

The Chief Seattle Speech

*An Authentic Indigenous American History
or a Symbolized Fabulation?*

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C-ESSAY

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1 INTRODUCTION

During 1995, a placard with the title *This Earth is Precious* (Author Unknown) was on sale in one of New Zealand's National Park Information Centres. The placard claims to cite a speech orated in 1854 by Chief Seattle, who was a member of the indigenous Indian population of America. Chief Seattle has become celebrated, above all within the industrialized world, due to this environmentally loaded statement. The placard emphasizes the above in its introduction, quoted beneath.

In 1854, the "Great White Chief" in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a "reservation" for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply, published here in full, has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made.

Reading this transcript (see chapter 5) one recognizes the value of the statement above. The publication states that it is a complete and accurate transcription of the declaration made by Chief Seattle. America's conquerors have depicted the native cultures of the USA as being savage. One could wonder how such a profound transcript could have been uttered or written by a savage. When reading Chief Seattle's reply, first published in 1887 by Dr. Henry H. Smith, it becomes apparent that the civilization he belonged to was one that felt great affection for the natural environment they were part of. How could an uneducated savage compose such a philosophical statement? Have historians wrongly depicted these ethnic societies? This essay will explore the past and find further information about the legendary, chief of both the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes, Chief Seattle, and his reply from 1854 to the "Great White Chief".

In the first chapter this essay will explore the site were the speech is situated, an inlet on the coastal North-western corner of the USA. A virgin region, which just had started to be colonised by Euro-American settlers. It was one of these early pioneers, Dr. Henry A Smith, who thirty years later published several articles in the *Seattle Sunday Star*, amongst others the Chief Seattle oration, preserving the reply for the generations to come.

During the early 1970's a modified transcript of the speech started to surface in both the USA and Europe. Later, at the end of the 1970's and early 1980's Rudolf Kaiser, a German

researcher, studied four versions of the Chief Seattle speech, including the versions mentioned above. Kaiser delivered evidence which he supported on the original Dr. Smith publication in order to classify the modified transcript from the early 1970's. Unfortunately he never researched the authenticity of the Dr. Smith text, which affected the outcome of some of his conclusions. In 1997 Albert Furtwangler, an American researcher and English teacher, prolonged Kaiser's research and published his book *Answering Chief Seattle*. Using the legacies of official and private notes from both governor Isaac I. Stevens and his adjutant George Gibbs, further indications were made available concerning the authenticity of the Dr. Henry A. Smith article.

The second and third chapters are dedicated to evaluating the two mentioned versions of the Chief Seattle speech. There is every reason to scrutinize, compare and analyse Kaiser's and Furtwangler's transcripts. Combining the views of these two authors will generate an improved impression of the circumstances surrounding the Chief Seattle speech. How authentic is the 1887 *Seattle Sunday Star* article?

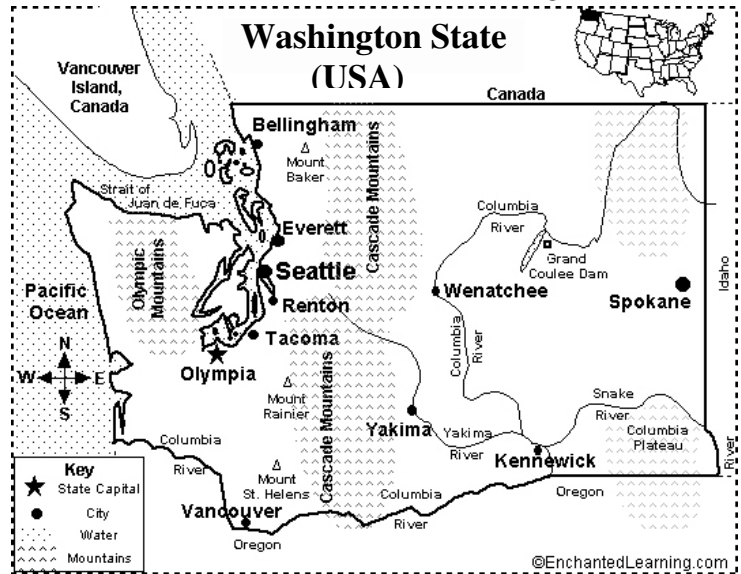
The speech is renowned, above all in the industrialized world, for its ecological disposition. Disguised as Native American wisdom the speech symbolises, expresses and satisfies the environmental feelings of many Industrialized Westerners. In the last chapter an analysis of the symbolism involved in the text is made using a more consistent version of the speech, in order to gain insight into the author's skilled use of symbolism.

Before setting out to explore the Chief Seattle speech, a word of appreciation is in order to the helpful and generous librarians at the libraries of Luleå Technical University, Middlebury College and the Seattle Public library.

2 COASTAL NORTH-WESTERN USA AND ITS INHABITANTS

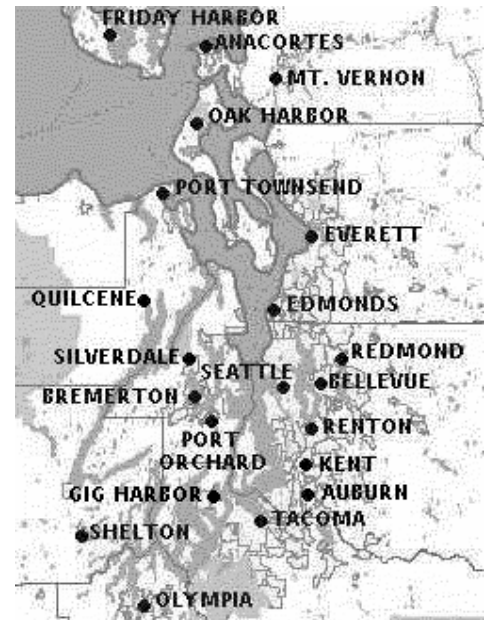
2.1 The region

The region of interest is an inlet on the coastal North-western corner of the USA. Today this area is part of Washington State which acquired statehood on Nov. 11, 1889 (Pike WWW), becoming the 42nd member of The United States of America. The areas coastal region is divided from the inland by The Cascade Range, a volcanic mountain range that stretches from Southern British Columbia in the North to Northern California in the south covering over 1120 km (Interactive WWW). The Pacific Ocean establishes its western frontier.



At the centre of Washington State's coastal line we find Puget Sound, a large inlet of the Pacific Ocean, enclosed by the Cascade and Olympic mountain. The Sound was named after its explorer, Peter Puget, a British naval lieutenant who explored the area in 1792. The Native American name used by the area's native inhabitants was, and still is, "Whulge" (Wikimedia 2006, January 12 WWW).

The Japanese current which passes along the coast, provides the area with a quite mild climate. Lush rain forests of cedar, hemlock and pine trees, once covered the entire area. This diminished rapidly through intensive logging by early settlers and nowadays there are several National Parks preserving the remaining environment for future generations. Creeks, streams and rivers entwine the entire area, fed by the areas rainfall, 91 centimetres a year, and melting snow (Jefferson 19).



