other's side. Wyatt Earp died in Los Angeles in 1929. Among the pallbearers at his funeral were early western movie stars William S. Hart and Tom Mix. Tom Mix wept.

The film's desire for authenticity, the concluding narration's historical accounting of the rest of his life is problematized by Keller's notion of paracinematic verification, the confusion of fictional romanticism and historical fact. Wyatt and Josephine's dance in white snow, allegorizing a sense of purity to their love, and the narrator's (Robert Mitchum) emphasis that the two remained together for almost half a century offers a conventional Hollywood "happily ever after" conclusion (Keller 250). While this is the future to Wyatt and Josephine on screen, the narrator describes it as a historical fact that has occurred in the past, all while the two continue to dance as if they are frozen in this snowy scene, frozen in time (*fig. 2.6*). The omniscient narration intertwines Wyatt as a cinematic hero that earning his dreamlike ending with a real historical figure in the American West (251). Therefore, he is never completely a presently constructed cinematic figure or a person from the past, he is a temporal amalgamation which alienates Wyatt. The entanglement of past and present contains a potential heterogeneity for Wyatt, as a figure of both times. However, since the combination of past and present occurs in the dénouement and he is still dancing in the diegetic present moment, the accessibility to Wyatt's long marriage and death appear only for the spectator and not Wyatt. Rather, the spectator is privileged with a historical omniscience, Wyatt and Josephine are both figures that

are subject to a masterful superiority of the spectator's present, which the narrator restores to the spectator after watching the period narrative. It is not that he is of multiple spaces and times, but that he appears to never fully reside in a fictional or historical space or time. He exists as an incompletely human "other" of the past, presently available for redefinition, resulting from the fixed, static, past of linear temporality.

In addition to *Tombstone's* proffered temporal exception of displacement, *Dances with Wolves* offers the Sioux's sense of place as an apparent exception to concentric spatiality. *Dances with Wolves* portrays the Sioux village with communal boundaries rather than geographically fixity, the Sioux are depicted as having a more complex social identity, and as a result the film offers them as a more communal and fluid in their social roles than the rigidly hierarchical military at Fort Hayes and Fort Sedgwick. However, the film's desire for heterogeneity and progressive depictions of historically "othered" Native Americans is limited by its spatiotemporal logic grounded in separation and opposition which produces and alienating romanticism.

Costner portrays the Sioux through a nomadic lens that disrupts the spatial fixity of concentric spatiality, but they are depicted with an emphatic concern towards the yoke of linear temporality. The Sioux village spatially relocates three times in the film. In the first occurrence, Dunbar informs Kicking Bird (Graham Greene) that the buffalo are nearby and the village uproots to track them; in the second, they relocate is to the mountains in the north near the end of the film; and finally, in the third, when the Soldier platoon investigates the second location and finds it deserted. However, this depiction of a detached physical place is not fully detached from the problems of the white towns in the revival westerns because they still regulate and control the

bounds of their community socially. As with any place, bounds prove necessary, but the importance lies in how these borders are erected and mediated. When Kicking Bird first discovers Dunbar, Wind in his Hair explains that because Dunbar does not know the language or how to build a Sioux shelter he is not valuable to the community and should be ignored. Dunbar eventually does assimilate and is accepted into their community, but this is after he begins to learn the Sioux language and customs. Therefore, not only do the social processes Harvey references situate the location of place on the map in the name of security, but they also enhance its fortifications through local cultural processes that strive for preservation. Dunbar is socially allowed to integrate into their community when he demonstrates a potential to not fix their place geographically but temporally, by adopting Sioux customs.

The depiction of the Sioux's communal regulation through assimilation is a product of *Dances with Wolves*' linear temporality, which offers permanence through time as a continuum. When *Dances with Wolves* and Kicking Bird warn Ten Bears (Floyd 'Red Crow' Westerman) of the impending invasion of white soldiers and settlers on the plains, Ten Bears removes a morion helmet from a cloth. Ten Bears dates the metal helmet, which looks ancient even during the closure of the western frontier, as a relic from "the time of my grandfather's grandfather." He goes on to explain that through generations many people have entered the western frontier and antagonized the Sioux, "They take without asking." In the end, he does decide to move the village to "the winter camp," further north. This scene offers two significant revelations. The first is, that the Sioux's nomadic characterization, which can be read as a postcolonial alibi for Manifest Destiny, is not a choice. The Sioux are nomadic as a reaction. They are victims of violent invasions that repeatedly displace their society. The second revelation is that their



emphasis on survival still portrays a focus on fixity, but their displacement has shifted the fixity to a temporal scale. Ten Bears' reference to past invaders with the morion helmet implies that the Sioux are still present, having been victorious over the various waves of previous militaries and settlers, highlighting time as a single, linear continuum. Akin to Behan in *Tombstone*, the Sioux are depicted as most valuing survival, for the self, their community, and society; their displacement provokes a devotion to the fixity paramount to linear temporality's promise of permanence.

Similar to the towns in *Unforgiven* and *Tombstone*, the Sioux's devotion to fixity constructs static, fixed hierarchies within their sense of place. Kicking Bird, individually figured as the communal center, is more welcoming, more open to finding productivity and value from a presumed "other" than the authoritative white military officers in *Dances with Wolves*. He is supposed to be a counter-agent to the exclusionary white communality because it appears more accepting and open. Nonetheless, the film still presents a fixed differentiation within their community, like the white towns of authority, that is particularly gendered, that is never criticized or tackled within the film directly. The Sioux women engage in social activities and evidence a more apparent social function of gathering materials, making food, and engaging in rituals, and yet they remain absent in all the scenes where male Sioux characters deliberate the acceptance of Dunbar. The Sioux women are not portrayed as having the level of influence regulating the social boundaries that constitute their sense of place. This glaring, problematic similarity to white communities is never interrogated by the romantic lens of the film. This lack of interrogation that is thrust upon the environmental violence of white settlers and physical violence of the white soldiers, still seems tainted by a hierarchical divide.

Additionally, the film attempts to complicate binary constructs of self and “other” enabled by desires of fixity via complex heterogeneous depictions of their community, similar to the duality the film seeks with *Dunbar / Dances with Wolves*. The aforementioned scene when *Dances with Wolves* and *Kicking Bird* approach *Ten Bears* presents the Sioux as perpetually displaced victims. Though the Sioux are illustrated as passive victims, they are also depicted as aggressive warriors. The Sioux go out and initiate attacks; this is what prompts *Dunbar* to fill a protective role over the community, against an attacking band of Pawnee warriors, while *Kicking Bird*, *Wind in his Hair*, and other men are out fighting. Costner’s work attempts to complicate the Sioux by depicting them as both stereotypes of the western genre—the stereotypical reliance itself a flattening of complexity—“the Indian as savage raider,” and noble Native American “victims of Manifest Destiny” (Loy 218, 217). And yet, this unprovoked attack is never portrayed on screen, only their departure from the community. The film seems to only *imply* the savagery of the Sioux, rather than explicitly address its complications. When the Sioux kill the white settlers that slaughter the buffalo, both *Dunbar* and the viewer can only look at this celebration of murder from afar, again in a separating over-the-shoulder long shot. *Dunbar* is apart from and above the Sioux as he and the camera look down on a flat plain where a collection of teepees are hidden by the haze of smoke from their fire, the distance mediated by several horses grazing in the grass. The return of this composition in this moment conjoins the processes of spatial separation between space and place, inside and outside, to distinctions of self and “other.” The place of the Sioux, the site of community, becomes alienating for *Dunbar* and the spectator’s perspective in a way that reveals a hierarchy. For *Dunbar*, this perhaps signals his inescapable whiteness that is inextricably linked to Manifest Destiny and the slaughtered settlers.

He cannot help but identify with the white settlers. The Sioux's celebration is an affront to his perspective. But, more importantly, it also serves as a representation for the film's desire to maintain and not problematize the depiction of Native Americans it has developed in the spectator to the point of romanticization.

Ultimately, the film is only willing to *show* the Sioux as the noble Native American victim and *allude* to a potential savagery because of a romanticization that is a product of linear temporality's objectifying nature that minimizes the film's sympathetic lament of the Sioux. Spatiotemporal separation's limiting effects are pronounced by the visualization of historical trajectories for Dunbar and Stands with a Fist (Mary McDonnell). Dunbar's personal history of fighting in the Civil War is offered at the beginning of the film and Stands with a Fist is privileged with the only exception to time's linearity, when the film offers a flashback of her family dying at the hands of Pawnee Native Americans. Contrastingly, the Sioux are never visualized with personal or cultural histories; their history is only alluded to when Ten Bears discusses repeated invasions with Dances with Wolves and Kicking Bird. While heralded as a socially and environmentally progressive "eco-Western," *Dances with Wolves* is a product of its time, the 1980s and 1990s, but its multicultural didacticism is inhibited by its linear temporal framework (Keller 245). Similar to Wyatt and Josephine, the film's linear temporality hinders the film's heterogeneous depiction of the Sioux; *Dances with Wolves* is unable to conceive of the Sioux as anything other than an "other" of the past. The simplification and singularizing of this culture to be what the 1990s masterful writer wishes them to be exposes this "othering" logic: their relegation to the past, with no depicted past or future of their own, makes them master-able.

The seeming transformation of the protagonists brings to light the seeming alternatives to place offered by the Sioux. However, both reflect the inability to make heterogeneous what is homogenous, just as the films' attempt to do with time. The conclusions of displacement in the revival westerns illustrate the consequences of a devotion to concentric spatiality and linear temporality's erections of singular, bounded, and fixed oppositions between space and place, past and present. Narratively, this logic is transferred onto social relationships of self and "other." This spatiotemporal ontology of fixity that promotes opposition produces harmful reactions of Heideggerian enframing and exclusion through hierarchies. The ordering function of place dispels any confusion or ambiguity over social relations. The primary understanding should not be that the revival westerns failed to execute their heterogeneous desires, but rather, their formal and narrative conceptions of space and time contain develop opposition and consumption in a manner that composes homogeneity. When Dunbar is being escorted as a prisoner at the fort while wearing Sioux clothing, a soldier asks: "Do we shoot him or salute him?" The revival westerns offer films seeking ambiguity and heterogeneity in an attempt to leave this question unanswered, but they do not escape their own spatiotemporal logic that relies upon binary conflicts and requiring the response: You shoot him.

### **Neoliberalism's Social and Ecological Displacements**

The spatiotemporal fixity presented in the revival westerns less about portraying the spatial conceptions of industrial modernity, than it is turning to this period to allegorize the concentric spatial model and linear temporality's logic in neoliberal globalization during the 1980s and early 1990s. While it began to take hold during the 1970s during President Carter's administration, neoliberalism surged during the 1980s and early 1990s with the rise of President

Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, 1). During this period, the focus of political economy presumably shifted from the local and national “introverted, inward-looking” conceptions of place to the global “instantaneous worldwide communication[s],” extending capitalist reach out across a global scale (*for space* 152, 157).

The transition from nationalist, bounded economics to globalization allows multinational corporations based in the United States, Great Britain, and other nations to extract resources from foreign nations, outsource production, and increase the importation of commodities and services. The homogeneity and succession of linear temporality allowed this system to identify available space for this globalization. However, this neoliberal “enframing” displaced people globally and locally, provoking them to symptomatically enact a reactionary sense of place. During this moment, the same logic is evident in ecological relationships. Political and cultural responses to environmental crises illustrates a concentric spatiality and linear temporality that contracts concern to the present and bounded place.

The allegorical function of the revival westerns is not to imply that the period of industrial modernity in which the revival westerns are set is the same as the neoliberal moment during their release. Rather, the forms I have identified in these works allegorize the issues that concern the neoliberal historical moment. The revival westerns seemingly offer a revision of the genre with dynamism and heterogeneity, but in actuality, offer fixity and homogeneity. Similarly, one of neoliberalism’s greatest contradictions is that its supporters and critics proclaim it a decentered, privatizing, global network. However, this system is a centralized political economic philosophy that physically and conceptually displaces people globally and locally

(Nixon 19). To clarify, the decentered nature of neoliberalism is a reference to its perceived design, while displacement is a reference to its effect.

Similar to the revival westerns central authoritative figures that regulate the boundaries of place and empower social hierarchies, neoliberal globalization is a centralized philosophy. Since the middle of the twentieth century, there have been several neoliberal economists, such as Milton Friedman, and neoliberal think-tanks, such as The Chicago School and the Mont Pèlerin Society, but to best interrogate neoliberalism's claims of decentered heterogeneity, my argument will narrow its scope to Friedrich Hayek's conception of neoliberalism (Mirowski 9). In his article, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," Hayek, a prominent economist and architect of neoliberalism, explained that this political economic philosophy should be an information processing system that absorbs multiple inputs and commands across the globe to then act as "one market," incrementally dispersing necessary information (526). For Hayek, the single, autonomous, free-floating market uses the code of the "price system" to interpret multiple, decentered, heterogeneous information (525). His proposal of a single, global market suggests a heterogeneity to global neoliberal practices. And yet, this decentered network is dualistically problematic. First, Hayek's own conception is contradictory, in as much that the market, in fact, is the center to this supposedly decentered network. In this ideal, the market takes in, interprets, and then disseminates knowledge, exhibiting the restrictive, protective bounds of place allegorized in the revival westerns. It acts as the masterful authority similar to the lawman or military officer that is charged with evaluating "others" that arrive from space to evaluate their potential belonging in a particular place. Akin to Wyatt's presentation when he enters Tombstone, the market is actually a tiny island. Secondly, Hayek's description of the market

does not appear to be the central figure of neoliberalism in its application. In his historical study of neoliberalism, Philip Mirowski complicates David Harvey's critiques of the philosophy's laissez faire economics by drawing upon Antonio Gramsci's remarks, "that laissez faire too is a form of state 'regulation' introduced and maintained by coercive means. It is a deliberate policy" (10). If neoliberal globalization were a product of laissez faire economics, Hayek's centralization of the market would hold true, but Gramsci illustrates that neoliberalism's central authoritative figure is elsewhere. The market is less a Little Bill and more of the "Ordinance 14" signs from *Unforgiven*. The market is the doctrine that outlines the social relations of place which are regulated by the central authority of economic elites and the governments that empower those economic elites. Through free trade agreements and limited political oversight, multinational corporations most greatly influence and then benefit from the market, reflecting their centrality to the market's behavior and their place atop the hierarchy of economic return.

