The Impact of Essentialist Representations on the Native American in a Postcolonial Context


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Abstract

This project seeks to investigate the effect that essentialist representations have on Native Americans in a post-colonial setting. Native Americans have been excluded from American culture in many aspects. When we look closer at the representations, the same process of symbolic exclusion occurs. Therefore, we believe that there is a strong connection between representations and actual lived situations. Hegemony is relevant here, as it explains that relations between power struggles can contribute to explaining the domination of one group over another. Representations are embedded in power relations due to essentialist strategies such as stereotypes or myths. The three stereotypes which we analyzed were that of the romanticized Indian through the discourse of innocence, the myth of the ‘Vanishing Indian’ and ‘Authentic’ which are closely related, and lastly, the Villain. These are able to symbolically exclude the subordinate group in their transparency as they are naturalized. Due to hegemony, the subordinate groups have no role in defining themselves and can define themselves only through the discourses the dominant group determines.

Summary in Danish

Dette projekt forsøger at kaste lys over hvilken effekt og hvilke konsekvenser essentialistiske portrætteringer af de indfødte Amerikanere har på disse menneskers kultur, selvopfattelse og på den generelle samfundsmæssige diskurs. Dette projekt argumenter for, stående på skuldrende af andre akademikere, at den stereotypiske portrættering af de indfødte Amerikanere (som ofte simplificerer dem og deres kultur til objekter af fascination) er med til at opretholde samfundets i forvejen besiddende magtstrukturer. Projektet indeholder også en kort beskrivelse af de indfødte amerikaneres levestandard i dag, samt en kort beskrivelse af deres kultur før og efter de hvide kolonialister kom til den nye verden.

Introduction

“The indigene is a semiotic pawn on a chess board under the control of the white signmaker. And yet the individual signmaker, the individual player, the individual writer, can move these pawns only within certain prescribed areas” (Goldie: 232).

As two of us have lived in Arizona, we have had an interest in Native Americans and their culture(s) for some time. This is what triggered our interest in writing about Native Americans. We
We were originally interested in writing a project concerning Native Americans in reservations and their notions of time and space compared to the linear Western notion of time. We soon realized that there was a lack of material concerning this so we shifted focus. While reading articles, we were often confronted with the view that Native Americans had been subjects of stereotypical portrayals in popular culture, and we found it an interesting topic for a project. This is partly due to the fact that we ourselves found our knowledge of Native American culture somewhat limited of their culture and a generally romanticized view about the Native Americans. Therefore, we felt that it was a good topic, as it would enable to understand Native American culture with a new approach. The amount of material that we found concerning Native Americans is surprising. It was difficult to reduce our field of study as there were so many options available. In fact, we came upon a text stating that indigenous people were the most researched groups in the world. This is something that was easily noticeable through the quantity of material available.

Native Americans have been subject to many stereotypes. These involve many consequences for Native Americans. They are in fact processes of symbolic power. The stereotypes which we have decided to base ourselves on are the romanticized, the ‘Authentic’ and the ‘Vanishing Race’ and the ‘Villain’.

In our project, we start out by setting relevant historical background concerning Native Americans. This is necessary in order to understand how interlinked representations and the situation of Native Americans. Representations are not isolated from exterior happenings. Hegemony is a concept which enables us to understand the role of power relations.

By writing a project about Native Americans we want to challenge our own simplified views of their culture, and we seek to this by exploring theories about stereotypes and power relations that will help us analyze the popular culture from which our knowledge has been greatly influenced by.

Of course we do not only write this project with the aim of enlightening ourselves, and we hope to broaden the knowledge of Indians and representation of whoever reads the project as it seems as though many people have same simplified beliefs of Indians as us.

**Problem Definition**

**Problem statement:** How and by which means does the West maintain its symbolic power over Native Americans through representation?

What is the impact of essentialist representation on the Native American?
What role does hegemony play in representation?

Terminology

Essentialism: The term is always used in relation to cultural essentialism, implying the perceiving of culture as natural and universal, not recognising social construct.

Native American: The indigenous peoples living within the present day boundaries of the United States of America. We insist on the fact that these cultures stem from various tribes with diverging cultures and languages in order to avoid the pitfalls of essentialist representations. We however understand that it is not possible to “escape” social construct.

Indian: The Indian as subject of Western Essentialist fantasy.

Power: When using this term, we do not mean direct violence. We draw on a symbolic form of oppression which operates by confirming governing power structures.

Limitations

Originally, we wished to focus on a different dimension in regards to the Native Americans. Instead of basing ourselves on Western representations of these, we wanted to understand how natives responded to representations. If we had not been limited regarding time, we would have applied for the study grant to do fieldwork amongst Native Americans. It would have been interesting for us to go to several touristic sites in Native American reservations (or markets for Native American art). This would have allowed us to investigate whether the way in which the natives represent their culture is attempting to conform to the view that the West has of the ‘Indian’ or, if on the contrary, they attempt to break with these stereotypes. However, when realizing that this was not possible, we decided to shift the focus of our project to its current topic.

Our current project would have been more complete if we had integrated Barthes’ theory on mythologies. Barthes’s myth advances how a bourgeois society promotes its values through specific cultural materials. In our case, we could have applied this mythologizing to the Native American, who becomes a specific new
signified, the Indian, an exotic creature.

Another limitation is the fact that when we argue for counter discursive methods, we claim that these are going against power. However, we have not gotten in depth about how even when going against power, one is always caught within power relations.

Methods

Our project seeks to investigate how essentialism has an impact on representations; we will see how essentialism leads to certain ways of stereotyping. We will then apply essentialist representations to the case of the Native Americans, this will be done through an analysis in which we will choose mainly mainstream representations of Native Americans from the last half century.

Who can Legally Call Himself Native American?

Persons of Native American descent have a unique legal position in society. They are American Citizens and have the same rights as every other American citizen, but they also have some unique rights in areas such as fishing, hunting, water use and in gaming operations (The Free Dictionary). But how is a person defined as an actual Native American, and what if a person is 1/4th Native American? The project seeks to answer these questions in the next section.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-341) defines that a person is only recognised as an American Indian if he or she is a member of a tribe that is eligible for certain special programs from the US (Oxendine).

DNA testing that shows markers of one having markers of certain biological traits is a heated debate. This is because of different opinions of how many races there exist and what race really is and means itself (IBID). There are stories of what is referred to as “full-blooded” Indians, who have hundreds of years old family trees of Native American ancestry (blood), only to undergo a DNA-test that show that they are in fact around 35 percent Native American, It can be argued that these DNA-test are not at all exact (IBID).
If one wants to be officially recognized as a Native American, one has to apply for a CDIB document: Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood. Contrary to what many believe, it is not a birth certificate, and it is issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In order to apply for a CDIB, one must provide a full genealogy and gather papers that document direct ancestry to Native Americans from one or both parent, who must be from an enrolled Native American on the Dawes Rolls (IBID).

**Brief History of the American Indians**

As this project concerns itself with Native American stereotypification in western art, it is important to present the reader to some historical background as it is relevant in relation to the stereotypical representations that can have led to the various misconceptions about the Native Americans. The next section of the project will give a brief historical overview of the history of the indigenous people of America as well as an overview of the various tribes and their different cultures of the continent with emphasis of course put on the people and the tribes who lived and still live in the northern part of America. This is done to in order to put the general portrayal of Native Americans in popular popular into perspective by clarifying to the reader that in the settler times, the Indians actually didn’t speak the same language and that their cultures varied vastly.

Native Americans are the indigenous people(s) who live within boundaries within the USA. To someone who is not acquainted to their culture, all Natives might seem somewhat alike and one might think that they all share the same customs and culture as well as the same bodily features. It may be believed that all today’s natives share the same background and descend from the same people, and that people were able to communicate with each other through a common language and shared the exact same culture, but this is not the case. Bodily and facial features alone tell us that the natives of America do in fact not all belong to the same people; some of them are tall, some very small, some of them are round-headed, some long-headed, some of them have broad and robust features whereas some have very delicate features (Josephy: 11). It is though generally accepted that they are of Asiatic origin:

“One theory suggests that in the remote past peoples who may have been the first to enter the western hemisphere had drifted away from a “proto-Mongoloid” stock in Asia, from which there later evolved the modern-day Asian Mongoloids. According to this theory, the descendants of these immigrants to the western hemisphere multiplied and spread across the Americas, evolving differently not only from the peoples who had remained behind in Asia but also among..."
One part of the general stereotypification of Native Americans is the misconception that they all look alike, and in much of the Hollywood art we have reviewed no real emphasis has been put on presenting or explaining the differing looks of these people. Arguably more important than explaining the different looks of the natives is it to clarify the many cultural and linguistic differences among the peoples of the Americas, and particular the people(s) living on lands that we refer to as the USA today.