Today Puget Sound is a fine harbour and the area is densely populated. The regions' economy is supported by industry, agriculture, and tourism. The areas' mayor cities are the state capital Olympia and the City of Seattle.

2.2 The indigenous inhabitants of the Pacific Northwest

The remoteness of the Pacific Northwest has not been an obstacle for the development of rich cultures. Numerous indigenous tribes have been living in the Pacific Northwest. Grouped according to language we can arrange tribes into the Coast Salish, the Nootka, the Makah, the Quileute, the Quinault, the Kwakiult and the Bella Coola. Linguistically the Pacific Northwest was the second most diverse area in America, surpassed only by California (Jefferson 24).

Many of these language groups were represented within the Puget Sound area and tribes like the Dawamis, Nisqually, Samish, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish, Upper Skagit, Tulalip, Puyallup and Nooksak (Avery WWW) could all be found within the Puget Sound region. When leaving the Puget Sound one would find numerous other indigenous tribes with a prosperous culture. Among these numerous tribes there are the more well-known and other rather anonymous tribes, but all had a blossoming culture.

Some of the tribes' leaders gained fame amongst their invaders. Others are nowadays unnamed but even they had a massive impact on history. Among the better known Native American leaders from this area are Chief Seattle, leader for the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes and Joseph chief of the Nez Perce tribe. Chief Seattle and Joseph are surrounded by forgotten leaders like the headman 'Maquinna' of the Nuu-chah-nulth and 'one-eyed Concomly' of the Chinooks. Conquerors often compose history and few among the defeated have evoked enough sentiments to be remembered (Buerge WWW).

The tribes found in the Pacific Northwest developed a culture unlike any other. Although there were trade alliances, and loose knit defence bonds there were neither large political organized units nor great nations as found amongst the Plains tribes (Jefferson 24). Technologically the areas inhabitants were still living in the Stone Age, since they had little

knowledge about metals. They used indigenous materials like bone, stone, shell and wood to make sophisticated tools. Canoes were used for river, inlet and ocean travel. The environment was an abundant provider of food and other resources. Their skilled and beautiful art is still appreciated by many (Jefferson 22/23).

With the arrival of the first Euro-Americans the destruction of the indigenous Native culture began.

- The environment changed; mainly through intensive logging operations.
- Epidemic diseases claimed many amongst the natives; whole villages were wiped out and in some areas up to 90% of the population died (Jefferson 64).
- Euro-Americans gained control over the region and its native inhabitants.
- By terms of The Point Elliott Treaty, ratified January 22, 1855, vast areas of lush ancestral land were signed away to the “United States”; the Suquamish tribe lost 93% of its ancestral land (Jefferson 79).
- Federal and local governments did not honour the treaties; additionally reducing the natives possessions (Jefferson 103/104).
- Native cultures were overwhelmed by the new civilization;

Smaller fractions of the indigenous culture have survived the invaders abuse. Even today indigenous tribal members are still struggling to seek recognition for the rights they received when signing the treaty more than one and a half century ago (Jefferson 106).

2.3 The Puget Sound Euro-American settlers

Almost 300 years after the discovery of America, in 1772 Spanish explorers landed on the Olympic Peninsular, to the west of Puget Sound, to claim the area for Spain. They were driven away by the Makah tribe, who still live in the Northern parts of the peninsular (Jefferson 56).

On May 19, 1792 the British sloop-of-war Discovery, captained by George Vancouver and crew, were the first white men reported to have entered and explored the Puget Sound area

(Crowley 2003, February 18 WWW). During the next six decades few white men have been reported visiting the area. In 1847 there were around 275 British and American citizens living in the Puget Sound region divided over three locations; the community of Tumwater at the south end of Puget Sound, Fort Nisqually also in southern Puget Sound and Cowlitz Farm to the south of the Puget Sound (Lange 2003, February 19 WWW).

On November 13, 1851 the so called Denny Party, consisting of 12 adults and 12 children all under the age of 8 years, landed at Alki Point (Lange 2003, March 08 #1 WWW). On November 28, 1851 a member of the Denny Party, Charles Terry, opened a store starting off with tools, tin ware, tobacco, whiskey, brandy, and raisins (Lange 2003, March 08 #2 WWW). In December the same year all male adults starting to cut timber which was shipped south to help rebuild San Francisco after its destructive June fire (Lange 2000, November 18 WWW). The area's timber industry had started.

Spring 1852 the larger part of the group relocated and called the new settlement Duwamps (Crowley 2003, March 08 WWW) named after the Duwamish River. At the end of the same year a post office had been constructed, an important marker in the start of a community. During this year the physician and merchant "Doc" Maynard arrived guided by his friend Chief Seattle. To thank his Indian friend he persuaded his new neighbours to rename the settlement Seattle (Crowley 1999, October 15 WWW). The Denny Party is traditionally credited with founding the city of Seattle, Washington.

During the following years the town saw the opening of a sawmill, a coalmine, a private school and a church (Admin@historylink.org. (n.d./2006) WWW). In 1860 a road construction was finished which connects Seattle with Fort Vancouver (Lange 1998, November 03 WWW). At some stage in 1864, the Western Union telegraph line reached Seattle (Lange 1998, November 04 WWW). On December 2, 1869 the city of Seattle was incorporated by the territorial Legislature (Admin@historylink.org. 2006, August 16 WWW). In 1870 Seattle had increased to a population of 1,107, at the turn of the century its population has grown to 80,671, by the year 2000 this had become 563,374 citizens (Zevin WWW).

2.4 Chief Seattle

There are a few legendary Native American leaders from the Pacific Northwest who have fascinated Euro-Americans and others. One of these leaders is Chief Seattle who conquered the minds of many but never fought the White-men in war.

Seattle was born around 1786. By birth he gained an aristocrat hereditary position within the Suquamish since his father was a Suquamish chief and his mother the daughter of a Duwamish chief. Due to military successes and his great oratory ability he was highly regarded amongst his people. In 1808, at the age of 22, he became chief for both the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes which both belong to the same language group, that is Coast Salish.

By the 1840s Seattle had been transformed from a war chief to a peace chief. Around the same time he was converted to Christianity and baptised Noah Seathl (Jefferson 75). The sacramental register of those who likely baptised Seattle, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at the St. Joseph of Newmark Mission near Olympia gives his name as Noe Siattle (Wikimedia 2006, January 18 WWW).