While rhetoric surrounding neoliberal globalization emphasizes the boundlessness of global space and the "instantaneity" of time, neoliberalism's centralization is a product of the organizing logic that produces oppositional structures in the revival westerns: concentric spatiality and linear temporality (Massey 81, 76). The social relations during neoliberal globalization are particularly economic and political relations, but they did not link local to global as much as they signaled an expansion of the local across global space. This geographical model of neoliberalism is made possible by its concentric spatial logic. According to Harvey, the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s had a certain "developmentalism" that extended its economic and resource interests to global spaces (115). Simply, the global spread of neoliberalism and neoliberal hubs, such as the United States, reflect a concentric spatiality that

conceives of a neoliberal place that has a vast global space to expand. The centrality of multinational corporations and nations relies on a separation that facilitates neoliberal enframing across a global plain, a homogenization of space for consumption, akin to the consumption of the landscape in the extreme long shot of the revival westerns. For example, in the early 1980s “forced neoliberalization struck” Latin America, producing “economic stagnation and political turmoil” (88). Transnational relationships, such as these, set upon nations thought of as developing, “other.” Neoliberal rhetoric justifies global expansion by perceiving foreign nations with presumably less influence on the global market as a static, homogeneous, outside “other,” that is also undeveloped and a master-able object of the past, similar to the Sioux in *Dances with Wolves*. As an objectified, consumable “other,” these nations are subjugated multinational corporations and nations that have stronger influence on the single market, and are forced into relationships that pulled materials and revenue back to larger nations in an uneven development (87).

Thus, not only do the revival westerns allegorize neoliberalism’s contradictory appearance and actuality but also its spatiotemporal design and problematic effects. During the release of the revival westerns in the early 1990s, British sociologist Anthony Giddens was studying the structure of globalization, which he defines as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (181). He acknowledges that the aim of this political shift, intensifying capitalist relations across a presumably boundless global sphere, also intensifies the influence and impact distant nations impart on one another. For Giddens, globalization links proximate and distant, but the effects of neoliberal relationships illustrates it



as a hierarchical connection. Such neoliberal expansion is predicated upon distinction and consumption which manufactures displacement. Comparable to the Sioux in *Dances with Wolves* who repeatedly relocated due to violent intrusion, the infiltration of foreign capital and resources into global spaces forces these “othered” individuals and communities to relocate or lose their sense of place. In his book *Slow Violence*, Rob Nixon theorizes the spatial problems of neoliberalism, particularly how neoliberalism causes “displacement in place” (17). He realizes this form of displacement by looking at the “vernacular landscape,” an “affective, historically textured map” of place (17). However, he notes that inside the neoliberal model, “governmental, NGO, corporate, or some combination of those ... instead ... writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is ... instrumental” (17). He provides a strong example when he explains how “oasis dwellers in the Persian Gulf get trucked off to unknown destinations so that American petroleum engineers and their sheik collaborators can develop their ‘finds’” (Nixon 18). While Nixon uses the active verb of “writes” to convey how the economic elites, governmental and corporate, displace foreign places and its people in that place, this active enframing is already made possible by the concentric spatiotemporal logic within neoliberalism. The infiltration of the neoliberal invader, akin to the white soldiers in *Dances with Wolves*, not only disrupts the bounds of place, but also does not conceive of it as place. Neoliberal transgressors have no problem in uprooting the community or natural resources of this area because it is conceived of as a static, empty, boundless global space organized into standing reserve. This displacement can force a physical or geographical displacement, as in his example previously offered, but it can also render people “simultaneously immobilized and moved out of one’s living knowledge” of place (19). This occurs with the intrusion of outside

developers that strip away “the land and resources beneath” the feet of people in a global place, but this also occurs to the citizens of the local neoliberal hub that sets upon this global space (19). Neoliberalism’s so-called global network is more aptly an expansion of the local concentric place into the global, maintaining its concentric logic as it fosters the displacement of presumed “others” in space.

The expansion of the local into the global unsettles the conceptual boundaries of place locally. The local perception of lost or insecure geographical distinctions creates what, postcolonial theorist James Clifford, calls a “quasi-diaspora” (306). Quasi-diasporas contain some components of “diaspora,” a loss of place that contains a particular “memory ... or myth,” with the displaced people who are “committed to ... the return[,] ... maintenance[,] or restoration of [their] homeland” (304). Clifford’s aim is to loosen the ideas of diaspora by applying this theory to victims of displacement without having to relocate or people that might identify with multiple homelands (306). His work is particularly helpful since he contends diaspora is “produced by ... economic inequality” (319). This quasi-diasporic displacement in place occurs because of the internal hierarchical structuring of place resulting from concentric spatiality and centrality. Similar to the revival westerns, which depict central, regulatory figures using peace as the justification to regulate place’s internal social structures, neoliberalism regulates place through economic productivity and employment, the ability to contribute to and benefit from the market. According to Harvey, the 1980s neoliberal response to Keynesianism resulted in unemployment rates of “7.5 per cent in the US ... [and] more than 10 per cent in Thatcher’s Britain” (88). Regulating place through economic productivity not only tacitly endorses multinational corporations’ pinnacle placement in an internal hierarchy, but it also creates a sense

of displacement for the unemployed, who have been decentered from their productive social role in the community.

Simultaneously, neoliberalism's importation of products and foreign businesses forces the same alienated citizens to confront the visible manifestation of their displacement, having presumably lost the assumed "other" outside of place and their social role within place, both constitutive selfhood, people in expanding places try to recapture a sense of place through new forms of boundaries. Similar to the reactionary nature of the revival westerns that confronted the presumably boundless openness of globalization with narratives of closure and boundaries, depicting an end of the western frontier during the creation of economic global frontier, people engineered a reactionary notion of place. Massey observes that amid this transgressive influx of foreign products, capital, and culture, "reactionary nationalisms, to competitive localisms, to introverted obsessions with 'heritage'" have emerged (151). This consequence symptomatically reproduces the enframing of place in an attempt to reconstitute its boundaries. Upon the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, a "full-blown anti-NAFTA movement" emerged, "united in their perception that they had ... been excluded from ... prosperity" (Wise 19). In a vain similar to Little Bill's assault of English Bob in an attempt to stabilize unsettled boundaries, the anti-NAFTA movement tried to reclaim a sense of belonging through a reactionary sense of place. Because their loss of place was not a physical displacement, those bounds were commonly constructed socially, surrounding identity, expelling "other" people through arbitrary designations to attempt to reclaim a sense of self, the individual, since place had seemingly dissolved into space. Thus, the boundaries contracted even more,

becoming even more exclusive and alienating. The members of the anti-NAFTA movement fought concentric spatiality's displacement with concentric spatiality's opposition.

Though the concentric spatial model and linear temporality cultivate separation and opposition socioeconomically, they also do so ecologically. During the 1980s there were several environmental crises that warranted response and a potential for care in non-human relationships. Yet, this neoliberal spatiotemporal logic also pervaded ecological responses. The Chernobyl disaster of 1986 and the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989 illustrated how political and social response was limited by concentric spatiality and linear temporality. In 1986, a Soviet Union reactor suffered a fire at the graphite core and spread radiation. President Reagan's Deputy Press Secretary released a statement explaining that a task force was assembled and would be meeting for the "foreseeable future" ("Statement" 1). The announcement relayed future concern, a concern limited to a foreseeable-ness that contracted around the present, evident in the fact that just a few lines later, the first mention of concern was not directed towards the devastated Soviet area or the people in that place, but whether the radiation would spread to the United States. The lack of care is likely, partly, because the event occurred in global space, in the particular area of a perceived threatening communist "other," and any potential effects were perceived as future consequences, lacking the need for immediate response. The perceived separation of geographical distance and political separation limited concern to "violence ... as ... immediate," and an "instant sensational visibility" (Nixon 2).

The political and journalistic responses to the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989 were also limited by the contracted spatiotemporal logic. Thomas Birkland and Regina Lawrence explain that because Alaska boasts the tagline of "The Last Frontier" and is nationally known for

“cleaner, more beautiful natural environment[s] and more generous natural resources than most other states,” the state became the figure for the United States’ attempt to balance ecological respect and resource extraction (Birkland 19). This metaphor motivated the “[n]early 1000 print news stories and 69 network news stories discussed the Valdez spill between June of 1989 and the one-year anniversary of the spill” (18). However, because of its association with the frontier, akin to the static, empty, boundless frontier of the revival westerns, and the geographical separation of Alaska, the political response to this disaster perceived this as a problem of an outside space that lacked teeth. President Bush, in response, ratified OPA 90 in 1990. The bill “provides for vastly tougher penalties and liability... allocat[ing] more resources for dealing with spills, and places ... [prompting] respon[se] to oil spill incidents promptly” (20). This political response is problematic because it only addresses immediate reactionary measures—responses to the cleanup. It does not legislate stronger preventative measures or reconsider oil distribution policies from the past. Mirroring the structure of Deleuze’s movement-image found in the revival westerns’ continuity editing, the isolation of political ecological care to the present indicates a temporal logic that is attending only towards each present moment as it passes, equidistantly separated from the past and future. The legislative focus on reaction instead of prevention illustrates a devotion to linear temporality, privileging the present without focusing on its relation to the past causes that could restructure energy extraction and distribution or far-reaching future restrictions that could prevent such events.

Finally, linear temporality can be seen as the hurdle to climate change policies during this historical moment. According to Daniel Bodansky, there was “a pre-negotiation period from 1988 to 1990, when governments became heavily involved” in climate change (Bodansky

23-24). However, the process was fraught with political tension. Larger nations, especially the United States, were able to organize deliberations into the regulatory panels they desired and challenge agreed upon time tables they felt were “too rigid” (30). This is an illustration of a problem of linear temporality’s successive nature that offers permanence to place, because larger, wealthier, more powerful nations felt their place was sustainable, just Behan thought of Tombstone. They limited concern to political relationships and economic advantages of looser regulations rather than design far-reaching controls that ensured sustainability and stretched beyond the bounds of political place.

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In conclusion, this chapter explained the concentric space as a spatial ordering that differentiates space as a vast, empty container that is opposed to the bounded, fixity of place. This characterization is enhanced by linear temporality’s homogenous, successive nature that privileges contracted presents. This spatiotemporal logic contracts concern to place and the present, both occupied by the self that stands in opposition to the “other” that is relegated to space. Neoliberalism applies this logic in its actions and reproduces it in the people that it displaces locally and globally. To return to Matthew Arnold’s words that David Harvey cited, the aimlessness of neoliberalism, the lack of destination for the horse named freedom, is a product of a spatiotemporal logic that displaces rather than places. Because this single political economic philosophy reproduces concentric spatiality and linear temporality, and its problematic consequences of violent exclusion and restriction, this ontology of space and time appears to echo the words Margaret Thatcher when describing neoliberalism: “There is no alternative.” The revival westerns confirm just as much, since they, too, appear to adhere only to this

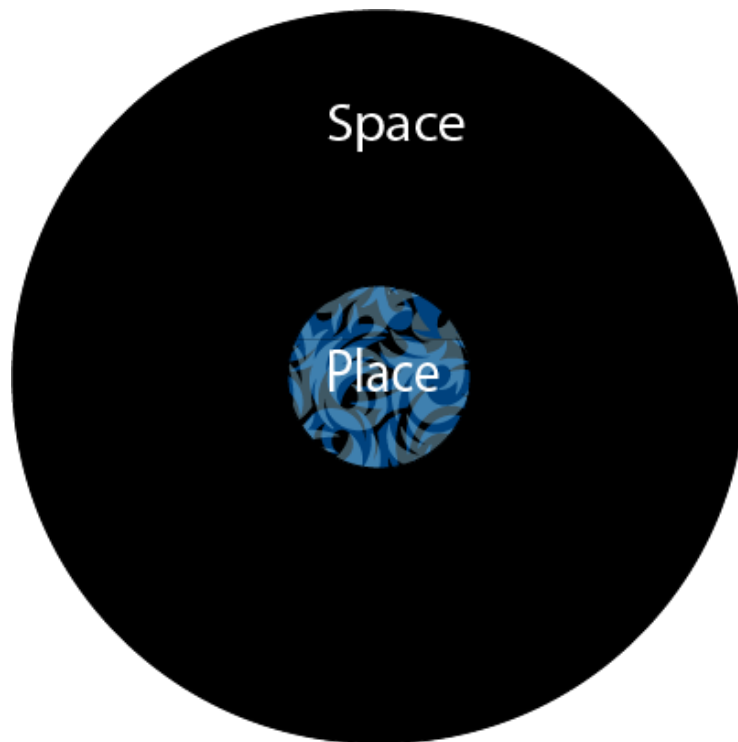
presupposition of opposition and difference. They do not offer an alternative framework to transcend alienating separation, but instead, react to neoliberal expansion with a more contracted concentric spatiality and linear temporality, only sewing further division, repeating similar hierarchies and displacements. However, this provokes unanswered questions: Is there truly no alternative to this conception of space and time? If there is one, how might it appear?