When the white men first came to the Americas, there were more than 2,200 spoken languages that could also differ regionally, and it has been estimated that the Native Americans in the north of Mexico spoke more than 200 mutually unintelligible languages and that these languages were spoken with many phonetic differences. Many of these languages have died out, but in reservations in the western part of the US some of the original languages and dialects may still be heard as the Sioux, Crows, Blackfeet, Pueblos, Navahos might still converse in their original languages (Josephy: 12).

Many of the languages spoken derive from the same parental languages that were spoken in ancient times, also referred to as “superstocks”. There are varying theories of how many original languages there were, but most importantly is it to clarify that not all of the Native American languages were and are related (IBID).

As the various tribes of Native Americans were not able to communicate orally through a common language, a sign language was invented and used, this language consisted of hand signs.

No Indian tribe had invented and made use of an alphabet, some peoples of the Middle America used picture symbols as a way of communicating (Josephy: 13).

Not all Indian tribes’ survival relied solely on hunting large herds of buffalo - the animal that has almost become a symbol of the Native Americans’ way of life and surviving.

Indian people’s original cultures naturally reflected the places and environments in which they lived. They invented the techniques and adopted the lifestyles required to survive and live in their respective locations that differed greatly in temperatures and climate, but also the land itself differing from mountain covered to desert-land or grasslands. The greatly different lands also had different resources of food, and this naturally forced the Indians to adapt their weapons so they best suited the hunting of their particular area’s animals (Josephy: 23). Some tribes relied almost...
completely on agriculture to get food, whereas some combined both fishing, hunting, gathering and farming (Josephy: 24).

The Western Man’s Conquest of the Indians

The oldest known contact between America and Europe is a Norse Saga in which Leif Eriksson’s brother, Thorwald and a group of his men, who sailed up North America’s northeast coast killing eight Indians, or Skrellings as they would call them. (Josephy: 295) Viking sites have been identified along the coast of Newfoundland, but apparently all knowledge had disappeared about the indigenous people of North America at the time of the settlers’ arrival (IBID).

The history of the encounters between the American Indians and the European settlers is a history of violence, killings and removal programs. It is claimed that the Indian population from the years around 1500 to 1900 dwindled from 12 million people to an estimated only 237,000, and this massacre of Indians is regarded by historians as one the worst holocausts in mankind’s history (Lewy). Exactly how many Indians were killed and how many lived on the North American continent around the time the European settlers came is though still a subject of discussion. Exactly how many Indians were killed though doesn’t change the fact that the settlers caused a drastic fall in numbers of the Indians. The main cause of death amongst the Indians However was not the settlers’ weapons but the diseases they brought with them, particularly smallpox was the extremely dangerous for the Indians - an estimated 75 to 90 percent of the Indians’ deaths came as a result of diseases (IBID). The fact that the Indians’ main cause of death was from diseases has lead some to state that one could not compare the Indians’ dying to a holocaust (IBID).

Ever since the settlers came to the North America there had been conflicts between them and the Indians. In the early parts of the 1800s the settlers wanted valuable land in the southern part of the US upon which the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Seminole and Chicasaw resided and this caused even more conflict (McNamara). These five tribes had actually taken up Western ways of cultivating the land on which they resided, but this was only to cause dismay among the settlers as this was contrary to the common belief caused by propaganda that the Indians were unable of such things as they were believed to be savages (IBID). The election of Andrew Jackson as president and the rapidly-growing US saw the area of the five tribes viewed as an obstacle of progress to the eyes of the settlers and on May 28, 1830 Andrew Jackson signed into law the Indian Removal Act which would move all Indians from the eastern part of the US into lands west of the Mississippi (Lewy).
Negotiations unfavorable of the Indians began and treaties about expulsion were made with the Indian tribes of the south, though with threat of force if they didn’t agree (Brown: 303). In 1838 the US Government forced more than 15,000 Cherokees to move west, and over 7,000 men were given orders to remove the Cherokees. The march which is known as the trail of tears started late in 1838, and it resulted in approximately 4,000 Cherokees dying from trying to walk about 1,000 miles to the land they had been relocated into. (McNamara)

Native Americans’ Living Conditions Today

Many factors come into play when exploring Native Americans’ responses to how they have been represented, and their current living conditions is certainly one of these factors. The next section will give a brief overview of the situation of the Native Americans and their tribes today.

In today's U.S., there are an estimated 550 or more federally recognized tribes or "tribal entities" as called by the US government (infoplease). There are though currently 237 "entities" that are trying to receive recognition from the federal government. Tribal governments are determined as “domestic dependent nations” and have retained a lot of powers from the pre-contact period (Robertson). Most of the tribal governments, which vary vastly in size of membership and the land they control, have written constitutions which they act according to. The recognized tribes have jurisdiction over Indian Country which is:

“...all land within the limits of Indian reservations, all "dependent Indian communities", and all restricted Indian allotments, i.e., individual restricted parcels formerly part of reservations but allotted to Individual tribal members pursuant to the General Allotment Act of 1887 or similar statute” (IBID).

As of 1990 figures there were, according to United States Census, 1.959 million Native Americans living in the US which means that these people made up less than 1 percent of the total population (To compare with other minorities, African Americans made up ca. 12 percent and Asians 3 percent) and are the smallest ethnic minority as well as the poorest with approximately 32 percent of the Native population living below the poverty level (Robison). Connected to the high level of poverty is the high unemployment amongst Native Americans in reservations which of 1990 figures was 35 percent. This high unemployment rate is also linked with the fact that Natives are not as
educated as the general population, and as of 1990 figures only 10 percent of Natives go beyond high school to earn a bachelor’s degree. The poverty level is also visible in the health statistics, and cancer and heart disease are the Native American’s main causes of death. Linked to this is the high rate of alcoholism, which is 579 percent, compared to the rest of the population. Other sad facts show that people dying from homicide is 61 percent greater amongst natives, and 70 percent more Natives commit suicide (IBID).

Compared to the pre-Columbian times the Native American population is relatively small now as there were an estimated 10 to 75 million people living in America. Diseases brought to the continent by the settlers caused this dramatic fall in numbers and only in the last century has the Native American population begun to rise in numbers (IBID). Actually, the birthrate of Native Americans is now higher compared to average in the US which means that the Native Americans as a people are now relatively young. Though the general population of Native Americans has increased not all tribes have increased in numbers. The largest tribe as of 1990 is the Cherokee Nation with 369,035 members (IBID).
Caused by removal programs of the early nineteenth century most Native Americans live in the west of the US. Land owned by tribes to the east of the Mississippi river almost comprises a total of 2.2 million acres, whereas in the west, over 43 million acres of land is of tribal ownership.

**Representation and Power**

This section will cover the relation between representation and power in order to elucidate on the importance of power on the former.

Power is often associated to direct physical violence, however, contrary to common belief; it is also present in representation (Hall, 1997: 259). This is a symbolic power, which includes the ability to: “represent someone or something in a certain way” (IBID). This will be relevant for us in order to clarify the relation between the U.S.A. and the natives along with the representations such a dynamic entails. Stereotyping has frequently been used in representation in cases where this symbolic power is present.

We will be looking at theories of Orientalism and hegemony in relation to representation. The section will more precisely study stereotyping as it is central to the exertion of symbolic violence (IBID).

In his works on Orientalism, Said argues how the ‘Orient’ was a Western stereotyped construction
advanced to keep control over the area, led by a discourse “by which European culture was able to manage- and even produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the Post- Enlightenment period” (IBID). The Orient was thus contributed to new objects of knowledge, exhibited in museums, and studied in the diverse fields of anthropology, biology, linguistics etc.

Said draws on similarities in Foucault’s and Gramsci’s notions of Hegemony in order to define power. (Hall, 1997: 260)

He draws on Gramsci’s notion of Hegemony in claiming that in a non-totalitarian society, rather than by direct military force, it is cultural leadership, meaning the imposed beliefs (being the result of cultural hegemony) which enable Orientalism to remain such a dominant and persisting vision (Said from Hall, 1997: 261). The idea beneath Orientalism is that Europeans are grouped together versus the strange and exotic Others from the Orient (IBID). Said argues that the fact that Europeans regarded themselves as the civilized and superior culture is precisely that which made it hegemonic (IBID). Furthermore, the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient reinforce and reproduce the power relations and ways of perceiving the other culture, making it very difficult not to perceive the orient in this light (IBID).

The similarities between Foucault and Gramsci in terms of representation are that power involves “knowledge, representation, ideas, cultural leadership and authority, as well as economic constraint and physical coercion” (Hall, 1997: 261).