Seattle's native name is unknown; some claim it to be Seeathl, but there are no records to be found to sustain this claim. White settlers modified his native name into, a for them more understandable and acceptable phonetically English, Seattle. Later at a formal meeting on March 11 1854, the governor Stevens imposed the official identity of chief upon Seattle (Furtwangler 50). The locals personalized the title by adding Chief to the Seattle name. Chief Seattle is said to have been a real friend of the whites and was a skilled diplomat. Around 1853, out of respect for Seattle's reputation, the local settlement of Duwamps was renamed Seattle. Chief Seattle passed away at the approximate age of 80. His tombstone reads "SEATTLE, Chief of the Suquampsh and allied tribes. Died June 7, 1866. The firm friend of the whites and for him the CITY of SEATTLE was named by its founder." On the side it reads "Baptismal name: NOAH SEALTH age probably 80 Years." (Jefferson 16)

Dr. Henry A. Smith portrayed Chief Seattle in the following terms when he published the speech in the *Seattle Sunday Star*, October 29, 1887:

Chief Seattle - A gentleman By Instinct ...Old Chief Seattle was the largest Indian I ever saw, and by far the noblest-looking. He stood 6 feet full in his moccasins, was broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and finely proportioned. His eyes were large, intelligent, expressive and friendly when in repose, and faithfully mirrored the varying moods of the great soul that looked through them. He was usually solemn, silent, and dignified, but on great occasions moved among assembled multitudes like a Titan among Lilliputians, and his lightest word was law.

When rising to speak in council or to tender advice, all eyes were turned upon him, and deep-toned, sonorous, and eloquent sentences rolled from his lips like the ceaseless thunders of cataracts flowing from exhaustless fountains, and his magnificent bearing was as noble as that of the most cultivated military chieftain in command of the forces of a continent. Neither his eloquence, his dignity, or his grace were acquired. They were as native to his manhood as leaves and blossoms are to a flowering almond.

His influence was marvelous. He might have been an emperor but all his instincts were democratic, and he ruled his loyal subjects with kindness and paternal benignity.

He was always flattered by marked attention from white men, and never so much as when seated at their tables, and on such occasions he manifested more than anywhere else the genuine instincts of a gentleman.

3 CHIEF SEATTLE’S “ORIGINAL” SPEECH

3.1 The Dr. Henry H. Smith’s article

Dr. Henry H. Smith (1830 – 1915) published an article in the *Seattle Sunday Star*, October 29, 1887. The article commemorates a hero and an event from the early days in the history of Puget Sound. Dr. Smith claims to have used his own diary and notes for the recreation of the event. He starts off, with a dramatic recreation of the setting before presenting a speech. After the speech, which is claimed to be orated by Chief Seattle, he included a paragraph about the setting which concludes the article. Albert Furtwangler reproduced the complete text in his book “Answering Chief Seattle”. In view of the fact that the only surviving copy of the *Star* is damaged, he also refers to a reprint made by Frederick James Grant (1863-1894) in his book *History of Seattle, Washington, with illustrations and biographical sketches of some of its prominent men and pioneers*, published 1891. The text below is the article as it appeared in the *Star*, with phrases in brackets copied from Grant’s *History* to finalize the text. The entire article is duplicated from Albert Furtwangler’s book, *Answering Chief Seattle*.

Early Reminiscences
number 10
Scraps from a Diary
Chief Seattle - A gentleman by Instinct — His Native Eloquence. Etc. Etc.

Old Chief Seattle was the largest Indian I ever saw, and by far the noblest-looking. He stood six feet full in his moccasins, was broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and finely proportioned. His eyes were large, intelligent, expressive and friendly when in repose, and faithfully mirrored the varying moods of the great soul that looked through them. He was usually solemn, silent, and dignified, but on great occasions moved among assembled multitudes like a Titan among Lilliputians, and his lightest word was law.

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HIS MAGNIFICENT BEARING

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His influence was marvelous. He might have been an emperor but all his instincts were democratic, and he ruled his loyal subjects with kindness and paternal benignity.

He was always flattered by marked attention from white men, and never so much as when seated at their tables, and on such occasions he manifested more than anywhere else the genuine instincts of a gentleman.

When Governor Stevens first arrived in Seattle and told the natives he had been appointed commissioner of Indian affairs for Washington Territory, they gave him a demonstrative reception in front of Dr. Maynard's office, near the waterfront on Main Street. The bay swarmed with canoes and the shore was lined with a living mass of swaying, writhing, dusky humanity, until

OLD CHIEF SEATTLE'S

trumpet-toned voice rolled over the immense multitude, like the startling reveille of a bass drum, when silence became as instantaneous and perfect as that which follows a clap of thunder from a clear sky.

The governor was then introduced to the native multitude by Dr. Maynard, and at once commenced, in a conversational, plain, and straightforward style, an explanation of his mission among them, which is too well understood to require capitulation.

When he sat down, Chief Seattle arose with all the dignity of a senator, who carries the responsibilities of a great nation on his shoulders. Placing one hand on the governor's head and slowly pointing heavenward with the index finger of the other, he commenced his memorable address in solemn and impressive tones.

CHIEF SEATTLE'S SPEECH

Yond[er] sky that has wep[t tears] of compassion on our fathers for centuries untold, and which, to us, looks et[erna]l, may change. Today it is fair[, tom]orrow it may be [overca]st with [clou]ds. My [words are like the] stars that never set. What Seattle says, the great chief, Washington, (The Indians in early times thought that Washington was still alive. They knew the name to be that of a president, and when they heard of the president at Washington they mistook the name of the city for the name of the reigning chief. They thought, also, that King George was still England's monarch, because the Hudson bay traders called themselves "King George men." This innocent deception the company was shrewd enough not to explain away for the Indians had more respect for them than they would have had, had they known England was ruled by a woman. Some of us have learned better.) can rely upon, with as much certainty as our paleface brothers can rely upon the return of the seasons.

The son of the white chief says his father sends us greetings of friendship and good will. This is kind, for we know he has little need of our friendship in return, because his people are many. They are like the grass that covers the vast prairies, while my people are few, and resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain.

The great, and I presume also good, white chief sends us word that he wants to buy our lands but is willing to allow us to reserve enough to live on comfortably. This indeed appears generous,

for the red man no longer has rights that he need respect, and the offer may be wise, also, for we are no longer in need of a great country.

THERE WAS A TIME

when our people covered the whole land, as the waves of a wind-ruffled sea cover its shell-paved floor. But that time has long since passed away with the greatness of tribes now almost forgotten. I will not mourn over our untimely decay, nor reproach my paleface brothers for hastening it, for we, too, may have been somewhat to blame.

When our young men grow angry at some real or imaginary wrong, and disfigure their faces with black paint, their hearts also are disfigured and turn black, and then their cruelty is relentless and knows no bounds, and our old men are not able to restrain them.

But let us hope that hostilities between the red-man and his pale-face brothers may never return. We would have everything to lose and nothing to gain.

True it is, that revenge, with our young braves, is considered gain, even at the cost of their own lives. But old men who stay at home in times of war, and old women, who have sons to lose, know better.

Our great father Washington, for I presume he is now our father, as well as yours, since George has moved his boundaries to the north; our great and good father, I say, sends us word by his son, who, no doubt, is a great chief among his people, that if we do as he desires, he will protect us. His brave armies will be to us a bristling wall of strength, and his great ships of war will fill our harbors so that our ancient enemies far to the northward, the Simsians and Hydassas, will no longer frighten our women and old men. Then he will be our father and we will be his children.

BUT CAN THIS EVER BE?

