Squaw, Mistress or Princess? – Stereotypical Representations of Native American Women in Hollywood Narratives

Emilia Mădălina Prodan, PhD candidate
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi

Abstract: *This paper investigates mainstream visual representations of Native American women in several films belonging to different historical periods: John Ford's* My Darling Clementine *(1946) and* The Searchers *(1956), Delmer Daves's* Broken Arrow *(1950), Terrence Malick's* The New World *(2005), Disney's animation* Pocahontas *(1995), as well as James Cameron's* Avatar *(2009). The narratives within the dominant discourse have stereotypically delineated the American Indian women as the "squaw", a household drudge and beast of burden; the seductive (mixed-blood) mistress; or the Indian princess, a modest, but exotically beautiful maiden, usually the chief's daughter. My aim will be threefold: firstly, the analysis of the prevalence of these clichés in films produced at certain points in time. Second, the paper will focus on gender construction, as well as on the male-female/white-Indian dynamics and on the issue of miscegenation. Finally, the paper will analyze the construction of gender and ethnicity in the contemporary American mainstream cinema.*

Key words: *film, Native American, gender, (mis)representation, miscegenation*

In her 1975 essay *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema*, Laura Mulvey argues that Hollywood cinema provides a position highly detrimental to women; since the female characters' role is as "bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning", the visual medium renders woman as image and man as bearer of the look. The woman's image seems "to be looked at" from a male perspective and the female character develops and evolves only in relation to the male protagonist (Mulvey 163). Women are therefore objectified, a fact that reinforces male domination. This gender-biased filmic perspective couples in the case of Native American women with a racially distorted imagery employed by the male Euro-Americans for their own purposes. This essay aims at pointing out some of these stereotypes, constantly focusing on the motivations of those holding the camera.

Feminist criticism constantly scrutinized women's positioning within the patriarchal social structures. Though often criticized by feminists, Claude Lévi-Strauss' perspective on the role of women in the formation of social bounds proved influential in the evolution of feminist thought. In *Elementary Structures of Kinship* Claude Lévi-Strauss considers marriage as the archetype of exchange; exogamy becomes the basic law in primitive societies, awarding every man sexual access to a woman. This male right to choose a wife will result in strong social bounds among men. Consequently, women become the most valuable goods that need to be guarded in order to ensure the survival of the clan. In long term, the social structures solidified the women's role in a binary classification as either virgin (high exchange value) or whore (no exchange value since it is available to all men). This dichotomy was at its highest in the patriarchal Victorian society. And, since the Anglo-Saxon mentality had an important contribution in shaping the newly founded American society, the virgin-whore dichotomy was even more exacerbated under colonialist imperatives of conquest and subordination. The gender-based taxonomies, corroborated with the racist classifications of the American Indians as either noble or ignoble savages [1] categorized the native woman as Princess (the female equivalent of the noble savage) or as Squaw Drudge [2] (Stevenson 57) and sometimes as a prostitute (as the female counterpart of the ignoble male Indian savage).

The former stereotype became the most prominent in Hollywood productions, being labeled by critics as the "Pocahontas type" (Smith 1987, 65). It featured the native woman as a virginal maiden, childlike, naturally innocent, of a ravishing beauty and of high social status, inclined to civilization and conversion to Christianity and to European customs. This Indian Princess, or *la belle sauvage* as French Enlightenment labeled her, has been present in the literary Euro-American imagination since the "discovery" of the American continent. The

latter stereotype, that of the Squaw, was less frequent in the Hollywood narratives, mostly in westerns released in the second half of the twentieth century.