Both believe that power is not simply accomplished through force, but that it ‘seduces’ and ‘wins’ consent. In fact, power is maintained by its imposing by the one(s) in its possession down on to the subordinate(s), but “includes the dominant and the dominated within its circuits” (IBID).

As Homi Bhabha declares: “…it is difficult to conceive... subjectification as a placing within Orientalist or colonial discourse for the dominated subject without the dominant being strategically placed within it too” (Bhabha from Hall, 1997: 261).

This means that both parts are taken within its grips, subject to its influence. Additionally, not only does power limit, but it is also productive in that it produces: “new discourses, new kinds of knowledge (i.e. Orientalism), new objects of knowledge (the Orient), it shapes new practises (colonization) and institutions (colonial government)” (IBID).

Both theoreticians argue that power is found everywhere, and this may be caught in what is termed
by Foucault as the *circularity of power*.

The circularity of power is central when speaking of representation, the idea being, again, that we are all to differing degrees caught and contributing to power structures.

In terms of representation, stereotypical forms are common strategies, where the subject is presented within what Hall terms a *racialized regime of representation* (Hall, 1997: 262). This type of representation may be seen, for instance, in the portrayal of black masculinity which “has been forged in and through the histories of slavery, colonialism and imperialism” (Mercer, Julien from Hall, 1997: 262)

The stereotype is made because the Other is viewed as a threat, being both an object of fear and desire (Hall, 1997: 262). This is also the case when there is a fear of eugenic population. Because of this, the master affirms himself by depriving the subject of that which is perceived as a threat. This will advance the subject in a simplified and degrading manner, commonly placing it on a child’s level. This process called ‘infantilization’ is a common representational method (IBID).

This may be seen when women athletes are frequently referred to as ‘girls’, or the use of the term ‘boy!’ when addressing a grown black man in South Africa (ibid).

In order to cope with these repressive projections, the Other commonly challenges the stereotype by going against it (Hall, 1997: 263). However, in doing so, they are confirming the dominant discourses and fantasies from which the stereotype arises.

Concerning the representation of black masculinity, for instance, Mercer and Julien state that “This cycle between reality and representation makes the ideological fictions of racism empirically ‘true’ - or rather, there is a struggle over the definition, understanding and construction of meanings around black masculinity within the dominant regime of truth” (Mercier, Julien from Hall, 1997: 263).

Those who are stereotyped become trapped within a binary opposition - either the image represented or that which is countered - where they alternate endlessly between them, sometimes even embodying both at once (Hall, 1997: 263).

The relation between representation and power has now been advanced. Foucault and Gramsci both perceive power as determining the beliefs of a society. It is not perceived as a direct imposable violence, but one which wins consent.
Essentialist Representation of the Postcolonial Subject

The postcolonial subject is one which has frequently been represented in relation to Western imperialist discourse, benefitting and reinforcing prevailing dominant power structures. (Moreira-Slepoy: 11) Postcolonial dynamics are characterised by underlying power distributions between the coloniser and colonised, where the former exerts his power and authority over the colonized. Interferences with what were generally indigenous cultures have been conducted in the name of development, out of good will to help the colonized achieve similar “civilized” ways as the colonizer himself. This civilizing process was achieved in part through the use of representation as a means of control by spreading Western Imperialist discourse through essentialist views.

In philosophy, the essential properties of an object, in contrast to accidental properties, are qualities which are necessary to an object’s being, and without which it could not possibly ‘be’. They are thus essential to its existence. Accidental properties, however, refer to certain qualities which an object might possess, but might also not have possessed (Robertson). In relation to this, one might have an essentialist view on culture. This leads one to understanding cultural ways as natural (common knowledge), not recognizing social construct, which presents a danger when one tries to impose these ‘truths’ on a culture presenting differing ways of life.

We will investigate the impact of stereotypes on a population, and its use as an effective medium of coercion.

During imperialist times, European colonial power was not solely maintained through military means. In fact, representations of the colonial subject were used as a tool in promoting their discourse. (MOREIRA-SLEPOY: 2) The images circulating depicting the colonized were controlled and manipulated which was a powerful tool of coercion.

According to Said, “...we live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and representations-their production, circulation, history, and interpretation are the very element of culture.” (MOREIRA-SLEPOY: 1) These representations have represented the colonizer as a deviant Other, bringing him to a fixed and static position.

For Homi Bhabha, fixity is: “…the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of
colonialism, which is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (IBID).

Thus, this fixity is a strategy used by essentialist dominating powers to enforce their ways over the colonies through representation whilst ensuring a continuation of their discourse. The ensuring of one’s power through representation will be developed later in the chapter.

In terms of the colonized responses to the representations, Dubois has proposed what she refers to as double consciousness, which is: “...a peculiar sensation, [...] this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness” (Du Bois: 3-4).

What Dubois is claiming here is that when being oppressed, the colonised starts to look at themselves through the eyes of the colonisers, internalising the stereotyped constructions of their identity which leads to a mimicking of the colonizer's ways. However, while the colonised feel an urge to comply with the dominant discourse, they also intuitively feel the need to find alternative ways of resisting.

The postcolonial subject will unconsciously try to gain acceptance by internalizing the dominant essential discourses, thereby mimicking the representations viewed. In Homi Bhabha’s words, this mimicry may be understood as “one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge”. He adds that this strategy aims at creating «a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.” This implies that the colonized should internalise and embody Western discourse, while however still remaining an Other. These ideological representations were, naturally, derogative, portraying the colonized as a degenerate or primitive being (Bhabha: 85-86).

In terms of aesthetics, Western works were considered as surpassing any other forms of art. These were left unquestioned, considered as universal truths. In fact, Schwarz states that: “...a conception of art which views itself as transcending ideology even as it raises a single object, English literature, to the status of self-contained totality” to point to the essentialist views of the prior (Schwarz: 21).

Binary thought is characteristic of imperialist discourse, and can be seen when a representation is
made through divisions of Self/Other. This Othering can also be done through the representing of Others as a mythical or exotic creature. Edward Said has contributed greatly to this process which he terms Orientalisation: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said: 87).

Thus, the Occident/Orient dichotomy is a socially constructed one which has a history and tradition. These mechanisms of representation established through degradation or exoticism are employed to symbolically force subjects into internalizing dominant discourses, entering the collective consciousness of the people, thus reinforcing governing power relations. This is obviously an essentialist stance where one does not question essentially natural and habitual ways of life, enforcing them on others who ‘do not know better’.

Through this binary way of perceiving, a hierarchical view where the self is perceived as superior to the Other is established. The self is also the ‘normal’ one, and in this sense, the Other is a sort of alien.

**Western Mediation of Native American art**

In this section, we will make a brief historical overview of the west’s hegemonic power over the Native Americans. The image we have of the Native Americans today is a simplified western construction which is not adequate with the complexity of Native American culture, history and their self-representations. (Harlan et al: 202) This demonstrates the way power can be used to enforce dominant ideologies.

In Robert Berkhoffer's *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* he writes that: “*Since Whites primarily understood the Indian as an antithesis to themselves, then civilization and Indianness as they defined them would forever be opposites.*” (Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present, New York: First Vintage Books Edition, A Division of Random House, 1979, p. 29)

Indians exist not as having their holistic culture and history but as a dichotomy to us, and therefore dependent on us. If the Indian exists only in relation to being what 'white is not', then the Indian is truly Indian if he remains excluded from civilization and maintains his traditional culture. He is therefore an ahistorical and decontextualized being.
When American anthropology developed in the 1890's, artifact collecting became popular amongst intellectuals. Later, in the twentieth century, tourism expanded and the general public started collecting artifacts. According to Brody and Garmhausen, it is between 1900 and 1917 that white intervention amongst Native art began in the Southwest (Harlan et al: 217). Anthropologists or Indian traders went to various Indian tribes and provided the Natives with material for painting. They were asked to make paintings regarding tribal ceremonies. These paintings were bought and exhibited at museums or used for research. These paintings are therefore not 'authentic' in relation to the western definition of authentic which is not influenced by Western culture. They are paintings seeking to please the white market.

By the 1920's, there were over a dozen of Indians who produced these 'Native paintings' for white customers in areas such as in Santa Fe, Taos and New Mexico. Two of these became a market which remains the largest 'Indian art' venues today (Gallup Inter Tribal Indian Ceremonial and Santa Fe Indian Market) (IBID). A larger event was held in 1931 in New York. This National Indian Art show emphasized that Indians were a dying race and that their culture needed preserving. As the demand for Native art increased, more Indians participated in the making of this art (IBID).