The forthcoming chapter will serve to answer these questions by turning to Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995). Jarmusch's western, praised as a postmodern emblem that critiques the western genre and its Manifest Destiny, also affirms an alternative conception of space and time that is absent in the film's contemporary discourse. With the ecocritical lens of New Materialism, I will analyze how the film offers an ontological plurality via trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality. These alternate conceptions of space and time emphasize relationality over separation and opposition, offering alternatives to current socioeconomic structures and limitations of environmental activism that can potentially develop a greater social and ecological care.

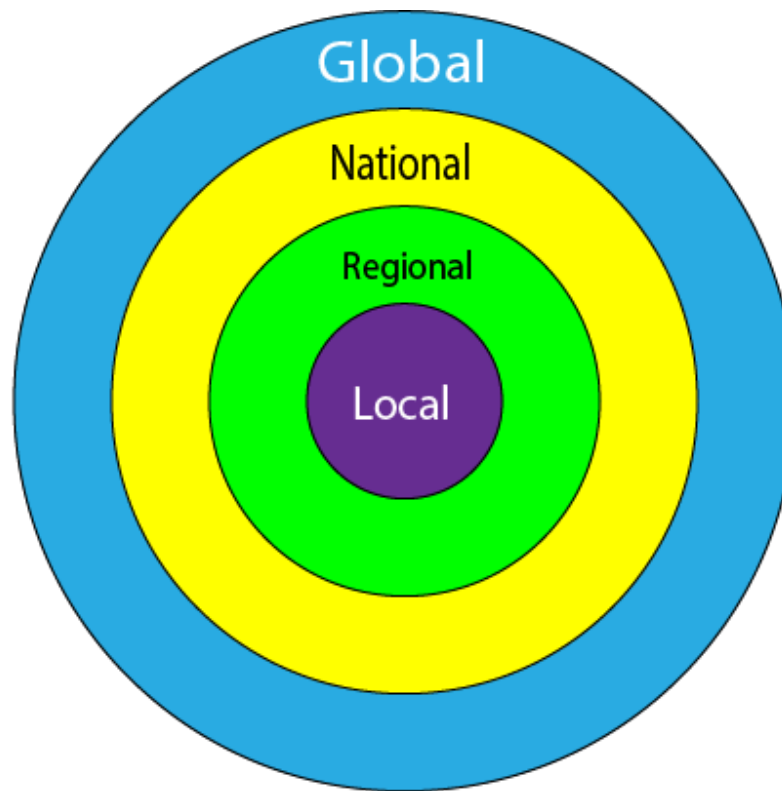


**Figure 2.1** A Tiny Island (*Dances with Wolves*, 1990)





**Figure 2.2** Concentric Spatiality: Geographical



**Figure 2.3** Concentric Spatiality: Conceptual



**Figure 2.4** Place's Structured Boundaries and Regulation (*Unforgiven*, 1992)



**Figure 2.5** Killing Duality with Masterful Exception (*Dances with Wolves*, 1990)



**Figure 2.6** Frozen in Time (*Tombstone*, 1993)

## CHAPTER TWO:

### ***DEAD MAN*, TRANS-SCALAR ASSEMBLAGE, NON-LINEAR TEMPORALITY, AND POTENTIALS FOR CARE**

There is no alternative.

—British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, 1980

In Chapter 1, I examined the concentric spatiality and linear temporality of the revival westerns from the early 1990s. I traced how the films conceive of frontier space as a vast, empty, static container that is both separate from and available to a full, communal, and bounded place, and how this fixed ontology is maintained through linear temporality's separation between past and present in a single, omnidirectional, successive, homogeneous concept of time. Finally, I located this spatiotemporal logic in neoliberalism which underpins exclusionary violences of displacement both globally and locally in space and place. The revival westerns' shared spatiotemporal neoliberal logic appears to affirm, if even unwillingly, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous declaration concerning neoliberal economics: "There is no alternative." While her comments speak directly to political economic philosophy, the revival westerns indirectly offer concentric spatiality and linear temporality as the logic of industrial modernity which neoliberal globalization extends and amplifies.

In this chapter, I labor to nullify this claim. It is here that I turn to Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) as a revision to the organization of space and time in the revival westerns. While current scholarship emphasizes the film's postmodern aesthetics as a critique of the western

genre, specifically the genre's historical valorization of Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism, this chapter explicates what the prevailing scholarship has overlooked in *Dead Man*: its affirmation of a new spatiotemporal logic that allows for greater relationality within social and ecological relationships. Jarmusch's work abstains from the compositional and narrative structure of the revival westerns; instead, he makes spatial and temporal scales ambiguous by rebuffing contiguity and continuity with multiple shooting locations and elliptical editing. This ambiguity realizes multiple, simultaneous, rearrangeable narratives in the film. Reading these narratives through an ecocritical lens, *Dead Man*'s spatial logic is understandable as, what I term, trans-scalar assemblage. In this form, space is not offered as a boundless, static, outside "other" available for consumption, as it is in the revival westerns. Rather it is conceived as preceding and exceeding bounded and fixed notions of place. Similarly, *Dead Man* also presents time as non-linear. The film's temporality emphasizes the relationality between past, present, and future. Ultimately, the simultaneity and relationality of the film signal an ontological plurality that cultivates social and ecological care, offering an alternative to the alienating, excluding, displacing fixed ontology that underlies neoliberal globalization occurring in the early 1990s.

### **The Dying Narrative, Critique of Concentric Spatiality, and Spatial Sites of Multiplicity**

Since Jarmusch complicates notions of a single narrative resulting in multiple spatiotemporal frames, it is necessary to first address the linear narrative from which his formal ambiguity will open multiple alternatives. To best navigate the multiple narratives within the film, it is vital that I appropriate Melinda Szaloky's terminology from her postmodern dissection of *Dead Man* titled "a tale N/nobody can tell." Like me, Szaloky recognizes there are multiple

narratives functioning within the film and divides them into a tripartite of dying / dead / dreaming the former being the linear narrative most important in this section (58). In the dying narrative, William Blake travels from Cleveland to the town of Machine for an accounting job at Dickinson Metalworks. Once he arrives, John Dickinson (Robert Mitchum) informs him that he has already filled the position and casts Blake out of the office. A forlorn Blake then meets Thel (Mili Avital) and she takes him back to her bedroom, where Thel's former lover, Charlie Dickinson (Gabriel Byrne), Dickinson's son, discovers them in bed together. In an attempt to kill Blake, Charlie fires his pistol and the bullet passes through Thel's chest and lodges in Blake's own. Blake retaliates by firing three rounds from Thel's pistol, killing Charlie. Blake then flees the town of Machine. He is discovered by a Native American named Nobody who, unable to remove the bullet, helps lead a weakening Blake through the wilderness of the frontier to prepare his final rites. During their travels, in which they navigate through multiple frontier settings ranging from snowy mountain tops to dense redwood forests, the pair encounters potential threats found in the space of the frontier and also evade the pursuit of three bounty hunters and sheriff's hired by Dickinson to capture Blake and return him to the town of Machine. The film ends with Nobody and Cole Wilson (Lance Henriksen), the final bounty hunter, killing each other on the shore of what is presumably the Pacific Ocean, as Blake floats away in a canoe.

The dying narrative is a story of journey envisioned through the many spaces of the West; thus, *Dead Man* immediately announces its hyperawareness of the role of landscape and frontier space in the western genre. In the film's opening sequence—which later I will argue can also be understood as the film's conclusion—Blake boards a train to the town of Machine. Blake looks out the window at the landscape on five different occasions. This is a perspective shared by the

spectator because all five shots are from a point-of-view perspective. Throughout the scene on the train, both Blake and the spectator witness varied landscapes of the western frontier: first, the spectator and Blake observe trees and white rigid mountains; second, there is a dense forest where we see a dilapidated, abandoned wagon; third, the depicts the tops of trees, as the camera is tilted up towards the vertical cliff faces of mountains; fourth, the spectator sees an extreme long shot of the desert of the southwest with mesas rising up out of the empty, flat, surface; and fifth, the camera focuses on the plains of the midwest with trees in the background and a dilapidated and abandoned Native American teepee.

All five shots evoke the compositional effects of the revival westerns' extreme long shot, which presents the western frontier as an empty, boundless, and static space that exists outside of place, as discussed previously in Chapter 1. The blinds from within the train, through which Blake, the camera, and the spectator are looking, condense the vertical container of the frame. This framing's horizontal emphasis directly signals the revival westerns' extreme long shots that depict space as a vast, static, container, a "territory lying beyond the frontier as an abundant and unappropriated land that is simply there for the taking" (Szaloky 49). When the train is nearing the town of Machine and the frontiersmen begin shooting at buffalo that are running alongside the train. The action of the characters demonstrates how this composition that creates a standing reserve directly links to a violent and problematic enframing of western space (Heidegger 11, 13). However, the fact that this allusion is constructed by the horizontal blinds within the train evokes Edward Buscombe's characterization of the western frontier as a generic construction. Specifically, this construction is produced from a position of separation. All depictions of the western landscape shot during this scene are seen from inside the train, the blinds of the window



emphasize the separation of an outside frontier space from the inside of the train. Jarmusch appears conscious of this aesthetic gesture of separation and its facilitation of consumption in the revival westerns—for both characters and spectators—because of the manner in which he unites identification between camera, spectator, and Blake in the point-of-view shot.

There are two significant provocations from this opening scene. First, each of these settings is revealed to be distinct, intercut with scenes within the train and fades in the editing which signal a discontinuous break that lacks any spatial contiguity. While the revival westerns' concentric spatiality enframes the West with the diegesis that is limited to one of these geographical regions, seemingly containing the entirety of the West within its limited setting, *Dead Man* appears to be announcing all of these disparate locations constitute the West. The West in *Dead Man* is figured literally as a geographical assemblage. Secondly, the shots out the window appear tilted. The blinds on the window are askew, indicating that something is off-kilter with this representation (*fig. 3.1*). What appears to be askew is the concentric conception of space that constitutes a self-contained world of the West in a manner that then distinguishes a vast, empty, static space to be consumed by place, and those within place, which Jarmusch disrupts with spatial ambiguity.

Spatial ambiguity is recognizable in the settings throughout the film. Jarmusch offers various settings of the western genre through the window on the train before it arrives at the town of Machine, a fictional place. Unlike the revival westerns that ground their settings in historical western towns, such as Tombstone, Arizona, or link them to a recognizable historical moment, such as the 1880 chryon in *Unforgiven* or the civil war in *Dances with Wolves*, the fictional nature of Machine is never rooted in geographical or historical specificity. Such

spatiotemporal ambiguity dislocates any certainty and stability that concentric spatiality privileges with place. Spatial certainty is then further dislocated by Blake's flight from Machine. Blake rides through tall arching series of mountains with Nobody. He rides through thick dense forests, walks through the redwood forests of the northwest, and ultimately arrives at what can be assumed to be the Pacific Ocean. In an interview with Jonathan Rosenbaum, Jarmusch revealed that he chose multiple shooting locations in the American West: "We shot that little Western town out in the desert south of Phoenix. We also went to northern Arizona. ... [T]hen we shot ... in Nevada[,] ... [i]n southern Oregon[,] ... [and] northern California" (33). The film's multiple shooting locations loosen the film from any determinant location, invalidating any spatial contiguity by continuously intercutting these various settings with fades. Jarmusch's ambiguous spatiality hyphenates these disparate locations of the West, both dividing and compounding their proximity via the film's discontinuous editing.

Instead of offering space as simply a static emptiness, as the extreme long shot in the revival westerns constructs, *Dead Man's* spatial hyphenation and ambiguity exposes western space's relational nature. Jane Bennett's explanation of "assemblage" offers a superior way to describe the important distinction in Jarmusch's settings (20). Bennett borrows her theory of assemblage from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and in her discussion of globalization defines as ad hoc organizations of various things that constitute "parts of this giant whole ... both intimately interconnected and highly conflictual" (23). Bennett continues to explain: "The effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in that their ability to make something happen ... is distinct from the vital force of each materiality considered alone" (24). *Dead Man's* multiple shooting locations and geographically distinct locations are

certainly an ad hoc grouping of distant regions that constitute the whole of the film's setting. These various disparate locations are highly conflictual in that their lack of proximity makes distance and time ambiguous, but also intimately connected by the pursuit in the narrative that connects them. For example, while Blake and Nobody are traveling in the dense forest and rocky terrain, the two stop at a small puddle when Blake sees a wanted poster with a hand-drawn image of his face and says: "That's me." Jarmusch cuts to a man riding through the forest and putting up all of these signs. The following scene returns to the same rocky terrain and dense forest where Blake and Nobody were when they discovered his wanted poster, but in this moment, the three bounty hunters appear and also recognize Blake on the wanted poster. The distance between Blake and the bounty hunters is ambiguous because of the lack of geographical contiguity, but it is this same ambiguity that puts this location into relation with others. It is precisely the lack of certainty regarding the proximity between these disparate locations that causes spectators to question: Where is this place in relation to where we just saw them travel? How close are they to Blake's current location? These questions, and other similar thoughts, open up spaces in Jarmusch's *West* to form an assemblage of diverse settings that in their ambiguity are both disparate and related.