Squaws for Sale

The Squaw Drudge was characterized as a "squat, haggard, papoose-lugging drudge who toiled endlessly", "lived a most unfortunate brutal life" and fought enemies with a vengeance and thirst for blood unmatched by any man (Smith 1987, 65). In contrast to the positive representation as an Indian Princess, the Squaw Drudge is often delineated as sexually licentious, has repulsive physical features (ugliness suggesting her racial inferiority) and is invariably portrayed as a beast of burden and a slave to men, be them white or native as Janice Acoose suggests in her influential work *Iskwewak - Kah'ki yaw ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws*. Outlined as visibly inferior to her white sister who despises her (irrespective of their common position of subordination under patriarchy), the squaw is subjected to a double oppression, that of race and that of gender, which places the native woman at the bottom of the social scale. There is little surprise then that in the mainstream narratives the Squaw Drudge is invested with almost no value.

For instance, John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) outlines one of the most negative images of the native women in United States cinema. The film is considered even today one of the most accomplished Hollywood westerns, even if it was intensely criticized by the ethnic studies critics for its explicit racism. The film mirrors common perceptions of the squaw in the American society in the nineteenth century (when the events in the film unfold) and in the twentieth century (being a cultural artifact, the film inherently bears traces of mentality of the historical moment when it was produced and released). Even though the film doesn't explicitly focus on how native women are treated by both the native and the white men, there are enough elements to sustain the analysis of the genderly and racially biased social prescriptions identifiable beneath the fictional layer of the film.

The economy of the film leaves little space to the presence of native women on screen: fleeting images of what the white mentality deemed as "squaws" catch for a moment the viewer's eye, only to return to the white protagonists' adventures. The film renders on the silver screen the "traditional" squaw, while, at the same time hints to the fate of the white women kidnapped by the Indians who also becomes squaws and are considered to be better off dead than living as Indians, as Ethan Edwards' thinks about his niece Debbie whom he is trying to find for several years after she was kidnapped as a young girl. The reason behind his tireless search is not returning her to the white world, but killing her, since the Indian ways she adopted corrupted her irredeemably (as happened to the crazed white women kidnapped by the Indians and retrieved after the white soldiers slaughtered the tribe and brought them back to the fort). Another fleeting appearance on screen is that of the Indian prostitutes traveling along with the army, as well as the Indian women and their children taken prisoners and hoarded to forts after their husbands were killed by the army. As numerous historical accounts state, native women were forced into prostitution through either physical violence or due to economic circumstances (no other means of sustenance). All native women in *The Searchers* are treated like second-class citizens, retaining almost no value (for instance, Martin Pawley unknowingly buys a wife for two bowler hats, thinking that he bought a blanket), being rendered as "racial objects" (Marubbio 155) rather than human beings.

Wild Goose Flying in the Night Sky (Look) is outlined as the "traditional" [3] squaw in *The Searchers*. Actually, in the era, most native women in Hollywood productions were part of the Indian crowd, delineated as part of the landscape rather than as real human beings. The short appearance of a native woman in the film is notable, even if it is not realistic objective representation, but it is employed for entirely different purposes (the idea I will tackle on later in this essay). Also, the actress who played the part [4] is the only Native

American actress in the film [5]. Though it is a rather small role, it is quite significant since at the time native women were rarely represented in Hollywood productions.

The Indian squaw's appearance in *The Searchers* has two main functions, the former as a comic relief for the tense and strenuous adventures of the white male characters (the racist Ethan Edwards and the mixed-blood Martin Pawley set off to find two white girls who were kidnapped by the Indians and get revenge on the Indians who butchered their family). On the other hand, her "marriage" to Martin is set up as oppositional element to the relationship between Martin and Laurie (his white sweetheart). Outlined as sexually unattractive (as a mocking reply to the Pocahontas' myth), of limited intelligence (she seems to be more like a faithful dog than like a human being). Even if the marriage is rather a mocking variant of the "Indian marriage", Look, as all her kin sisters have to die, putting out the white fear of miscegenation (an issue to be addressed later in this essay).