From the 1930's onwards, art was seen as a process for economic growth. For this reason, art, which assured the continuation of 'Native art' was incorporated into boarding schools as part of the curriculum (Harlan et al: 216). The Santa Fe boarding school is an example of this. The teachers were non Native American and taught Native American students to use techniques and subjects which conformed to the idea of the Vanishing Indian. This school aimed to preserve Indian art through techniques which were said to be 'authentic’. Dorothy Dunn, the director of the Santa Fe art school decided that the art produced was to be sold exclusively for the Indian Market. This way of making art was known as the Studio style. The students were told to look in their backgrounds for tribal themes to depict and were refused any other topic. The subjects were traditional ceremonial and tribal scenes, and plants and animals, using a flat, decorative, linear style. (Ojibwa) It is important to note that although Dorothy Dunn scholarized the studio style to fit the demands of the white market, several techniques were already present in Native American culture before the arrival of settlers. For example, she introduced the use of earth color paintings in 1933 to reproduce the colors traditionally used in painting pottery and ceremonial objects. (Ojibwa)
In 1959, The Rockefeller conference took place at the university of Arizona. The aim of this conference was to discuss ways to preserve and expand Southwest Indian art. Dorothy Dunn supported the idea that Indian studio style art was ahistorical: “Indian painting is, first of all, art, but in the greater implications of human relationships and history it is something more—something perhaps of a genetic aspect in the riddle of mankind. Unless the legends, songs, ceremonies, and other native customs are recorded by the people themselves, painting must continue to be the principal contributor of Indian thought to the world art and history.” (Harlan et al: 219)

Dorothy Dunn is placing the Indians beyond history and context thus bringing them to a more universal and mystical level of mankind. Lloyd New went against the ideas held by the conference concerning the idea of the vanishing Indian:

”Let’s admit, sadly if you must, that the hey-dey of Indian life is past, or passing. Let’s also admit that art with all peoples has been a manifestation of the lives of those people, reflecting the truth of the times. And if Indian culture is in a state of flux then we must expect a corresponding art” (IBID).

In the late fifties and early sixties, there was a shift in Indian Art. Until then, it had only been outsiders who spoke on behalf of Native American culture. This started changing slowly. In October 1959, workshops were organized by organizers of the University of Arizona for young Indian artists. It was in order to help the younger generation during a time of conflict between traditional and contemporary viewpoints. The workshops did not only focus on Indian painting as seen in the Studio Art movement. They learned from both Indian anthropological resources and historic and contemporary Western art sources and were taught by both Indian and Anglo instructors (IBID).
In 1962, the Santa Fe boarding school was replaced by the Institute of American Indian Arts (also known as IAIA). Three Native American instructors were hired as instructors of the school. They broadened the fields of Native Arts so it did not only encompass painting. This period was known as the post-studio style and golden period. American Indian studies later became available at universities which caused competition for the IAIA.

Modern artists began detaching themselves from the techniques of the industry and developed their own techniques. The art produced was for a larger audience, in opposition to the Studio Style. New artists became renowned for being artists and not only Native Artists. Furthermore, by the mid-2000s a new generation of artists started to create socially critical works (Harlan et al: 221).

Museums have broadened the boundaries of Indian Arts so that they are in accordance with modernity (and not only the 'authentic' Indian image from the Indian Market.) This is the case of the exhibition New maternities in a post Indian world at the National Museum of the American Indian (IBID). This museum collaborates with Native communities and gives place to the voices of contemporary Indigenous as exhibitions are from the Native perspective.

**Theory of Representation of Stereotypes**

Stereotyping is defined as a "one-sided characterization of others, and as a general process, stereotyping is a unilinear mode of representing them." (Pickering: 47). The two stereotypes which are relevant in relation to the case of Native American representation are the concepts of the 'Other' and the 'primitive', which is derived from the former.

As shall be investigated further in the project, Native Americans have been subjected to various stereotypes.

Stereotypes are strong tools of representation as they allow symbolic control over the one who is stereotyped. As we have seen in the previous chapter, stereotypes are maintained by those in power. They have the ability to “reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity” (Hall, 1997: 258). As a symbolic process it is effective, as people can take it as being true.

Firstly, we shall attempt to explain that due to its naturalized appearance the stereotype can be efficient and thus create a symbolic control over the other. Secondly, we shall establish the various ways in which it maintains symbolic control. These manifest themselves partly through symbolic expulsion of the ‘Other’. The control over space and time is an important aspect here. This is
We shall see that control over time and space leads to a denial of history. Stereotyping involves a process of objectification of the ‘Other’, which leaves the other in a position where his cultural identity will be damaged with no possibility for change. Stereotypes are able to have an effect on both those stereotyping and those being stereotyped. It is for this reason that we can speak of a symbolic control. It is not the stereotype in itself which is powerful, but the legitimacy that people grant it. When people start taking it as being true and act in accordance to it, the power of the stereotype takes place.

As we have formerly observed, power relations play a role on representations. This is in relation to the hegemonic relations and structures within a society(ies). Bourdieu states that: “The cultural arbitrary is used by dominant groups or classes because it expresses completely although always in a mediated way the objective and material interests of the dominant group” (Rajan: 139).

This means that representations can appear to us as natural, as they reflect underlying power relations. Indeed, due to the power relations at play, what is culturally arbitrary takes on a quasi-cognitive dimension, as if they could be demonstrated objectively or separately from culture (Pickering :70). If stereotypes take on a naturalized form, then they can hardly change. The association with essentialism is clear here. Cultural values take on naturalized dimensions and appear to have an innate and universal existence rather than taken as being cultural constructs (Merriam-Webster). Therefore, the stereotype appears to us as 'true' and 'transparent'. The stereotype then reaches a neutral level and is disguised. It needs to be masked in order to exercise its power (Pickering: 70).

The construction of the ‘Other’ can be explained in relation to power relations. In relation to hegemony, those who possess the power have the ability to regulate the norms of society in their interest. In order to maintain their position, they ensure the exclusion of those who do not possess power. (Hugh). Those who do not fit into society’s norms are deviants. They do not go unnoticed. For “what is taken as normal is usually taken for granted and left unquestioned” (Pickering: 70). The opposite also applies that what is not normal or deviant is noticed. In The Second Sex, de Beauvoir illustrates this in relation to gender: “He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the ‘Other’” (Pickering: 64). This could be applied to other social categories such as race, ethnicity etc. Those who possess the power possess the means to construct the discourses. They define themselves in contrast to the ‘Others’. The ‘Others’ do not have the means of defining themselves,
but instead identify themselves through the dominant groups’ self-definition. This is a denial of identity as it “...divests them of their social and cultural identities by diminishing them to their stereotyped definitions.” (Pickering: 73). Furthermore, this recognition of oneself as ‘Other’ violates individual autonomy and independence as the subject is objectified as complementary to another subject in order to be.

Stereotyping can thereafter cast the 'Other' on the social periphery. By distancing the 'Other', it unifies the sense of social identity of the ones placed at the symbolic center. The need for this symbolic centrality suggests two causes:

”...either a fear of what cannot be admitted into an ordered identity, or a critical lack, an absence in the presence of identity which demands that the other be turned into an object of happy assimilation” (Pickering: 49)

It can be said that the 'Other' is accomplishing the needs of solving fantasies of those engaged in the process of stereotyping.

In this way, stereotypes reveal more about the ones stereotyping than the one being stereotyped: “The Other is always constructed as an object for the benefit of the subject who stands in a need of an objectified other in order to achieve a masterly self-definition” (Pickering: 71)

Defining the Other is first and foremost to define the self.

In order to understand the construction of the stereotype of the primitive, it is necessary to look back into history to when the term was first used, as the view on the primitive today is still based on this imperial history (Pickering: 52). The term primitive is the binary opposite of the term modernity. The notion of the 'primitive' became widely used in the nineteenth century (though it had existed since the Columbian times (Pickering: 51). As the concept of the 'Other', the primitive fulfilled the task of mirroring the West, more particularly in their own development. The primitive is seen as antithesis to development.

Darwin's evolutionism was an important contribution to the transition from the traditional to the modern society (Pickering: 52). This led to an interest in studying 'primitive' societies, which lacked any sense of development concerning empirical and rational knowledge. The primitive was therefore the opposite of the civilized modern individual.

