The Enduring Villain: Germans as Nazi Stereotypes in American Cinema

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https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-qfxe-y652

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THE ENDURING VILLAIN:
GERMANS AS NAZI STEREOTYPES IN AMERICAN CINEMA

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of American Studies
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Christine Lokotsch Aube
1998
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Author

Approved, December 1998

Arthur Knight

Christy Burns

Jennifer Taylor
To my parents and my husband, without whom none of this would have been possible.
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The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Professor Arthur Knight for his guidance, encouragement, and thoughtful criticism. The author also thanks Professors Christy Burns and Jennifer Taylor for their careful reading and helpful suggestions.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the development and popularity of German stereotypes in American cinema from the inception of the medium until the present day, with a special focus on the emerging of a specific, the Hitchcockian, stereotype.

The investigation centered on the depiction of male antagonists in mainstream Hollywood productions, films in which studios as well as filmmakers had a vested interest, which elicited critical responses, and which reached and influenced broad audiences.

The findings show a historical as well as contemporary preoccupation with Germans as negative characters who, from the onset of World War II on, were increasingly inscribed with Nazi traits. These stereotypes have evolved over time but are still a prevalent staple in movie-making and related cultural branches.

Applying psychoanalytical theories, this study suggests that the presence of negative German stereotypes can be attributed to a still lingering fear of Germany and Germans, but also to the usefulness of this stereotype as a tool to cope with the domestic unrest and geopolitical turmoil Americans had to face in the past decades.

Hollywood’s enduring interest in Nazi or Nazi-like villains, together with the relative absence of positive German characters and the relegation of German actors to antagonistic roles, has resulted in a conflation of the concepts of Nazism and Germanness in American movie culture.
THE ENDURING VILLAIN:

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INTRODUCTION

We order our experiences through the symbolic act, or, at least, we construct an acceptable order for them through the use of symbolic language taken from the society or culture in which we live. The roots of this symbolization are in the need for order; its form is the essential symbolic language of any given worldview. Thus science and religion, literature and art, the representation of the "real" and the "fictive," all exist in terms of symbolic language.

- Sander Gilman (1991)

[Germany’s] past will not go away precisely because its representations are everywhere.

- Anton Kaes (1989)

Germany is Hitler and Hitler is Germany.

- Rudolf Hess (1934)

“Are you German?” This question is posed by a French archeologist to a small-headed, but otherwise oversized, ironclad alien warlord in the science fiction movie The Fifth Element (1997). And this allusion to Germany’s militant past is not the only anti-German reference in the film: the primary antagonist, Zorg (Gary Oldman), with his rabid rhetoric, small beard and black, distinctly parted hairdo is clearly fashioned after Adolf Hitler. These curious Germanic characters in an international production - the film is the result of French-U.S. cooperation - is only one of many examples of the ongoing presence of Nazi-like characters in big-budget movies. Germans as a group, and by their unique Nazi-association after the Anschluss, Austrians, are apparently singled out by Hollywood as the one Axis power that still poses a considerable threat to humanity, unlike their former consorts: Italian and Japanese/Asian characters, while also stereotyped and often vilified, seem to have
been romanticized in past decades, to the point where films with Italian or Asian ethnic subject matter form their own popular genres.²

By comparison, the image of a militant, villainous Germanic persona pervades not only World War II Allies’ movie industries, but also surfaces in TV series, commercials, and even music videos. The root of this cinematic phenomenon may be found in Hollywood’s anti-German imagery around World War II. With movie production at an all-time high during and right after the war, the message that Germans were generally evil Nazis was received by hundreds of thousands of entertainment-hungry American spectators.³ This potent propaganda was, as Dana Polan has noted, compounded by the fact that most of contemporary Hollywood presented Nazis according to the conventions of the gangster film genre.⁴ The resulting stereotype, while certainly not the first negative depiction of Germans in American cinema, has been a prominent feature ever since.