The Sexualized Maiden

In *Killing the Indian Maiden* Elise Marubbio states that one of the underlying themes in films dealing with what she labels as the Sexualized Maiden is that "the woman's sexual taint resides in her Indian blood like a disease."(Marubbio 130). The supposedly exaggerated sexuality of the Indian women (that is open sexuality, wielded in a manner traditionally permissible only to men), as reiterated in the dominant discourse narratives, strengthened the "scientific" idea so popular during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that blood carries degeneracy. And since most temptresses on screen are of mixed-blood descent, the racial and sexual the stigmas inherited doom her from the beginning: her racial stigma that of being a half-breed [6], coupled with the sexual stigma of being a woman. Subsequently, the mixed-blood Sexualized Maiden is positioned on the lowest level within the mainstream discourse. The mixed-blood Sexualized Maiden carries this evil draped in a seductive form, as John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946) suggests, the mixed-blood girl's Indian blood tainting her white blood and ultimately killing her.

The Sexualized Maiden as delineated in Ford's film is a femme fatale that simultaneously attracts and repels, her garments and gestures accentuating her erotic image. Revealing clothing is a must in her job as a saloon girl, contributing to the fetishization of the woman's body as an object from which men derive visual and sexual pleasure (Marrubio 129). This stereotyping through costuming is also a marker of women's social inferiority. Saloon girls were next to social outcasts and Chihuahua's perpetual hope that Doc would marry her and make her an honest woman is actually socially impracticable.

Even if she is featured on the film poster, Chihuahua has no depth, remaining a flat character whose main purpose is to be set in contrast to the white heroine. Her character gets no respect from the others; she's Doc Holliday's anytime girl and Wyatt has no trouble dunking her in a horse trough while threatening to "send her back to the reservation, where she belongs". Given an insulting pet name instead of a real name or background, it doesn't seem to matter if she's Mexican or Apache in origin: her main purpose in the film is to be a contrasting element to the white heroine. Firstly introduced to the audience as a treacherous seductress, she is despised by all the other characters and is shown sympathy only when she's safely at the point of dying, after sacrificing her life to save the white male characters.

My Darling Clementine presents double heroes and love relations (quite rare for the era) as opposites: the couple of Wyatt Earp and Clementine standing for order, civilization and the promise of a "harmonious community" (Marrubio 129) on the one hand, and the couple of Doc Holliday and Chihuahua as a doomed couple separated by the racial conflict, violence and moral decay. The mixed-blood saloon girl whose real name is never mentioned throughout the film (as being irrelevant) is meant to mirror the destructive behavior of her doomed partner, Doc; on a different level, she is set in contrast to the white angelical beauty

(also implying virtue, honesty and all the qualities rendered as necessary to a lady at the turn of the twentieth century). In opposition, Chihuahua stands for degeneracy, immorality and savagery as a threat to her more civilized white sister. Ford tackles once more, as he did in *The Searchers*, the racism that runs deep into the American national identity.

The Indian Princess

The Indian Princess stereotype emerged in the era of the pro-Indian westerns (at the beginning of the 1950s) when the directors opted for a more sympathetic delineation of the Native Americans. In regard to outlining the female characters, the previous two negative types traditionally employed in the previous period (the squaw and the temptress) were replaced by a more positive, though not less stereotyping image, that of the Indian beautiful maiden mediating between the white and the native worlds. The focus in these films is on her high social status, her beauty and her historic heritage. One of the most representative films is Delmer Daves' 1950 film *The Broken Arrow* which features Sonseeahray as the Indian princess who plays an instrumental part in bridging the tensions between the white and the native culture. Sonseeahray's superiority is suggested by her symbolic and high social status within her tribe as a incarnation of the White-Painted Lady, Mother of Life, an Apache deity. In order to compensate for her racial inferiority, the Indian Princess had to be either of noble birth (usually the chief's daughter, i.e. Pocahontas) or to be placed above the other members of the tribe (i.e. Sonseeahray).

Another distinctive feature of the Indian Princess is her desire to assimilate into the western European culture. All the native maidens start by teaching their white partner their language, but they rapidly end up adopting the white values and are assimilated into the western European culture.