Founded on evolutionism was the eugenics movement, initiated by Francis Galton who justified superiority of races by stating that physically inherent characteristics had bred Europeans into
modern civilized beings (Pickering: 53). The dominion of Europeans over other less scientifically
developed cultures was confirmed and the existence of races confirmed.
The construction of races carries many consequences. Along with it is the idea that the 'primitive'
cultures lack the innate abilities to develop, which Europeans have. This legitimizes Europeans' right to control these cultures, in order to develop them. It also puts the West at the symbolic center and every other culture on the margin due to being modern and therefore superior. We can note that due to the fact that the primitives serve as a mirror for Western development,
Darwin's theory of Evolution brought a hierarchical model within social development where development was the dynamic of evolution (with the West at one end and the primitive cultures at the other). According to this thought, every culture goes through the same stages in relation to this scale of progress, following the path of Europe. This brings every culture as dependent to the West on an inferior level, as they will all follow the same stages of development the West has undergone.
The Other serves to indicate how far Western civilization has developed. The West is therefore the reference point to other cultures as it is the most developed. These cultures serve the purpose of a "living fossil" for the West, as a mirror of the stage that Europe had gone through long ago. They are in fact so underdeveloped that they represent a form of human existence which is”...backward, unchanging, simple form of human existence which the West had long left behind” (Pickering: 54).
As the primitive is placed into the past of the West, it creates a division in time around the globe where different cultures are living in different times. Living in the past does not leave space for them to change their position on a symbolic level.

We can notice a temporalization of geographical spaces. As mentioned above, temporality is divided in stages regarding the Western model of modernity. The primitive is so underdeveloped that he does not have a place on the scale. Consequently, he is denied time. If he is denied time, then follows that he is denied history (Pickering: 56). It places them in a different time than the present of the producers of the discourse, which further excludes them. The ‘Others’ are symbolically muted by being in the past of the production of discourse.

Primitives were exhibited as spectacles in Europe, such as African tribes as the 'Kaffir' in London in 1853 or bushmen displayed as little above monkeys (Pickering: 58). The exhibitions were degrading for these cultures. They permitted the West to keep a control over the 'unknown' savage. The savagery under spectacle is under control this way. The primitive makes its way into popular
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culture, as it is accessible and familiarized by the general population and made real in popular minds. This is a case of the happy assimilation of the unknown to fit the society's needs and adapt it as an object of fascination. Furthermore, it brings forth the development of the West.

Cultural Identity Theory

Stuart Hall gives an analysis of what cultural identity is and stands for and how it is constructed and its complexities. He states that there are at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity (Hall, 1993: 223). The first of these two, which Hall acknowledges but doesn’t favor, understands identity as individuals bound together by either ethnicity or race, who share a common history and that this history is fixed and unchangeable. This fixed history, he says, gives common points of references and frames of meaning. Hall uses Frantz Fanon in explaining that the colonizing power “distorts”, “disfigures” and “destroys” the past of a colonized people, and therefore that a rediscovery of a beautiful past is very important to postcolonial societies. Hall also states that colonizing power even has the power to make the colonized people see themselves as others (Hall, 1993: 225).

Hall discusses if the search for a beautiful past is not only a rediscovery of a past, but that it also serves another purpose: an attempt to retell the past. He states that: “‘Hidden histories’ have played a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of our time - feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist” (Hall, 1993: 224).

One can have a tendency to think of identity as an already established and finished product, but Hall’s view on cultural identity differs:

“Instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term, ‘cultural identity’, lays claim” (Hall: 222).

Hall recognizes that people can share many similarities, but that we can’t really say that there exists any ‘one experience’ or identity; cultural Identity is historical but it is still in ‘constant transformation’ and is “…subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall, 1993: 225) Stuart Hall, who was born in Jamaica and spent his childhood there, actually begins his discussion on Cultural Identity and Diaspora by discussing the cinema of the Caribbean which he says joins the other “Third Cinemas” (a political and aesthetic project that have guided filmmakers
from regions with colonial struggles, addresses problems connected to race, class and gender and to post-colonial struggles) but differs from the Afro-Caribbean’s various other ways and forms of visual representation (Dodge). He speaks of the important or crucial role that Third Cinema has had in producing representations that negotiate the cultural identities of the third world diasporic people against the representations in the dominant western regimes. Third Cinema provides and allows these people to recognize different histories and aspects of themselves. The new representations provide new and negotiated positions from which these people speak of themselves. Hall states that “Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write... ...nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical...” (Hall, 1993: 222).

Hall states that through difference and transformation diasporic identities produce and reproduce themselves constantly. (Hall, 1993: 235) He also discusses diasporic aesthetics and uses Dick Hebdige in explaining it: “Across a whole range of cultural forms there is a ‘syncretic’ dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture,...” (Hall, 1993: 236)

**Analysis**

Representations and discourses are controlled by the dominant group and permit symbolic control over the ‘Other’ by symbolically excluding and expulsing him. This is possible due to the power relations at play in relation to hegemony. Essentialized social constructs have been taken as true due to different historical and social happenings. As we have elicited in the chapter concerning stereotypes, eugenics and social darwinism were partly the factors contributing and involved in this essentialized thought. Essentialized views explain what is socially constructed and arbitrary as if it were natural and legitimate. Stereotypes and myths can be associated to essentialist views as they function similarly. Indeed, the effectiveness of the stereotype is that it appears as natural, taking on a quasi-cognitive dimension. The three representations which we have decided to base ourselves on are Native Americans as romanticized through innocence, the myth of the authentic as a Dying Race, and the savage as villain or Noble Savage.

These three representations will now be elaborated on:
The Indian as romanticized Through the Discourse of Innocence

We shall see how this is done through several examples in the following. We will base ourselves on Walt Disney’s Pocahontas, and a pro-environmental advertising starring actor Indian Iron Eyes Cody.

The stereotype of the Indian living in harmony with Nature is a predominant one within Western representations of Native Americans (Lewis and Clark). This is the case of the Disney motion picture Pocahontas. This will be the film of reference in relation to analyzing the romanticized Native American. We are aware that Disney's Pocahontas is addressed first and foremost to children, which could in part account for this simplified view of Native Americans. In the first scene, we are presented to the Indians canoeing back to their tribe. The women are picking corn for the gathering, men are hunting fish with spears, some children are playing together while others are watching a 'shaman' making animal shapes in the fire. These activities are undertaken with a smile whilst they are chanting a song in colorful surroundings (Ebert, 1995). The underlying discourse concerning Native Americans as living in harmony with Nature is innocence. This is observable in relation to the passage above. Representing Native Americans in a way which limits their lived situations to living peacefully in harmony with Nature depicts this. As stated in the chapter concerning stereotypes, the power of the stereotype takes place when it is unnoticed. At first sight, what seems less innocent than a portrayal of Indians living peacefully in touch with Nature? Innocence here is a strong discourse as it does not seem to hold any underlying threats, appearing transparent. The irony is that the more it appears to be innocent, the more power it holds. This way Disney is able to present their own depiction of Native Americans neglecting lived experiences, history and political contexts of Native Americans. This permits them to rewrite their own history. Due to the symbolic power of stereotypes, viewers will take these representations as being the truth. Their life does not appear to us as engaging in struggles, where the atmosphere is very peaceful and calm. This somewhat trivializes their customs and way of life, as it is not a complete representation of their culture, undermining aspects such as spirituality or communality to an innocent portrayal which . These are core aspects of Native American culture (Erwin: 2-3).

There is a major source of power in their hands, as they can 'manipulate' happenings and portray them as they wish to due to the control over factual events and underlying discourses. Indeed, the
story of Pocahontas as presented by Disney is not representative of the historical facts, but facts as mediated (detolldisney.wordpress).

This idealization or fantasy of living in harmony with Nature can be explained by the fact that in our representation of the 'Other', there can be a tendency to compensate for what is lacking in our own culture. Western culture is based on rationality and science and so does not view Nature as a living entity which is to be respected. Instead, it is as dead material governed by physical laws. This view detaches any intrinsic values from the Earth, as what is there to respect in something dead? This could be an explanation as to why we idealize such cultures which have a spiritual way of living encompassing respect and compassion for 'Mother Earth'. The idealization would therefore stem from a lack of meaning associated to our planet, which we feel we need to compensate for. It would also explain the growing interest in our society for spiritual activities such as yoga, meditation, shamanism... (Prosser).

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, a stereotype is usually made when the Other is perceived as a threat. According to Hall, infantilization is a key method used in this case, emphasizing the menace. Here, we have a clear discourse of innocence which can directly be linked to this infantilization process where the Indian is rendered inoffensive. This might be due to the fact that “hybridity” was perceived as the worst alienation, the colonizers thereby fearing the natives as a threat to their integral culture. The fact that the tribes were placed in reservations and not integrated within the settler society strongly reinforces this. It might not be the case that there is still this fear of ‘racial degeneration’ today, however, as stated earlier, imperialist discourses are still present in our modern society.

