**The savage as living ghost: representations of Native Americans and scholarly failures to dismantle the notion of the savage**
Chen, C.

**Citation**
Chen, C. (2017, March 21). *The savage as living ghost: representations of Native Americans and scholarly failures to dismantle the notion of the savage*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/47360

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page





The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/47360 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author**: Chen, C.
**Title**: The savage as living ghost: representations of Native Americans and scholarly failures to dismantle the notion of the savage
**Issue Date**: 2017-03-21

**Chapter Three**


**The Savage Multiplied: *Inglourious Basterds* and *Unthinking Eurocentrism***


**Introduction**

In the previous chapters I looked at the ways in which the savage was considered either as an opposite and dialectical counterpart to the civilized and by implication civilization, or as a figure that marks a difference within. This chapter looks at the possibility that the concept and figure of the savage can also be considered in terms of multiplication. Such multiplication is related to a multiplication of history, which by implication is a multiplication of culture. Regarding the savage, such multiplication can result not so much in a wide variety of savages but, instead, in the possibility that the savage starts to function as a vehicle or embodiment of multiple characters and voices. In order to explore this operation of multiplication, I take my cue from chapter five of the momentous *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994), entitled "Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle over Representation," where Shohat and Stam deal with the dominant power that speaks through cinema and other visual media when it comes to the representation of stereotypes, a dominant power that they term "the demagoguery of the visual" (1994a, 214). In this chapter, I aim to address such demagoguery by bringing the film *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), directed by Quentin Tarantino, to bear on Shohat and Stam's paradigmatic study. In the film, Native Americans are brought into play not through direct visual representation but through a plot that mixes up the histories of Native Americans, American settlers, African-Americans, Jews, Frenchmen, Germans and Italians.

In order to read this explicit but, in another sense, hidden or indirect appearance of Native Americans I will follow a tactic developed by Shohat and Stam that they propose in order to counter the aforementioned "the demagoguery of the visual" (214). They suggest that, in the context of critiquing ideologies, critics focus on the *voices* that are hidden in, or underneath, dominant visual expressions:

> It is not our purpose merely to reverse existing hierarchies - to replace the demagoguery of the visual with a new demagoguery of the auditory - but to suggest that voice (and sound) and image be considered together, dialectically and diacritically. A more nuanced discussion of race and ethnicity in the cinema would emphasize less a one-to-one mimetic adequacy to sociological or historical truth than the interplay of voices, discourses, perspectives, including those operative within the image itself. The task of the critic would be to call attention to the cultural voices at play, not only those heard in aural "close-up" but also those distorted or

drowned out by the text. The analytic work would be analogous to that of a "mixer" in a sound studio, whose responsibility it is to perform a series of compensatory operations, to heighten the treble, deepen the bass, amplify the instrumentation, to "bring out" the voices that remain latent or displaced. (214)

As may be clear from this quote, the idea is not so much to trace a "savage within," but to see how an "interplay of voices, discourses and perspectives," that is to say a multiplicity of elements, can be operative even within one image (214). Such an interplay should not be analyzed in order to determine the adequacy or inadequacy of (ethnic) representations of people but to make a dynamic of cultural voices palpable, voices which may seem upfront and clear, but also deformed ("distorted") or hidden ("drowned"). The terms chosen by Shohat and Stam clearly come from the domain of the audible, alluding to how sound can be distorted or certain sounds can be drowned out in the density of other sounds. In line with these terms, the critic's task, here, is not simply to un-mix but also to make things better heard by amplifying them. In this context, it is telling that the savages central to the previous chapters were often not seen but could be "heard" nevertheless.

By bringing *Inglourious Basterds* into dialogue with Shohat and Stam's paradigmatic study, I wish to tease out a third attitude regarding the problem of the savage: one responding to history written from a dominant perspective, to history written in such a way that this perspective appears to be the *only* one. Instead of deconstructing this perspective in terms of center and margin (with a possible reversal of these terms), the tactic here is to radically multiply history into a diversity of many histories. Along these lines, Shohat and Stam aim to replace the margin/center division with a polycentric model. This model, which puts emphasis on multiplicity, is indebted to a post-structuralist approach to history. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba discusses the role of post-structuralist theory in post-colonial thought and restates Jorge de Alva's suggestion that "postcoloniality is, and must be more firmly connected to, poststructuralist theories of history" (Loomba 17). Yet, a difference between poststructuralism and postcolonialism may, indeed, lie in their notions of multiplication. Whereas poststructuralism still clings to the dismantling of existing oppositions and a "suspicion of established truths," postcolonialism is also concerned with bringing in new and other forms of subjectivity through "the decentering of the human subject... as male and white" and regarding language "as a tool of domination and as a means of constructing identity" (39-40). Loomba also suggests that "in order to listen for subaltern voices we need to uncover the multiplicity of narratives that were hidden by the grand narratives, but we still need to think about how the former are woven together" (200). In postcolonial approaches, it is important not only to dismantle established hierarchies in a poststructuralist fashion, but also to situate the subaltern "within a multiplicity of hierarchies" and to discuss how these hierarchies are related (200). Similarly to this postcolonial approach, Shohat and Stam try to figure out how these hierarchies are related through amplification. For Shohat and Stam, "radical multiculturalism" and "amplification of voices" are integral to a study of cultural history

that is intrinsically related to social power and that starts from the premise that there is no equality between a diversity of viewpoints or voices (1994b). Following this premise, the savage would no longer be the ideal dialectical vehicle to define civilization but would become one figure in a dynamic field of multiple hierarchies.

Such multiple hierarchies also imply a multiplication of histories. In light of history's multiplicity, I will first deal with the film as a postmodern work of art, since the writing of history as a tool of power and the interplay of multiple histories are key aspects of postmodernism.

## 3.1 *Inglourious Basterds* as a Postmodern Work of Art: Parody and Meta-history

Although Tarantino's film was released fairly recently, there are already book-length studies on the film, such as *Quentin Tarantino's Inglourious Basterds: A Manipulation of Metacinema*, a collection of essays edited by Robert von Dassanowsky and published in 2012. The fact that *Inglourious Basterds* provoked such immediate and considerable public and scholarly responses, is a sign in itself; the film manages to combine popular consumption with academic reflection. In its blending of popular culture with high art and theory, the film is distinctly postmodern, both in terms of its intertextual play and its concern with a multiplicity of histories: histories moreover that can be either real or fictional, with a porous border in between.

The film consists of five separate chapters with the following titles, in different fonts: *Once upon a time in… Nazi-occupied France*; *INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS*; *GERMAN NIGHT IN PARIS 1944 JUNE*; *OPERATION KINO*; and *REVENGE OF THE GIANT FACE*. The first chapter title inscribes the film intertextually and thus introduces fiction, both in its literary and cinematographic mode. It repeats the opening phrase of fairy-tales, firstly, and, secondly, alludes to famous films such as *Once upon a Time in the West* (1968) and *Once upon a Time in America* (1984). At the same time, however, the title hints at a specific historical place and time that is not fictive at all: Nazi-occupied France. The other four chapter titles, set in a different font and written in capitals, sound more like the chapters from a book, thus hinting at the familiar postmodern strategy of mixing media. Taken together, the five chapters develop a plot, taking place during the Second World War, in France, and interweaving two primary story lines.

One story line concerns the revenge of a young Jewish woman, Shosanna Dreyfus [Mélanie Laurent], after her family members have been killed by SS Colonel Hans Landa [Christoph Waltz]. The other story line concerns the undercover operation of group of American-Jewish soldiers, the so-called "Basterds," led by Aldo Raine [Bradd Pitt], who later cooperates with British Lt. Archie Hicox [Michael Fassbender] and German film actress and spy Bridget von Hammersmark [Diane Kruger]. Both storylines come together in "Operation Kino." As may be evident from the title, cinema plays a key role here, and, as the subtitle of Von Dassanowsky's collection suggests, we may be dealing with a form of meta-cinema. The film ends with a successful act of revenge when many high-ranking Nazi members, including Adolf Hitler himself [Martin Wuttke], are burned to death in the cinema owned by Shosanna, where they had been enjoying a film on a German sniper killing hundreds of enemies.

As both the end of the film and the title of Von Dassanowsky's edited volume suggest, *Inglourious Basterds* can be considered as a meta-reflection on cinema itself. Such meta-reflection is a dominant characteristic of postmodernism, as scholars Patricia Waugh and Brian McHale suggest. Yet, the film is also clearly a reflection on history, not only because the Holocaust is not something to be "played" with, as seems to be happening here, but also because the film brings together different historical strands in a synchronic context, which makes it peculiarly contradictory and incoherent. The film thereby also provokes a reflection on history. Linda Hutcheon, the Canadian postmodern literary and cultural critic, argues that postmodernism is "resolutely historical" and a postmodern phrase such as "the presence of the past" indicates that postmodern writing "is always a critical reworking, never a nostalgic 'return'" (1988, 4). In other words, as a new way of thinking about history, postmodern writings of history are not authentic representations of historical events, but reworkings of history. In being radically subjective, personal, ambivalent, and opaque, many postmodern writings challenge "the assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation" (92).