Virginal purity and innocence allude to the native primitivism and to the white moral obligation to civilize the indigenous populations. This is suggested in *The Broken Arrow* by the fact that Sonseeahray's innocence is underlined several times in the film. This childlike innocence alludes to Sonseeahray's need of guidance from a superior being (thus, subtly alluding to the paternalistic Euro-American treatment of the native people even today) [7].

Pocahontas on Display

The Hollywood Pocahontas has little relation to its historical model. Shaped according to the myth-based perceptions of Euro-Americans, Pocahontas is a typical example of male domination of women and appropriation of their power (according to Robertson 1996). Pocahontas' myth is a typical example of how real historical events were manipulated and distorted by the narratives within the dominant discourse in order to legitimize the Euro-American subordination of the native other under the pretence of "authenticity". The myth originates in Captain John Smith's accounts of his interactions with the native tribes in Virginia at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Pocahontas, whom Smith met in 1608, is first mentioned in his *A True Relation of Virginia* (1608) as being "a child of tenne years old" at the time. In *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) John Smith gives an extensive fictionalized account of how Pocahontas saved him from the death that her father, the great chief Powhatan (leader of the Tsenacommacah) condemned him to by throwing herself in front of the executioner [8] after he was captured by the native inhabitants of Virginia.

In Smith's account of Pocahontas there is no hint of a potential romantic relationship between the two. Smith was almost thirty years old when he met the ten- years-old Pocahontas. According to some critics, even the act of Pocahontas saving Smith has a high degree of uncertainty and fictionality attached to Smith's story. Nevertheless, the subsequent popular culture narratives of Pocahontas constantly brought the two together in a doomed

interracial relation that would eventually become the prototype for native-white ill-fated interracial relationship.

Pocahontas' story is the most prominent narrative of white-native interracial romantic relationship. Eventually Pocahontas did marry a white man, the tobacco planter John Rolfe, adopted the white ways, converted to Christianity and took the name Rebecca. The couple and their son traveled back to England where Pocahontas fell ill and died in 1617, at the age of nineteen.

Disney, looking to highlight a new multicultural sensibility, took John Smith's account of his love story with Pocahontas and turned it into a box office success. The film was cross-marketed to children (especially little girls) through the sale of Pocahontas themed Nestle chocolate bars, Barbie dolls, Halloween costumes, coloring books, and many others. The animated version of the historical native girl is that of a grown-up woman looking more like a contemporary model that as a seventeenth century indigenous woman, with almond-shaped eyes that look rather Asian and with a highly sensual body.

As it was fitted for a children's film, Pocahontas is not killed in the end, she and Smith choosing dedication to serving their people instead of having a selfish affair (quite a clever subterfuge for avoiding miscegenation), unlike *The New World* where Pocahontas has to die.

New Age Feminism

James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) is more than just another story of the white male protagonist going native, at least in respect to women status within the social structures. In the film the technologized mercantilism of corporatist America is contrasted to the Edenic harmony of the Na'vis with their exotic land on the planet Pandora [9]. Jake Sully, a paraplegic ex-marine, is literally going native through a temporary mind-inhabiting of an avatar, a hybrid body that combines the human DNA with the DNA of the natives.

The women in Avatar are intelligent, strong and independent, fighting side by side with the men. Ney'tiri is feminine yet powerful, beautiful, and deadly. Grace, the chain-smoking scientist is intelligent, strong willed, and witty and she still manages to keep her femininity. Trudy is as good a soldier as her male colleagues; her flying abilities are outstanding, surpassing those of the men around her. Mo'at, Ney'tiri's mother, is governing the tribe alongside with her husband, her spiritual guidance situating her on a particularly powerful position. The Omaticaya women have complete control over their own lives. Many of them choose to become soldiers, fighting alongside their men. This representation of women on screen is laudable, but it is not surprising. More and more contemporary women are financially independent, pursuing a career and having full control over their lives. This sort of equality and strength of women is appealing to most women, adding to the success of the film.