There is another important aspect involved in representing Native Americans as living peacefully and innocently with Nature which involves symbolic control over the 'other'. In films, it is easy to note contrasts between the Natives and settlers (as these films often take place during the discovery of the New World). This can be observed in the 'primitiveness' of the Natives and the 'modernism' and 'development' of the Settlers. In Pocahontas, The settlers appear with their ships, guns, metal armor and other items representative of the modernized world. In contrast the Indians are represented as wearing animal clothing, fighting with spears and archery and believing in 'magic'. This lack of technology on the Natives' side clearly explicates that they are inferior to the settlers as they are in no way a threat to them. Indeed, if desired they can be killed at any time.
By representing Native Americans as living peacefully with Nature, they are happily assimilated into our culture to fit our needs. This can be noted in the commercial concerning the environment starring Iron Eyes Cody where the slogan is: "Get involved now, pollution hurts all of us" (Adcouncil). This advertisement was first aired on television in 1971 and features Iron Eyes Cody, an actor thought to have been Native American until it was later discovered that he was of Italian descent. What is important here is that Native Americans have been happily assimilated as a spectacle in order to fit the West's needs. This shows an essentialist view where the natives are molded in order to fit our standards, perceived as the universal truth towards which all ought to strive.

In a time of climate change, it is of perfect use to bring out the 'natural Indian'. The Indian is not only inoffensive, but even contributing to helping the Western world and the problems it has brought up. We can say that cultural imperialism has succeeded by making Native Americans into 'docile pets', useful only in fulfilling the West's fantasies and needs by maintaining them in this 'primitive' state.

In the chapter concerning stereotypes, we have elicited how primitives are denied history as they are refused a place on the scale which divides time according to stages of progress. As we have observed, Indians have often been depicted as living in conditions which are contrary to progress. They are thus denied time. This is a symbolic exclusion. Due to not having a past or history, they are 'fixed' in a stagnating notion of time. It does not leave them the possibility for change. They are left symbolically excluded from our globalized society with no chances of belonging to it. The stereotype is therefore serving the function of symbolically excluding the 'Other' and maintaining him excluded.

Representations of the wise or shamanistic Indians have been apparent in several films such as in The Doors or The Simpsons Movie. In the two first examples, this character personifies the mystical and spiritual aspect of Native American culture. In Oliver Stone's The Doors, the image of an old Indian appears several times of need for Jim Morrison, as an advisor (Nittle). Similarly, in The Simpsons movie a woman gives Homer some "fire water" to help him regain consciousness and shows him his path. In both cases, the mystical and wise Indian serves to help lead the main character back to the right path. Again, we see how imperialism has succeeded as the Indians are benevolently using their traditional methods to 'serve the colonizer'. These characters have no individual autonomy, but their value comes as complementary to how they guide the white character.
It could be argued that the tendency to represent the Native American in a romanticized fashion emerged due to guilt from the colonial past that the West (more particularly the United States) had not come to terms with.

**Myth of the ‘Vanishing’ and ‘Authentic’ Indian**

The thought that Native Americans are a dying race is one which is widely spread. Two films involving Native Americans can be related to this notion: ‘The Last of Mohicans’ and ‘Last of Dogmen’. These two films belong to the top three rated films involving Native Americans on IMDB. The former film tells the story is about the dying tribe the “Mohicans” in which only two are left as well as one adopted white man, and in the latter one of the main characters “Gates ventures further into the mountains and discovers an isolated settlement inhabited by a Native American tribe thought to have been wiped out by white settlers a century earlier.” (IMDB). Both show an interest for the notion of depicting Native Americans as a dying race such as in these films. It points to the fact that they are believed to be on the verge of extinction. This idea was also spread regarding Native American art, as mentioned earlier in the project. Indeed, Native American art was seen as vanishing and attempted to be 'preserved'. This supposes that races are inherent and natural. Therefore a mixing of races will lead to an 'unpure' or different race, which would account to why Native Americans are a 'dying race'.

According to this essentialist thought, due to the fact that currently Native Americans have somewhat been assimilated to American culture, they are not considered as natives anymore. What is problematic with this thought is that it does not consider the cultural arbitrariness of these cultural constructs but instead sees these as innate. It takes these social constructs as being natural. It is when cultural arbitrariness is taken as true that we refer to the concept of ‘myth’. We have here a situation similar to the symbolic power involved in stereotypes, as when it takes on a natural appearance it becomes a strong source of symbolic control. Indeed, as the dominant groups control and shape representations, they will do this to their advantage in a way which excludes the 'Other', in this case the 'Dying Race'. However, as mentioned earlier, this fear of the dying race is far from reality, as the native population is in fact increasing over time.

The Indian as authentic portrays an Indian which is in the past. If the Native American wishes to be integrated within Western culture, he will lose his status as 'Indian' according to this discourse. He is then symbolically forced to belong to the past. Furthermore, the 'authentic' Native American which is in the past does not belong in our developed and globalized society. According to the scale
of time determined by modernity and progress, the 'authentic is denied time (as was the primitive). Indeed, he does not correspond to the characteristics of civilization as he continues living in a natural or ‘primitive’ environment on reservations. There is therefore a double expulsion maintaining him in the past.

Depicting Native Americans as a Dying Race is a way of maintaining symbolic control over them. Social Darwinism could account to why Native Americans are a dying race in relation to the survival of the fittest. Native Americans would be considered a weaker culture as they have not succeeded in surviving. According to this thought, they endangered and near extinction. They are therefore inferior and dominated by the U.S.A. This places them in a victimized position and therefore legitimizes the right of the West to be their ‘saviors’. Indeed, their intervention is even ‘necessary’ because if they are a dying race, they cannot survive on their own. A power relation is visible here between the ‘savior’ and the ‘victim’, where the savior is clearly in a dominant position, his actions even gratified and honorable. In this way, the actions of the United States can be supported. As an example, the placing of Native Americans in reservations may attempt to preserve their culture by ensuring that they have their own territory but this further excludes them. Indeed, by living in reservations, Native Americans are marginalized and physically excluded from the society.

The myth of the 'Dying Race' can be related to that of 'authenticity'. Indeed, both stem from essentialist beliefs that there are 'innate' social categories which exist exterior from social constructs of a culture leads to specific ways of representing, which are very common in the portrayal of the natives. It is not a coincidence that many adaptations are set a few centuries back to when the natives were still considered authentic.

Related to the Indian as a dying race, there have been stereotypes about the Indian as being 'stoic' (Nittle). This is represented in various films or in Curtis' photographs, where almost none of the subjects figured on the portraits smile. Curtis was a photographer of the early twentieth century and has portrayed many monochromatic Native Americans portraits. These images are iconic as they are the representations concerning Native Americans which we are most exposed to (nativeappropriations). In Curtis' opinion, the Indian was a dying race and this was illustrated through his work. These images are in fact not representative of Native Americans. The Hopi tribe, as an example, view that we are all clowns in life and that we have to clown our way through life (Harlan et al: 211). This exemplifies the Western interest in the Native American without attempting to truly understand these cultures as they are but rather as one wishes to see in them.
According to essentialism, there are essentially inherent or true cultures. Because of this, a culture is real when it is not mixed. There is thus an idea that a Native American is true when he is living as he was before having been exposed to the western culture. If there are ‘true’ Native Americans then there can be ‘false’ ones. This can be noted in the fact that Native Americans are considered real only when recognizable through objects such as feathers, tipis or smoking pipes. When we think of a Native American, we reduce their culture to these few icons. However, these icons do not reveal the complexity of various Native American tribes but are reductionist. They are so to the extent that if a Native American is seen without these attributes, he will not be identified as being a Native American. These stereotypes have become necessary to defining what is Indian. There is a metonymization of the Indian where a part defines the whole. This is also an objectification of the Native American, as he exists only as complementary to these objects. He is not subject but has become object.

There has been the use of the term ‘Indian’ to refer to all Native Americans and therefore reducing them to one common group. As has been observed previously in the project, there are many Native American groups so this is not a valid claim. Native Americans have often been reduced in their representation as to being one culture.

As we have seen earlier in the project, ‘authenticity’ was a Western established concept to portray what the West was interested in representing and defining the Native as. This was the case with the Indian Art Market. The West therefore controls authenticity and does not leave Native Americans the space to define themselves. The same case occurred with aboriginal peoples of Australia:

“subaltern speech are contained by the discourse of the oppressor, and in which the writing of the Australian Aboriginal under the sign of ‘authenticity’ is an act of ‘liberal’ discursive violence” (Bill Ashcroft: 238). ‘Authenticity’ works as an act of liberal discursive violence as it does not allow the Natives to define themselves and mutes them on a symbolic level.