The epistemological and ontological implications of this postmodern sensibility have been amply noted in relation to Tarantino's film. As Imke Meyer states in her contribution to Von Dassanowsky's volume: "the historical truth is always already out of reach and all we can access are representation of history, rather than history itself" (25). Especially in relation to the theme of the Holocaust, it is relevant to note that such a postmodern conception of history does not mean historical truthfulness becomes irrelevant. On the contrary, postmodernism, according to Hutcheon, has a serious agenda. She argues that the "provisionality and uncertainty [of postmodern works] … define the new postmodern seriousness that acknowledges the limits and powers of 'reporting' or writing of the past, recent or remote" (1988, 117). Thus, rather than being non-serious, or simply playful, postmodern writings provide a new kind of seriousness, which calls into doubt the conventional idea of history.

Building on Umberto Eco's distinction of three ways to narrate the past—the romance, the swashbuckling tale, and the historical novel—Hutcheon proposes historiographic metafiction as "a fourth way of narrating the past" (113). Her proposed term refers to "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (5). One could include in this category not just novels, but also other works of art, like films. Different from late modernists' attempts "to explode realist narrative conventions … historiographic metafiction's somewhat different strategy subverts [these conventions], but only through irony, not through rejection" (xii). Moreover, historiographic metafiction exposes the ways in which historiography properly makes the past become present through literary or historical texts. "The intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction enacts, in a way, the views of certain contemporary historiographers: it offers a sense of the presence of the past, but a past that can be known only from its texts, its traces – be they literary or historical" (125). In historiographic metafiction, simple mimesis disappears and "the very possibility of *any* firm 'guarantee of meaning'" is doubted (55). Instead, historiographic metafiction

suggests that "truth and falsity may indeed not be the right terms in which to discuss fiction … [for] there are only truths in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths" (109). One of the questions that one could ask in relation to *Inglourious Basterds*, then, is how it relates to and projects these multiple truths. Furthermore, one might ask: if there is a savage, or savages, lurking somewhere in this multiplicity, how are they projected and related to?

However, before moving on to this multiplicity, let me first consider, in relation to the histories of both Native Americans and European Jews, how postmodernism has been criticized precisely for this multiplicity. In relation to truth, and in contrast with Hutcheon's political take on postmodernism, Fredric Jameson considers postmodern works of art to be de-political or non-political, which means that there is little political relevance in these works. In relation to history, for instance, he writes that "a semblance of historical verisimilitude is vibrated into multiple alternate patterns, as though the form or genre of historiography … seems to offer postmodern writers the most remarkable and untrammeled movement of invention" (368). The first point that Jameson is making, is that historical verisimilitude is no longer a guiding principle for postmodernism, since it is only brought forward in terms of semblance. This suggests that there is no longer a claim to historical truth, not even in the ironic way that Hutcheon traces. Secondly, Jameson suggests that postmodern writers appear to know no restriction or restraint in their dealings with historical material, which, to them, becomes experimental "untrammeled" ground for invention. We might find this in Tarantino's film, in which different historical perspectives and realities (Germans and Jews, American soldiers and Indians) and different historical periods are juxtaposed and mixed together simultaneously. *Inglourious Basterds* never returns to an "objective" representation of historical events, nor is it a serious reworking of those events. Rather, historical figures such as Apaches, Jews or allied military men, seem to be shuffled "like so many cards from a finite deck" (367).

For Jameson, a film like this should and could not be taken seriously, while for Hutcheon the "provisionality and uncertainty" of historical pasts and figures could provide a new kind of seriousness, which might contribute to a rethinking and reworking of the past (1988, 117). If we follow her view, instead of making history of the "real" kind, the film is making history unreal, with the aim of working on historical pasts in a self-reflective and ironic way. This is why one critic argues that "*Inglourious Basterds* isn't even really Tarantino's war film; it's his film about war films and war stories" (Cederlund). It is safe to say that the way in which the film anachronistically stages different historical chapters interacting within the same cinematographic "universe," without claiming historical truth or accuracy, invites us to read it as a postmodern work of art. Yet, the question I would like to answer in what follows is whether, especially in relation to the figure of the savage, the film can be read in a politically relevant way, *a la* Hutcheon, or should be read in a playful but meaningless way, *a la* Jameson. The answer to this question pivots around how the historical past is activated or parodied in the film.

As hinted at above, *Inglourious Basterds* involves many different histories, many different ideas and stereotypes relating to different historical pasts. Are they presented as pastiche, sincerely imitating well-known historical facts, established events, or

familiar representations? Or, is this a form of parody that reworks all these in an ironic way, which could be either serious or not? For Jameson, pastiche refers to "the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter" (17). Pastiche just imitates a style, then, in a mechanical and neutral way, without any ironic implication and without a particular motive or objective. Hutcheon proposes parody as another form of imitation, as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (1985, 6). Different from pastiche, parody is not a simple combination of historical pasts, but reworks these pasts "both to enshrine the past and to question it," and "opens the text up" through irony, so that we can rethink these pasts and develop critical ideas through that rethinking (1988, 126).

I would like to weigh these options against one another by focusing on a scene right at the beginning of the film, when the history of Native Americans is brought in explicitly through Aldo. Aldo does not announce any historical facts about Native Americans, but he is playing with historical material. This might seem to fit Western discourse, in which Native Americans are often constructed as being history-less, both in the sense that they have always been the objects of history, not partaking in constructing it, and in the sense that they are regarded as living in a primitive time without any sense of history. However, in this scene, where Aldo introduces himself and immediately gives orders, he tries to associate himself with the history of Native Americans as "Indians," to use their history as it is framed by the Eurocentric perspective to define his own history and justify his mission. It is one of the moments where we have to use the tactic of amplification proposed by Shohat and Stam, since the term "Native American" is never mentioned in the film. There are only two occasions when the closely related term "Injun" is used.

The first time is when Aldo utters it in the aforementioned opening scene, addressing a speech to the Basterds before their departure from America to France:

> My name is Lt. Aldo Raine, and I'm puttin' together a special team. And I need me eight soldiers. Eight – Jewish – American – soldiers... Nazi ain't got no humanity. They're the foot soldiers of a Jew-hatin,' mass-murderin' maniac, and they need to be destroyed... Now, I'm the direct descendant of the mountain man Jim Bridger. That means I got a little Injun in me. And our battle plan will be that of an Apache resistance.

The here proudly mentioned "I've got a little Injun in me" is followed up in the "Operation Kino" chapter, when General Ed Fenech [Mike Myers] tells Lieutenant Hicox who the Basterds are and says that they are "like a red Injun." Moreover, in this opening speech there is an explicit reference to one so-called First Nation: that of the Apaches. In fact, this is also the nickname of Aldo, who is called Aldo "the Apache" Raine.

In this context it is either of relevance or a telling coincidence that in the same year as *Inglorious Basterds*, a Canadian documentary under the title *Reel Injun* was released. It is a documentary that focuses entirely on the ways in which dominant images of Native Americans have been produced produced by film "reels" and are, hence, less than real.

This problem of representation is bastardized in Tarantino's film by a character that claims to be of humble origin, as testified to by his slang, but with great ancestry. As for his slang, "Injun" is a term with specific connotations and, since it is slang, the official dictionaries will not be of much help here. In the *Urban Dictionary*, we read that "Injun" is "a racially offensive epithet used towards Native Americans" and "This word is to Native Americans as 'Nigger' is to African-Americans."[1] It is also "a word meaning idiot or retard." However, we also read that it is not necessarily derogatory, and it can be used as "a convention of the word indigenous which describes a group of people that inhabit a geographical area." Moreover, it is not limited to American Natives or people from India, but it is also used to refer to "other people who are 'down with the brown.' This EVEN includes white people, as long as they're tight with some Indians" (emphasis in the original). Thus, we can see that in colloquial language "Injun" can refer to, first of all, Native Americans, then Indians as "people of India," and finally white people associated with "brown" people (but, again, primarily Indians). Based on these definitions, "Injun" is used first and foremost as an offensive term to produce a certain stereotype of Native Americans. Yet, its use in this scene, uttered by this particular character, played by this particular actor, and played in a specific way, makes the term's function more "messy" and contradictory, as I will show in section 3.4, when I return to this.

The second utterance of the word "Injun" is during "Operation Kino," a secret mission to assassinate Hitler and several other high-ranking Nazi officials during the premiere of the Nazi propaganda film *Nation's Pride* at the Le Gamaar Theater in Paris. British Lieutenant Hicox, a secret service agent, is assigned to be a part of the Operation, and is asked to work with Bridget and the Basterds, but he has no idea who these Basterds are. Based on some of his questions—such as "why do they call him (Aldo, the leader of the Basterds) that?" and "Scalps, Sir?"—we can see that he is reluctant to take Aldo and his gang seriously. In order to make Hicox understand, General Fenech tells him that these Basterds are "like a red Injun." Based on what has been discussed about stereotypes of Native Americans in Western discourses, we know that they are often depicted negatively, as violent, irrational, cunning, and cruel. Here, the comparison of the Basterds to Native Americans seems to help confirm this stereotype of Native Americans. After being informed about the Injun-like Basterds, Hicox states about Aldo: "Rather gruesome-sounding little dickybird, isn't he?" Here Native Americans are compared to the small bird that in slang indicates "insignificance."[2] The metaphor serves to repeat the haughty and disdainful British attitude towards both Americans and Native Americans. As if to emphasize this, the General says: "No doubt the whole lot, a bunch of nutters. But you've heard the expression 'It takes a thief.'" This implies that for the General, both Americans and Native Americans follow the logic of the English proverb "it takes a thief to catch a thief." These Americans and Native Americans may contribute to the killing of Nazis, because both Indians and Nazis are as insidious and harmful as thieves. Distinct from in Aldo's case, the term "Injun" is not used for self-identification here but refers to an external perspective from which Native Americans are viewed

---

[1]  See < http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=injun>.