Traditionally, academic work on cinematic representation has focused on the prejudiced depiction of women, repressed minorities, non-American exotic cultures, or religious groups. The stereotyping of Germans is the topic of comparatively little scholastic discourse, despite the quasi-omnipresence of Germanic or Nazified villains in post-World War II films.⁵ The relative absence of positive characterizations of Germans seem a noteworthy omission - Germany’s 50-year commitment to democracy has obviously not diminished the popularity or usefulness of the German as Nazi antagonist. On the contrary, it seems that is has become more common to confine the imagery of Germans to their Nazi past. This continued Hollywood practice and the conscious use of the powerful German/Nazi stereotype deserve an
analytical look at this representation’s origin, its modification and ramification, as well as its ongoing implementation.⁶

What is more, the popularity of a static, one-dimensional Germanic foil character, whose prominent Nazi traits serve as unreflected, ready-made signifiers for evil, seems frivolous in the face of six million murdered Jews and more than 50 million war casualties.⁷ The irresponsible and indiscriminate evocation of a historical horror and the prevalent narrative convention that has the hero triumphant after about 90 minutes of filmic fiction, oversimplifies and incidentalizes the concept of the “Third Reich,” and therefore trivializes the suffering of its victims. Contrarily, representations of a more multi-layered, realistic antagonist - while still fusing the constructs of Nazism and Germanness and forging yet another stereotype in the process - works as a reminder that all these crimes against humanity were committed by humans. Alfred Hitchcock first introduced such ordinary Nazis, who share characteristics and convictions with the spectator and thus force the audience to acknowledge that war and genocide are not specifically German but can be - and are - perpetrated by people much like the viewer himself.⁸

In this study, a brief overview of pre-World War II portrayals of Germans in chapter one is followed by a closer look at some influential wartime productions.⁹ Here, the deployment of German characters generally follows a specific pattern: before the U.S. joined the fight in World War II, there were often “good” German protagonists - played by American or British actors - who were persecuted by the minor characters, evil Nazis that were often portrayed by actors of German descent.¹⁰ After 1941, the plots usually revolved around Allied characters, and Anglo-Americans
ceased to take roles as Germans - probably because there were virtually no more of the “good” kind.11

After establishing a pattern of Hollywood-made stereotyping of Germans, I show in chapter two how certain films play on this image and even expand it. With the help of a detailed analysis of three Hitchcock movies that bracket the American involvement in World War II, *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Lifeboat* (1944), and *Notorious* (1946), I argue that Hitchcock as auteur used German stereotypes consciously and thus invented a new inflection of the traditional Nazi stereotype: the humane murderer who chills audiences by showing ordinary, even positive characteristics, thereby enticing the viewer to partially identify with the Nazi. A sign of this deliberate deployment of stereotyping is the evolution of Hitchcock’s German villains; the rather monolithic, yet emotional spy of *Foreign Correspondent* develops into a more three-dimensional, almost sympathetic killer in *Lifeboat*, who evolves into a multi-faceted and therefore uncannily familiar persona in *Notorious*.

The third chapter, then, is dedicated to the proliferation of postwar Germanic stereotypes, the influence of Hitchcockian villains, and the perpetual popularity of Nazi and Nazified characters - both the one-dimensional and the polymorphic types. Scriptwriters and directors, as my opening example indicates, draw upon the powerful stereotype to this day; the fictitious, villainous Nazi or Nazi-like culprit has survived historical realities like unconditional surrender and the Nuremberg Trials, to resurface in period pieces and science fiction films alike. The sturdy breed of Germanic antagonists penetrates, as I have suggested, not only genres, but also geographical boundaries and production budgets: Nazis terrorize in Hollywood blockbusters like
Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), as well as in little-known British productions, like The Keep (1983). Nazis and neo-Nazis populate the small screen as well, from the concentration-camp comedy Hogan's Heroes (CBS, 1960s) to the gothic series Millennium (Fox, 1990s). The German Nazi wreaks havoc in modern-day settings, from The Marathon Man (1976) to Apt Pupil (1998), and he has even managed to bequeath his fascist ideology to villains of other nationalities: Nazi-like, or, to make the point clearer, Nazified villains can be South Africans (in A Dry White Season, 1989), Russians (The Peacemaker, 1997), or of obscure nationality (as in various James-Bond movies).