The spatial ambiguity resulting from *Dead Man's* multiple shooting locations unmoors any fixed structures of place that are found in the concentric model because he does not depict clear spatial boundaries in *Machine*. When Blake arrives in the town of *Machine* he sees a sign welcoming him to the town, similar to the signposts in *Unforgiven* and *Tombstone*. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, the revival westerns use signs to signal the physical geographical boundaries of place in an effort to preserve society through mandates demanding

peace while also revealing social organizations of authority. The revival westerns define and cling to these boundaries to separate space from place, carving off place as a tiny island. The boundaries of place in the concentric model not only distinguish space from place, but also self from “other” in a manner that exerts perceived mastery and control of who can and cannot navigate into the town physically and hold power socially. And yet, Jarmusch fades between the shot of the sign and Blake’s entry into the main street of the town, delimiting any authority in the sign because the sign’s proximity to the town is too ambiguous to denote a clear boundary.

While Jarmusch foregoes the geographical fixity of the town, he does preserve Machine’s function of place in distinguishing “otherness” from one’s self. Blake’s costuming—his clean plaid suit and porkpie hat—graphically differentiate him from the dirty, smoky, muddy town and the dirty frontier people clothed in fur coats and cowboy hats. Blake is immediately ostracized when he arrives in Dickinson’s metal works, establishing the protagonist as out-of-place. Accordingly, Machine forecloses relationships to Blake at this point; he is rejected by Dickinson for the job at Dickinson’s Metalworks, and he meets Thel whom he takes to bed, only to be shot and presumably killed by Charlie when he catches them together. This foreclosure signals what Ryan Blum theorizes as the “need for regulated order . . . and normalization,” in what he terms “machine space” (Blum 61). Blum here is referring to the socially regulated order of Machine found in the centralized authoritative figure of Dickinson. Blum’s attention to normalization analyzes the townspeople’s superficial assessment of Blake’s out-of-place appearance, determining that he has no place with them “because to produce machinic space . . . they wear or employ all manner of metal objects as indicative of their metaphorical relationship to the material” (62). The relationship to which Blum is referring is one of perceived control, mastery,

and extraction that authorizes the community, specifically the town's central authority Dickinson, to regulate place through social boundaries.

However, I believe Blum's argument can be extended. He contends that machinic space—what I refer to as place—subsumes space, but I believe that Jarmusch does something else with space in the film. Unlike the revival westerns that valorize place to an extent that ignores these problematic exclusionary boundaries, *Dead Man* inverts the communal designations between space and place in the revival westerns by making space the place of interaction, a place of community building that Blum limits to a space for the excluded and marginalized. Blake and Nobody form the spaces of the western frontier into their place. On the train to Machine, and intermediate space, Blake meets the train's fireman (Crispin Glover). Their encounter is the first exchange of dialogue in the film. After being shot by Charlie, Blake awakens in the space of the frontier where he meets Nobody, as Nobody tends to his wound. The significance of this inversion is best articulated through Doreen Massey's book *for space*, a theoretical reimagining of space amid neoliberalism's late twentieth-century globalization. Massey explains that in this new historical, socioeconomic moment of global relations, space is “the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions[,] ... [it is] the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality. ... It is never finished; never closed” (9). She offers this as a counter to the way neoliberal globalization refuses to “imagine,” foreign communities and places as “having their own trajectories, their own particular histories. ... That cosmology of ‘only one narrative’ obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space” (5). To Massey, the lack of geographical and social boundaries allows for spontaneous and surprising interactions that reveal or develop relationships, and the lack of

boundaries allows for prolonged emergence and social possibility. Thus, it is the openness of space, its facilitation of inter-social assemblage that brings together these disparate characters in the narrative and produces potentials for new relationships, new possibilities, one of which is the creation of places with new social boundaries.

Unlike the revival westerns that frame space in an extreme long shot that encapsulates it, projecting an empty, boundless, consumable, outside “otherness,” *Dead Man* does not exceed a long shot when depicting frontier space. When Nobody is guiding Blake through a mountain trail, shortly after they met, the pair venture through the frontier on horseback. Jarmusch alternates between point-of-view shots from Blake’s perspective and medium shots or long shots of the pair riding their horses. In one of the point-of-view shots, the camera is shaking as Blake’s horse rides through rough terrain, quickly swerving in the direction of Blake’s head movement. The trees exceed the frame, their branches and dancing wildly in the shaky shots, not fully contained or stabilized. The movement of the camera, while presumably a product of Blake and the horse, offers a lively dynamism to frontier space. The trees are not a static, consumable “other,” but rather, a living thing. Additionally, because the trees are not captured by the boundaries of the frame, space is boundless. Space’s boundlessness is not a consequence of perspectival composition evident in the extreme long shot of the revival westerns that empties space, or presents it as empty. Space is boundless with plentitude that cannot be controlled or mastered. The fullness of space is amplified by Jarmusch’s black and white film stock. Black and white film is a stylistic signature of Jarmusch’s *oeuvre*, but with Jarmusch’s luminous daytime setting in this scene, it casts subtle shadows on Nobody’s shirt and among the trees that highlight the density and depth of the space. In one of the long shots, Nobody and Blake reach

the pinnacle of a crest on the mountain, similar to the elevated points in the revival westerns where the camera would look down upon space in an extreme long shot. The camera is positioned down in the grass, not far from where the two pause, and is tilted up towards the two (fig. 3.2). Most noticeably, there is a small, growing tree directly next to Nobody and they are the same height, both reaching the top of the frame. *Dead Man* consistently frames shots in the wilderness where the size of Blake or Nobody reflect a piece of the environment, allegorizing the lack of a hierarchy between humans that are supposed to belong in a place and the space of the frontier. Similarly, rather than look down over space, similar to the extreme long shots in *Dances with Wolves*, the camera is tilted upwards at the two characters looking beyond the camera. Rather than situated in an outside position, the camera is composed as inside their field of view, offering space as an inside to the spectator, and it is lying in the grass, connected instead of separated from space.

The full, expansive, dynamism of space in *Dead Man* is not only a place of interaction, but where relationships and dependences form. Nobody takes on the role of guiding and protecting Blake on his journey to the ocean, first by tending to Blake's wound and then by defending him against a motley crew of fur traders. Similarly, Blake defends Nobody in the tent with the missionary (Alfred Molina). While the two do not form a sense of place by erecting physical or geographical boundaries, the two men develop a sense of belonging by belonging to each other and the environment that surrounds them. When the two are at the campfire during Nobody's vision quest, the two men are surrounded by trees and bushes. Nobody is sitting on a fallen branch or dislocated stump, and Blake is sitting on the ground resting against a tree. The frontier space in *Dead Man* is so excessive that it not only transcends the boundaries of the

frame, it fills the frame to an extent that it physically supports them both. Furthermore, Jarmusch frames the men in a two shot so that they, again, extend from the bottom to the top of the frame on each edge with the fire between them. Later, Nobody is depicted kneeling directly next to Blake, as if the abundance of the natural environment is pushing the two meant together, forming a relationship not just with the environment, but also with each other. Massey's expression of the potentiality found in spatial assemblage realizes what Blum terms "Nobody's space," where "we find heterogeneity, a greater diversity of peoples, perspectives, and languages. To realize this sort of space takes an oppositional role to machinic space" (Blum 59-60). For both Massey and Blum, space is a site of multiplicity, heterogeneity, and interaction, but both still rely on a clear distinction between space and place. For Blum, place "subsumes" space when Nobody and Blake presumably die at the end of the film, situating space and place into an oppositional relationship (57, 63). For Massey, space can become place, an inversion that recognizes the dynamism and social systems that denote what was once space and "otherness" as a place for one's self but still recognizes space and place as different based upon belonging. Yet, it is precisely Blake's multiple interactions in space's site of multiplicity that realizes the multiple narratives that will complicate this spatial distinction.

### **The Dead Narrative, Spatial Plurality, and Trans-Scalar Assemblage**

When Blake is in bed with Thel, Charlie shoots Blake and kills Thel as the bullet passes through her and lands in Blake's chest. After Blake shoots at Charlie, missing the first two times before fatally striking his neck, Blake jumps out of the window. The film cuts to a shot tilted up towards the sky before it slowly tilts downward presenting a level street view. Then, a man riding a pinto—presumed to be Blake in the aforementioned dying narrative—passes through the



frame fleeing town. The movement of the camera implies subjectivity, as if this is a point-of-view shot comes from Blake's perspective, but this would deny any possibility that the man on the horse is Blake in a material, living, human sense. Rather, it would imply that what was riding the horse was a representation of Blake's spirit. This possibility is made more explicit when Nobody asks Blake, in the following scene: "Did you kill the man that killed you?" Nobody's question, their first interaction utilizes a past-tense determinism of "killed," suggesting that Blake's body was the perspective left lying on the ground. Similarly, when Blake first meets the fireman on the train, he immediately asks:

Look out the window. And doesn't this remind you of when you were in the boat, and then later than night, you were lying, looking up at the ceiling, and the water in your head was not dissimilar from the landscape, and you think to yourself, Why is it that the landscape is moving, but the boat is still?

The reference to the boat and the water is an allusion to the final scene in *Dead Man*, when Nobody casts Blake into the ocean inside a canoe. This scene would be unknown to both the first-time spectator and the fireman, presuming that this scene occurs in a material, living world that adheres to a linear temporality. And yet, the fireman's spatial and temporal transcendence of the space of the train, to be fully aware of the film's final scene, suggests that Blake is dead prior to the beginning of the film, enunciated by the preface from Henri Michaux—"It is preferable not to travel with a dead man." These multiple interactions that occur in what Massey calls the openness and heterogeneity of space also reveal multiple heterogeneous spatial frames. Blake's interactions with Nobody and the fireman thus realize Szaloky's "dead" narrative, in which the on screen images occur within a supernatural space, not only a material, living space of the dying narrative (58).

The dead narrative's alternative supernatural spatial frame is not only revealed through space as a site of multiple social interactions, as Massey and Blum both assert, but also the emergent ontological plurality of space itself. The diegetic spatial multiplicity in *Dead Man* is thus most intelligible as an example of David Harvey's "relational view" of space ("Space as Keyword" 123-124). Harvey's Marxist approach to space provides an economic critique of the neoliberal moment, but his spatial analysis is most significant for understanding *Dead Man*'s trans-scalar assemblage. According to Harvey, "The relational view of space holds there is no such thing as space or time outside of the processes that define them ... Processes do not occur in space but define their own spatial frame" (123-124). Just as the space of the film includes dying and dead frames, these frames are not closed and determined, but rather they are made available in the interactions and exchanges that make them available for interpretation. Jarmusch does not privilege one narrative over any other in a sense to prioritize an interpretation. Because they are all available within the representation of the film, these multiple spatial frames exist and overlap. Harvey expresses as much for his own tripartite of "absolute ... relative ... and relational space," which he believes to be in a "dialectical tension" rather than a hierarchical structure (121-124, 126). The multiplicity of space opens up multiple narrative spatial frames in the relationships of assemblage that realize the relationality of space. Massey explains space as working from the outside in; space is open, dynamic, and heterogeneous because its vastness contains a myriad of emergent social relationships. Inversely, Harvey explains space as working from the inside out, that social processes—interactions—construct spatial frames such that the emergent, multiple, and heterogeneous relationships that occur in space constitute the simultaneous existence of multiple ontologically heterogeneous spatial frames.

The plurality of space itself, however, still does not fully grasp at that elements of *Dead Man*'s trans-scalar assemblage, because it does not fully spell out the social consequences and potentialities for beings within space. The relational nature of space means that space can exist in multiple frames simultaneously due to the relationships that constitute that space, but how does that specifically form an assemblage? What does that mean for the people, environment, and things that shape multiple relationships to realize the multiplicity of space? When Blake is traveling in the forest alone and discovers the dead fawn with a gun-shot wound in the chest he runs his fingers in the blood and mixes it with his own wound. He then lays beside the deer cradling it, both lying on their sides, graphically matching their wounds to their postures (*fig. 3.3*). Blake then looks up at the sky in a point-of-view shot. The sky is visible through the branches of the leafless trees that then begin to spin as the camera performs several revolutions. This circular camera movement ushers in a superimposition, the overhead shot of Blake laying next to the deer fades into a point-of-view shot looking up at the sky through the trees. The superimposition is a literal touching of the frames, a connection that signals the interconnection of assemblage despite separation and distinction as separate frames, and we see Blake as dying human or dead spirit, graphically connected to the deer with the frame of the trees formally touching the two (*fig. 3.4*). In the point-of-view shot, the vast, boundless space of the sky transcends the grounded separation of the trees. Graphically, this spatial organization may be thought of as multiple individual points of people, things, and places that are entangled, intertwined in a dynamic, plural, ever-shifting set of connections.