[2] For more meanings of "dicky-bird," see <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/Entry/52272?redirectedFrom=dicky-bird#eid>.

through negative stereotypes. In the film, the term "Injun" seems to impose different masks each time it appears.

Countering the stereotypical idea of history-less Native Americans, Aldo inscribes himself into a history of representation by means of the term Injun. This inscription is also a kind of parody that relates both to the history of representing Native Americans and the history of famous prize winning actors in Hollywood films.[3] As Hutcheon remarks, "to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it" (1988, 126). In this case, the reworking of the history of Native Americans and the way in which they have been represented is not simply nonchalant, empty play with historical facts; rather, it functions within an ironic context, fraught with intertextual allusions which make offensive, stereotypical terms like "Injun" confusing, contestable, and open to resignification. This is in accordance with Hutcheon's view on parody: "Parody offers a much more limited and controlled version of this activation of the past by giving it a new and often ironic context" (1985, 5). This kind of irony provoked by parody does "mark the difference from the past, but the intertextual echoing simultaneously works to affirm – textually and hermeneutically – the connection with the past" (1988, 125). That is to say: irony seems to be a form of rupture with the past, which is nevertheless closely connected with the past through postmodern intertextuality. The past is recontextualized in the present in such a way that viewers are offered access to the past in a new way.[4]

Even the very term "the past" is off the mark here. The film repeats and recasts deep-rooted stereotypes in unexpected, subversive combinations. It projects many stereotypical representations of the Native American as savage while also questioning these. Or, put another way, the film recasts these stereotypical representations through paradoxical confrontations with other historical figures. These confrontations, in effect, multiply history into histories.

## 3.2 Screening Native Americans: Or How to Multiply Within a Framing Gaze

A very famous Native American literary character plays a dominant role in what I want to term "the card game scene." To celebrate the birth of the son of a soldier called Wilhelm [Alexander Fehling], five Nazi soldiers come to a tavern called La Louisiane in Nadine. This tavern is also the place where the Basterds and Lieutenant Hicox are assigned to meet the double spy, Bridget, who also happens to be an actress. Just before the Basterds and Lieutenant Hicox arrive in the basement, Bridget is playing a card game with the Nazi soldiers. Each player has a card with the name of a famous person, real or imaginary, stuck to their forehead. Since the player himself cannot see the card and therefore doesn't know what name is on his or her forehead, he or she has to figure out who he or she "is" through asking questions.

---

[3] In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat and Stam declare that "we use the term 'Hollywood' not to convey a kneejerk rejection of all commercial cinema, but rather as a kind of shorthand for a massively industrial, ideologically reactionary, and stylistically conservative form of 'dominant' cinema" (7). In this chapter, I follow their description of Hollywood as a kind of dominant cinema.

[4] It is "a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context" (Hutcheon 1988, 118).

From the names we *see* on their foreheads, a wide range of historical figures, real and fictional, parade before our eyes, such as the Polish actress Pola Negri, famous for her role as a femme fatale in silent films between 1910 and 1939, the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven, the infamous dancer Mata Hari who was accused of spying for the Germans and executed during the Frist World War, the immensely popular author of detectives and thrillers, Edgar Wallace, the great Mongol conqueror from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Genghis Khan, and the most famous Native American in European history, the bloodbrother of Old Shatterhand, as invented by the German author Karl May (1842-1912): Winnetou. Tellingly, the latter is the only fictional character in play. Yet, that does not make him less "real." In a sense, all these characters are "unreal" in that they are not present as straightforward images. Yet, they all call upon images, or even connote cinema, because they have either acted in films, written for them, or otherwise occupy a prominent place in what Tarantino's film and psychoanalytic theorist Kaja Silverman tellingly indicate with a cinematographic term: the cultural *screen*.

In the following, I will first discuss how the figure of Winnetou, and by implication the Native American, works stereotypically and ideologically, here, by analyzing the scene in terms of Silverman's notions of the look, the screen, and the gaze. I do so to indicate what the difficulties are in trying to multiply forms of subjectivity, as Shohat and Stam suggest. I will consider in and after my analysis what possibilities the terms of look, screen, and gaze, might offer for amplifying other voices hidden in the film.

As a postmodern work of art, the film brings many historical figures together. At the same time, however, there is a condensation of stereotypical representations of Native Americans. These stereotypical representations do not stand on their own, but invoke others, or are framed by others, because the camera is more than just an instrument to project images with. It is on the one hand closer to a machine than a tool, as Jonathan Crary claims in his study of nineteenth century visual culture. For this distinction Crary falls back on Marx, for whom, unlink a tool, a machine subjects man by means of "a relation of contiguity, of part of other parts, and of exchangeability" (131). Through the machine man is more closely related to others; the machine promotes more exchanges with others, but it also *subjects*. Yet, this is obviously not the work of the machine itself. Silverman emphasizes the *relational* function of the camera and argued that: "The camera is less a machine, or the representation of a machine, than a complex field of relations" (1996, 136). For her, the camera does not so much *represent* reality, or does so only secondarily. It first of all shows a complex system of relations.

To work out how the camera works through these complicated relations or how images are visually organized, Silverman rethinks and rigorously distinguishes three concepts of visuality: the look, the gaze, and the screen; she does so on the basis of Jacques Lacan's gaze theory. In order to better understand these three concepts, I will introduce Lacan's gaze theory first.

Departing from Cartesian optics, Lacan does not regard the observer as simply a geometric point from which to look and see other objects; on the contrary, the observer is simultaneously looked backed at by the object. This anonymous look from the object may stir anxiety or shame in the observer. Lacan terms "this anonymous look from the object" the *gaze*, describing it as "the gleam of light," which "is presented to us only in the

form of a strange contingency" and which surprises the viewer, "disturbs him and reduces him to a feeling of shame" (96)(84). In this way, the gaze involves anxiety and shifts the viewer from "the observer" to the passive position of "being looked at." Working on Lacan's gaze theory, cultural critic Henry Krips explained it further and argued that "in terms of the example of the sea-faring tin-can, the gaze may be thought of as an external point from which an anxiety provoking look assails the subject" (93).[5] Now, to avoid being captured by the gaze of the object, the screen can provide the subject with masks.

Working with Lacan's gaze theory, Silverman considers how Lacan "never properly interrogates that relation between camera and gaze, or proposes that it might be central to our present field of vision" (1996, 131). To further distinguish how the camera organizes cultural images, she made additional distinctions between the notions of the look, the gaze, and the screen. According to Silverman, the look "foregrounds the desiring subjectivity of the figure from whom it issues, a subjectivity which pivots upon lack, whether or not that lack is acknowledged" (1992, 143). The look is often situated on the side of desire and lack. Through looking, we can learn what is lacking within the subject as well as what the subject desires. The look can tell us a lot about what is looked at, and it can also help to disclose more about those who are looking.

Different from the look, Silverman argues that the gaze is "impossible to seize or get hold of," and "the relationship between eye [look] and gaze is … analogous in certain ways to that which links penis and phallus; the former can stand in for the latter, but can never approximate it" (130). That is to say, compared with the look, the gaze is more abstract and invisible, and "is merely the imaginary apparatus through which light is projected onto the subject" (145). Like Lacan, Silverman believes that the camera is more aligned with the gaze than the look, and argues: "Not only does the camera work to define the contemporary gaze in certain decisive ways, but the camera derives most of its psychic significance through its alignment with the gaze" (1996, 135). On the one hand, the camera determines the gaze or confirms the subject's identity; on the other hand, the gaze helps the camera to gain psychic significance, because when we feel the gaze upon us, we feel "framed," which provides the camera with psychic significance. In brief, and in line with how Mieke Bal reads Silverman's work, the gaze is "the ungraspable mechanism or structure," "situated outside the subject;" it "is comparable to a source of light, but it does not have a shape itself; it is formless" (1997, 65). Under this

---

[5] Krips is referring here to the famous memory in Lacan's development of the issue: "It's a true story. I was in my early twenties or thereabouts—and at that time, of course, being a young intellectual, I wanted desperately to get away, see something different, throw myself into something practical, something physical, in the country say, or at the sea. One day, I was on a small boat, with a few people from a family of fishermen in a small port. At that time, Brittany was not industrialized as it is now. There were no trawlers. The fisherman went out in his frail craft at his own risk. It was this risk, this danger, that I loved to share. But it wasn't all danger and excitement—there were also fine days. One day, then, as we were waiting for the moment to pull in the nets, an individual known as Petit-Jean, that's what we called him—like all his family, he died very young from tuberculosis, which at that time was a constant threat to the whole of that social class—this Petit-Jean pointed out to me something floating on the surface of the waves. It was a small can, a sardine can. It floated there in the sun, a witness to the canning industry, which we, in fact, were supposed to supply. It glittered in the sun. And Petit-Jean said to me - *You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!*" (Lacan 95).

98

ungraspable, formless and invisible frame, subjects are captured and watched over. Through the gaze, what is hidden by the look may appear.

Standing between the look and the gaze, is the screen: a "culturally generated image or repertoire of images through which subjects are not only constituted, but differentiated in relation to class, race, sexuality, age, and nationality" (Silverman 1992, 150). The screen is like a cultural filter which both constitutes and differentiates subjects. As for its relation to the gaze, Silverman argues that the "screen represents the site at which the gaze is defined for a particular society, and is consequently responsible both for the way in which the inhabitants of that society experience the gaze's effects, and for much of the seeming particularity of that society's visual regime" (1996, 135). As the site where the gaze is defined, the screen determines both how subjects experience the gaze and how the society's visual regime functions. Simply put, the screen "makes the stereotypical, prefabricated images and ideal images available for the look" and shapes the formless gaze into forms (Silverman in Bal 1997, 65).