Your God loves your people and hates mine; he [folds his strong] arms [lovingly around the white man and] leads him as a father leads his infant son, but he has forsaken his red children; he makes your people wax strong every day, and soon they will fill the land; while my people are ebbing away like a fast-receding tide, that will never flow again. The white man's God cannot love his red children or he would protect them. They seem to be orphans and can look nowhere for help. How then can we become brothers? How can your father become our father and bring us prosperity and awaken in us dreams of returning greatness?

Your God seems to us to be partial. He came to the white man. We never saw Him; never even heard His voice; He gave the white man laws but He had no word for His red children whose teeming millions filled this vast continent as the stars fill the firmament. No, we are two distinct races and must ever remain so. There is little in common between us. The ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their final resting place is hallowed ground, while you wander away from the tombs of your fathers seemingly without regret.

Your religion was written on tables of stone by the iron finger of an angry God, lest you might forget it. The red man could never remember nor comprehend it.

Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors, the dream of our old men, given them by the great Spirit, and the visions of our sachems, and is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the homes of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb. They wander far off beyond the stars, are soon forgotten, and never return. Our dead never forget the beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its winding rivers, its great mountains and its sequestered vales, and they ever yearn in tenderest affection over the lonely hearted living and often return to visit and comfort them.

Day and night cannot dwell together. The red man has ever fled the approach of the white man, as the changing mists on the mountainside flee before the blazing morning sun.

However, your proposition seems a just one, and I think my folks will accept it and will retire to the reservation you offer them, and we will dwell apart and in peace, for the words of the great white chief seem to be the voice of nature speaking to my people out of the thick darkness that is fast gathering around them like a dense fog floating inward from a midnight sea.

It matters but little where we pass the remainder of our days.

THEY ARE NOT MANY.

The Indian's night promises to be dark. No bright star hovers about the horizon. Sad-voiced winds moan in the distance. Some grim Nemesis of our race is on the red man's trail, and wherever he goes he will still hear the sure approaching footsteps of the fell destroyer and prepare to meet his doom, as does the wounded doe that hears the approaching footsteps of the hunter. A few more moons, a few more winters, and not one of all the mighty hosts that once filled this broad land or

that now roam in fragmentary bands through these vast solitudes will remain to weep over the tombs of a people once as powerful and hopeful as your own.

But why should be repine? Why should [I murmur at the] fate of my people? Tribes are made up of individuals and are no better than [th]ey. Men come and go like the waves of the sea. A tear, a tamanawus, a dirge, and they are gone from our longing eyes forever. Even the white man, whose God walked and talked with him, as friend to friend, is not exempt from the common destiny. *We may* be brothers after [all.] We shall see.

We will ponder your proposition, and when we have decided we will tell you. But should we accept it, I here and now make this the first condition: That we will not be denied the privilege, without molestation, of visiting at will the graves of our ancestors and friends. Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hill-side, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe.

EVEN THE ROCKS

that seem to lie dumb as they swelter in the sun along the silent seashore in solemn grandeur thrill with memories of past events connected with the fate of my people, and the very dust under your feet responds more lovingly to our footsteps than to yours, because it is the ashes of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch, for the soil is rich with the life of our kindred.

The sable braves, and fond mothers, and glad-hearted maidens, and the little children who lived and rejoiced here, and whose very names are now forgotten, still love these solitudes, and their deep fastness at eventide grow shadowy with the presence of dusky spirits. And when the last red man shall have perished from the earth and his memory among white men shall have become a myth, these shores shall swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe, and when your children's children shall think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway or in the silence of the woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night, when the streets of your cities and villages shall be silent, and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land. The white man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not altogether powerless.

Other speakers followed, but I took no notes. Governor Stevens' reply was brief. He merely promised to meet them in general council on some future occasion to discuss the proposed treaty. Chief Seattle's promise to adhere to the treaty, should one be ratified, was observed to the letter, for he was ever the unswerving and faithful friend of the white man. The above is but a fragment of his speech, and lacks all the charm lent by the grace and earnestness of the sable old orator, and the occasion.

3.2 The setting

During 1853 the newly appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs and governor for the state of Washington, Isaac I. Stevens, arrived in Olympia. At the time of his arrival there were few Euro-Americans living within the coastal Washington Area. By 1854 there were a few thousand settlers in all of western Washington; in the Town of Seattle no more than a few dozen cabins (Furtwangler 64). The Native Americans of the area, although considerably outnumbering the white-settlers, were peacefully trying to coexist with their new neighbours.

In December 1854, Governor Isaac I. Stevens returned from a trip to the East. It is believed to be most likely that the speech which Dr. Smith reconstructed was given on, or shortly after, the governor's return. David Buerge, a local Seattle historian, dates the speech from January

12, 1854, at the Seattle harbour front on the shore of Elliott Bay, in front of 120 white settlers and 1200 Puget Sound Indians (Furtwangler 49). It is believed that Chief Seattle proclaimed the speech during a Point Elliot Treaty negotiation. The ambience is captivatingly depicted by Dr. Henry A. Smith when publishing the speech in the *Seattle Sunday Star*, October 29, 1887.

The bay swarmed with canoes and the shore was lined with a living mass of swaying, writhing, dusky humanity, until old Chief Seattle's trumpet-toned voice rolled over the immense multitude, like the startling reveille of a bass drum, when silence became as instantaneous and perfect as that which follows a clap of thunder from a clear sky.

The authenticity of Chief Seattle's "original" speech

3.3 Rudolf Kaisers silence authentication

In 1987 Rudolf Kaiser, a German researcher, traced four versions of the Chief Seattle speech. Kaiser's main objective was to locate and study the origin of an Indian speech that had started to surface in Europe and the USA in the early 1970's. He traced the origin to the a screen-play written by Ted Perry. Ted Perry's transcript will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. During his substantial research he also located the oldest source, the *Seattle Sunday Star* article. Kaiser never appears to question the authenticity of this historical document. He might have decided that further research into this matter required resources he did not have, and therefore he concentrated on his main objective and ignored the authenticity question of the 1887 article.

Since Kaiser's research was accomplished accurately it became academically accepted and has not been challenged. Those who followed Kaiser's trail and used his work as a reference overlooked the fact that the Dr. H. Henry Smith text had not been authenticated. It is important to remember however that as Kaiser had set out to determine the origin of the speech that had started to surface in Europe and the USA in the early 1970's, his main interest wasn't the original speech. He succeeded in documenting the source he had been looking for and concluded his research. By not attempting to authenticate the *Seattle Sunday Star* article he gave the document, most likely unintentionally, authenticity and silently declared the speech, edited by Dr. Henry H. Smith, to be the genuine words of Chief Seattle.

3.4 Challenging Dr. Henry H. Smith's account

When understanding Rudolf Kaiser's misjudgement concerning the original source we should determine the strengths and weaknesses of the *Seattle Sunday Star* article.