Space is illustrated as a boundless beyond that precedes and exceeds place, existing inside and outside what was previously depicted as a densely enclosed forest. This

transcendence helps realize the relationality between Blake, the deer, and the trees a relationality that stretches through human, animal, and environmental to supply an example of what Jane Bennett calls “thing-power.” According to Bennett, thing-power derives from Spinoza’s theory of *Conatus*, a persistence of being, “a power present in every body” that maintains its shape and form (Bennett 2, 3). However, Bennett conceives of thing-power to be the non-subjective agency of things, through what she calls an *actant*, which

is neither an object nor a subject but an ‘intervener[,]’...which, by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event. (9)

While Bennett’s theory assumes the assemblage of space, it provides an apt metaphor for how *Dead Man* conceives of space as a trans-scalar assemblage (*fig. 3.5*). She explains thing-power as the force that exists inside all matter and beyond in its ability to set things into a series of new relationships that exert agency simply by their arrangement in space. Space’s inverse mechanics of working from outside in and inside out, as revealed through Massey and Harvey, is allegorized in the way the point-of-view angle looks outside while the overhead shot looks inside. Such an inversion is possible because space transcends geographical, social, and conceptual boundaries. Space exists inside and outside of place as an open, boundless, heterogeneous relational force.

While at once a metaphorical theoretical lens, thing-power also exemplifies how trans-scalar assemblage constitutes relationality and the potential for ecological care. The superimposition realizes a string of multiple connections afforded by spatial assemblage between human, animal, and environment, indicating the relationality of these beings because of their location in the assemblage between human and thing. Conceiving of space as this boundless

trans-scalar assemblage that finds relationality in thing-power echoes Martin Heidegger's notion of the "unheard-of center," a term which Heidegger borrows from poet Rainer Maria Rilke, to refer to the 'medium' that holds one being to another in mediation and gathers everything in the play of the venture. The unheard-of center is 'the eternal playmate' in the world-game of Being" (Heidegger 104-105). The word eternal, while temporal, also signals the flow of space as always preceding and exceeding the boundless trans-scalar nature that assembles all being into a relation that does not expel difference but is open and finds connection in that difference.

This relationality afforded by thing-power thus complicates concentric spatiality and its presence in spatial readings of space in *Dead Man*, eliciting social possibilities. Blake and Nobody's formation of place should be understood as a consequence of the multiplicity inherent to relational space. That is to say, because multiple diverse relationships exist in space to define its frame and space transcends boundaries of place, space's openness allows it to simultaneously exist as space and place. As discussed previously, the revival westerns situate space and place into a distinctly separated binary resulting from a singular material frame. *Dead Man's* ontological plurality and multiplicity revises the revival of the western in the 1990s by complicating this fixed spatiality. Revised, too, is Blum's spatial theorization of the film, which opposes machine space to Nobody's space to conceive of the diegetic spatial frame as singular, that of the dying Blake in a living world. Since one can comprehend the diegetic space as a post-mortem, spiritual spatial frame, a purgatorial space, then the sense of belonging that Blum argues exists homogeneously in Machine and heterogeneously in the frontier is not an exclusive, regulatory, separation (Blum 60). Rather, every character in the film, necessarily belongs in this space of the after-life because of their shared quality of being already dead.

Shared death, meanwhile, reveals the mutual dependence between Blake and Nobody. Their dependence cultivates care and sense of belonging that finds place inside space. In Szaloky's explanation of the relationship between Blake and Nobody in the dying and dead narrative, she articulates that Nobody can be understood as either a metaphorical spirit guide, in the former narrative, or a literal one in the latter. Nobody, in her words, is a "gesture of Charon ferrying the soul of the deceased across the Styx" (61). Thus, Nobody is a nobody to his native American tribe, but he is a *somebody* to William Blake whom he helps evade capture and who protects him at the missionary's trading post in return. The missionary's disdain, evident in reverse shots of dirty looks and the suggestion he has blankets for Nobody, indicate the threat of this encounter. This is an articulation that space's site of multiplicity does not always constitute peaceful relations, but Blake's destruction of the missionary and his threat is a form of protection for Nobody.

Figured not only in the multiple narratives and content, Jarmusch's form also challenges the fixed designations of space as empty and place as full. In the campfire scene when Nobody enters into his vision quest, the two men are framed in a long shot that shows them sitting next to the fire as Blake leans against a tree. While this scene occurs in what the revival westerns' concentric spatiality would define as the empty space of the frontier, the two men are surrounded by a dense backdrop of trees that surrounds them to the point of obscuring any space beyond interaction. Blake and Nobody are shot "in natural spaces that are, simultaneously, strangely empty and full" (Nieland 181). In effect, this composition signals the bounding associated with place in the revival westerns, and yet Blake figures this communal, bounded, place as both empty and full. The spaces Blake and Nobody navigate, which are seen as empty and full, threatening

and peaceful, signals the multiplicity of space itself in a constant state of emergence. Space is constantly open to redefinition based on the multiple interactions that might occur and place is constantly destabilized because of space's transcendence of its geographical and conceptual boundaries. When Nobody looks at Blake while on his vision quest, a skull superimposes over Blake's face. This image of the skull signals emptiness by referencing death, an assumed static and fixed end to the fullness of life, visualized in the dissolution of the material flesh of Blake's face. And yet, the skull is translucent, allowing the fullness of life in Blake's material flesh to bleed through the skull. Thus, this space and Blake are depicted as ontologically plural, simultaneously empty and full, dead and living, space and place. Ultimately, the two construct a procedure of place formation made available by the open, multiplicity of trans-scalar assemblage. Their open sense of place avoids replicating the contracted exclusionary reactionary notions of place in the concentric model that opposes place to space in a manner that facilitates spatial enframing and exclusion (Massey 152).

### **Neoliberal Problems, Spatial Alternatives, and Socioeconomic Potentialities**

While Jim Jarmusch sets *Dead Man* in the late nineteenth century to critique the western genre and specifically the revival westerns of the 1990s, his portrayal of space as a trans-scalar assemblage has socioeconomic relevance for this period of neoliberal globalization. The multiple narratives enabled through Jarmusch's spatial ambiguity realizes a relationality that offers an alternative spatiotemporal logic to the opposition and consumption of concentric spatiality and linear temporality to produce greater social care.

As discussed in Chapter 1, during the 1970s and 1980s neoliberalism began to expand across a global scale. Rising out of Friedrich Hayek's and Martin Friedman's contributions to

the Chicago School and Mont Pèlerin Society in the 1940's, "neoliberalism is first and foremost a theory of how to reengineer the state in order to guarantee the success of the market and its most important participants, modern corporations" (Horn & Mirowski, 158-59, 161).

Neoliberalism conceives of the market as a free-floating, autonomous system that extends through a decentralized global network. Neoliberal proponents US President Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, intensified neoliberal policies, advocating for and implementing "strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, 2). According to Harvey, during this period governments were primarily designed to support the market's function on the global stage; he adds, "all forms of social solidarity were dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values" (23).

It is specifically Hayek's conception of neoliberalism as a heterogeneous, decentered market-focused system that many would compare to trans-scalar assemblage's boundless multiplicity. In fact, Hayek calls decentralization neoliberalism's solution to economic problems "because only thus can we ensure that the knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place will be promptly used" (524). His reference to the particular time and place of knowledge is simply one input of many entered into the metaphorical grand processing machine that is the global market, an ad hoc grouping of commercial developments and economic partnerships. Hayekian economics justifies this structure because the dissemination of information around capital:

is always a question of the relative importance of the particular things with which ['the man on the spot'] is concerned, and the causes which alter their relative importance are of no interest to him beyond the effect on those concrete things of



his own environment. ... [H]e need not know of these events ... nor of all their effects. (525)

Hayek conceives of neoliberalism as a grand information processing system of the market that uses the price system as the fundamental code to disperse information across a global economic assemblage (524). His metaphor suggests neoliberalism is an interlocking system of seemingly disparate places across time and space that input and receive information through the market. And yet, Hayek's decentralization is not as boundless and decentered as he would like to conceive nor is it structured in the same manner as *Dead Man's* trans-scalar assemblage (524-525).

Hayek's conception differs from trans-scalar assemblage discussed here because the dissemination of information and capital in this mechanical output is still bounded, or centralized, to constitute an economic authority of elitism determined by the command of multinational corporations with greatest access to and influence over this market. While Hayek believes that limiting the flow of information increases reactionary speed and action in the market, he does not acknowledge the social imbalance that can enforce this localization of knowledge. Hayek's words expose—without his acknowledgement—a predetermination of relational importance. In other words, Hayek's conception of the neoliberal market system relies on relationships between individuals and corporations that are unevenly defined and weighted, not by the economic system or the actors in the networked relationship, but by corporate and political actors with the strongest manipulation of the market system. This bounds knowledge and the influence of relations too tightly to people, places, and events in a concentric spatiality that constitutes a hierarchy of knowledge and influence.

*Dead Man*'s affirmation of assemblage introduces an alternative to this conception, specifically through its trans-scalar nature. Space, in its boundless preceding and exceeding of bounded and fixed places, complicates neoliberalism's decentralization by signaling that it still enables the separation and opposition of centralization in its output. Now, to be clear, this is not to imply that all information should be disseminated and understood by all people. This would constitute a false illusion of mastery that accompanies concentric spatiality. Rather, trans-scalar assemblage is a spatial conception that more clearly signals the open, relational system that attempts to make visible the dynamic, multiple, heterogeneous relations and dependences of people across space. Thus the alternative being posed is one that more clearly and transparently signals the relationships of interdependence between people, places, and institutions without obscuring this system or negating its functional role. *Dead Man*'s proposition is a spatiality that counters Thatcher's declaration that there is "no such thing as society, only individual men and women'—and ... their families" (Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, 23). Opening up to the various interdependent relations across places, people, and institutions through trans-scalar spatial assemblage dislocates the bounding and fixing of beneficial care that the "other" is capable of providing or receiving.

For instance, following the Watts Peace Treaty of 1992, just three years before *Dead Man*'s release, the Bloods and Crips' attempted to forge peace between their gangs and produced a proposal for community uplift. In the document, they called for the participation of federal, state, and local Los Angeles governments to contribute to the construction of medical facilities, reconstruct the welfare system to a system of investments and loans for businesses to generate jobs, and finally, to development peaceful recreational parks and social environments ("Bloods

and Crips Proposal”). What their proposal realizes and calls attention to is not only the interdependence of the individual on community and the state, but also the connections among these variously located, stratified institutions, which influence one another and one another’s ability to influence change. Therefore, *Dead Man*’s spatial multiplicity, heterogeneity, and plurality is an attempt to show the generative openness and potential of a new relationality, demonstrating society’s role across people and institutions, places locally and globally, throughout the reach of space’s trans-scalar assemblage.

### **The Dreaming Narrative and Non-Linear Temporality**

Now to return to the film proper, while the trans-scalar assemblage of *Dead Man* realizes relationality and multiplicity spatially, the film’s formal discontinuity also constitutes a non-linear temporality. The primary mode of revealing relationality temporally is through the narrative’s simultaneity. The significance of the film’s multiple spatial scales, put more simply, is that they exist simultaneously, and it is this feature that prevents their hierarchical organization.

To begin, we first must address *Dead Man*’s critique of the linear temporality found in the revival westerns. As discussed in Chapter 1, linear temporality derives from what Gilles Deleuze defines as the movement-image, a continuity form that offers equidistant instants and designs a single, omnidirectional “succession of passing presents” that “others” the past and future (*Cinema 1*, 5, *Cinema 2*, 101). In my previous discussion of Deleuze, I discussed the Earps’ entry into the town of Tombstone to bear out the movement-image, but it is locatable in all of the revival westerns. For example, in *Dances with Wolves*, when Lt. Dunbar arrives at Fort Hayes his voiceover narration references the events that occurred between this scene and the previous

battlefield discussion with the general: “I was also awarded Cisco, the trusty mount that carried me across the field that day, and on full recovery was given transfer to any station I desired. The bloody slaughter continues in the East as I arrive at Fort Hayes.” While Dunbar references past events, they are all, at best, vague. His references to “that day, ... on full recovery” and “the bloody slaughter continues” all signal time but lack any determinable sense of its passage. The reason for this indistinct language is because the film’s reliance on linear temporality and continuity demands a direct connection between the previous scene on the battlefield and Dunbar’s arrival at the western fort. Therefore, all the past events are collapsed together into a broad classification of the past that situates the temporal distance between shots as equidistant instants, distinguishable only as previous instants and current instants, the past and the present, and privileging the latter.

*Dead Man* does not ignore the linear temporality of the revival westerns; in fact, just as with the shots out the window on the train, Jarmusch immediately depicts the omnidirectional succession on which this continuity relies. The film opens with a close-up of a train’s wheels on a track, forcefully revolving to propel the train along a linear single track. The evolving wardrobe of the passengers on the train from clean, well-dressed passengers to only men who wear fur coats and carry guns, depicts a linear progression of movement and temporal continuity between these images. The opening close-up of the circular wheel’s revolutions implies the circuitous revolutions of time, whether daily, weekly, monthly, or seasonally. Nonetheless, the linear axis that connects the wheels is an allegory for the linear rationalization of time that links these revolutions to a single forward movement constrained by the direction of the tracks. Non-linear revolution is subordinated to linear progression in this composition.