With these three notions of the look, the gaze, and the screen, Silverman successfully discusses how cinema visually organizes cultural images. However, this kind of cinematographic representation does not produce fixed representations of cultural images, because the contents of the screen are in a constant process of renewal. In the following, I want to analyze the stereotypical representations of Native Americans in *Inglorious Basterds* as part of this cultural *screen,* embodied, here, in the card game scene.

When in the scene Winnetou is introduced, and through him the image of the Native American is evoked, it is with a highly ironic twist. This irony is already captured by the fact that the entire scene is in German, whereas the only actual German figure the soldiers and women have on their foreheads is Beethoven. The German soldier whose card reads "Winnetou" asks questions to find out who he is, starting with the most basic one "Bin ich Deutsch?," that is "Am I German?" After the response "no," he finds out that he is a literary character and he ends up asking questions such as:

> ... okay, I'm not German. Am I American? ... If I had a wife, would she be called a squaw? ... Is my blood brother Old Shatterhand? ... Did Karl May write me?

As the questions suggest, he already knows who he is by then, and will gloriously conclude with drawing the card from his head and seeing that he, indeed, "is" Winnetou.

For Silverman, "the look apprehends what is already given to be seen" (1996, 175). We can look at images that are already available, whether on the cinematographic screen or from our broader repertoire of images. The question, of course is, what we *see*—historically, culturally, ideologically—in looking. In the film, the looks are organized through the use of the camera that is either showing us the group of soldiers playing the game from some distance, or appears to be looking from the viewpoint of one of them. Through the card game, these characters, looking and being looked at, invoke the cultural images of Winnetou, of his "squaw," and of his blood brother Old Shatterhand. This implies that cultural stereotypes are brought into play in the context of how people

look at things in a more general sense. For instance, the question of the German soldier—"Am I American?"—evokes two different ways of looking at things. It would seem to be an easy question to answer, but it turns out to be controversial, because one of the soldiers, namely the one with "Edgar Wallace" on the forehead, thinks that Winnetou cannot be regarded as American, because "he's never been translated into English... he's not an American creation." In contrast, Bridget provides another way of looking at things, believing that Winnetou "is" American and arguing that "the nationality of the author has nothing to do with the nationality of the character." She compares the character of Winnetou to Hamlet, who was Danish, and concludes that the most important thing is where the character is said to have been born. In a sense, her analysis is a mise-en-abyme for what the scene is doing. Simply putting on a card with a name turns one into someone who 'is' that person, as is evident in the question: "Am I American?" This points to the fictional operations involved in any practice of identity-assignment. By implication, to determine one's identity proves to be not at all an easy task, as even one's language is no longer a secure means of determining one's identity or nationality. This suggests that one's national identity is a fictional construction rather than a natural given, although the fact that one is said to be born someplace is also a determining factor. Most importantly, the card scene may imply that one's identity is determined by the card one has been arbitrarily given, which is literally the case here. This can also be understood metaphorically, as a comment on historical processes that determine subjectivities; some people, such as Native Americans, have been dealt "the wrong card."

After the German soldier successfully guesses the name of Winnetou, he stands up and gestures as if he is a great native leader, which is not necessarily a gesture mimicking the character Winnetou, but more a gesture taken from a general European colonial repertoire of images of Native American "chief-hood." How these German soldiers look at Winnetou is paradigmatic, then; it implies that how we look at others, in desire or fear, depends on what we already have in our cultural repertoire of images and that we may look at things differently depending on which images we have selected from this repertoire. This is what Silverman aims to indicate with the concept of *screen*. As has already been iexplained above, the screen contains many images and it functions as the cultural filter that both facilitates and inhibits subject's constitution and differentiation of themselves. Moreover, the screen is a "large, diverse, but ultimately finite range of representational coordinates which determines what and how members of our culture see – how they process visual detail, and what meaning they give it" (221). So, the screen contains not just images, since these function as representational coordinates that regulate what we see when we look, but it also contains how we look. That is to say, there is no immediate visual access to objects, and we are trained to see objects *through* images which are already available on the screen.

In *Inglourious Basterds*, the screen contains a repertoire of images that function in terms of gender, culture, civilizations old and new, cultural hierarchies, colonialism, and ethnicity. The German soldiers can only recognize or describe Native Americans based on images available from their cultural/ideological screen, as described by Silverman, and the same holds, by implication, for the audience of the film. A seemingly simple

question, for instance, is: "If I had a wife, would she be called a squaw?" This is a question that a general audience would probably have no problem with. Still, the term may indicate that what we look at (or listen to), is not necessarily what we "see." The *Urban Dictionary* mentions that squaw "has been a familiar word in American literature and language since the sixteenth century and has been generally understood to mean 'an Indian woman, or wife.'"[6] Yet, within circles of Native Americans and scholars, it is clear that:

> [Squaw] is not an Indian word. It was probably invented by European colonists who could not pronounce a longer Indian word. In the Algonquian languages, which were spoken on the East Coast and were the first to be encountered by Europeans, many feminine nouns end in a suffix with a "kw" or "skw" sound. For example, in Meskwaki-Sauk, Thakiwakwe means a Sauk (Thakiwa) woman; in Micmac muwineskw means a female bear (muwin); and in the Abenaki language, Cimakskwa means Mrs. Cimak. If the Europeans thought that meant "skwa" or "kwe" was the word for "woman," though, they made a mistake. It's just a suffix, like the English suffix "-ess" in "princess" or "seamstress."[7]

A similar idea is shared in an anthology called *Literature of the American Indian* edited by Thomas E. Sanders and Walter W. Peek, in which the origin of the word "squaw" is regarded as "probably a French corruption of the Iroquois word otsiskwa meaning 'female sexual parts'" (184). Not everyone agrees with this idea and there is still debate over the origins of "squaw." Regardless of the exact origins of the term, however, we are sure of the fact that, etymologically speaking, in Native American languages "squaw" is not a word, but rather a suffix used before many feminine nouns. Thus, it is a neutral term.

In contrast, the word "squaw" used by European colonists connotes their own screen on which Native American women appear as erotic, sensual, and lustful. In response to this ideologically produced screen, and in the course of Native Americans' battles against subjection, the term "squaw" has taken derogatory connotations over the years. It is now said to be "offensive to Indians, in the same way that 'nigger' is offensive to African Americans" (Bright 207). Thus, when the wife of Winnetou is referred to as a "squaw" in the film, the laughter that follows may be understandable from within the diegesis, showing that the company understands Wilhelm is close to a solution. At the same time, we can read it as the continuation of a derogatory attitude towards Native American women and their history by a general European or Western audience.

Taken up in an argument that explores the possibility of multiplying histories in order to get away from a stereotypical notion of the savage, Silverman's notion of the screen may hint at why such a multiplication is difficult. Take, for instance, another equally innocent question: "Is my blood brother Old Shatterhand?" Old Shatterhand, who "is" a German fictional character, but is also *from* Germany in the sense that he is created

---

[6] See <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=squaw>.
[7] See <http://www.native-languages.org/iaq5.htm>.

by the German author May, is Winnetou's blood brother and the prototypical civilized man who is able to mingle with indigenous people. In *Winnetou der Rote Gentleman* (*Winnetou the Red Gentleman*), the title suggests that this savage is clearly noble because he is like a gentleman. By implication, this means he might also be worthy of being a brother—through blood. This type of blood-brothership is dealt with by historian Klaus Aschema, who states of May's novels that these "works are probably far more representative of the common German's opinion about foreign peoples than many ethnographic analyses" and mentions blood-brothership as one of the key elements of May's representations (275). Oschema quotes from May's novel, regarding Old Shatterhand:

> A blood-brotherhood then, a real, true blood-brotherhood; the one I have already read so much about! It exists amongst a variety of wild or semi-wild peoples and it is concluded either by the partners mixing their blood which they drink afterwards, or their mutually drinking each other's blood. As a consequence of this act, the partners stay together more intensely and altruistically as if they had been born as brothers. (qtd. in Oschema 275-56)

May seems to suggest, here, that any sort of European blood-brotherhood would be different from that of Native Americans, as the latter would be more real and true. Yet, although the general idea seems to be that blood-brotherhood is a typical feature of tribal and primitive societies, such as those of Native Americans, it is emphasized by anthropologists, such as Oschema, that this practice has a long history in Western discourse. It was "a part of discriminatory narrative strategies which aim at the exclusion of foreign and non-Christian cultures" (275).

When Shohat and Stam talk about voices that have been "displaced," this would be an apt case in point. While blood-brothership connotes the mixing of blood, this is not quite the case, or only so on the level of representation. In fact, purity of blood was one of the great obsessions of nineteenth century colonialism and racism. It was on the basis of the strict separation of bloodlines, for instance, that during the late 1800s in the United States, blood quantum was "initially used by the federal government to classify 'Indianness'" (Schmidt 1).[8]  That is to say that "blood" was used as an effective method to determine one's membership in an Indian tribe. This of course holds only if one adopts an essentialist view on ethnic identity as determined by biological factors, bloodlines and blood relations. Such a view was, again, a Western obsession. In reality, many customs of Native Americans went against the separation and purity of bloodlines. For example, in cases in Southern American tribes, captives were allowed to live for long periods so that they could be assimilated into the tribe (de Castro 140).