Dr. Henry A Smith, the author of the 1887 article, did settle at a cove three miles outside Seattle in 1853 (Wilma 2001, July 02 WWW). Smith claims to have taken notes while witnessing the proclamation of the speech in December 1854. Thirty years later, he transferred these notes into the article published on October 29, 1887 in the *Seattle Sunday Star*. The publication is a historical document and can, according to Albert Furtwangler (page 19), claim several well-defined advantages:

- It is the earliest surviving record
- It comes from a direct witness
- It dates from a period still early in the history of Washington State
- It appears in unpretentious form, as an admittedly incomplete but yet admiring collection in a newspaper circulated to other pioneers along Puget Sound
- It includes out-of-date terms
- The language of the speech seems to transcend the talent of the author of the text

When studied more carefully it becomes obvious that these advantages also reveal shortcomings, which challenge the authenticity of the document.

3.4.1 The earliest surviving record

The first claim, which states that Dr Smith's article is the oldest surviving reconstruction of the speech, is a well established fact. Unfortunately there is no conformation from other sources, a fact which increases the uncertainty of whether the speech actually was uttered. No previous records supporting Dr. Smith claim have been found.

George Gibbs, a subordinate of Governor Stevens, has left a legacy of official and private notes. His private notes display a man exceptionally interested in the spiritual beliefs of the natives. On March 11, 1854 Gibbs recorded officially that “Seattle made a great speech, declaring his good disposition toward the whites” (Furtwangler 50). However he has left us no extended official or private notes about this “great speech”. To quote Albert Furtwangler; “How then could he have missed a chief’s extensive and explicit account of spiritual immanence — when it was spoken aloud and in public before him, and when he was particularly expected to keep good records?”

Governor Isaac Stevens, knew the value of extensive and accurate records. He was a seasoned writer of journals and a regular correspondent. Amongst Steven’s legacy we find day to day notes depicting significant events from his every day life. Yet, he left no account, not even a note, about a great oration made by Chief Seattle. Hazard Stevens, the son of the Governor and writer of the biography on Stevens’, quotes dozens of Indian speeches but reports no “great speech” by Chief Seattle (Furtwangler 55/56).

It is striking that neither Stevens nor Gibbs leave the smallest trace indicating a “great speech” given by Chief Seattle. Dr Smith’s own account puts Stevens unquestionably at the scene; “The governor was then introduced to the native multitude by Dr. Maynard, and at once commenced, in a conversational, plain, and straightforward style, an explanation of his mission among them, which is too well understood to require capitulation. When he sat down, Chief Seattle arose”. It nevertheless appears that Dr. Smith was alone when it came to taking notes. He is in fact the only one known who recalls the event.

3.4.2 A claim from a direct witness

The speech is claimed to be witnessed by a member of the audience, Dr. Henry A. Smith, who later reconstructed and published it. Being a young local resident of Seattle, Smith could undoubtedly have witnessed the event. However there is no confirmation to be found that Smith was actually present.

Smith also claims to have kept diary/notes during the event. Again this is an unverifiable argument since no such memorandum has ever been located; therefore it is impossible to confirm or deny the claim. Yet, we can conclude that he retained his notes/diary over a vast period of time, thirty years. This shows how valued and important these documents were to Smith. Still, no trace can be found that helps to solve the mystery of Dr. Smith's missing diary/notes. The disappearance also raises reservations about the existence of a diary or notes. Why did they disappear when there already existed a great interest in local history? To historians of that time a diary must have been a high prized item. Did not Dr. Smith realise this? Was it too private? We will never know for sure, unless one day against all the odds, Dr. Smith's diary or notes would be recovered.

3.4.3 An account that dates from an early historical period

Even during the 1880's the history of the United States Pacific Northwest was still young and uncertain. The article as published in the *Seattle Sunday Star*, October 29, 1887, is a historical document from these still early days.

The article was first reprinted in Frederic James Grant's *History of Seattle*. It should be noted that Grant prints the speech as a kind of appended note — not in the chapter on early settlement but in the long final chapter “Men of Seattle,” as part of the biographical entry on Henry A. Smith. Grant thus preserves the speech as authentic but very marginal to developments after the 1850s (Furtwangler 23). Could Grant have doubted the legitimacy of Smith's article? Again we will never know since Frederic James Grant drowned (Whitehouse WWW) on September 27, 1894 (info@portrenfrew.com WWW), while travelling from Seattle to San Francisco.

3.4.4 An account seemingly in unpretentious form

Dr. Smith published the article in the local newspaper which circulated amongst other pioneers along Puget Sound. The article's and the *Seattle Sunday Star's* residential character

might make it the ideal choice for publication. But by doing so the article appears to reduce its historical value since the *Star* does not appear to have been a highly creditable newspaper. Quoting Albert Furtwangler (20) gives a good idea on the questionability of the Start and the articles publication.

The meaning, accuracy, and authority of this text are also darkened by its appearance in a mere, obscure, evanescent newspaper column. In this form it appeals to the commonplace literacy of nineteenth-century Americans, and to a long tradition of viewing Indians through readers' spectacles. It thus diminishes Seattle's greatest moment into an item of merely passing interest, while at the same time it claims to dramatize Seattle as the towering spokesman of his people and his place.

The heading of the newspaper article states "Scraps from a Diary" and Dr. Smith ends with "The above is but a fragment of his speech, and lacks all the charm lent by the grace and earnestness of the sable old orator, and the occasion." By recording this, Dr. Smith himself proclaims that the article is an inadequate recreation of the speech.

The word scraps could in this context, according to the Longman "*Dictionary of Contemporary English*", indicate either "old objects — materials or objects that are no longer used for the purpose they were made for, but can be used again in another way" or "information — a small piece of information, truth etc". By using the word scraps, Dr. Smith intently or unconsciously confuses the reader. If the meaning is to be; "uses material that are no longer used for the purpose they were made for", then why did he ever record the speech? Why keep the records for thirty years and then decide they no longer fulfil the purpose they once served? Was it an impulsive act of the moment taking these notes? If we are to interpret scraps as small pieces of information, truth etc, then we may conclude that the article is a reconstruction of inadequate information and therefore the speech can hardly have been orated by Chief Seattle the way it is published in the *Seattle Sunday Star*.

3.4.5 Out-of-date terms, which seems to transcend the talent of the author

The use of out-of-date terms, which even had to be explained to many of the readers of the *Seattle Sunday Star*, gives the article a sense of historical authenticity. Smith recalls an

historical incident, which no one else appears to have taken notice of, and might just have used the out-of-time terms as a technique to create a realistic atmosphere. The out-of-date terms were, in all probability, part of his own vocabulary and served his purpose for creating legitimacy.

Those who have studied Dr. Henry H Smith's other writings and compared them with the article from the *Seattle Sunday Star*, October 29, 1887 have found few similarities. According to Albert Furtwangler (20) the Seattle speech is, when set against Smith's other writings, strangely, even uniquely, powerful; Yet it could also be the curious masterpiece of a writer with grand ambitions and limited talents.

3.5 The disappearing authenticity: the creation of a legacy.

Contemplating how time elapsed between eye-witnessing the event and the reconstructing of it the thirty years later, these years of frontier-life surely must have influenced Dr. Smith's recollection of the claimed episode from his youth. How did he reconstruct these moments which he claims to have witnessed in the early history, of what was to become Washington State? Contemplating Smith own words "Scraps from a Diary" and "The above is but a fragment of his speech" we understand that the text is not a citation. At its best the article represents an Indian oral performance, filtered by translation into a white mans cold print (Furtwangler 20).