On a more general note, the notion of territoriality is relevant while speaking of the ‘authentic’, as there is the claim that there is an authentic homeland one belongs to and therefore has legitimized grant to. This is visible in the fact that Native Americans are accorded tribal sovereignty in the United States which grants them more rights and different laws than non-tribal citizens. We can note that the discourse of authenticity therefore lies in the political discourses of the United States. The problem is that the Native Americans are not the ones who have been able to define themselves regarding ‘authenticity’. It is the United States which has defined them. As dominating groups will
represent others as is in their benefit, it cannot be positive for Native Americans to be under laws reserved for Natives which they have not themselves defined.

The Stereotype of the Villain and the Warrior

The Native American cast as the villain is a character that is largely associated with the Hollywood westerns of the 50's and 60's. (Rollins et al.: 1)

Arguably one of the most popular westerns of that time is John Ford's “The Searchers” from 1956. Today, the movie is considered to be very offensive and racist towards the Indians it depicts, but “...in 1956 many audiences accepted its harsh view of Indians” (Ebert).

We shall give some examples of the stereotypification process from the movie and exemplify the the racist tone of the movie.

Native Americans being cast in the roles of villains was arguably caused by the atmosphere of the time towards the non- or un-American: "With the onset of the Cold War in the fifties, and the accompanying repugnant political outgrowth of McCarthyism, the distrust of anything outside the norm only deepened. Self-protection was the ability to confirm and display one's American-ness" (Schnupp) In Ford’s movie The Searchers the distrust of anything outside the norm is certainly visible. The movie, which has been celebrated by critics as one of the best films ever made (Eckstein: 3), is set in 1868 and stars John Wayne as the main character, Ethan Edwards, as a psychologically damaged Confederate Civil War veteran who returns to his brother’s settler homestead in Texas. Ethan’s homecoming becomes tragic though as many of his family members are killed by the evil Chief Scar and his band of Comanches, who have also abducted Ethan’s nieces, Debbie and Lucy. Ethan, accompanied by Debbie’s adopted brother, Martin, who is 1/8th Cherokee (and in the beginning also by Captain Samuel Clayton and a group of Rangers) embarks on a several year-long journey to take home the girls. It though becomes apparent that Ethan would actually rather kill Martin’s sister than have her live with the Comanches and become one of them. In the end though he ends up saving her, but it is only until the last minute the viewer understands that he decides to rescue her instead of killing her.

Lucy is found earlier in the movie and Brad, Lucy’s fiancé, believes he’s seen her in the Comanche camp:

Brad: I found her, I found Lucy!

Ethan: “What you saw was a buck wearin' Lucy's dress.
I found Lucy back in the Canyon.”

Brad: “Was she...?”

Ethan: [screams] Whad’ya want me to do, draw ya a picture?

Spell it out? Don’t ever ask me! Long as you live, don’t ever ask me more! (Schnupp)

It has been discussed whether it is actually Ethan himself who has killed Lucy because he found her assimilated into the Comanche tribe. Ethan seems to think that Lucy’s living with the Indians and even becoming one of them is a fate worse than death. Ethan’s hate towards the Comanche is not only based on the fact that they killed several of his family members, but that he also has a belief that races ought not to be mixed and that the Indians are of a lower race.

The first thing Ethan remarks about Martin is that he could have mistaken him for a half-breed. Ethan’s remark about Martin is racist, but his tone and manner of speaking is generally rough, but his hatred towards Indians is otherwise mainly reserved for Chief’s Scar’s Comanches. When Martin, because of a misunderstanding, accidentally marries an Indian girl, she is treated as if she was worthless, and at one point Martin kicks her down a hill for no other reason than the fact that he doesn’t want her to lie next to him, Ethan just laughs at the incident and says to Martin “You’re really rough!” This particular incident makes the Indian girl an object of no real value and symbolically depicts the white man’s power over the Indian. It would have been unthinkable that Martin and Ethan would have reacted this way had it been a white girl, and it therefore symbolically depicts the power distribution of the actual society.

Chief Scar (the name itself isn’t particularly flattering) is portrayed as a mere one-dimensional evil killer and child-thief, and such a portrayal can be argued to have helped establish a general perception of Native Americans as being somewhat stupid and someone who are not to be trusted. One could also simply use the term ‘primitive’. This leads one to further argue that it helped legitimized the US’s right to “tame” them by moving them into reservations; in other words the symbolic exclusion in The Searchers movie arguably helped legitimize the exclusion in actual society.

By portraying Chief Scar and the Indians as evil, the movie symbolically supports the idea that the Indians have to be controlled.
Renowned film critic Roger Ebert said of The Searchers that he thought it, or the director, Ford, was attempting to depict racism that justified genocide, and that the audience of the time of the film’s release didn’t see this because they sympathized with Ethan’s view of the

![Chief Scar](http://ddecstasy.blogspot.dk/2013/02/thematically-clint-eastwoods-outlaw.html)

The Searchers’ portrayal of the Indians clearly reinforces the already existing societal power structures by using representations that exert and reinforce the already prevailing structure and discourse. By portraying the Indians as either stupid or evil the movie portrays the westerners as the civilized ones and in that sense legitimizes the use of force to tame and civilize the Indians. The movie is a great example of a colonial power using images, storyline and representation as a tool of controlling the colonized subject. Not only will such one-sided representations have influence on the discourse of the colonizing power, but it also has the power to become internalized by the colonized subject himself, who thereby will accept the existing discourse, and further enter into the collective consciousness of society, which reinforces the prevailing power relations.

The internalization of stereotypical depiction of The Searcher’s Indians shows the power of the stereotype, and it is when the stereotype becomes transparent and therefore recognized and accepted as truth that it effects on both the depicted colonial stereotyped subject and the dominant power accepts as that its power on society and culture becomes apparent.

In the case of The Searchers, the colonizing force in power regulates and controls the societal discourse and regulates the norms of society to serve its purpose. In this case, the Indians are depicted as stupid and evil and the movie thereby contributes to a societal discourse as thinking of these as stupid and evil.

In the societal discourse in the times of The Searchers, the Indians are represented as the Others. Such a representation denies them to re-define their identity and their identities are confined to being the stereotypical definitions of them. When the Indians begin to take the stereotyped
representations of them as being true they are limited in both dimensions of cultural identity that Stuart Hall discussed. What further supports this view is that due to having been limited to symbols and objects of fascination, the Indian is fixed in time.

Arguably the term that best defines the depiction of the Indians in The Searchers is ‘primitive’ a term that is in direct opposition to modernity. And Ethan’s racism and seemingly perception of the Indians being of a lower race and his belief the people of different races ought not mix reinforces and supports the idea the primitive vs. modernity is also a case of the ‘lower race’ vs. the ‘advanced race’. This again reinforces the colonizing power in its self-proclaimed right to control the colonized culture, as the colonizing power then is given the right to develop the colonized culture.

In December, 2009, The current president of the US, Barack Obama, signed the Native American Apology Resolution, but no press release went out of the white house and the resolution didn’t get much attention in the media (Capriccioso). This might illustrate the struggle of coming to terms with a colonial past, because if such a resolution is purposefully denied public attention in the present day, one might better understand that the racist tone of the Hollywood westerns of the 50’s and 60’s was used so widely and was generally accepted.

Native Americans have been used in many sports clubs in the United States as mascots or names of sports teams (Wikipedia). For instance, the American football team the Washington Redskins have incorporated features such as feathers, a stoic Indian and long braided hair into their logo. Also in the team’s name itself is a reference to Indians as these people have been perceived to have a red-like skin color. One might think of the Washington Redskins’s logo as flattering towards the Native Americans, but behind the apparent good intentions of associating the Indians with a strong warrior-type figure hides the trivializing of their culture by using the usual and fetishized objects which are taken as being Native American culture and reduced the culture to these aspects. In that way, Native Americans are objectified as their cultural patrimony such as feathers and the warrior-like character. Essentially, once again this representation portrays the Indians as being the primitives, and it reinforces the dominant power in believing that his culture is the advanced one. Again, the Indian, or maybe his culture, is represented as primitive. There is an aura of strength and power connected to the Washington Redskin’s warrior-type figure, and one might argue that
connecting Indians with such features adds to the colonizing power’s belief that the Indians are to be controlled.

(Picture of the Washington Redskins mascot:
http://washingtondullesairport.blogspot.dk/p/washington-redskins-fan-page.html)

The Washington Redskins’ name recently sparked controversy as a group of African American, Latino and Native American leaders have come out and said that the team should change its name which has been claimed to equal the term Nigger. The Redskins’ owner, Daniel Snyder, said of the name that it is a “badge of honor” and said that it will never be changed (Vargas).