---

[8]  Blood quantum as a means to identify Native Americans has also been discussed by Karren Baird-Olson, who argues: "The use of fractions of blood degree as the primary means of categorizing social groups was legally recognized as early as 1705 and later supported by scientifically racist theories and the ongoing hegemonic strategy designed to create the illusion that American Indians 'vanish' when their White or other non-Indian blood quantum reaches a certain level, typically considered to be three fourths. Today, this technique is called statistical genocide" (194-95).

The simple and almost natural term "blood-brother" then calls upon many histories, some of which connote essentialism: the very essentialism that Shohat and Stam are trying to get away from in considering identity as a continual cultural process rather than something inherent or innately fixed. Identity is always under cultural construction and is shaped through many factors. As viewers, we cannot simply *see* this in *Inglorious Basterds*, in the sense of simply seeing which factors influence characters' identities; simply seeing how such identities are both fictional and real, or simply seeing how identities are in a constant process of construction and reconstruction. In fact, if the idea is to multiply forms of identity and subjectivity, this demands conscious action; it implies the renewal and perhaps also the multiplication of the screen. Such renewal and multiplication is greatly hampered, in turn, by the fact that the screen is framed by the gaze, which is at stake in the last question that the German soldier asks: "Did Karl May write me?"

Basically, the question refers to the aforementioned German writer May, who was not only famous for his novels set on the American frontier but also those set in the Middle East, paradigmatic cases of Orientalism. Now, May never travelled to America before writing most of his well-known Western stories. Neither did he travel to the Orient or Middle East where another of his famous characters operated, on whom German films were made in the interbellum: Kara ben Nemsi. His stories are basically shaped by his own (deeply Romantic) imagination or his readings of documents related to the American West or the Orient. Yet, this seemingly personal imagination acquired its force and its immense popularity only because May tapped into an ideology that was "naturally" Eurocentric. On the one hand, May's work can be regarded as contributing many images of Native Americans to the screen; as a result, through this familiar screen, the soldiers are familiar with these images. On the other hand, the screen is not offering a neutral set of possibilities, here, but is highly ideological. In May's work, we detect the Western ideological landscape, the Western gaze.

In May's imaginative ethnography, "the Apache were the most peaceful tribe in the trans-Mississippi West, suffering vicious attacks from the most warlike tribe, the Sioux, their dreaded enemies" (Berkhofer 101). For May, the Apache were peace-loving and they only fought for justice, which fits a Romantic idea of the pure and noble savage. By contrast, in many Western novels by American writers, such as *Apache Ransom* by Clay Fisher and Will Henry, *Apache Hostage* by Lewis B. Patten, *Apache Massacre* by Lynton Wright Brent, the image of the Apache is one of an "irresistible, inhuman presence endowed with almost supernatural malice and cunning" (Sonnichsen 71). I will come back to this "supernatural" element at the end of this chapter. In works such as these, Apache chiefs are represented as cunning and treacherous, with great capacity for trickery and deceit. Yet, although May's works seem to contrast with these Western American forms of imagination, it does not necessarily imply principally different European and American ideological landscapes. May's novels have been said to have contributed to the strengthening of German nationalism and, particularly, the ideology of national socialism in Germany. Historian Robert F. Berkhofer argues that May's books "stressed German nationalism and shaped the outlook of many a German youth, including one devoted reader named Adolf Hitler" (101). Hitler used stereotypes of

Native Americans and Germans to reinforce purity in nationalism and to promote his ideology in Germany, which projected the nobility and purity of his own race while degrading other races, such as Jews. May's works were used as propaganda and were quite popular among Germans during the Second World War. His descriptions of Native Americans were widely accepted among Germans to fit not only a Western ideology, but a particularly German one, in which some Native Americans were regarded as savages, though pure or gentlemanly, whereas others represented the inferior races that Hitler came to define as Slaves.

As already hinted at above, the screen is framed by the gaze. This is not to say that the screen is stable or static. Historically, it has changed continuously, but this does not come naturally. Silverman proposes the idea of the *productive look*, which provides "the possibility of seeing something other than what is given-to-be-seen" (Baydar 40). This kind of look has "creative potential to occupy a different viewing position with respect to the screen to see in ways that are not entirely predefined" (40). This is to say that the productive look can adopt a different perspective and see what is not completely predefined by the screen. Images thus seen may become part of the repertoire, contribute to, and renew the screen. Through the productive look, parodic and ironic representations of images may emerge, which may reveal hidden, despised, or marginalized images. In this sense, the screen can be regarded as a "political arena" which provides a way to criticize dominant modes of representation. In this context, the film, as a postmodern work of art, has many opportunities to manipulate and renew the screen. Tarantino can be seen as playing with the screen and renewing it by parodying stereotypical representations of Native Americans. *Inglourious Basterds* represents them in an ironic way rather than providing "positive images" of Native Americans, because such images still work to resubstantialize and essentialize identity. Through playing with the screen, the film attempts to renew it. Yet, as already said, its success depends very much on how it fits into the gaze.

For Silverman, the gaze is analogous to the camera as it shows itself when its images are projected. When we sit in the cinema, we, the viewers, are inevitably gazed upon by what is happening on the screen. As Silverman argues: "The screen represents the site at which the gaze is defined for a particular society, and is consequently responsible … for much of the seeming particularity of that society's visual regime" (1996, 135). Through controlling what is to be included in the repertoire, the gaze has the normative power to screen the proper images and screen out improper ones. It has the power to naturalize the invisible center from which reality is organized. The screen "makes the stereotypical, prefabricated images and ideal images available for the look" and it shapes "the formless gaze into forms of reality" (Silverman in Bal 1997, 65). Returning to Tarantino's card game scene, the whole idea of the game in the diegesis of the film is to evoke familiar images and identities. Yet, as viewers in the twenty-first century, we occupy an interesting position. We are both caught in the same historical "cinema" that defines the gaze and able to look at Native Americans differently based on current screens. These help us to read the look of the German soldiers on Native Americans as, on one hand, familiar and parochial and, on the other hand, distorted and absurd.

The cinematographic power in all this is defined by film critic Shohini Chaudhuri, who focuses on the force of the gaze within which characters are brought or made to play, and then argues that although "Films have the ability to confer identity to subjects – this does not necessarily put them in thrall to the dominant fiction but can enable them to defy it" (115). Here, the dominant fiction refers to "the repertoire of images through which a society establishes consensus about its 'reality'" (119). That is to say, characters in the film are given a certain identity, but they may have the potential to defy their identity and with it a certain reality. In this case, Tarantino's stereotypes of Native Americans are assumed to be coherent with the dominant fiction, but they also take on new significance and put the dominant fiction in an ironic position. This will be discussed further in my final section, entitled "Repetition and Resignification of Stereotypes: The Ghost in Representation." There, I will further develop how the different screens in play do not simply help us to get back to one proper historical vision of Native Americans. Instead, their multiplication entails more a mixture of histories, such as those of Native Americans, Jews, and Black Americans. Before elaborating on this further, however, I will deal with another cinematographic power that concerns not so much characters as the actors that play them.

## 3.3 The Racial Politics of Casting

As an immediate form of representation, film casting is quite telling regarding hierarchical relationships between different ethnic groups. Actors from Europe or America dominate the screen, whereas non-European actors play the supporting role. As Shohat and Stam put it: "Within Hollywood cinema, Euro-Americans have historically enjoyed the unilateral prerogative of acting in 'blackface,' 'redface,' 'brownface,' and 'yellowface,' while the reverse has rarely been the case" (1994a, 189). The casting is Eurocentric and actors from other races are regarded as incapable of representing themselves. In *Inglourious Basterds*, white actors "play" characters like Aldo, who *claims* to be partly Native American ("Injun"). That is, a Euro-American again plays the role of (a partial) "redface," but the film also begins to complicate this role-playing. This becomes most evident in the scene where Aldo and his associates pretend to be Italians and not only fail to be convincing in their roles but are deeply inadequate. The practice of casting white American actors to play other ethnicities results in a ludicrous performance here, with "Italian" brought back to something analogous to the "How" that characterized stereotypical Indians, the very language indexically reduced to a simple set of deformed accents. In this way, with hindsight, in light of the Italian scene, the casting of a white man as partially, or posing as, Native American can also be read as a critique, and parody of, the politics of casting in Hollywood films and the absurdities it leads to.

By means of contrast, the scene also serves to highlight how English is used as a *lingua franca* in Hollywood films. It is spoken by ethnic "others" (including Native Americans) instead of their native languages, "thus contributing indirectly to the subtle erosion of the linguistic autonomy of other cultures" (Shohat and Stam 1994a, 192). Ethnic "others" are all supposed to speak English rather than their native languages,

which will gradually lead to the annihilation of native languages and cultures from the screen about which Silverman worries. As a potent symbol of collective identity, language operates within hierarchies of power: "Inscribed within the play of power, language becomes caught up in the cultural hierarchies typical of Eurocentrism" (191). The operation of language is not neutral, neither in this film nor ever, and in this case it is clearly Eurocentric, or American-centric. In Hollywood cinema cultural others are often either silent or speak an inferior version of English, implying that they are thought unable to master English.