The existence of any earlier record has not been found, something which appears bizarre when observing the magnitude of the occasion. Nevertheless Dr. Henry H. Smith's article remains the oldest manuscript found and published. The *Seattle Sunday Star's* perspective has inspired scores of individuals.

4 THE TED PERRY TRANSCRIPT

4.1 Ted Perry (1937-)

Scrutinizing Ted Perry's book *My Reel Story*, the following can be uncovered regarding his childhood and the years that were to follow. Ed and Gertrude Perry's son Ted Perry was born in 1937 in New Orleans, Louisiana USA. He was named Teddy but called Ted after his father's hero, Thomas Edward Lawrence better known as Lawrence of Arabia (1888-1935), a British liaison officer who played a remarkable role during the Arab Revolt of 1916-18. (Wilson WWW)

Between the age of two and four he lived with his father, since his parents lived apart. During this period he became close to his father, a Western/Cowboy and War film-lover. In 1945/46, Ted being 8 years old, his father left to work in Africa, where he died in Liberia on April 2, 1957. Perry worked in the Gulf of Mexico during the late 1950's drilling oil in order to be able to go back to college. Later he moved to Iowa to study play writing. To pay for his studies, Perry started to teach courses about film. During this time he also took a Ph.D. so he could teach different classes.

He has been the director of the Department of Film at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and taught film and video courses at four different US-Universities. His written legacy includes; books and articles on Italian cinema, stage plays and television documentaries. He is still active as Fletcher Professor of the Arts at Middlebury College, teaching film and video.

4.2 The setting

During the early 1970's an Indian transcript started to surface in both the USA and Europe. The text, which is regarded by many to be a manifesto of ecological feeling and thinking, was mainly staged as a speech orated by an Indian, Chief Seattle. Chief Seattle's association with this speech has made him "the prophet of an ecological sentiment that is said to be lacking in Western industrialized countries." (Kaiser 497).

The text, initially written in English, has been translated on numerous occasions and can be read in German, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese, Swedish, Danish, French and Spanish. Searching for “Chief Seattle” using the search-engine Google gave roughly 275,000¹ hits. Many of these internet-sites about Chief Seattle refer to Chief Seattle’s Speech. Environmentalists have extensively been mentioning, quoting and distributing the text. Individuals and organizations in numerous countries and of all social-levels cite the speech. The Swedish minister for agriculture referred to the speech while speaking to the Swedish parliament on December 7, 2004 (Nykvist WWW). But those quoting the speech may receive correspondence arguing its source, since many are keen to highlight the authenticity of the speech quoted.

4.3 Ted Perry’s film script “*Home*”

In 1969 the poet and professor William Arrowsmith made his own interpretation of Chief Seattle’s address, revising the complete transcript but remaining faithful to the original content of the Dr. Henry H. Smith text. The poet clearly states at the end of his *Speech of Chief Seattle* that the text is “Translated from the Victorian English of Dr. Henry Smith of Seattle, published in the *Seattle Star* on October 29,1877” (Kaiser 507). Sometime around 1973 a new text was published, differing from all the previous publications, and closely followed by a comparable, but reduced and simplified, transcript. Both publications lacked the source of origin, but in appearance they appeared to transcribe the authentic words of Chief Seattle.

William Arrowsmith recited his version on the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970 (Stevens WWW). A screen-play writer named Ted Perry was amongst the spectators present. A few years later, hired by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, Ted Perry used Arrowsmith’s poem as the inspirational source when writing a script for an ecological film, entitled “*Home*”. Perry’s producer used his script, adding or changing about 3% of the screenplay. The movie was aired in 1972 (Kaiser 514) but had no “written by” credit. By

¹ Search made in any language, done on December 14, 2005 at 15.21 Central European Time.

doing so the Southern Baptist Convention gave credit to Chief Seattle for words he had never orated. The producer explained, when contacted by Perry, that the “written by” credit had been omitted in order to give the film and its text more authenticity (Kaiser 514). It had been done purposely and they would not reconsider. To support the film 18,000 posters with a reproduction of the speech were also mailed out. (Stevens WWW). Today we can conclude that Perry’s employer’s desire to create a more authentic appearance has been extremely successful. A screen-play writer’s fiction had given birth to a modern myth through the broadcasting of a film called *Home*. In retrospect, Ted Perry wished the idea had never occurred to him (Stevens WWW). During the years Ted Perry has repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried to demystify the misinterpretation of his words. In the winter of 1988/89 he published his original script in the *Middlebury College Magazine* and in 2001 Warren Jefferson included Perry’s original text in his book *The world of Chief Seattle – How Can One Sell the Air?*

The text below is duplicated from Rudolf Kaiser’s book “*Chief Seattle’s Speech(es): American Origins and European Reception.*” It most probably is Ted Perry’s screenplay-script for the film *Home*, as altered and broadcasted by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in 1972. This adaptation is probably the most famous “Chief Seattle” transcript known.

The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land.

The Great Chief also sends us words of friendship and good will. This is kind of him, since we know he has little need of our friendship in return. But we will consider your offer. For we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take the land.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them from us?

We will decide in our time.

What Chief Seattle says, the Great Chief in Washington can count on as truly as our white brothers can count on the return of the seasons. My words are like the stars. They do not set.

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse and the great eagle are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man- all belong to the same family.

So when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy the land, he asks much of us.

The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortable to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children.

But can that ever be? God loves your people, but has abandoned his red children. He sends machines to help the white man with his work, and builds great villages for him. He makes your people stronger every day. Soon you will flood the land like rivers which crash down the canyons after a sudden rain. But my people are an ebbing tide, we will never return.

No, we are separate races. Our children do not play together and our old men tell different stories. God favours you, and we are orphans.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us. We take our pleasure in these woods. I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

The red man has always retreated before the advancing white man, as the mist of the mountain runs before the morning sun. But the ashes of our fathers are sacred. The graves are holy ground, and so these hills, these trees, this portion of the earth is consecrated to us.

We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his father's graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children. He does not care. His father's graves, and his children's birthright, are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleaned by a midday rain, or scented with the pinion pine.

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath- the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept, I will make one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers. I am a savage and I do not understand any other way. I've seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of your grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself.

Our dead go to live in the earth's sweet rivers, they return with the silent footsteps of spring, and it is their spirit, running in the wind, that ripples the surface of the ponds.

We will consider why the white man wishes to buy the land. What is that the white man wishes to buy, my people ask me. The idea is strange to us. How can you buy or sell the land? – the swiftness of the antelope? How can we sell these things to you and how can you buy them? Is the earth yours to do with as you will, merely because the red man signs a piece of paper and gives it to the white man? If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them from us.

Can you buy back the buffalo, once the last one has been killed? But we will consider your offer for we know that if we not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land. But we are primitive, and in his passing moment of strength the white man thinks that he is a god who already owns the earth. How can a man own his mother?