An interesting aspect of representation is the meta-level representation of Native Americans that can be found in comedy shows such as “South Park” or “The Simpsons”. Such representations are aware of the stereotypical representations of Native Americans in popular culture, and over-emphasize the stereotypical characteristics of Natives to make comedy.

In The Simpsons movie from 2007 Homer, the movies main character has a meeting with stereotypical “wise-counselor”-character who is only in the plot of the movie to help and complete Homer’s character. Part of the comedy of the wise-counselor character is arguably that the show recognizes the stereotype, but over-emphasizes the recognizable traits of the stereotype to add to the comedy.

**Conclusion to the Analysis**

Native Americans have been represented in a romanticized form in popular culture. When speaking of the term romanticization, we are referring to a representation of Native Americans which is inscribed in a discourse of innocence. While it might at first appear that a romanticized stereotype can be inoffensive or even favorable for Native Americans, we have seen that this is far from being
the case. As we have seen in the chapter concerning stereotypes, representations of the 'Other’ can serve as a means to fulfill our fantasies in the interests of compensating for a deficiency of cultural identity or alienation from cultural values. In this case, the Indian is not sought to be represented according to lived and contextual conditions, but according to what best fits the needs and desires of the dominating group. Instead, the Native American is taken away from his context and depoliticized. He becomes somewhat of a ‘pet’ or mascot to adapt to Western societies’ needs and in this way fulfills the imperialist tasks given to him by the West.

The idea of the Native American as a ‘dying race’ or ‘Authentic’ is one which is widely spread (Beck). The essentialist view is that the authentic has a homeland where he belongs geographically. Furthermore, by being referred to as the ‘dying race’ or the ‘authentic’, there is a generalization and reducing of the various Native American tribes. Indeed, the dying race refers to one race, while there are many Native American tribes. There is a symbolic violence involved in use of this myth. The Native Americans are silenced through the discourses as they are not given the possibility to speak on behalf of their own identity.

The savage is identified to the Indian mainly due to his strength. In the case of the villain, this is done through the savage-like actions which contrast greatly to the ‘modern’ citizen. As his actions are barbaric, the West are legitimized the right to kill him in order to “defend” themselves. Furthermore, it places the West on a superior level on to the scale of development.

**Discussion**

Through the project we have seen how essentialist views with myth of purity have shaped western understandings of the Other, and thus representations of the Other. As previously argued, these views have advanced the Other in binary terms and alleged him to a fixed position, where stereotypes were beneficial strategies to promote these visions whilst ensuring the maintenance of power. In fact, this position does not allow space for change.

Common essentialist stereotypes included infantilization, authentication, villainization and fetishism. These simplified versions of the natives served to attenuate the threat of a eugenic population which haunted the white colonizers at the time, and are still present now. Furthermore, as discussed in the chapter on Representation, when the Other is not understood, he is ‘translated’ as
These essentialist ways of perceiving still dominate our understanding of the Others now, where imperialism is embedded within the collective consciousness of the people.

In order to confront the static and derogatory position which the native has been subject to, responses to this essentialist way of representing have been made. One way of countering essentialist representations is to call for hybridity. In fact, the term is enticing, calling for the refusal of a fixed position and providing an alternative to binary thinking, agency for the oppressed and a destructuring of power (Prabhu: 1).

This seems to be a relevant and beneficial tool to counter dominant and oppressive discourses in a postcolonial context.

The discussion will aim to examine this aspect of Native American responses to mainstream representations, namely how hybridity is used to counter common essentialist views on cultures. To understand how this is done, we will study two photographs taken by the American Indian artists Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie and Zig Jackson, who are renowned for their use of irony in playing with the Indian stereotype. We will now demonstrate how the selected photographies support hybridity.

_Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie - Nobody’s Pet Indian_

Written in the photography: “Would I Have Been a Member of the Nighthawk, Snake Society or Would I Have Been a Half Breed Leading the Whites to the Full-Bloods. . . .?”
Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie and Zig Jackson are both twentieth century American Indian photographers who, as we shall demonstrate, are engaged in their work regarding Native Americans. As mentioned above, they are excluded from society and living in harsh conditions. Furthermore, because of Western colonization and all of the above-mentioned power struggles this entails, they are left with a damaged cultural image: “We were treated as though we were the problem. Colonization left us with a negative self-esteem as a race.” (Burning)
Because of this, there is a need amongst the Native American population to: “decolonize entire communities held in the grip of damaging non-tribal ideologies.” (Cook-Lynn)
Here, the setting is a post-colonial one, and therefore it is not direct violence that the natives are countering, but the oppressive power of imperialism that lingers in the colonized minds, which means power on a symbolic level.
This decolonization method is used in the two chosen photographs, where, as we will establish, stereotypes of the Indian are subverted.

Both photographies are monochromatic, meaning that these are in black and white. This is already a
crucial feature in countering the authentic image of the Native American. As mentioned in our analysis, the authentic native is often associated to vivid colors and enchanting surroundings. By depicting the Indian in these unexotic colors, there is a break with the authentic and exotic stereotype. The monochromatic style is also in conflict with the studio style paintings which the West had mediated Native Americans into producing, labeling it as ‘authentic’ Indian art. Studio style paintings have left traces as is noticeable by the amount of Native American paintings comprising features of this style available on the internet via the simple search: “Native American Art” on google.

Additionally, in Nobody’s Pet Indian, this rupture is further emphasized by the fact that the Native is dressed in a plain black shirt, having short hair and wearing a watch, thus depicted as an average modern man. A black shirt is a casual type of clothing one can wear. It breaks with the stereotype of the braided, traditionally dressed Indian. By bringing in oppositions to stereotypes he is making use of a counter-discourse.

Adding to this is the fact of the Native American being portrayed in a triptych. This reinforces the inauthenticity, where he is no longer unique and is thus desacralized, depicted as a mere commodity.

This is also apparent in Jackson’s photograph where a tourist is seen taking the picture of the Indian. Here, the subject is as close to being authentic as possible, having all the attributes necessary including dress and hilly environment. This may be seen when the tourist approaches the Indian in order to photograph him, the former, again, becoming a mere commodity as he is an object to satisfy the white man’s desire.

This breaking with authenticity is also advanced through use of humor in “Indian Photographing Tourist Photographing Indian”, where what is made transparent through discourse, namely the Indian as object of fantasy becomes strikingly obvious. In fact, the tourist is now made into the object of study. There is a reversion of the roles where one is led to question the place of the Native American in our society, as well as the essence of the authentic.
Conclusion

Essentialist views have been dominant in Western ways of perceiving the Other. This view understands cultures as being natural and objective fact, thereby denying the nature of social construct. Such a view has strong repercussions, as power is very unequally distributed and justifiable. An example of this in practice was visible in the chapter on Western Mediation of Native American Art, where dominant ideologies were enforced on the subordinate. In fact, the aesthetics of the natives are altered according to a Western of what the Indian is. Representations were seen as an effective strategy to maintain the power relations, and this was further reinforced by the use of stereotypes.

Stereotyping is in fact a strong tool of representation allowing symbolic control over the Other. Stereotyping is an efficient strategy when they appear as natural by fitting into the dominant discourse, the cultural arbitrary thus appearing being naturalized. It can then exerse its power. The analyses of western stereotypes of the Native Americans has depicted them as romanticized through the discourse of innocence, the myth of ‘authenticity’ along with the ‘vanishing Indian’, and lastly the Indian warrior. In the case of the romanticized Indian we have argued that although it might seem that the stereotype may be favorable for Native Americans, it was not the case. The romanticized Indian is moulded according to the needs and desires of the dominating group. He is therefore not represented with his historical past. He then becomes depoliticized.

The Native American as authentic stems from an essentialist view that the authentic belongs to a homeland. Authenticity involves territoriality in the sense that any given culture has a place it belongs to. By being referred to as the ‘Authentic’, the Native Americans’ diversity was neglected. Symbolic violence is perpetuated through the use of this myth, where the Native Americans are not accorded the space to define themselves.

Lastly, the villain is identifiable through savage-like actions which legitimize the right of the imperialists or the West to ‘defend themselves’. Furthermore, it places the West on a superior level in terms of development, also contributing to maintaining them in the past.

The discussion has studied the engaged responses to essentialist representations and colonization. It is not direct nor physical violence that they are countering, but symbolic violence which has prevailed long after the imperial regime. In the discussion, we argue that the photographs are calling out for hybridity which seems to offer a solution to the problems of essentialist thinking. In fact, by recognizing constructivism, one culture can no longer be seen as the inherently dominant one
enforcing symbolic violence over the others. This leaves space for the Native Americans to reaffirm their history, allowing them to break from a fixed position and gain agency.

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