

pitch a tipi, but the Laubins know how to satisfy their wishful dreams. Having spent some twenty summers in and around Indian tipi camps, I recommend this book as a reliable and useful introduction to the tipi of the Plains Indians.

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From the Land of Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl, by Donald B. Smith. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1990. Pp. 320.

Many white Canadian males who were boys in the 1950s and 1960s lived a legacy that Grey Owl popularized. Summer camps awarded feathers for achievements, and headdress-bedecked camp directors took ceremonial Indian names to foster in their campers a spirit for an out-of-doors and extra-urban, if not actually an Indian, life. Warring house-league hockey teams, the Cree, Blackfoot, Seneca, Huron, Oneida — the Iroquois were always the roughest — faced off each Saturday morning, and not because George Armstrong was the captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs. These cultural practices are worth citing, for they serve to demonstrate that the myth of Grey Owl outlived both him and the posthumous debunking of him as a suntanned white man. Whites still loved to play Indian two or three decades after his death. As if just another version of the Rudyard Kipling/Baden Powell idea of spiritual growth through identification with the animal world, playing Indian inculcated some salutary values, but also unintentionally implanted the notion that Indians and wilderness were the stuff of games, of artifice, of diversion, out of which one was expected to grow. It was a part of the making of men. We live today with repercussions that can be traced back to that ideology, then thought innocent.

Donald B. Smith's exhaustive biography does not go much beyond Grey Owl's own lifetime to pursue the thread that he and his influence wove into the fabric of the English-Canadian character, but Smith makes a thorough job of explaining both how Grey Owl evolved out of fatherless English schoolboy Archie Belaney, reared on a diet of Natty Bumppo, Chingachgook, *Two Little Savages*, and Hiawatha, and how, right up until his early death in 1938 at the age of 49, he dodged any declared suspicion that he was not who he claimed to be. Rather than connecting the message of conservation preached by Grey Owl to the contemporary movement and ideology of "endangered spaces," Smith has chosen to present every possible detail of the man's strange life.

Has Smith done his job well? Only a book reviewer would ask this question, for the quality of the biography seems to pale into insignificance when the bald tale of Grey Owl makes such fascinating reading. It being only human to dream of other identities for oneself, the tale of someone who actualizes his dreams is nearly irresistible. What is clear, however, is that Smith has placed on view the findings of his exhaustive search over two decades to interview everyone who knew Archie Belaney/Grey Owl in either of his personae, who had met him even once, who had photographed him

(the photos provide an excellent, comprehensive complement to the text), who had loved him, and who had suffered by him. Nor does he hide details. While he stops short of condemning the man for compromising the lives of several women in England and Canada and of his own children, Smith anatomizes the alcoholic truant's various liaisons in and out of wedlock and monogamy, and he offers a genetic *cum* psychological explanation for this behaviour by finding its equivalent in the life of Archie's father. Both men consumed humanity, laid waste to lives. In Grey Owl's case, this expense occurred in the name of causes that seemed rather to find him than he them. In addition, Smith does not go so far as to argue that Belaney compromised the integrity of the Indians who, though dubious about his claims to be one of them and all but mocked by him in their company with his fraudulent dances and songs, remained silent during his lifetime.

Smith also persuasively analyzes Grey Owl's spoken and written rhetorical power, tracing his success to the man's ability engagingly to expose the average Canadian's ignorance of his own country. He served a self-created role of emissary, bringing the North to the city dweller's auditorium and library in the middle of a depression that offered few other escapes for one's attention. Even wilderness men found him disarmingly enchanting: Ken Connibear, a Rhodes scholar who had grown up at forts Resolution and Smith and had manned traplines, attested to the power of one of Grey Owl's British speaking tours: "It [the wilderness] was never so real to you before — even if you have once lived in it." (p. 184)

Smith does not explore or connect some ideas as thoroughly as he might. For example, at one point he finds it incredible that Hastings Grammar School's top student "could write the language of Shakespeare so abominably" (p. 65); yet, his reader has already learned that Archie had an excellent ear for and could mimic accents. Surely, his abominable written English is merely a pretense, a transference of the aural talent to the page. A collateral point left uninvestigated in a thorough way has to do with the use Belaney made of his English audience. A chameleon in other respects, Belaney remained an imperialist throughout his public career, and found his most adoring audiences in England. Were the English particularly disposed to his romantic rendering of the wilderness life of North America, to the enchanted life of the exotic beaver and, thanks to the legacy left by painters like George Catlin who altered their images of Indians to conform to European taste, to the "noble savage"? These questions await responses, even though the book intermittently provides clues (pp. 103, 114, 124, 154, 170, 192, 205), including the obvious one, of Grey Owl commencing each speaking tour in Britain in order to generate enthusiasm and anticipation in a more circumspect (less gullible?) North America, which he would subsequently tour, Canadian venues following American ones. While it is fascinating to learn that he retained the use of a sun lamp while in England (p. 191), how he pandered in other ways to English expectations must be considered. Commentary should have been provided, for example, on this sort of vintage image of the wilderness propagated in Grey Owl's writing: "On all sides from the cabin where I write extends an uninterrupted

wilderness, flowing onward in a dark, billowing flood Northward to the Arctic Sea." (From *Pilgrims of the Wild*, 1934, quoted by Smith, p. 218.) At the least, such a passage, by eliminating the Indian presence, could be likened to the effect created in the contemporary and earlier paintings of wilderness by the Group of Seven. That they, like Grey Owl, were and still are Canadian icons might have much to say about the erasure of Native peoples from the wilderness they depicted and described.