Surpassing at times the drawbacks of the Indian Princess stereotype, Ney'tiri is delineated as a strong woman possessing full control not only over her decisions, but also over her emotional positioning within society (there is no trace of the obeying daughter in her, Ney'tiri defying both tradition and her parents when choosing a husband). She fights alongside Jack, leading with him the fight against the human invaders. Even more importantly, she is the one to save Jack (reversing thus the damsel-in-distress imagery reiterated within the patriarchal discourse since Romanticism).

On Miscegenation

The term of miscegenation was coined in the nineteenth century in connection to interracial marriage and interracial sex, and more generally, to the process of racial mixing. In the United States race mixing, especially between black and white people has been taboo for many centuries, anti-miscegenation laws being in place in the United States as early as 1691.

In regard to native-white interracial relationships, there were no legal interdictions (except for a short period in the seventeenth century). Nevertheless, there has always been a certain tension in the area where the two races intermingled, miscegenation being regarded as highly undesirable (though, I repeat, not forbidden) and the children resulting from such unions being usually treated as substandard citizens. Labeled as "half-breeds", often together with a derogatory adjective, such as "stinking", the mixed-blood individuals were given by the white society an even lower status than the full blood natives and, while being often rejected by the native community as well.

On a symbolic level, the fear of miscegenation is a recurrent theme within the white imaginary. The foundational story in the United States focuses on the Founding Fathers – white political leaders and statesmen who participated in the American Revolution by signing *The Declaration of Independence*, establishing the United States Constitution. The inhabitants of the new country who were not white or male (Native Americans, African Americans, women, etc.) were negatively inscribed in the new social structures that proffered equality for everyone and were virtually excluded from the democratic government.

In comparison to the foundational story in the United States, Brazilian foundational stories, for instance, reflect a different attitude towards racial intermixing. Whereas the North American vision of national identity was inscribed into an unstated, yet nevertheless, normative "whiteness", the Brazilian vision of national identity was usually premised on the notion of racial multiplicity, metaphorically labeled as "tropical multiculturalism" [10]. Since miscegenation was used by colonizers as an instrument to control the native population, interracial mixing is much more common in Brazil than in the United States where racial purity was generally the norm. Consequently, the symbolic representation (in literature and, later, in cinema) of interracial mixing in the two cultural spaces differ greatly. Brazil's foundational story involves a native woman and a white man (José de Alencar' novel *Iracema* is the most famous novel about brazilian literary representation of interracial love) or a native man and a white woman (José de Alencar' s novel *O Guarani*, for instance). The implication is that the Brazilian nation is born from the mixing of the two races (white and indigenous), whereas in the US culture, the union of the two races is doomed (*Pocahontas*, for instance), whiteness overpowering all the other races.

Although representations of Native Americans in Hollywood films have, as a whole, moved away from the simplistic categorizations noble savage/bloodthirsty demon, miscegenation gets the same treatment it did one hundred years ago, the motif of the interracial love affair remaining still behind the times: even if natives have been outlined as complex human beings in recent Hollywood productions, it seems that fear of miscegenation still dooms interracial relationships to failure. There are few productions which outline white characters as abhorring miscegenation. For instance, there is a very subtle treatment of the common view on miscegenation in both John Ford's film discussed in this essay. In *The Searchers*, Martin Pawley's attitude towards his Indian "wife" when she sets his camping bed next to his is extremely rude and violent for a character that is very gentle and kind throughout the film. Even if Martin himself has some Indian blood (he is one eighth Cherokee), his violent rejection of miscegenation is highly suggestive of the commonly-held view on interracial relationships.