To examine the psychological causes for the omnipresent cinematic Nazi villain in both war and post-war productions, I apply Sander Gilman's psychoanalytical theories about the creation of stereotyping as not only an explainable phenomenon, but even a necessary tool for survival. The political turmoil that Germany created with its assault on Europe in the late 1930s was strongly felt in the filmmaking community. Jewish-led studios like Warner Bros., anti-fascist actors, and émigré filmmakers reacted by inscribing German characters with Nazi traits and by creating a vicious Nazi stereotype as a means to bring a certain kind of clarity into a world that was spinning out of control. This need for order and structure is palpable in the so-called "prematurely anti-fascist" films made before 1942, which expressed Hollywood's anti-isolationist politics, as well as in wartime productions, all of which at least indicate an Allied victory and thus implicated the return to peace and harmonic symmetry.
However, Gilman’s studies suggest that the uncanny survival of the evil Nazi is due not just to his convenient use as a stock or foil character, but also to the opportunity to meet a psychological demand that does not occupy a specific temporal space. The producers of films and their customers alike still feel what the psychologist calls “a need for order” - to explain inexplicable monstrosities like the Holocaust and World War II combat, as well as to confine these atrocities to certain predictable and therefore manageable stereotypes. This psychological constriction of horror to a familiar image works with both one-dimensional and more desirable, nuanced representations of Germanic villains, signifying that the process of stereotyping cannot be uniformly judged as wrong or harmful. To apply Gilman’s theories to the depiction of Germans in Hollywood productions helps to comprehend how Americans in general view certain ethic groups, and how negative perceptions can be influenced by the filmmaking community.
NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

1 The quoted scene is from the beginning of the film which starts out with a flashback to 1914. And while the narrative introduces this particular alien fighter as a positive figure who had come to earth to prevent an apocalypse, the negative connotation of Germanness and violent militarism is obvious.

2 Italian heroes and anti-heroes were celebrated in Academy Award-winning productions like the Godfather trilogy (1972-1990), or Moonstruck (1987), while the former Asian enemy - and its equally exoticized neighbors - gained some filmic clout as wise instructor and occasionally even fighter against evil in scores of martial arts movies.


4 Polan states that “the endurance of fixed forms is so strong that even those films that try initially to separate gangsterism and Nazism often seem to finally blur the two.” In Dana Polan, Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 63.

5 The most prolific work has been done by German sociologists Lothar Bredella, Wolfgang Gast, and Gerhard Probst. American scholars Daniel Leab, Richard Oehling, Allen Woll, and Randall Miller devoted only short articles or book chapters to this issue.

6 It should be noted that this analysis is limited to the portrayal of male characters, because the intimate relationship between Germanness and Nazism is largely defined by the interaction of male villains with male and female protagonists. An explanation for this causality might be a general shortage of representative examples of prominent female Nazis in Hollywood productions.


8 The existence of a less offensive Germanic stereotype does not suggest that the depiction of Germans in these films is satisfactory or accurate. Hollywood’s treatment of Germans should be a topic in the filmmaking community as well as in academia.

9 For the purpose of this study, “influential” means successful movies made by prominent indigenous or émigré filmmakers for large studios like MGM, Paramount, or Warner Bros. - films that probably reached and impressed large audiences. This particular focus does not preclude the analysis of certain popular TV programs, though.

A notable exception to this overall cinematic designation is the Fred Zinneman film *The Seventh Cross* (1944), in which Spencer Tracy plays a German who escaped from a concentration camp.

An April 1998 episode had the protagonist battle a Nazi spy ring named “Odessa.” This particular organization, which achieved cinematic fame with the 1974 film *The Odessa File*, is rumored to have escaped de-nazification by fleeing to South America; its ultimately purpose, however, is to reestablish the reign of the “master race.”