Another problem with Grey Owl's writing that goes unexamined is his uncritical and not entirely logical connection between beavers and aboriginals, as in his histrionic vow to the superintendent of Prince Albert National Park: "Every word I write, every lecture I have given, or ever will give, were and are to be for the betterment of the Beaver people, all wild life, the Indians and halfbreeds, and for Canada, in whatever small way I may." (p. 162) As well, Grey Owl's refusal or inability to understand how the wilderness could exist in concert with some commercial development offers a pattern of a problem that still bedevils our polarized views of nature in Canada; meanwhile, it is vastly entertaining to Europeans who, as the fur ban has clarified, can run to remarkably irresponsible lengths to demand that Canadians, including Native peoples, leave nature alone, leave it vacant, to be roamed in by Indians who, Grey Owl was proof of it, could encode their life's experience by means of familiar rhetoric, the language of Shakespeare. In what sort of esteem was Grey Owl really encouraging his readers and audiences to hold the wilderness? A considered response to this question might reach towards an understanding of whether or not the man's fraudulence, when it became known, called the message of conservation into serious doubt, either in others' writings or in government policy respecting Native peoples, the development of national parks, or the exploitation of natural resources.

For the most part, the book is well organized, but problems do arise that a more scrupulous editing would have caught. The study does not avoid the problem inherent in the assembling of research over a long time: points made early on are repeated far too often, as if to keep the discussion on topic, but the reader does not require such constant repetition and grows weary of hearing that Grey Owl feared any sort of confrontation, or that he championed the cause of conservation and the welfare of the Canadian Indian.

The organization grows bizarre in the section describing Grey Owl's interview with the king and queen of England (pp. 189-91); spliced into its midst are ten paragraphs, the reason for which seems only to be to indicate how proud Archie's aunts must have been of his being interviewed by royalty. These problems in organization of material — perhaps they are unavoidable with the incorporation of such a vast amount of it — are too often reflected in contradictions (Smith states that in November 1917, after being discharged as an invalid from the army, Belaney met his first Canadian wife, Angele, in Bisco [p. 65]; ten pages later, he sets their first such meeting at 1923 [p. 75]), in awkward sentence structures in which appositives are misplaced, and in failures to make transitions between ideas: "At night by the fireside of Beaver

Lodge the Dutch explorer and nature writer [W.G.N. van der Sleen] listened to his new friend. 'He spoke freely, without scruples, intuitively sensing how I as fellow [*sic*] nature lover, stood closer to him than the majority of my race living in the cities.' Few of Grey Owl's visitors in the early 1930s met Anahareo at Beaver Lodge." (p. 112) The connection between the last two sentences is remote if it exists at all. Elsewhere, the index is nearly complete, but the job of tracing references to Belaney's children grows very difficult because, while the text refers to them only by their first names once they have been introduced, they are indexed only by surname. These instances amount to regrettable frustrations for the reader, but not to insurmountable obstacles. Certainly, no one will fault Smith for his impressive research, only for aspects of its presentation.

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Wolverine Myths and Visions: Dene Traditions from Northern Alberta, compiled by the Dene Wodih Society, edited by Patrick Moore and Angela Wheelock. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990. Pp. 259.

This bilingual collection of traditional stories from the Dene Dháa, Athapaskan-speaking people of northwestern Alberta also known as the Slavey, represents a true collaboration of scholars and community members, especially Native elders. Many stories were originally translated by an elder from Assumption, Alberta, who wanted young people to know and value their traditional heritage. The stories are dominated by two figures central to Dene Dháa oral tradition: Wolf and Wolverine. Wolverine appears as a trickster figure; Wolf, more often as a human helper in these stories intended "to help people live." They also figure prominently in the teachings of Nógħa, or "Wolverine," a Dene Dháa prophet who led the Messianic Tea Dance religion in northwestern Alberta during the fur-trade period. In addition to the stories, the book includes a brief history of the Dene Dháa, analysis of context and performance of the narratives, an introduction of the Dene prophets and the Tea Dance religion, linguistic notes, and an examination of how myth and history interrelate in the contemporary use of traditional stories.

The book is divided into an introduction and two main sections, the English and Dene texts. Each is then subdivided into "Traditional Stories" and "Accounts of the Prophet Nógħa." The introduction offers necessary background on the Dene and cultural change in the twentieth century as well as a thorough analysis of the storytellers, narrative genres, performance, and translation. All stories are based upon shared traditions, though individual tellers who have learned from expert elders innovate in both content and style of performance. Repertoires of the best tellers often include over one hundred stories. Wolf and Wolverine stories are part of a larger genre of *tonht' onh wodihé* or "stories of long ago," a time when animals lived and talked like human beings. The stories about animal people are often told to