As compared to Black-white interracial marriage, which was strictly forbidden (legally, as well as on screen), there was a certain tolerance towards native-white interracial relations, though Hollywood almost invariably doomed the union to failure. As Edward Buscombe states in *Injuns!: Native Americans in the Movies*, "Indian westerns [have an] almost obsessive interest in the question of mixed marriage... Fully half of the forty films [released in the 1950s and 1960s] contain a character who engages in some sort of sexual relationship across the racial divide, but never without difficulty: that is to say, the

relationships are never 'normal' or 'natural' – instead, there is always a problem of some kind" (Buscombe 125). Consequently, a fruitful union is impossible, the purity of the white race being of outmost importance in Hollywood, as Friar and Friar assert: "White men marrying Indian maids has long been a favorite subject in Westerns but – and there has always been a but – something must happen to prevent the couple from living happily ever after" (Friar and Friar 238).

The problematic implications of interracial relationships was generally dealt with by killing one of the lovers – most of the times the native woman – ending the film on a note of bittersweet resignation. Such is the case in *Broken Arrow*, which shows Jimmy Stewart's Apache wife, Sonseeahray, killed just before the end of the film. Countless other films in the era follow the same scenario in suggesting the inevitable demise of the race, as Buscome observes: "it is as if the filmmakers, taken aback in their audacity in depicting such a transgressive union, need to introduce the woman's death in order to mitigate the offense: the only good Indian wife is a dead Indian wife" (Buscombe, 127).

While miscegenation has long been a theme of western literature and films regarding Native Americans, it never seems to end on a note of interracial harmony: the indigenous lover is killed off (in most scenarios), the white hero finds out he has native blood and is thus not the Other anymore or the lovers find that their cultural differences are too strong to overcome. Natasha and Ralph Friar termed this tendency the "cop-out" as they noted its prevalence in westerns of the 1930s and 1940s (Friar and Friar, 167). But fear of miscegenation was not specific only to the most negative period in portraying Native Americans in film. It is still taboo in movies from the 1990s, as well as in the latest Hollywood productions, such as *Avatar* (2009). Similarly to the directors of early westerns, modern directors still employ the same artifices in order to negate the interracial love affair by introducing plot twists through which interracial relationships are no longer an issue.

One of the most typical motifs involved in interracial Native/ white relationships is that of the Native woman sacrificing herself or her people for her love. This motif has been played out in hundreds of films during the last century (Kilpatrick 13), but most notably, of course, in the Pocahontas stories. The intermixing of white and Native Americans is a historical fact; indeed, many white families took "pride in having a select type of Indian blood", as Donald Kaufmann states, "the best of Wasps, horrified at having one drop of Negro blood, somehow imagined that all went well in the family tree after an illustrious male ancestor stepped off the Mayflower and mated with the first available Indian princess" (Kaufmann 28).

The solution found by recent Hollywood films for a valid and durable romantic involvement of the white hero with a woman belonging to a native tribe is quite predictable. In *Dances with Wolves*, for instance, the woman Dunbar falls in love with is a white woman, Stands With a Fist, who was adopted into the tribe when she became an orphan as a child.

James Cameron's 2009 film *Avatar* finds an alternative way to negate interracial mixing in films dealing with aboriginal characters simply by negating the issue of race. A classic Pocahontas story, *Avatar*'s solution to the interspecies relationship of Neytiri and Jake is to permanently transfer Jake's mind into his avatar body, thus literally having the main character "go Native". Consequently, the interracial love affair is no longer an issue and, therefore, it is an acceptable note on which to end the movie. As a human/Na'vi couple, Neytiri and Jake are biologically incompatible, an uncomfortable metaphor for white/native relationships. The film offers a new solution to the issue of miscegenation, but it still does not confront it. Apparently racial prejudices continue to inform the visual narratives within the dominant discourse.

To conclude, mainstream visual representations of Native American women in different periods tend to be stereotypical and bear little connection to reality, being employed

to serve as justification or legitimization for the Euro-American mistreatment and subjugation of the indigenous women throughout the tumultuous United States history. Even if more recent productions empower women to a certain extent, the racial stereotyping is still present and miscegenation continues to remain a taboo in Hollywood.