However, Jarmusch sets up the dying narrative within a linear temporality so that he can unsettle its conception of time with elliptical editing and ambiguous dialogue that produces discontinuity, reassembly, and simultaneity. In this sense, the same scene exhibits what Deleuze identifies as “sidereal time”—a form of the “direct time-image” (*Cinema 2*, 98). The direct time-image is the movement-image’s antithesis: “It does not abstract time; it does it better: it reverses its subordination in relation to movement” (98). If we take the multiple fades between shots in the scene on the train seriously, as we should, the film opens up time. We presume that Blake and the train have both moved, as we notice variation and change in the western landscape vignettes through the window, but there is no temporal frame with which to measure these presumed presents against each other to clearly delineate a past and future of the present images. In fact, in one shot, Blake looks to his watch, but the hands of the watch never move. Another close-up of the watch is never offered in this scene, so stability and certainty are cleaved from time. The temporal opening up Jarmusch offers with his fades allows the spectator to recognize the simultaneity and reassembling capacity of the scene, again hyphenation but temporally as well as spatially.

While spatial transcendence is made possible in realizing space’s multiplicity, it is paramount to understand that *Dead Man* presents this multiplicity simultaneously. The train’s fireman enters into the train and sits with Blake. The fireman’s question that references the final scene is not just a spatial transcendence but also temporal. What can be read as an innocuously ambiguous memory thrust upon Blake in the linear narrative can also serve as reference to the final scene of the film, in which this is a future present for Blake and a present for the fireman. The reference to the boat in the past tense alters our understanding of the narrative. We can

understand this as a present for Blake that establishes the proceeding narrative to be a flashback, a past unfolding presently throughout the proceeding film. Reading this scene as a flashback brings to the fore Szaloky's final component of *Dead Man*'s narrative tripartite, the dreaming narrative (58). Rather than a memory, Szaloky offers another virtual spatiality by posing that "since the opening sequence shows Blake falling asleep, could his, and Nobody's, entire journey simply be a dream that he had on the train en route to Machine?" (58).

While Szaloky offers a provocative narrative interpretation of the film's ambiguity, the fireman's present access to Blake's future conjures an alternative spatiotemporal frame to this narrative. Thus in spite of my use of Szaloky's label for this narrative as the dreaming narrative, I contend that this narrative is better understood as a distorted past "virtual memory," in which Blake is, at this moment, lying in the boat and the entirety of the film is occurring within a mental frame (Deleuze 105). From this point of view, the exchange between Blake and the fireman is occurring in Blake's mind as a memory of the past he experiences from the boat, and the conflation of past (train travel to Machine), present (he is in the boat), and future (dialogue referencing his "own grave") are all consolidated into this conversation. The temporality of *Dead Man*'s opening is an example of Deleuze's "sidereal time," which is "a system of relativity, a pluralist cosmology, a simultaneity of presents in different worlds" (102-103). Each character has simultaneous access and availability to all temporal realms. This scene realizes the inability to "actualize" the scene; because the entirety of the dreaming narrative is contained within a subjective frame, "the real and the imaginary, the objective and the subjective, and the actual and the virtual" become "indiscernible" (104). The uncertainty is a consequence of the various characters' simultaneous occupation and access to the past / present / future (104).

Such ontological pluralities in character and time present themselves through Jarmusch's continuity-rupturing fades, which open time back to a system of relations that realize the open, dynamic, relations of the past to present and present to future all at once. As Juan Suarez notes about the film's temporality, "*Dead Man* [i]s a radical meditation on the history of Western expansion, as it accounts for the traumatic content of the past and rejects chronological linearity" (104). This is figured in the dilapidated wagon and teepee that both Blake and the spectator see through the same visual lens beyond the window. The wagon, a figure of Manifest Destiny that enabled continuous movement and enframing of the American West, is here abandoned, destroyed, as if to signal this movement is no longer necessary. The same representation of the teepee suggests that this movement has destroyed the place of the Native American and that the wagon is no longer necessary because enframing has reached a historical completion. Nevertheless, later on the train Blake and the spectator are also subjected to this mortally violent, indiscriminate, assault upon the West when all the men in the train begin to fire their guns at the buffalo. The present tense action of the men firing at buffalo confuses the past-tense impression of completion offered by the abandoned teepee. Violent displacement of people and animals in the West is depicted as both completed and ongoing. Jarmusch conflates past and present, completed and ongoing, to criticize the earlier westerns of the 1990s. The revival westerns rely upon a linear temporality that not only develops narrative continuity, but also privileges the historical present of the film's release as master of the American past. Their pretense of authenticity depends upon history's distinction between the past, present, and future, historical narratives that have concluded are differentiated from ongoing present events. Thus the process of western history and genre tradition that suggests this destructive enframing exists solely in the

past is also inextricably linked to Hollywood's present, simultaneously, as a historical and cinematic process. *Dead Man* unmoors linear temporality in a manner that is critical of the revival westerns, but offers non-linear temporality as an alternative at the same time.

Non-linear temporality is more than mere simultaneity as illustrated in the dreaming narrative; it also has a cyclical potential that ruptures the subordination of revolution to linear progress. Non-linear temporality's circuitous structure is best reflected in the dead narrative which posits that Blake dies either prior to the film's beginning or at some point before the final shot, and the remainder of the film is a depiction of his venture towards a superior spiritual realm. The narrative focus on a final destination reflects a "death-bound journey" (Rickman 401). However, this journey is not a linear ascension; it "may even be cyclical," according to Rickman (401). "Blake is trapped in some sort of time loop," he writes, similar to the revolution of the wheels on the train (401). The exchange between Blake and the fireman is actually a point of convergence, a connection that unites Blake's presence in the boat to this point of the film's narrative genesis. The circular shape of this form of the dead narrative relies on temporal circularity. In Yi-Fu Tuan's phenomenological articulations of space and time in *Space and Place*, he defines time's role in personal experience with a circular template through the "astronomic ... principle[] of ... [m]ythic time" (131). In his words, "Astronomic time is experienced as the sun's daily round and the parade of seasons; its nature is repetition," not unlike the evocation of natural revolutions visualized in the wheels of the train (131). Instead of offering repetitive revolutions of time to compose linear temporal progression, non-linear temporality inverts this subordination. Blake appears to carve a linear journey that is, in fact, just tracing the larger circular design of time. Linearity's subordination to non-linear circularity



becomes even more apparent when Blake gets in the canoe and Nobody declares: “Now back to where you come from William Blake.” A comment of this nature could be referring to a postmortem reading in which this is a static purgatory where Nobody guides Blake to a final universal destination in a progressive and linear journey back to spiritual realm beyond this purgatorial space. Or, the origin to which Blake will return is the origin in the film, the train ride from Cleveland to Machine. Similar to Nobody, the fireman is a facilitator of movement. As such, he, along with Nobody, are afforded the reflexivity to be aware of the loop, while Blake is, and will continue to be, oblivious. The fireman and Nobody are aware of this tactile point where Blake begins an infinitely recurring journey in a purgatorial space.

The circular purgatorial reading of the dead narrative is reflected even more strongly when the film’s mirrored structure is made visible in a manner that links the past and future to the present. Szaloky uncovers the mirrored narrative structure in the film through the settings: “the white and Native-American settlements ... [and the] near-isomorphic duplication” of which “brings together the beginning and end of the narrative ... to a circularity” (Szaloky 64). In this interpretation, Szaloky is comparing Blake’s entry into the main street of Machine to his entry into the Native American village with Nobody. When Blake enters the former, he is framed on both sides between vertical buildings, adorned with skulls and materials extracted from the environment. In the latter, he similarly walks through a pathway, framed by the constructed wooden buildings adorned with furs and sticks, displaying materials taken from the surrounding environment. Blake enters the town of Machine immediately after his train ride that opens the film, and he enters the Native American village immediately before the film’s conclusion during

which Blake is placed in the boat by Nobody and floats off into the ocean.<sup>4</sup> These mirrored reflections can be understood as points that are narratively level. Each particular scene lies directly across from its reflection in the revolutionary shape of the film. In their mutual looking, both images are related in their inverse narrative location, their similarities and differences reflect past and future back upon each other through the present.

While a circuitous revolutionary narrative loop, Jarmusch's elliptical editing helps realize the revolutionary potential of this narrative revolution. The constant fading between scenes, previously shown to rupture the spatial contiguity and temporal continuity is particularly a disruption of what Deleuze calls the "sensory-motor link" that realizes "the unity of movement and its interval, the specification of the movement-image" (Deleuze 272). More simply, the sensory-motor link is the process of human action that perceives a stimulus, interprets the stimulus, and then produces a corresponding response. The repetition of this model is what guides the linear succession of the movement-image in "narrative cinema," according to Deleuze (272). This disruption graphically figures the purgatorial reading not as a clear, unilinear, single circular construction in which all the same events occur the same way, in the same place, with the same people. Instead, the disruption indicates time's formation as a circular shape of hyphens—multiple lines that suggest a shape but have intermediate absences that facilitate reshaping or reconfiguration, offering the potential of new experiences and relationships in the temporally ambiguous blackness of the film's fades. To return to the final reading of space's multiplicity in the previous section, the perceived emptiness of the blackness in the fades is also

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<sup>4</sup> The language "directly" and "immediate" may seem to suggest some certainty to the passage of time or its linear nature. This is not my intent. To clarify, these descriptors are not referencing diegetic temporal frames. This description refers to the succession of scenes and their order in the viewing experience.

a fullness in that the ambiguous ruptures are what allow for multiple narratives, spatial frames, and temporal conceptions to emerge. This elliptical editing reshapes the understanding of the film as well as the narrative structures of the westerns during the 1990s, exhibiting revolutionary potential. While this will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter, *Dead Man* realizes the proliferation of linear temporality in the logic of industrial modernity and its historical neoliberal moment. For Jarmusch, this continuation, or cyclical return, is limiting in that fails to produce radical change, but conceiving of time as a hyphenated circle allows for openness, potentiality, and change that can restructure the formation of care.

Just as the train's wheels can move forwards and backwards along the railroad track, non-linear temporality can be further complicated due to its reversibility. In an interview with Johnathan Rosenbaum, Jarmusch explains his editing choices: "We had ... in the back of our minds while shooting, that scenes would resolve in and of themselves without being determined by the next incoming image" (43). Jarmusch's language of self-containment evokes the contraction of the present within the scene, separating and distinguishing the present from the past or future as a totality, akin to the linear temporality of the revival westerns that rely upon Deleuze's movement-image. However, Jarmusch acknowledges that this was purposefully designed to illustrate a "rhythm," and one that is still distinct from the linear succession of passing, self-contained presents because the discontinuous editing's ambiguity negates the equidistance between these presents (43). The varying lengths of these self-contained scenes and the ambiguous temporal distance between scenes implies a subjective rhythm. The subjective inconsistency is most closely linked to the dreaming narrative in which the film is a projection of Blake's internal memories, desires, and present physical environment. In historian Stephen

Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space*, he turns to Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss' article "Summary Study of Time in Religion and Magic" to explain time as "heterogeneous, discontinuous, expandable, and partially reversible" (32). Most significant for non-linear temporal assemblage is time's reversibility, its reorganization, which Hubert and Mauss locate in "rites of entry and exit" that "may be united over time ... as end is joined with beginning" (32). This exists within *Dead Man*'s content in the form of tobacco. Throughout the film, Blake is asked if he has any tobacco multiple times by Thel, Nobody, and the fur trappers he encounters in the forest. Jarmusch understands tobacco to be a social and religious "sacrament" that is desired by all the characters, except for Blake (Rosenbaum 35). While Thel and the fur trappers are seeking tobacco for their own purposes, Nobody is seeking tobacco for Blake's sake, stating that tobacco is necessary for his journey. Therefore, tobacco represents the religious rite necessary to exit the living material world of the dying narrative and the purgatorial loop of the dead narrative to facilitate entry into the final resting place from which Blake emerged or the entry into new possibilities and experiences in the postmortem revolution. Tobacco is the intermediary that propels a linear transcendence, but one that reverses the characterization of time by applying origin to the future and past to the present.

Drawing upon the simultaneity of time, the dreaming narrative that occupies a virtual spatial frame also reveals the rearrange-ability of time as an assemblage. In the dreaming narrative, the scene in the train and the exchange with the fireman are a simultaneous entanglement of past and present. If the fireman accesses Blake's personal past with references to Blake's ex-fiancé and parents' death, then it is because he is actually a subjective figure moving through Blake's consciousness. He is a virtual projection of Blake's questioning of how

he ended up in his current place inside the canoe. It is valuable here to understand the temporality of virtuality because it expands and contracts. Its potential forms are infinite. According to Homa King's study of time in digital media: "The virtual is not a parallel, unreal world, separated by a chasm from the present world, but an interstice that connects the two and is the site of becoming or being-in-process" (12). Not only is this an interstice that unites the objective and subjective, past and present, but King's language of becoming or in-process indicates that it, too, is a fledgling temporal frame that is malleable and selective.