But we will consider your offer to buy our land. Day and night cannot live together. We will consider your offer to go to the reservation you have for my people. We will live apart, and in peace. It matters little were we spend the rest of our days. Our children have seen their fathers humbled in defeat. Our warriors have felt shame, and after they turn their days in idleness and contaminate their bodies with sweet foods and strong drinks. It matters little where we pass the rest of our days. They are not many. A few more hours, a few more winters, and none of the children of the great tribes that once lived on this earth or that roam now in small bands in the woods will be left to mourn the graves of a people once as powerful and hopeful as yours.

But why should I mourn the passing of my people? Tribes are made of men, nothing more. Men come and go, like the waves of the sea.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover, our God is the same God.

You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival.

God gave you domination over the beasts, the woods, and the red man, and for some special purpose, but that destiny is a mystery to the red man. We might understand if we knew that it was that the white man dreams – what hopes he describes to his children on long winter nights – what visions he burns onto their minds so that they will wish for tomorrow. But we are savages. The white man's dreams are hidden from us. And because they are hidden, we will go our own way. For above all else, we cherish the right of each man to live as he wishes, however different from his brothers. There is little in common between us.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish.

When the last red man is vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, the shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat.

If we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it... as the Great Spirit loves us all."

One thing we know. Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see.

4.4 The reduced and simplified placard version

Rudolf Kaiser, as discussed in the previous chapter, traced four versions of the Chief Seattle speech. The oldest was the Dr. Henry H. Smith reconstruction. The final version which Kaiser discusses is a placard presenting the Chief Seattle speech, which had been on display in the US-pavilion during the Spokane, Washington State, Word's Fair '74. The theme of the Word's Fair was "Celebrating a Fresh, New Environment". The US-pavilion had the theme "Man and Nature" and on the outside the quote "The Earth does not belong to Man, Man belongs to the Earth", (attributed to Chief Seattle) was written in large letters on the outside wall (Fuller WWW). Inside the pavilion the speech was played from the mouth of a Chief Seattle statue (Stevens WWW).

By 1974, the myth of the Chief Seattle's speech already seems to have been accepted and since then has spread worldwide. Illustrating this is the fact that during 1995 a placard with the title *This Earth is Precious* (Unknown Author) was on sale in one of New Zealand's National Park Information Centres which is analyzed for its symbolism in chapter 5. The manuscript's introduction, reproduced in full text in chapter 5.1, states "...Chief Seattle's reply, published here in full...", but is clearly a reduced and simplified adaptation of the text as broadcasted in 1972.

4.5 The accuracy of Perry's text

The transcript presents itself as being an oral performance made by Chief Seattle. Knowing that Chief Seattle died June 7, 1866 gives us a historical deadline concerning events he might have witnessed. The most noticeable historical inaccuracy is the quotation presented halfway into the speech: "I've seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train... Can you buy back the buffalo, once the last one has been killed?" These sentences highlight the slaughter of the buffalo and contain several inaccuracies.

- It was not until February 15, 1870 that the Northern Pacific Railway started to build a track between Lake Superior and the Puget Sound region, setting off from Duluth at the shore of Lake Superior, Minnesota. These tracks did not reach the Puget Sound area until 1873 (adelitab@NOSPAMcomcast.net WWW).
- The killing of the buffalo became systematic during the 1870s (Miller WWW).
- By the late 1880s only a few thousand specimens remained. They were the remnants of a herd sized roughly 30 million that had inhabited the Great Plains, their principle habitat (Miller WWW).

Chronologically it is obvious that Chief Seattle never could have seen these events since they all occurred after June 7, 1866, the day of his passing. In addition to the historical errors there are some factual errors concerning, amongst others, references to the pinion pine and the antelope.

The Pacific Northwest was a densely forested area which included pine-trees. It appears habitual that Seattle would refer to these trees: “The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleaned by a midday rain, or scented with the pinion pine.” Here Seattle specifically refers to the pinion pine, also called pinyon or piñon pine, a pine tree which is found in southwestern USA (Wikimedia 2005, November 19 WWW). It is unlikely that Chief Seattle ever left the Pacific Northwest of the United States. He surely would refer to an indigenous tree, not to a tree native of a different area.

“The swiftness of the antelope” refers to the pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra Americana*) the only surviving member of the Antilocapridae familie. It is not a true antelope but it is the fastest land animal in North America running at speeds of 96 km/h. Its habitat does not include the area where Chief Seattle lived (Schemnitz WWW) and surely Chief Seattle would have referred to an indigenous animal.

These inaccuracies are explained by Ted Perry in an article published 1993 by *Readers Digest* (Stevens WWW). “I didn’t check the historical accuracy of anything I wrote, explains

Perry... He figured viewers would realize the speech was fictitious once they saw “Written by Ted Perry” at the end of the film.”(Stevens WWW).

4.6 Relation between the Dr. Henry H. Smith and Ted Perry versions

When confronted with passages or quotations ascribed to Chief Seattle it is highly likely that they originate from the Ted Perry text. Comparing Perry’s transcript with the original published by Dr. Smith in 1887 it is apparent that little resemblance remains. The attitude of the whole speech has altered. Chief Seattle has become an environmentalist. The original text has associations towards the environment but those have a supporting role. This is in contradiction to the Ted Perry text which focuses principally on environmental topics. In Ted Perry’s text, Chief Seattle has also taken a more reserved standpoint towards the white man, and the attitude towards religion has changed dramatically when compared with the original transcript from Dr. Smith. Here are some quotations from both transcripts.

The original 1887 Dr. Smith transcript.

...his people are many. They are like the grass that covers the vast prairies, while my people are few, and resemble the scattering trees of a wind-swept plain...

...I will not mourn over our untimely decay, nor reproach my paleface brothers for hastening it, for we, too, may have been somewhat to blame.

...Your god loves your people and hates mine...
the white...

The Ted Perry transcript.

...The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath...

...For we know that if we do not sell, the White man may come with guns and take our land....

...He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and

4.7 The myth rematerializes

With the publication of the children’s book *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message From Chief Seattle* in September 1991, the Seattle myth was evoked again. Artist Susan Jeffers and her publisher claim to have adapted the original 1854 speech and decline to offer rectification. By July 1993 it had sold over 400.000 copies (Stevens WWW). Since then it has sold many more and has been translated into, amongst other languages Swedish. In April 1992 the *New York Times* published a front-page article revealing the speech to be a myth (Stevens WWW).

However by 2005 the book is still on sale. Many criticise the book for being a hoax. The Oyate organization, a Native organization working to see that the lives and histories of natives are portrayed honestly, and so that all people will know our stories belong to them, list the book as; a “Book to avoid”. (oyate@oyate.org WWW)

Jeffers defends her book by saying “Ted Perry can say he wrote them, I can't say that he wrote them, because I don't know.” Perry, when contacting the author/publisher, never wanted royalties, he wanted accuracy. Unfortunately, the author would rather take the royalties and inaccurate history does not seem to bother her or the publisher (Stevens WWW).