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Notes

[1] The indigenous inhabitants of the Americas have been represented as either noble or bloodthirsty savages from the initial contact (see, for instance *The Letter of Columbus to Luis De Saint Angel Announcing His Discovery* from 1493) to contemporary Hollywood cinema. In my thesis *Contemporary Native American Self-fashioning Narratives* I examine *in extenso* these ideologically-loaded misrepresentations of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas in the dominant discourse narratives.
[2]The word *squaw* was borrowed by the English language from the Algonquian languages in which it meant "woman". In English it was mostly used, both as a noun and as an adjective, as a generic term which designates an indigenous woman of North America. Even if initially it did not have any negative connotations, in some late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries texts the word squaw is used or perceived as derogatory. Critics as Steels, Hodge or Harris investigated the derogative usage of the word in English. In the second half of the twentieth century the word also acquired a negative sexual connotation. Sanders and Peek (1973) stated that in the 1970s there was a common view according to which the word *squaw* originated form a native word meaning "female genitals". For contemporary Native Americans the term is highly offensive, the usage of "squaw" demeaning native women because it suggests condescending images and even racialist attitudes.
[3] I use the inverted commas in order to emphasize the presupposed veridicality of the master narratives.
[4] Beulah Archuletta (1912–1969), the actress cast in the role of Wild Goose Flying in the Night Sky, was often cast as a squaw parts in numerous Hollywood productions.
[5] Until quite recently, non-native actors were cast to play native roles in the Hollywood productions. With a few notable exceptions, from the late 1920s to the early 1980s native actors were cast mostly as extras, white actors in red face representing the Indian on screen for the white audience by simply using the "Instant Indian Kit" (Ralph and Natasha Friar), a specific set of props that would turn any white wearer into an "authentic" Indian (this costume included "traditional" Indian clothing and other paraphernalia which made the wearer easily recognizable, as for instance: black longhaired wig, full buckskin clothes, headband, necklaces, moccasins, war bonnets, bone breastplates, etc.). In regard to the films that I look into in this essay, only the very recent *The New World* has a native actress cast in the lead role (Q'orianka Kilcher as Pocahontas).
[6] Mixed-bloods were despised even more than full-blood natives, both by the white community and by the native tribes.
[7] The infamous Bureau of Indian Affairs harmed the survivors of the nineteenth century genocides in new ways. Even today, under the pretence of helping the natives (the same paternalistic attitude was employed by the whites in their attitudes towards African-Americans as well), being nevertheless quite harmful.
[8] According to latest criticism on the mythical delineation of Pocahontas, the entire episode of the native girl saving the white colonist is merely an invention. Though there are several historical accounts of Pocahontas, the only written source on Pocahontas' act of saving Captain Smith is the latter's *The Generall Historie of Virginia*.
[9] As the European explorers named "the new world" they discovered at the end of the fifteenth century "America" and the inhabitants they encountered "Indians", there is little surprise that Cameron, who also wrote the script, chose a name from ancient Greek mythology to name the planet the humans invaded in order to exploit its natural resources. The symbolical subordination of Pandora and its technologically underdeveloped inhabitants (who use bows and arrows to fight machineguns) starts thus at the level of discourse: the ominous denomination alludes to the humans' failure to conquer the planet and exploit it, while, at the same time, it silences the planet inhabitants at the discursive level (the viewer learns that the Na'vi band in the film is called Omaticaya but that's about all in regard to native denominations).
[10] Term coined by Robert Stam in his famous study of the Brazilian cinema Tropical Multiculturalism: A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema and Culture.

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Filmography

Avatar. Dir. James Cameron. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2009
Broken Arrow. Dir. Delmer Daves. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1950
Dances With Wolves. Dir. Kevin Costner. Tig Productions, 1990
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