Consequently, chronologically speaking, the train sequence is actually the final scene of the film, but because this virtualizes the spatiotemporal frames of the film, differentiating and interlocking various experiences and images of past and present, time is subjective and non-linear, illustrating time's loose and malleable nature. Such possibility is amplified by Jarmusch's fades through which events, locations, and people are presumably removed from this projected memory, and the discontinuity reveals an inability to properly locate a linear chronology of sequenced events. In Henri Bergson's ontological study of time, he explains that time is shaped like a cone. The widest expanse of the cone is the distant past with a multitude of experiences that then narrows into a tighter focus and understanding, ultimately contracting to a single point in the present (Deleuze 99). Bergson believes that there is a "constant interconnection of all past experiences with the present regardless of how far back they may have occurred" (Kern 44). Blake's memory, the entirety of *Dead Man*, is potentially this intertwining path through Bergson's cone, which Deleuze describes as "the coexistence of circles which are more or less dilated or contracted, each one of which contains everything at the same time and the present of which is the extreme limit" (99). The chronology of Blake's memory and the film move through

this cone in a chaotic non-linear path, circling, zigzagging, and jumping in ways that rearrange the past in relation to the present.

And finally, as previously argued, the heterogeneous and dynamic relations between past, present, and future exist simultaneously, and consequently the expandable quality of *Dead Man*'s non-linear temporality is also vital to understanding time. Violence in the revival westerns typically occurs when a perceived "other" enters into a town or fort and is perceived to disrupt the peace or stability of the place. The violent reactions within these films are usually contained within a single scene and its repercussions appear to span only the length of the film. Long-lasting consequences, such as the displacement of Native Americans described in the scroll at the end of *Dances with Wolves*, are only alluded to or described, their violences rendered invisible. However, Rob Nixon's theory of "slow violence" helps illustrate the reconfiguring potentials of non-linear temporality locatable in *Dead Man*. According to Nixon, slow violence is not typically perceived as violence because it occurs slowly and is typically not visible (2). Nixon describes slow violence as "gradual[]," "delayed," "incremental and accretive," emphasizing a temporal discontinuity between action and consequence, but not a causal separation (2, 11). Therefore, slow violence reorganizes the relations between past, present, and future, specifically Nixon's adjective "delayed" implies that these relations can exist discontinuously. Slow violence embraces time's non-linearity and ruptures notions of causality that emphasize linear temporality's successive homogeneous nature. The delayed and accretive nature of slow violence that realizes non-linear temporality suggests that "the past of slow violence is never past" (8). Akin to Bergson's cone expressed in Deleuze, his expression is significant in multiple ways: it realizes the constant relationship between past and present because "past ... is never

past,” but also in this quote, we see two pasts—“the past of slow violence” and the “past” that “never” passed (8). Because past is repeated twice, I read it as a metaphor for the existence of multiple heterogeneous pasts with multiple relationships to each other and a present that simultaneously exists. The repetition exposes the relationality of not just slow violence, but also time generally.

Returning to the scene of the vision quest, Nobody sees a skull replace Blake’s face, signaling death, but Blake’s relation to death is still uncertain because the elliptical editing of the film has made it ambiguous whether Blake is dying or already dead during this scene (*fig 3.6*). Blake’s hand—still material flesh—nicely juxtaposes the skull to heighten this uncertainty, visualizing the simultaneous entanglement of past and present for both characters. And since death would be the future of dying, this also suggests the present’s entangled relations with the future. The aforementioned entanglement is figured as an expansion of time. Temporal expansion, according to the film, appears to have generative qualities. During the same campfire scene, Nobody exclaims: “It is odd that you do not remember any of your poetry William Blake.” Though situated in the dying narrative with a living material frame and linear temporal frame this is seen as a recurring joke of confusion, since the poet William Blake would have died approximately fifty years prior to this moment. Alternatively, however, the dead narrative offers an eternal expansion of the temporal frame, one that extends so far as to negate any claims to significance of the difference between fifty years. Nobody’s potential to encounter the poet is no longer a joke in this postmortem spatial world, since the poet would be dead and exist in this spatiality.

For time, this represents Nixon's expansion of time in slow violence. In this supernatural spatial frame, there is no material bodily death that would differentiate the past from the present. Instead, the spirit of the poet William Blake is an eternally potential encounter for Nobody's present because the bounds of time have been expanded so greatly that they suggest Nixon's claim that past is never past. Rather, the past is absorbed into the present. Since time is not relegated solely to the past, but also married to futurity, Nixon's aim is to rethink time in a manner that generates care beyond a contracted present that is bounded from past and future, attending to social and ecological "fatal repercussions...dispersed across space and time" (9). In this sense, Nixon's project is an extension of Bergson's cone discussed in Deleuze's and King's work. It is a stratified cone that contracts to a limited present, but Nixon's expansion of time in the future also helps us understand that the cone passes through the present, extending out into the future and expanding its indeterminable possibilities (Deleuze, 99-100).

### **Non-Linear Temporality and Ecological Possibilities**

The non-linear temporality in *Dead Man* illustrates alternative ways to restructure relations between past, present, and future that contain greater potentials for care within the film. They also allegorize new possibilities for the film's historical moment. Similar to the manner in which Jim Jarmusch's spatiality reveals the positive relational alternatives to neoliberal spatial logic, non-linear temporality provides an alternative temporal model amid neoliberal globalization in the early 1990s. While the spatial alternative strongly looks to produce greater social care in anthropocentric relationships, non-linear temporality looks to provide alternatives that can develop greater ecological care between human and thing relationships.



The arch of twentieth-century environmentalism displays a shift from primarily local concerns to a perspective that also includes global care. Early environmental focus had local scopes; the primary focus of human and environment issues centered on the tension between conservation, the maintenance and oversight of land for accessible resources, and preservation, the care and maintenance of land for its own sake and survival. However, the countercultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s ushered in a growing concern surrounding the global environment. Publications, such as the *Whole Earth Catalog* founded in 1968, and political acknowledgement, such as the foundation of Earth Day on April 22, 1970, reflect a significant turning point in which ecological concerns expanded to focus on a global scale. Globalized ecological concern only heightened when scientists discovered a hole in the ozone layer in 1984, and in the same decade, scientists also discovered and publicized global climate change. However, in her book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, Ursula Heise explains that the transition to environmental globalism was fraught with oppositional reactions calling attention to local ecological focus, much in the same way the anti-NAFTA responded to neoliberal globalization (19). Ecological calls to a “holistic view of the planet,” cultivated a “call to return to local environments and communities as a way of overcoming the modern alienation from nature” (20-21). The localist tension in the environmental movement was predicated on “place[,] ... one of the most important categories through which American environmentalists articulate what it means to be ecologically aware and ethically responsible” (29). While desiring a new framework for ecological care across a global scale, concentric spatiality’s separation and contracted focus seemingly had not been confronted or replaced within the environmental movement.

In Chapter 1, neoliberalism's insufficient response to environmental disasters was analyzed primarily through a spatial lens, but non-linear temporality's plurality provides a lens to also understand this as a temporal problem. As Daniel Bodansky explains, "the latter half of the 1980s was a period of increased concern about global environmental issues generally—including depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer, deforestation," and other numerous examples (Bodansky 27). And, as concern began to grow "[i]n 1988 ... climate change emerged as an *intergovernmental* issue," signaling the interdependence of trans-scalar assemblage across global space and the need for unifying sense of care (28). However, at the 1989 Noordwijk Meeting, at which many nations across the globe met to strategize approaches to climate change, the United States chose to "argue that emphasis should be placed on further scientific research and on developing national rather than international strategies and programs (29). The response from the United States reflects Heise's description of localism's persistent challenge to global ecological care at a political level. Such interference spatially illustrates a nationally contracted focus as a result of concentric spatiality. That is to say, the United States and other neoliberal nations relied on their hierarchical distinction of self and "other" to not only apply more control during the meeting, but also ensure concern looked inward at a national global place instead of one that constituted relations across global space. Temporality was also a factor because neoliberalism's linear temporality constituted a homogeneous single narrative that was used to measure development between places. Rather than look for a better system of relations through diverse and dynamic histories, neoliberal places contracted their focus to present concerns, created unfair requirements, and a lack of contributory aid to foreign catastrophes (30).

This moment of global relations politicized ecological care, submitting it to the dominant linear temporality that also impeded the environmental activism. For example, as previously discussed, American political response to the Exxon Valdez in 1989 produced political bills, but ones designed wholly on reaction to events and not toward recognizing the impact of such events on a far-reaching future, regulating their prevention and limiting their impact. As the influence of environmentalism began to encounter roadblocks by the centered political focus of addressing climate change and other global problems, the previously “mainstream environmental groups’ excessive centralization,” produced “a further decentralization of the radical wing of the conservation movement” in the form of groups such as *Earth First!* (Davis 246). While the name of this movement signals the unifying relationality of space in trans-scalar assemblage because of the way global space is suggested to be more important than local place, they, too, appear limited by the linear temporality that dominated the neoliberal center. Members of this dispersed, heterogeneous movement sank whaling vessels, attacked corporate privatizing structures over the environment, barred access to forests by chaining themselves to trees, and used other physically violent and destructive tactics to draw attention to global concerns (31, 18, 19). However, their emphasis on creating spectacular, immediate visibility—what Nixon describes as the traditional view of violence—suggests they too were limited by linear temporality. Their desire to inflict violence on technologies and instruments indicates a lack of concern for consequences on the surrounding environment that could occur over time as well as the prolonged consequences of causing employees of these companies to lose income permanently as a product of termination. They were likely aware of these consequences and decided they were insignificant in relation to stopping environmental violences or because they

existed in a long-off future. Ergo, *Earth First!* displays the same problematic hierarchical separation revealed by neoliberal political centers. Rather than challenge hierarchical relationships, they merely inverted them and continued to privilege the present over the future.

At this moment, it is necessary to return to the film to parse the consequences of its non-linear temporality, measuring Jarmusch's spatial, temporal, and narrative ambiguity against a nihilistic interpretation. It is uncertain, to Blake and the spectator, whether he is dead or alive, if he is in the West or a supernatural plane, if he exists in a stable present or is transcending the bounds of time. Aside from the plurality argued above, the ambiguity also carries potentials for collapse. Blum's concluding remarks offer as much: "Like Blake in his funeral boat, we are propelled by movements not entirely our own toward the disappearing horizon between space, subject, and history—the anxious latitudes of our mediated experience of place" (64). He is calling to examine the anxieties surrounding the unstable boundaries between "individual[ity], space, and history," but he does so by assuming the spectator shares Blake's aimlessness (64). The film's ambiguity paired with the spectator's perception that they lack agency or stability could certainly produce an anxiety resulting in a sense of meaninglessness. Unlike reactionary notions of place that seek to reconstitute homogenizing boundaries and identity, such a position amplifies the film's heterogeneity to justify a nihilistic disregard for the environment.

While a nihilistic reading would dispel any notion of *Dead Man*'s theme of ecological care, the film's narrative interdependence and ambiguity strive for a greater relationality that complicates a nihilistic interpretation. The dying / dead / dreaming narrative plurality in *Dead Man* is not without linking similarities. Primarily, whether Blake is being lead to his physical resting place in the dying narrative, the beginning of a purgatorial loop in the dead narrative, or

to a spiritual spatiotemporal plane in the dreaming narrative, all three are inextricably linked to narratives that seek a connection to a space or a time. Trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality's hyphenation is both separating and conjoining at the same time, as such the narratives are simultaneously differentiated and connected. Just as Blake and Nobody's relationships to each other and their environment inform the relational plurality of space, so, too, do these multiple spatial frames rely upon one other for identity.

Trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality is an expansive spatiotemporal logic offered to better form relationships because it allows for ontological potentiality, but it is the film's formal ambiguity that activates the spectator to form relationships. Because the film's narratives are not just about Blake's seemingly wandering journey but also his pursuit, Jarmusch's discontinuity and noncontiguous forms an active spectator. When Blake rides up a snow covered mountain on his stolen pinto, tall evergreen trees can be seen in the background through the space in the trees. Then the film fades to black, and when it fades back in seconds later, the bounty hunter Wilson rides up the same mountain. The trees are still leafless and standing tall, but now only a hazy fog can be seen between their branches. Although this time, there appears to be less snow, as large patches of grass are now visible. Wilson dismounts his horse and touches the grass, checking for tracks that might indicate when and if Blake passed through this space. The spectator is provoked to attend to the landscape. Jarmusch's elliptical editing disrupts any continuity that would imply immediacy of succeeding presents between these shots. Rather, Wilson's attention to the grass is a simulation of how the spectator is intended to respond to the temporal and spatial ambiguity. The melted snow and hazy fog are markedly different than the moment Blake passed through this space, prompting the spectator to

cue in on the slightest differences in the environment to gain a sense of the passing of time. Similarly, the spectator, along with Wilson, is left to question how this mountain relates to other, distant, unknown spaces, as in questioning where Blake is at this moment. The spectator asks: “What is the distance between the two?” This process and effect is repeated throughout the film, similar to the manner a teacher has a student repeat behavior until it is ingrained. The intent is not to overreach and attempt to form stable fixed relationships across space and time, but to comprehend their plurality and seek new relationships with what is distant and invisible. The activeness of the spectator in attending to Jarmusch’s ambiguity complicates Blum’s passive spectator that develops anxiety and potentially a nihilist response to trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality.