5 THE PLACARD VERSION'S SYMBOLISM

5.1 The placard version

Chief Seattle's association with the speech has made him in the words of Rudolf Kaiser (497); “the prophet of an ecological sentiment that is said to be lacking in Western industrialized countries.” To many individuals the speech symbolises and reflects an ecological feeling with which they can associate. The text below is recited from the “New Zealand” placard (see also chapter 3.4), and environmental symbolism seems to be exploited thoroughly throughout the text.

Printed on stiff grey/green paper it has in its centre a photograph of Chief Seattle. Above the photograph is the heading “*THIS EARTH IS PRECIOUS*”. Underneath the photograph the placard introduces and states the origin of the published text as follows:

In 1854, the “Great White Chief” in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a “reservation” for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply, published here in full, has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made.

The placard continues by relaying Chief Seattle's reply as follows:

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.
If we do not own the freshness of the air and sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

ALL SACRED

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people.

Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us.

The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers.

The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man--all belong to the same family.

NOT EASY

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves.

He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land.

But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors.

If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people.

The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

KINDNESS

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs.

The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on.

He leaves his father's graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children, and he does not care.

His father's grave, and his children's birthright, are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads.

His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways.

The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings.

But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand.

The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand.

The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleaned by a midday rain, or scented with the pinion pine.

PRECIOUS

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath--the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath.

The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench.

But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh.

And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

ONE CONDITION

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept, I will make one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers.

I am a savage and I do not understand any other way.

I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train.

I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit.

For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

THE ASHES

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of your grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin.

Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny.

We may be brothers after all.

We shall see.

One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover, our God is the same God.

You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white.

This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator.

The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man.

That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires.

Where is the thicket? Gone.

Where is the eagle? Gone.

The end of living and the beginning of survival.

5.2 The placard's symbolism

The reply portrays how highly Native Americans valued their surrounding environment. This is contrasted to our modern industrial way of thinking, in which the environment is no more than a component within a production process. The industrial revolution initiated an environmental abuse which hardly any Westerner had contemplated. It took more than a century, initiated by Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* (1962), for an environmental opinion to gain foothold. Ted Perry, the original author of the above reply, cunningly utilized this rising environmental awareness. Throughout the text Perry uses symbols, metaphors and

other techniques. He engages the reader and positions the environment on a social and highly personal level. Words describing family are exploited to refer to natural formations in order to depict the environment as something Native Americans felt and still feel strongly about. The following quotations all exploit this family theme.

- This beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man.
- The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man all belong to the same family.
- This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors.
- The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.
- The rivers are our brothers
- Teach your children what we have taught our children that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth

Perry used words by which society normally describes family bonds. Relations which are precious to most human beings: Mother, father, brother, children, sons, ancestors and family are all words which symbolise something unique and special. We do not want to dissociate ourselves from these symbols nor demolish them.

These powerful foundational environmental symbols are countered by the conflicting white man's attitude. The text depicts the white man as people who merely exploit and maltreat nature. This is illustrated by the following quotation:

One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs.

The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on.

He leaves his father's graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children, and he does not care.

His father's grave, and his children's birthright, are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads.

Perry changes style and uses terminology normally associated with criminality, scandal, destruction and illegal activity. Words such as "A stranger who comes by night", takes, enemy, conquered, kidnaps, plundered, desert, all negatively loaded vocabulary, symbolising phenomenon that humans want to detach themselves from. Expressions reciting the type of behaviour few humans want to be associated with. Most individuals are scared by or detest such activities and therefore they do not want to be associated with them.

Through the use of this conflicting symbolic vocabulary the reader is predictably manoeuvred into an attitude sympathetic to the Indians. Perry shrewdly utilizes this Indian

and environmentally sympathetic attitude by subsequently depicting the white man as being ignorant, since awareness is found amongst the red men. This is revealed in the following quotation:

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath—the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath.

The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit.

For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

By now it is hard not to sympathize with the environmental concern and awareness of the red men.

The final paragraph of the speech ultimately concludes its symbolism. The environmental manipulation by humans is taken beyond the biological effects it has on nature. This part emphasizes the consequences for humans themselves, and leaves no doubt as to its aggressive view.

- If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.
- The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth.
- Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.
- Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

The text shocks its reader; individual humans have no desire to contaminate their own bed. Through clear symbolism it is made apparent how the behaviour of whites affects the earth and the human society supported by her. Whites essentially need to recognize that their behaviour needs adjustment in order to uphold a beneficial sustainable environment.

At the end two ultimate questions are asked, both answered instantly. This technique engages the reader even further, in a more direct way than what a simple statement would have done. Concluding the reply with the final phrase; “The end of living and the beginning of survival.”, is a strong symbolic argument, pronouncing the requirement of environmental alterations in order to maintain a comparable standard of living.

Disguised as wisdom from the past the reply symbolises, expresses and satisfies the environmental feelings of many Industrialized Westerners.

6 Summary and conclusion

Chief Seattle took his last breath on June 7, 1866. His Euro-American legacy, established through a mere obscure, evanescent newspaper column, will unquestionably outlive us all. Yet the lack of plausible historical confirmation might be the foundation for an eternal debate concerning its authenticity.

For more than a century the heritage of the Speech was lodged within the Seattle area. Liberally interpreted by William Arrowsmith, it was sequestered by Ted Perry. Perry's moving film-transcript, was efficiently and successfully abused by his employer. The legacy, by now nothing more than a white mans transcript printed on cold paper, was launched nationally in the USA. Perry's words, marketed to be Chief Seattle's legacy, subsequently gained global acknowledgement for its ecological sentiment.

The texts' symbolism appears to be in harmony with the concerns, wishes and expectations of numerous environmentally concerned individuals from, in particular, the Western world. Many of these environmental concerns have been expressed through the publications of, amongst others, the Club of Rome. Numerous engaged grass roots environmentalists have adopted Ted Perry's Chief Seattle's reply as a declaration from the past expressing their modern ecological concerns, wishes and expectations. How can one oppose these statements, for example?

Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.
This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know.
All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Did Chief Seattle orate the speech which was later reconstructed by Dr. Henry H. Smith? Historical facts oppose such a conclusion but modern feelings have embraced the Native American, Chief Seattle, as an ecological, sentimental prophet. The early 1970's Southern Baptist Convention marketing scheme turned fiction into fact. A questionable document became accepted wisdom. Perry's association to the transcript is only made when questioning its authenticity. Can he be credited with writing this sentimental environmental message or

will he only be notoriously haunted by its fiction? Individuals might admit that the actual words are those of Ted Perry but the philosophy behind these words originates and belongs to Chief Seattle. Chief Seattle's own tribe's official Internet page gives full and uncompromised credit to their hereditary leader; "The speech Chief Seattle recited during treaty negotiations in 1854 is regarded as one of the greatest statements ever made concerning the relationship between a people and the earth" (Suquamish WWW). The fact that the speech might not be a Native American Chief's oration is simply disregarded.

Perry's writing skills and the philosophy behind his words have during the past tree decades influenced the lives of millions and should therefore be legitimate. Yet a film quotation does not make an environmental impact, Chief Seattle's words do!

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