

As a writer who is also Aboriginal, Robinson has chosen to avoid identifying her characters as being Aboriginal. Perhaps they do have Aboriginal blood, perhaps not. Perhaps Robinson is suggesting that her characters are simply people whose lives deserve to be made present.

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Ruffo, Armand Garnet: *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*. Regina: Coteau Books, 1996, ISBN 1-55050-109-7 Paper CDN \$ 14.95.

On 18 September, 1888 at Hastings, England Archibald Stansfeld Belaney was born to a teenaged Katherine Belaney (nee Cox) and a thirty-one year old remittance man, George Belaney. Five decades later, a continent and a lifetime away, a man known as Grey Owl died on 13 April, 1938 at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The incredible life lived in the intervening years by a man who assumed a different identity is captured imaginatively by Armand Garnet Ruffo through the poetry, prose, and photographs in this collection.

More than a biographer of physical events, Ruffo examines the evolving personality of a British boy who liked animals and "playing Indian" and who, when he moved to Canada, deconstructed his own past to create an entirely new persona. Multiple voices explore the psychological processes which transformed Archie Belaney into Grey Owl, and mark as well the response of others to this change.

Like his father, Archie Belaney had several spouses. Like his father, Archie also showed little responsibility for his many relationships and the children he fathered. Unlike his father, however, Archie came to believe that he had a contribution to make to society. His perceived contribution was to show respect for the natural environment. As he took on the persona of an Aboriginal, Grey Owl, he found that people listened when he spoke of environmental concerns. For several years he travelled across North America and Britain giving presentations on animal and forest conservation. In this way it appears that he rationalized his appropriation of an Aboriginal voice. Yet Ruffo posits that because his life as Grey Owl was a lie, Belaney sought in vain for a self concept with which he could be secure. Ruffo's poetry under the persona of Belaney illustrates well how despite fame and success, the man who becomes Grey Owl never finds fulfilment:

“Why I Write”

So I can live in the past,
 earn a living,
 protect the beaver,
 publicize conservation,
 attract attention,
 sell 35,000 copies in 3 months,
 give 138 lectures in 88 days,
 travel over 4,350 miles,
 wear feathers,
 wear make-up,
 play Indian—no
 be Indian,
 get to go to pow wows,
 get to tour Britain,
 meet the King & Queen,
 become famous,
 become alcoholic,
 leave a legacy,
 lose a wife,
 be lonely.

Ruffo captures with graphic clarity the psychological conflict Belaney faces as he becomes Grey Owl:

from “Indian”

Country Life wants a book
 and you've agreed to give them one,
 but the writing doesn't come.

And nothing fits.
 Grey Owl?
 Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin?
 Archibald Stansfeld Belaney?
 Whiteman? Redman?
 Who's speaking?

Who are you speaking as? Who are you
 speaking for? You rip the noose
 from your neck and fling it into the corner.

Ruffo whose own Ojibway ancestors knew Belaney in northern Ontario, allows the voices of those who knew Belaney to speak and expose him for what he becomes:

"Betty Somervell, 1936"

"It's the way they [Belaney and Anahareo] treat one another, certainly not as lovers, or even man and wife who have settled into comfortable coexistence;..." "This time I'm leaving for good..." "I ask myself if it's because he's giving so much of himself for his work he's got nothing left to spare. Well I can't give without receiving. You heard his plans, that's his life, not mine."

Moving from relationship to relationship, and from success to disappointment, Archibald Belaney turns to alcohol for escape from reality:

"Jack Leve, 1938"

Archie! I interrupt,
before he goes on, before I correct myself,
Grey Owl, I mean.
I don't want to alarm him, but I'm aghast to see him
in this condition, this once rough-tough wilderness man
sitting here with his face half-stewed with his face
puffed up

Even at the height of Belaney's success as an author and public performer, Ruffo pictures him as living in constant fear that "Grey Owl" will be exposed as a cheat through the revelation that his tale of an Apache childhood in the States is an utter lie.

"Grey Owl, 1935"

You in the audience who sit in expectation cannot know.
This fear, this inexorable fear, I take with me....
I make my way to the podium, for here darkness is no forest
sanctuary but more a murky abyss, ready to open greedily
like the mouth that it is, with sharp accusing shriek.
After a prefatory greeting in which I tell you I come in
peace, I'm now launched into a story of my early days as a
river man, or maybe I'm mentioning how different it was for
me to move to northern Ontario from the southern United
States, to learn the still-hunt of the Ojibway as compared
to the whoop and holler of the Apache buffalo hunt.
Without warning. From behind the black curtain
where you sit, someone is shouting: Liar! Liar!

As the poem continues, Belaney imagines the total collapse of his false identity.

One by one others in the audience begin to stand,
begin to make their way towards me, all
bearing an accusing finger.

There is no escape

The haunted has become the hunted.

I press my hands to my ears and implore everyone to stop,
to let me go: for you know now who I am.
Helpless, I fall to my knees. And above me, there she is,
Ivy, the young actress Belaney once loved and abandoned.
And beside her, all his old Hastings Grammar School
classmates laughing at odd-ball Archie who's still playing
Indian after all these years.

The photographs, news reports, dialogue, and journal entries supplement the multi-voiced poetic narrative to provide a thorough analysis of the persona of Grey Owl. Armand Garnet Ruffo has done an excellent job of providing readers with insight into the evolving, ~~self-destructive character~~ of Archibald Belaney as he appropriates the persona of Grey Owl.

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Stonechild, Blair and Bill Waiser: *Loyal Till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion*. Calgary, Alberta: Fifth House Publishers, 1997, ISBN 1-895618-88-6 Paper CDN \$ 18.95.

The institution known as Canadian history holds that the events, names, and places of the North-West Rebellion of 1885 are a testament to the resilience and strength of the new northern nation in the face of internal aggression. Meanwhile, the Métis have held to their history of the 1885 resistance as a struggle against overwhelming odds which proved their fortitude, unique identity, and rightful place in North American history. The First Nations, however, had yet to make their knowledge of that time, those