As suggested above, in *Inglourious Basterds* this hegemonic use of English is both evoked and parodied. For example, as an Injun, Aldo might be expected to speak an Indian type of "pidgin English," but he speaks English with an all-American Southern, cowboy accent. Moreover, the domination of English is reversed when the American and British characters are exposed and ridiculed in their attempts to speak other languages. In the bar scene, Lieutenant Hicox, from England, pretends to be von Hammersmark's German friend, convinced that he is quite competent in German. However, his odd German draws the attention of a drunk German solder as well as the Gestapo officer Hellstrom. They become suspicious of his identity as a German general and ask Hicox where he is from. Hicox convinces them that he is from the German mountains, but his knowledge is based solely, and ironically, on German films. Similarly, in the cinema scene, Aldo and two other Basterds play the roles of Italians. The reason they decide to go through with this role-playing is their stereotypical assumption that "Germans do not have a good ear for Italian," and thus they are in no danger of being exposed. However, when they introduce themselves to Landa, he proves to be able to fluently speak Italian—alongside English, French, and (of course) German. A little earlier, Von Hammersmark ironically asked: "I know this is a silly question before I ask it, but can you Americans speak any other language than English?" The answer to this question is clear: no, they cannot. Thus, the cultural domination of the screen by the English language is parodied.

Moreover, if we try to *amplify* in the sense that Shohat and Stam suggest, this play with casting is also evident from the very beginning of the scene. Brad Pitt playing Aldo Raine is, visually speaking, an explicit reference, as many noticed, to Marlon Brando playing Don Vitto, the Godfather; their heads take the same position, with a raised chin and a downward look, and the jaws are held in exactly the same manner.[9] Yet, although many noticed this, few (no one to my knowledge) tried to answer the question: why specifically *this* reference? Indeed, in terms of what Shohat and Stam termed *amplification*, the possibility to address this question has largely been missed.

Marlon Brando was immensely popular and famous in the fifties, but grew almost invisible as an actor after the early sixties. He only became world famous again in 1972, with Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*. With the Academy Awards ceremony in 1973, the actor used his popularity and his Oscar-winning performance in *The Godfather*, to bring the history of Native Americans into the national and internatonal limelight. He refused to receive the prize and instead asked Native American woman Sacheen Littlefeather to do so. Littlefeather, in full Apache attire, reported that the "poor

---

[9] See "Inglourious Basterds Review" by Holtreman and "Revenge is Sweet" by Edelstein.

treatment of Native Americans in the film industry" had motivated Brando not to accept the award for best actor. This all happened in the midst of what later came to be known as the Wounded Knee Incident, which was much more than an incident; two hundred Oglala Lakota, together with members of the American Indian Movement, seized control of the town of Wounded Knee, a town infamous for the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, during which hundreds of Native Americans had been killed by American military men. By turning down the Oscar and refusing to endorse the Western screen, Brando expressed his objection to stereotypical depictions of Native Americans by Hollywood. His refusal implied his resistance to a Western ideology, under which Native Americans were often depicted as savages.

In Aldo's case, then, we have a white American, played by the white actor Brad Pitt, who mimics Marlon Brando's iconic embodiment of the Godfather. Brando rejected his Oscar and asked Littlefeature to represent him and deliver a speech of refusal. It is in this light that we should read the derogatory term "Injun" that Aldo uses as a mode of self-identification. Repeating the derogatory term could point towards a strategy of resignifying hate-speech, which would correspond to strategies that Judith Butler describes in *Excitable Speech*. In some cases, Butler argues, hateful utterances, such as "queer!" for gay people, were re-signified in affirmative ways through repetition. Aldo seems proud to be an "Injun" here, which could suggest an attempt to positively resignify an offensive, racist term by turning it into an affirmative term of self-definition.

Yet, following Butler's argument, the offensive connotations of the term are still "performed" through Aldo's repetition. It is not simply a matter of deciding to use an offensive term positively, because its offensive connotations still resonate and "haunt" its current uses. This makes the term's performativity in the film even more complex and confusing; it is used affirmatively but not quite, because its offensive connotations also resonate and are enhanced by Aldo's typical cowboy-look and Southern accent. Moreover, it is used to pin down an identity that is anything but stable and pure, because Aldo's persona and mode of self-address condense images of cowboys, mountain men, Native Americans, Indians, white people, Jews, and others. Thus, there is no way for viewers to draw clear-cut boundaries around the identities of these Basterds by following racial and ethnic stereotypes. They are, quite literally, *bastards*, in the sense of "bastardized" and "hybridized" figures. Even more, their identity is literally *misspelled* ("basterds" instead of "bastards") which underscores the inevitable inconsistencies and historical inaccuracies through which identities are produced; there is no "right" or "true" identity in the film.

Still, however, if Aldo's character condenses American soldier, cowboy, and Native American, affiliates with Jews, and is played by an actor mimicking another actor who stood up for the rights of Native Americans, this also draws attention to the absence of Native Americans themselves in the film. Throughout the film, we are constantly reminded of their absence. It is only in this sense that we can say that they become present in the film. Through the film, the screen is then, not only enriched with a repertoire of both familiar and ironic images, but it also becomes populated with figures that are only present in a negative sense, or as ghosts. In Shohat and Stam's study, the question how the mixing of sounds would pluralize history is an important one. Perhaps

one relevant question here is: how can one make the voices of ghosts heard? An even more pertinent question is: how real are the ghosts?

## 3.4 Repetition and Resignification of Stereotypes: The Ghost as Representation

In *Inglourious Basterds*, there are other voices than those of Native Americans to be amplified. For instance, after it is decided that the Nazi propaganda film will be screened in Shosanna's cinema, her black assistant, though competent at projecting, is asked not to work on that day, because as a black man he is thought to be inferior to Germans and incapable of working for Germans. As viewers, we know that this black assistant is much more competent than Shosanna, but he is regarded as incompetent and unqualified, to the point that he may spoil the German night. Here, the racial stereotype of the black person as backward and unqualified is explicitly called upon, and due to the assistant's marginalization by Nazis, emblematic villains, it appears to be countered almost immediately. Yet, the oppression of, and prejudices against, black people can also be detected in, again, the card game, in a dialogue that involves the cinematographic character of King Kong.

As I already explained, Hicox's odd German accent makes the German officer Hellstrom suspicious of his identity, but Hicox successfully convinces Hellstrom that he comes from the German mountains. They then start to play the card game together. Hellstrom, after having gone through several guesses and answers regarding the card on his forehead, has established that he is an "exotic" figure, which might mean that his origin is, as he states it, the "Orient" or "the jungle." It appears to be the latter. He proceeds as follows, in German, and he is being answered time and again by Hicox and Bridget simultaneously:

> **Hellstrom**: Also, Herrschaften, an dieser Stelle könnte man fragen, ob man real oder erfunden ist. Ich finde diese Frage aber zu einfach und frage noch nicht danach. Ich bin… ich bin also im Urwald geboren, ich habe Amerika besucht. Der Besuch war für mich nicht von Vorteil, aber die Schlussfolgerung liegt nahe, dass es für jemand anderen von Vorteil war. Als ich aus dem Urwald nach Amerika kam, fuhr ich dann mit dem Schiff?
> **Bridget/Hicox:** Ja.
> **Hellstrom**: Geschah die Reise gegen meinen Willen?
> **Bridget/Hicox:** Ja
> **Hellstrom**: Auf der Schiffsreise, lag ich da in Ketten?
> **Bridget/Hicox:** Ja!
> **Hellstrom**: Als ich in Amerika ankam, wurde ich da in Ketten zur Schau gestellt?
> **Bridget/Hicox:** Ja.
> **Hellstrom**: Bin ich die Geschichte des Negers in Amerika?
> **Hicox:** Nein.
> **Hellstrom**: Also, dann muss ich King Kong sein.

> **Hellstrom**: Then, ladies and gentlemen, one could ask at this point if

one is real or fictitious. But I think this question is too easy and will not ask about it yet. I was… was born, then, in the jungle, I have visited America. My visit wasn't to my advantage, but it is obvious to infer that it was to somebody else's advantage. When I came from the jungle to America, did I go by ship?

**Bridget/Hicox**: Yes!

**Hellstrom**: Did the voyage happen against my will?

**Bridget/Hicox**: Yes!

**Hellstrom**: On the sea voyage… was I held there in chains?

**Hicox/Bridget**: Yes!

**Hellstrom**: When I arrived in America, was I in chains made a spectacle of?

**Hicox/Bridget**: Yes!

**Hicox/Bridget**: Am I the story of the Negro in America?

**Hicox**: No.

**Hellstrom**: Well, then, I must be King Kong

In quoting the scene in the original in German, here, my aim is to emphasize first the way in which stereotypes can travel through cultures and languages, having their specific connotations in each, while remaining transculturally recognizable nevertheless. Secondl, there are telling differences in the translation. "Gescha die Reise" is not just "Did I go." The German emphasizes here that the journey happened; the journey does not concern an "I" who *did* or did not *do* something. In other words, the German is more precise in capturing the subjecting force of history. With respect to this, there is the telling difference between "Geschichte" and "story," a distinction that connotes the power of representation.

Yet, if we were to stick to language only, something specific would be missing from our analysis, something that is of relevance to my argument. It is especially the face of Hellstrom that needs analysis when he asks whether his character represents the "story of the negro" in America. His facial expression shows that this would be a boring option. It is as if he expresses "not again," or as if he wants to say that this would be too simple. After he immediately afterwards concludes he is King Kong, his face is rather triumphant, as if it was his superior intellect that turned this game into an easy one. Meanwhile, the viewer could almost forget how the history (*Geschichte*) of the transatlantic slave trade is associated deeply, here, with the *story* of King Kong, an association that also links the reality of chaining, "displaying," and trading people to a theatrical or cinematographic display of an animal to an audience, as if in a circus. This is to say, the "Negro" is not seen as so much different from but rather as equivalent to the fictive figure King Kong, who has great physical strength, but lacks intelligence, and who makes a fragile white woman his object of desire.