CHAPTER I

HOLLYWOOD’S STEREOTYPICAL GERMAN THROUGH WORLD WAR II

Works of art, even works of entertainment, do not come into being in a political and social vacuum; the way they operate in a society cannot be separated from politics, from history.


I. The Development of the German Image

Beginning with Bismarck’s “blood and iron” policy in the late nineteenth century, Germany and Germans acquired a militant, authoritarian image within Europe and abroad. The first unification of modern Germany, compounded by a nationalistic realpolitik and the patronizing rhetoric of the Kaiser and his cabinet, produced diplomatic and political tensions among the leading industrial powers of the age. Given this background of a charged political atmosphere, it is perhaps not surprising that the representation of Germans in the emerging U.S. movie industry was largely confined to negative stereotypes. A contributing factor seems to have been the prevailing American perception of German immigrants as a united, politically active and therefore potentially threatening community. Specifically, German Americans were linked to radicalism and social unrest, particularly in labor politics. According to historian Michael Hunt, Americans fear revolutions and sudden social change, so images of Germans often worked to trigger an ingrained American suspicion of political radicalism; therefore, the seemingly unsettling influence of German characteristics helped to manifest negative stereotypes.¹
Stereotypes, as psychologist Sander Gilman has argued, work as a subconscious buffer against the hidden fears of the self. He regards them as a “universal means of coping with anxieties engendered by our inability to control the world.” These fears and the necessity to create stereotypes to manage them are prevalent patterns in every individual, even in “the creative artists in our society.” Gilman concludes that “stereotypes can assume a life of their own, rooted not only in reality but in the myth-making made necessary” by this need of control.\(^2\) According to this argument, the emergence of a malevolent, martial German stereotype can be linked to the depressions of the 1870s and 1890s in the U.S. - occurrences that, while not related to Germans or Germany, still created economic concern in much of the population. This lack of control over the domestic economy, combined with the rise of Germany as an industrial, colonial, and military power, might have instilled a sense of distress in Americans. Thus, they exchanged the complex reality of the multi-faceted German individual for a conveniently monolithic, “typical” German character with largely negative connotations.\(^3\)

As a consequence of domestic and international affairs that in turn bred the necessity for Americans to create stereotypes in order to cope with national disquiet, the early German screen image was made up of classic stock characters. This development climaxed in World War I, after German imperialism had pulled the world into a conflict of unprecedented proportions: villainy in Hollywood pictures was almost monopolized by characters in spiked helmets and German uniforms. During the war, filmmakers readily joined the “Hate the Hun” campaigns orchestrated
by Washington's Creel Commission. Hollywood went to war with such movies like *The Little American* (1917), in which the character of the tremendously popular May Pickford is deserted and later assaulted by her German lover, and *The Kaiser - Beast of Berlin* (1918), which portrayed Germans as arrogant and cruel. A particularly stirring anti-Hun image was conveyed by one of the most famous directors of the silent film era, D. W. Griffith, with *Hearts of the World* (1918), when a spike-helmeted German bullwhipped a cowering Lillian Gish. The ferocity of this cinematic onslaught on German characters was probably a consequence of widespread American war angst; after all, Woodrow Wilson had secured his second term as president by employing the slogan "He kept us out of the war" in the 1916 elections. If stereotyping "helps us with the instabilities of the world," as Gilman argues, then the terrifying "Hun" was an emotionally logical, understandable creation. By the end of World War I, Germans had been firmly established as warmongers in the American psyche.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, the stereotype of the militaristic German did not vanish from the silver screen. Successful actors and directors like Erich von Stroheim capitalized on the image of the haughty, authoritarian German aristocrat. In the major films he directed, from *Blind Husbands* (1919) to *Queen Kelly* (1928), he personified the cruel Prussian officer and refueled American prejudices towards Germans. Commercially eminent productions about World War I, like the first Academy Award winner *Wings* (1927), reintroduced the hated Iron Cross as a target for patriotic plane fighters and the term "Heinie" for the generic German soldier.
There was, however, a shift in tone: the rabid anti-German cinematic rhetoric was replaced by a more subtle presentation of German stock characters as mechanical soldiers rather than demons - which reinforces Gilman’s theory that “stereotypes are inherently protean rather than rigid.” Nonetheless, even more complex - and incidentally highly successful - anti-war movies like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), which showed the plight of German enlisted soldiers during World War I, still established the German officer as a trigger-happy ignoramus and, more importantly, had the movie-made German still dressed in military garb.