*Dead Man*’s temporal non-linear alternative is a process of exposing both the political actors and their environmental challenges to the contracted focus of their linearity, recognizing the constant simultaneous relations of past, present, future in an expanded, reversible, and cyclically assembled shape that re-couples the “violence” that “is decoupled from its causes by the workings of time” (Nixon 11). *Dead Man* illustrates the way that not just past and present, but also the extended and expanded future are simultaneously linked with the present, offering an alternative that can potentially reconfigure the centralization of violence as existing solely in the present or past.

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Jim Jarmusch’s multiple noncontiguous shooting locations and rhythmic elliptical editing cultivate a spatiotemporal ambiguity that loosens the formal structure of the revival westerns to open up to alternative possibilities. Rather than replicate the fixed, bounded, and singularizing

approaches of this genre's historical cycle, adhering to the concentric model of space and a linear temporality, *Dead Man* realizes space as a trans-scalar assemblage and a non-linear temporality that is ontologically plural, indeterminate, and relational in the simultaneous multiplicity they constitute. In this sense, *Dead Man* offers a didacticism not offered in the reactionary revival westerns. Instead of offering merely a revision of the western genre's forms of space and time or its theme of Manifest Destiny, this work allegorizes the spatiotemporal problems of its neoliberal socioeconomic moment, offering a speculative vision of care in addition to its disruptive critique. The film emphasizes care not only because it provides a new spatiotemporal framework in which distant relationships can become visible, develop, or take new forms, but it also causes the spectator to tacitly learn *how* to find relationality by forcing him or her to locate or develop dynamic relationships amid spatial, temporal, and narrative ambiguity.



**Figure 3.1** The Extreme Long Shot is Askew (*Dead Man*, 1995)





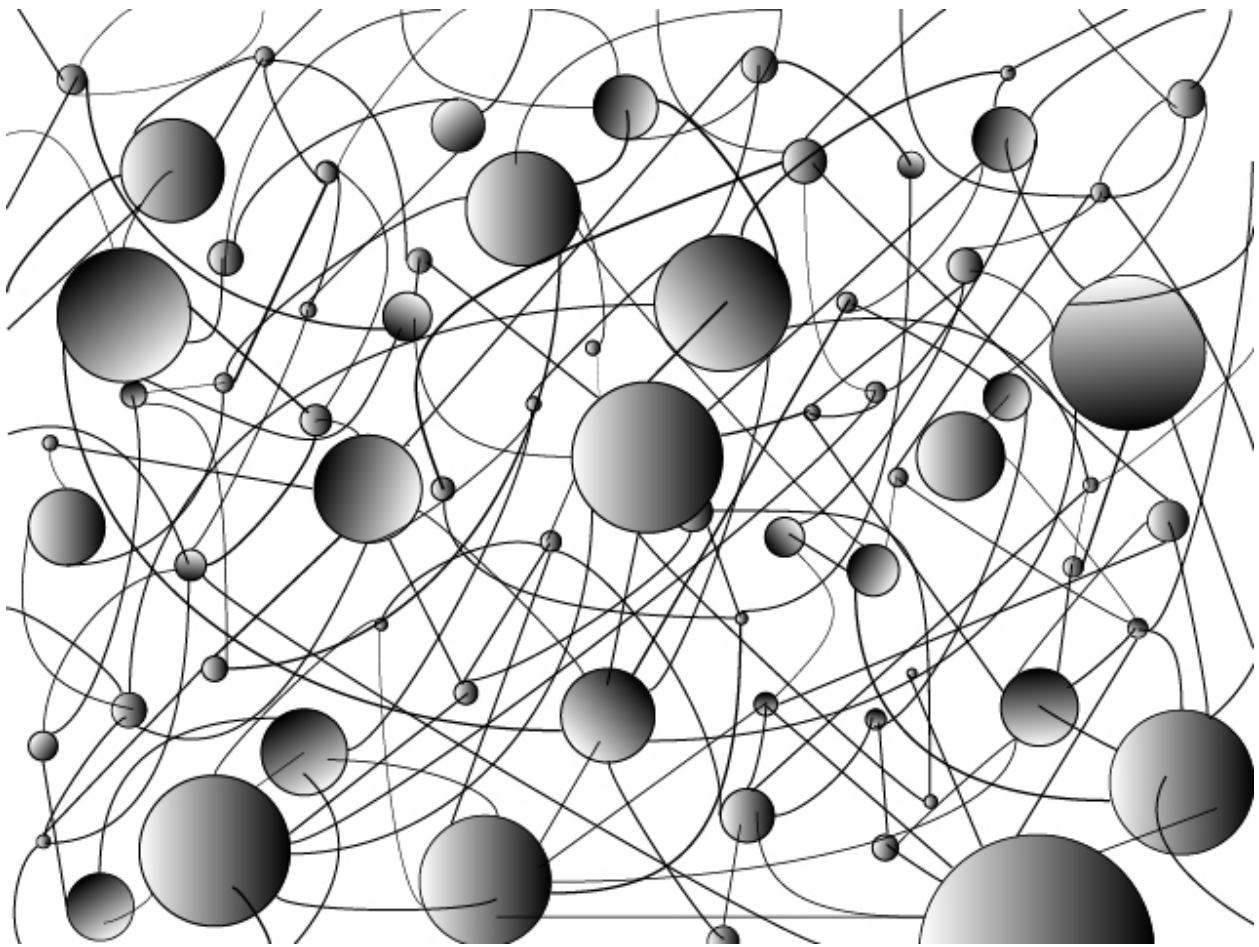
**Figure 3.2** Human and Environment Mirroring (*Dead Man*, 1995)



**Figure 3.3** Human and Animal Mirroring (*Dead Man*, 1995)



**Figure 3.4** Human, Animal, and Environment Relationality (*Dead Man*, 1995)



**Figure 3.5** Trans-Scalar Assemblage



**Figure 3.6** Dead, Dying, Dreaming? Yes. (*Dead Man*, 1995)

## EPILOGUE

While the revival westerns' objectifying and alienating concentric spatiality and linear temporality allegorizes their own historical period, the proliferation of neoliberal globalization in the modern moment warrants further investigation into spatiotemporal alternatives that can lead to greater care. Since the 1980s and 1990s, new trade agreements and communication technologies have only amplified globalization. Similarly, decades that have been filled with political inaction and the retraction of environmental protractations have intensified the demand for a new spatiotemporal framework to cultivate ecological care. The recent demonization of globalism during the 2016 presidential election and the institutionalization of nationalism with President Trump's inauguration further sharpens the problems of bounded and fixed oppositions. Trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality present heterogeneity and ontological plurality as a way to cultivate a greater relationality that facilitates care, but this logic is not the only available alternative. It is imperative that the future developments of my thesis continue to examine cultural objects produced during globalization through an ecocritical lens so that they can elucidate novel organizations of social and environmental relationships.

Since President Reagan's and Prime Minister Thatcher's neoliberal philosophies in 1980, the economic global network has only expanded, perpetuating concentric spatiality and linear temporality. The technologies that have facilitated global production and transportation, as well as the creation of the public internet in 1990, continually evolve to expedite the speed of communication and connectivity. Technology's emphasis on immediacy across global

connections privileges the present and contracts attention to a point that “others” the future as a period of inaccessibility, a space of missed connections or disconnection. Similarly, since the ratification of NAFTA in 1994 which established a precedent of eliminating “tariff and quota barriers,” the United States has developed over twenty multi-national free trade agreements, fourteen of which have been ratified and enforced with countries ranging from Jordan, Singapore, Colombia, and many other countries (“Free Trade Agreements and U.S. Agriculture”). Akin to the self and “other” disparity enabled by concentric spatiality’s differentiation of place from space, many of these agreements are made with foreign countries that are understood to be “developing” or “third-world.” The foreign locations of global expansion are not only geographically separated from America’s place in the neoliberal network, but also “othered” by terminology that relegates their place to the past limiting them to a consumable resource. The “othering” of distant locations constitutes a framework that makes them easier to extend into, with sites of production, and also extract from, by importing products or resources. Rather than redesign spatiotemporal frameworks to adjust to globalization, concentric spatiality and linear temporality’s “othering” separation and hierarchical alienation has endured.

Concurrently, environmentalism has continued to advocate for global attention and ecological care but has been limited by the same conceptions of space and time. For example, the title poster for Al Gore’s sequel to *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006), *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power* (Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk, 2017), features imagery that illustrates the prevalent logic and hurdles of linear temporality (*fig. 4.1*). The primary image is an hourglass that contains a vibrantly colored image of the Earth in the top sphere. The earth

appears to be dissolving into gray sand at the narrow neck as it falls into the bottom sphere, which contains the silhouette of an industrial factory surrounded by gray clouds of pollution. The overt impression of this imagery mirrors the message of the 1989 Time Magazine cover described in my Introduction. It conveys that time is running out to make a change, and Al Gore's rhetoric in the eco-documentary explicitly makes this claim. The desired effect is to draw attention to the fact that if political policies and relationships do not work with a global focus to care for the entirety of the Earth, a day will come when it can no longer survive. Interestingly, if the mirrored shape of the hourglass were rotated ninety degrees, then it would also reflect the shape of Rob Nixon's expansion of the Bergsonian cone described in Chapter 2. Indeed, both poster and film attempt to draw attention to the future consequences of present actions, similar to Nixon's call to attend to slow violences occurring as a result of neoliberalism. Still, the mechanics of their arguments are limited by linear temporality. In lieu of advocating for a non-linear expansion of time that can recognize multiple potential relationships between past and present, the rhetoric of *An Inconvenient Sequel's* title poster and film emphasize a contraction into the present. The sand falling down the hourglass implies that the cataclysmic day is rapidly approaching with every second, and the accompanying arguments elicit a fear that an ecological apocalypse will occur in this present historical moment. Because the future is an indeterminate sphere of boundless potential, establishing a relationship between present and future that attends to all these possibilities in a caring fashion has potential to inspire action. However, privileging the present moment with a rhetoric of immediate danger predicated on fear, opens up environmental rhetoric to dissent that uses the invisibility of consequences to inspire skepticism and doubt that hinders progress.

The preservation of concentric spatiality and linear temporality has maintained neoliberalism's displacing practices abroad and locally, casting globalization as a villain. American citizens that are suffering unemployment, wage stagnation, or other anxieties that cultivate sense of displacement became easy targets for a nationalist sentiment emerging in the 2016 presidential election campaign. In an interview on *Real Time with Bill Maher* which HBO aired on February 2, 2018, former White House Press Secretary Anthony Scaramucci explained that the attraction to President Trump's campaign was that the "aspirational working class has shifted into the desperation middle class" because of "globalization" ("The Mooch"). Scaramucci's assertion is fraught with difficulties because of its generality. Neoliberal globalization in its execution does displace communities locally and globally by valuing them less than multinational corporations under the central authority of the global marketplace. Nonetheless, referring to this economic hierarchical organization as "a globalization sort of thing" without detailed explanation of the politicians that enable corporations to function in this network ignores the nuance of the spatial and temporal rationalization that produces such violent effects.

President Trump appears to understand insecurities surrounding the frustration over neoliberal globalization. He campaigned and has governed with a reactionary impulse that is seeking stabilization and fixity. As soon as he joined office, the president withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris Agreement to combat climate change. Aside from analyzing any detrimental results of entering these agreements, the withdrawal of the United States signals a clear eschewing of global relationships in favor of bounded and fixed notions of a national place that he believes will deliver on his campaign slogan: "Make America Great



Again.” Modern anxieties surrounding economic and social displacement have produced desires to rationalize space in the same manner seen in the revival westerns during industrial modernity. However, this is not the appropriate response. *Dead Man*’s trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality realizes that global relationships are not the problem; global relationships should be strengthened. The problem is the way concentric spatiality and linear temporality frame the relationships in neoliberal globalization as it is currently enforced.

Trans-scalar assemblage and non-linear temporality offer an alternative logic that is capable of realizing relationality in social and ecological relationships, but it would be a disservice to understand this as a sole solution. Turning to moving-image media and other cultural artifacts of the 1980s and 1990s through an ecocritical theoretical lens can reveal additional alternative conceptions of space, place, and time that can potentially replace concentric and linear frameworks. The revival westerns’ rationalization of space, place, and time during neoliberalism actually differs from the disorienting multimedia films found in other genres, such as the science fiction or action genres. It is crucial to interrogate how the westerns of the 1990s spatiotemporally compare to other film genres. Alongside cinematic theorization, future studies also must consider media platforms released during this period that rely on digital technologies used by neoliberalism, such as computer and video games and installation art. Also, further explorations need to examine media from other periods of political and economic shifts, mid-century suburbanization for example, and analyzed against the films of the neoliberal moment to outline consistent trends that need reorganization for future alternatives. Most importantly, expansion of this thesis needs to maintain its central aim: Carefully crafting new ways to understand social and ecological relationships across space and time that seek care.



**Figure 4.1** The Rotated Expansion of Time (*An Inconvenient Sequel*, 2017). Title Poster. *An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*. Directed by Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk, performance by Al Gore, Paramount, 2017.

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