The racist connotations involved in this link have all been discussed at length in studies on Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Shoedsack's iconic film *King Kong* (1933). These Studies also address how King Kong has become one of the most iconic cinematographic figures of the twentieth century, with his appearance on top of the

Empire State Building, itself yet another icon. "In African American writing, King Kong is one of several racial personae … who serve as shorthand expressions for various forms of racist practice" (Erb 3). Characters in the film such as Carl Denham [Robert Armstrong] and Captain Englehorn [Frank Reicher] "make a clear separation between 'lower cultures' and 'higher cultures', and jump, for example, to the racist conclusion that the island's great wall could not possibly have been built by 'the [black] people who live there'" (Snead 60). The film further confirms and encourages "a strict separation and hierarchy of blacks and whites" (61). In studies on this film and its many representations since then, the link between King Kong and Black Americans has itself almost become a cliché.[10]  As J. C. Morley puts it on his blog:

> Released 35 years before the end of segregation and the passing of the Civil Rights Act, the film offers up a disturbing portrait of the dominant white racial ideologies of the time, implying that the idea of America (as represented by Manhattan's iconic topography) would be destroyed if the black man were given total freedom.

As has been dealt with above, the look of others, and to look at others can very much mirror the desires and anxieties of the observers. King Kong is a paradigmatic case that showcases the fear of the destruction of the White man by the "savage" Black Americans. The question here, however, is whether King Kong's and the African-American's appearances in *Inglorious Basterds* only confirm this racial dynamic or whether their appearances multiply, or help us to amplify, hidden voices in order to multiply. The key element in addressing this question circles around something hinted at by the bored face of Hellstrom. There are not only stereotypes being used (and criticized) here; not only the very use of stereotypes, but also their criticism has become almost stereotypical. In other words, there may be a sort of meta-stereotypicality at stake. Let me discuss this by returning to the stereotype that is more central to the film: that of the Native American.

Through repetition, stereotypes are used to enhance or back up a dominant discourse. In the 1980s, Ruth Amossy and Therese Heidingsfield propose a functional approach to stereotypes and discuss the functions of stereotypes in an article entitled "Stereotypes and Representation in Fiction." In their analysis, repeated stereotypes "offer a secure point of identification for social groups, assisting them in defining themselves against reductive and degrading representations of others" (Amossy and Heidingsfeld in Boletsi 2010, 254). Yet, Amossy and Heidingsfeld also point out the fundamental enigma and paradoxical nature of stereotypes. On one hand, stereotypes must be fixed and reconfirmed through repetition. On the other hand, this repetition is "free and multiform," because "it welcomes all formulations and variants and puts up with totally dissimilar stylistic registers, decors, and details" (691). That is to say, stereotypes become stable and hardened through repetition, while at the same time possibilities of subversion and shifts in the way they function arise, if readers or viewers

---

[10] In *White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side*, James Snead depicts Kong as an exclusively black figure.

pay enough attention to the inconsistencies that go into their making. It is an argument that is very similar to Butler's ideas on repetition and resignification of utterances in *Excitable Speech*. Still, with preconstructed stereotypical forms in mind, readers and viewers tend to pick up things which correspond to preexisting patterns and tend to ignore "remnants," elements which "perversely disturb this harmony of fixed traits reunited in a stable pattern" as Amossy and Heidingsfield note (693). In order to break up the simplicity of a prefabricated pattern and establish multiple interactions between text and reader (or image and viewer) that break with stereotypical patterns, the reader or the viewer should not eradicate or oppose stereotypes, but should take into account "the unstable and complex networks of the text," and pay more attention to the "remnants," so that they can avoid the mechanical and reductive reading of stereotypes and recognize their potential, which may be revealed through repetition (696). It is an argument that can be considered paradigmatic of ideology criticism, and one that prefigures Butler's idea on repetition as the potential for difference, which in turn informs Shohat and Stam's notion of multiplication.

In *Excitable Speech*, Butler takes the performativity of language as a starting point and discusses how utterances are repeated in time. "The illocutionary speech act is performed *at the moment* of the utterance, and yet to the extent that the moment is ritualized, it is never merely a single moment" (Butler 3). The moment of the utterance is never isolated. It is "a condensed historicity: it exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of utterance" (3). That is to say, the moment of the utterance is closely related to both its present and its past and future. In the case of stereotypes, how they function will not only be determined by their presents, but is also related to their pasts and futures. Butler's assertion that language is citational and iterable opens up multiple functions of language, including ironic and parodic functions. Stereotypes, too, may function differently and get re-signified or reversed in every repetition. However, this kind of resignification or reversion is not something we can control or intend to bring about by repetition, because we ourselves are constructed by language and do not have full power over language. In a sense, Butler is implicitly calling upon a ghost-like element in the moment of utterance, the element of history that "exceeds itself in past and future directions" (3). I will come back more extensively to the concept of the ghost in the next chapter, but for now I want to conclude this chapter by considering the ghost's relation to the realm of representation, or Silverman's screen.

For Derrida, the specter, which he developed as a concept in *Specters of Marx* (1993), is "a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence, and making established certainties vacillate" (C. Davis 376). It mixes the past, present, and future together, or at least blurs the boundaries between history, present, and future. The figure of the specter is located in one sense in the past, but always has the potency to come back. Moreover, one can never predict its appearance and it may even appear to come from the future, thereby disrupting conventional, linear temporality. "Specters show us how the identity of the living present to itself is disjoined, and how the present is but a 'spectral moment,' a fleeting, transitory instant, which already contains the past as well as the future" (Derrida in Boletsi 2010, 219). As a "spectral moment," the present

is not predetermined, following a fixed historical pattern, but is shaped by the past as well as the future. As discussed above, the moment when stereotypes are repeated can also be addressed as a "spectral moment." As a ghost, the image of Native Americans returns regularly through the recurrence of stereotypes.[11] The moment the ghostly image of Native Americans comes back, it may function differently from a simple confirmation of the stereotype. Let us keep in mind, however, that in my dealing with this issue in the film, the recurrence of the stereotype, but also our critical approach to it, may also be stereotypical in itself. If we bring this to bear on the specter, its appearance might not be one of disruption but rather one that provokes a response of boredom, of a "not again!"

The ghostly image of the Native American can be seen in what I would want to term "the baseball bat scene". After having ambushed a squad of Nazis, the Basterds are left with only three Nazis alive: Sergeant Werner Rachtman [Richard Sammel] and two common German soldiers. Because Werner "respectfully refuses" to provide the Basterds with information they need, he is beaten to death by Staff Sergeant Donny Donowitz [Eli Roth] with a baseball bat. Then one of the living German soldiers is shot to death while the other soldier, Private Butz [Sönke Möhring] tells whatever he is asked for, and is set free by the Basterds. Yet, as always, he is marked with a swastika on his forehead. This mark connotes the well-known stereotype of scalping. Furthermore, although there is no direct visual representation of Native Americans at stake, the image of Native Americans is also evoked through Donnny's baseball bat and his nickname "the Bear Jew." This name connotes the Native American tradition of giving people the names of animals.

Baseball is a popular sport around the world, especially in America. There is debate over its origin, with some people arguing that it originates in Britain and others thinking that it is a Native American invention. No matter which is the case, baseball is regarded as a sport that entertains people. However, in the film, Donny uses the baseball bat is used to bash in the skulls of Nazis. The baseball bat becomes a wooden club, a weapon. The entertaining sport changes into something violent, although this does not mean it is not fun to watch. When Donny beats Werner to death, he seems to give a kind of performance that all the other Basterds enjoy watching; they even cheer for him. As Aldo says: "Frankly, watchin' Donny beat Nazis to death is the closest we ever get to goin' to the films." Here, killing with a bat is considered to be funnier than killing with guns, which not only reveals the brutality of the Basterds but also echoes the stereotypical image of Native Americans as savage: primitive, backward, brutal, and cruel. At the same time, at this spectral moment, the past and the present become blurred. Because of the double associations of Donny with Native Americans and Jews, as viewers, we can either associate the violence with the history of colonization or with the history of the holocaust. In the former case, the conventional binary opposition between the colonizer and Native Americans is reversed and Native Americans are ready to fight back, while in the latter case, Jews would appear to take revenge against Nazis. The figure of Donny does not make it easy to pin down what exactly the implication of this violence is. It is

---

[11] Different from Derrida, I uses the term *ghost* to refer to Native Americans, and the reason for my choice can be seen in the Conclusion of the whole thesis.

the viewer's task to decide how the condensation of the past specters of the colonization of the Americas and the Holocaust functions here.

Killing with the baseball bat earns Donny the nickname "the Bear Jew." Hitler complains that the Basterds are "turning soldiers of the Third Reich into superstitious old women" and argues that "they seem to be able to elude capture like an apparition. They seem to be able to appear and disappear at will." In the published screenplay of the film (though not in its final cut), Hitler regards "the Bear Jew" as "An avenging Jew angel, conjured up by a vengeful rabbi, to smite the Aryans!" This is also why he orders that "the Bear Jew" should never be mentioned again. In this way, by means of synecdoche, the Basterds take on mysterious features and successfully conjure up stereotypical images of Native Americans as powerful, inexplicable, and to be feared. The practice of scalping is pivotal here, also because the film ends with an act of scalping, when Aldo has his final confrontation with Col. Hans Landa and the latter can no longer be saved by language. Tellingly, the confrontation takes place in the woods, which brings us back to the etymological root of my central theme of the savage. Still dressed in his smoking jacket, but with his bow untied, Landa surrenders himself to Aldo, since he has made a deal with the allies and is now on his way to a new future. Aldo first shoots the soldier accompanying Landa and gets his scalp. Since Aldo cannot scalp Landa, he gives him something that he cannot "take off"; with a knife he cuts a swastika into his forehead. The final scene thus becomes the most explicit one of Aldo's acting the savage.

Now, scalping was taught to Europeans by Native Americans after Columbus arrived in the New World, but this is not when the custom turned savage (Axtell and Sturtevant 451). After learning the art, Europeans further developed it and offered bounties to "encourage friendly Indians to kill Indians hostile to the interests of the European governments" (470). So, although scalping was first practiced by Native Americans, it was the European settlers who turned it into a savage practice that could be praised and defiled at the same time. By offering bounties as a reward for scalping, they subjected the practice of scalping to a European logic of exchange and of rule. Tellingly, in the opening scene, when Aldo declares himself to be an "Injun," he at the same time gives orders that follow this logic of exchange: "when you join my command, you take on debt. A debt you owe me, personally." His rule is not to be doubted, and although the Basterds will be sitting in a circle elsewhere in the film, this does not come close to, for instance, the Iroquois custom, "in which chiefs in council are implored to let at least one night intervene before making important decisions" (Johansen and Pritzker 321). Aldo is the one making decisions in the group. Furthermore, although Aldo claims to be closely related to Native Americans, his attire tells another story, because he dresses like a cowboy, the stereotypical enemy of Native Americans. Through the condensation of all these contradictory aspects in Aldo's figure, a complicated and paradoxical image of Native Americans emerges. Viewers may even laugh when they see Aldo trying to perform as a Native American, using an abundant set of stereotypes more cinematographic than anthropological.

This interlacing of stereotypes may highlight the inconsistencies and absurdities in popular representations of Native Americans and undercut the credibility of these representations. Or, in its rehashed repetition of the stereotypes of Native Americans,

the film may make use of the ambivalence within stereotypes. It does not just replace negative stereotypes of Native Americans with positive or more true-to-life representations of them. Instead, it interrogates the economy of the stereotype itself and reproduces stereotypical images of Native Americans with a twist. The "remnants," the strange, unfitting, deviant elements inserted through the repetition of these stereotypes in the film, unsettle the homogeneity of established stereotypical patterns and provoke resignifications. Just as I discussed in the first part of this chapter, as a postmodern work of art, the film reworks historical materials with not just one but several twists. Similarly, it does not only confirm the stereotypes of Native Americans, but endows them with different functions whenever they appear like ghosts. Thus, the stereotypes of Native Americans are repeated and re-signified through their repetition.

## Conclusion

Still, there remains a problem that lies at the heart of Shohat and Stam's attempt to *multiply*. Let me repeat part of an earlier quote:

> It is not our purpose merely to reverse existing hierarchies—to replace the demagoguery of the visual with a new demagoguery of the auditory—but to suggest that voice (and sound) and image be considered together, dialectically and diacritically. A more nuanced discussion of race and ethnicity in the cinema would emphasize less a one-to-one mimetic adequacy to sociological or historical truth than the interplay of voices, discourses, perspectives, including those operative within the image itself. (1994a, 214)

One important point that Shohat and Stam address here is made in passing. It concerns the distinction between *Geschichte*—that is: history, or as it is said here: historical truth—and story, as a matter of representation. In this context it is at least remarkable how *Inglorious Basterds*, as a postmodern work of art, keeps circling within the domain of representation. To give just one more example: Aldo Raine alludes to "the actor and WWII veteran Aldo Ray and a character from *Rolling Thunder*, Charles Rane (played by William Devane)."[12] Remarkably, the latter film is also a revenge film, but this time in the context of yet another violent history: that of the Vietnam war. As a lieutenant in charge of an undercover operation with a select company, Aldo Raine alludes to famous action films such as *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), where the "Bear Jew" has a mirror image in "Butcher Brown" and where the "natives" of Navarone both do, and do not play a role. Furthermore, the actual history of the Holocaust is framed here by theatrical and cinematographic allusions to revenge plays. So, what does it mean when film critic Heidi Schlipphacke argues that in the film "history is being (creatively) recreated, but the spectator experiences this history viscerally and in the present" (114)? Clearly history is creatively reproduced, and played with, and made to be present. Yet, if the play of

---

[12] See <http://ingloriousbasterds.wikia.com/wiki/Aldo_Raine>.

stereotypes being re-hashed stereotypically no longer affects "historical truth" in any sense of the word, what, then, remains the value of Shohat and Stam's amplifying tactic that is aimed at multiplication?

In the context of my dealing with the Native American as a ghost, what is principally at stake is this figure's connection to historical truth. The force of the ghost does not reside in its belonging to the realm of representation. If it were a matter of representation only, the ghost would not be very forceful. Derrida starts his discussion of the specter in relation to the beginning of the Communist Manifesto with Marx's famous line: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism." That specter was real, in a distinct sense, and the reality of it is confirmed by Derrida's subtitle*: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Translating this to the problem of the savage and Native Americans there is a lot to be mourned because of real and massive losses, losses that were inflicted in the name of battling savagery. How does multiplication relate to this loss, and how can it do away with the stereotypes that propelled and justified the acts leading to this loss?

According to Silverman, contrary to the look, the gaze can help us "to see the otherness of the desired self and the familiarity of the despised other" (1996, 170). In other words, through the gaze, we can see the inconsistency of ourselves and find that we share a lot, have a lot in common with, those we disdain or neglect. Ethically, through the gaze, as Silverman argues, it is easier for the viewers to accept the otherness of objects and thus "prejudice, oppression, and the anxiety induced by contact with perceived otherness" will become less (Jones 567). However, the gaze does not mean that the desire and lack of the observers will disappear once and for all or that we should look at objects in the opposite way; the gaze allows the orchestration of multiple perspectives and welcomes the dynamic interplay of cultural voices. This is also where the radical potential in multiculturalism lies. Radical multiculturalism does not focus on "correct" representations, but calls for multiple perspectives. Analogously, in the film, the stereotypical representations of Native Americans are not the "correct" representations, and they cannot be. Yet, through a productive look, what is hidden or veiled by these stereotypes can emerge.

This dynamic only works, obviously, when the gaze works on a higher level, or is more fundamental than the screen. In terms of the screen, *Inglorious Basterds* works as a postmodern work of art by reworking historical materials through parody rather than pastiche, so that we can see how these historical materials reveal multiple truths and challenge conventional accounts and understandings of Western history. Because the film projects many stereotypical representations of Native Americans as savages while questioning them through parody, it shows how the screen, as a cultural filter, is not stable at all, but is refreshed with new elements. At first, through repetition, the stereotypes of Native Americans seem to be reconfirmed. Instead of seeking out what the "reality" behind these stereotypes is, and instead of trying to answer the question "what to do with these stereotypes," I have found that their repetition does not guarantee their stability. In fact, through repetition, the stereotypes are almost forced to renew themselves frequently and sometimes unexpectedly. That is to say, the implicit or explicit evocations of the Native American figure in the film do not claim to truly

represent reality by trying to set "wrong" representations "right." Rather, the contamination of stereotypes of Native Americans in this film performs the impossibility of articulating a "true" or "authentic" representation of Native Americans, since these representations are limited to a Western perspective.

Still, this strategy, if it is that, comes at a price. The specter as defined by Derrida is in nobody's control, because it defies representation in the sense that it can never be entirely captured by it. There is some sort of materiality involved in Derrida's specter in that it is, in a historical sense, *real*. The real force that results from it, may be much weakened or destroyed if we get to the level of what I defined as the meta-stereotypical, which happens when the destabilization of stereotypes becomes stereotypical itself. The problem that I am hinting at has also been traced in studies of the Holocaust, as when the obligatory incorporation of the Holocaust in high school education did not lead to a deeper or broadened awareness but to "dull" and "bored" attitudes (van Alphen 2). The end result was, in this context, that the specter of the Holocaust became a purely representational one, as a result of which the historical force of the Holocaust as a specter was lost. Translated to my argument, and in the context of Shohat and Stam's amplification in the service of multiplication, the dichotomy of the civilized-savage opposition can be dismantled or at least destabilized by bringing in more and more "interplay of voices, discourses, perspectives." Yet, fairly quickly, this very interplay will become stereotypical. As a consequence, the historical horrors that were the result of the savage-civilization opposition are transposed to the level of the screen. The savage will still be much alive, but as a ghost to have fun with, much like Nearly Headless Nick in the Harry Potter books and films (in which he was played, not coincidentally, by the comedian John Cleese). The real specter will have disappeared or become inaudible.

To make up for such shortcoming, or to make historical voices that were nearly drowned heard again, many current critics propose to study Native Americans from the perspective *of* Native Americans. Such theoretical approaches situate themselves in the framework of what has been called the "decolonial turn." In the following chapter, I will work on how Native Americans might represent themselves and how they could renew the contents of the screen. In that context, I will also deal more deeply with the (haunting) powers residing in ghosts.