With the influx of German and Austrian émigrés into Hollywood, brought about by the booming film industry, the rise of Nazism in Germany, and especially by the start of World War II, the stereotypical German devolved again into a dehumanized aggressor. During the 1930s, the immigrant artists tried to draw attention to a rearming, fascist country which openly propagated brutality as a means of “survival of the fittest.” Met by resistance from the cautiously neutral established studios, they nonetheless managed to establish an anti-Nazi association by the mid-30s which eventually recruited more than 4,000 members - and despite president Franklin D. Roosevelt’s isolationist rhetoric, which mirrored neutralist sentiments of government and citizenry, anti-German movies started to appear a few years later. Herbert Kline’s *Crisis* (1938) was among the early films that dealt with Hitler’s militarism and the consequences for Czechoslovakia, followed by a sensationalized *March of Time* installment titled *Inside Nazi Germany*, produced by Louis de Rochemont. Consequently, war-weary moviegoers were again subjected to - and
continued to subscribe to - an image of the German as unemotional, militaristic brute.

II. Early Anti-Nazi Films and the Use of Symbolism

The first movie that openly and successfully broke with America’s - and Hollywood’s - dominant mode of political isolationism came with *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in 1939. This film served as a trendsetter for later movies, whether produced before or after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent American entry into World War II, by sending a strong anti-fascist messages to its audience. Hollywood deployed its considerable arsenal of dialogue, score, narrative, camerawork, mise-en-scene, editing, and star power to again denounce the Germanic evil. Third Reich symbols, like the fear-inspiring black leather coat of the Gestapo, swastikas, and SS-runes were used in abundance, signifying danger and desolation. In the course of a few movies in 1939 and 1940, the Nazi character himself became shorthand for terror, a symbol of destruction.

Like the process of stereotyping, the use of symbols seems to fulfill a psychological need. Sander Gilman investigates the psychological origin of symbols in stereotyping. In his discourse on representation, he argues that individuals, “(and this includes the artist) restructure [their] fictive world in terms of a symbolic language.” According to Gilman, this process is prompted by the universal human need for “a matrix for the structures for order.” And since the process of stereotyping as a tool to cope with the world’s uncontrollability corresponds to this paradigm, it
can be inferred that the desire for control can result in the use of literal symbols in texts - like swastikas in anti-Nazi films. Gilman asserts that everybody provides himself with “clean, ordered abstractions which transform the chaos of the flow of events into understandable meaning. This is a retrospective ordering, using symbols (with all their public meanings) to provide a context for our sense of self.” In the case of Hollywood productions, these “clean, ordered abstractions” might be Nazi characters, who stand in for evil, terror, and murderous attempts at ethnic cleansing and world domination, as well as their appropriated symbols (swastika, flags, anthems) and typical characteristics (Heil Hitler and Sieg Heil greetings, goose-stepping, singing of patriotic songs).

Confessions of a Nazi Spy, which opened in May of 1939, not only introduced several of the symbols that came to signify Nazi representations, but did so as a considerable commercial success. Director Anatole Litvak, an immigrant who had been forced to flee from the Gestapo, told the story of a vicious Nazi spy ring in New York that is finally broken by a smart and resourceful FBI agent, played by the openly anti-fascist actor Edward G. Robinson. This Warner Brother production was based on a book by Special Agent Leon Turrou, who had solved the case of a real spy operation in 1938. The realism of the film was boosted by the actual trials of the spy ring leaders shortly before the release, as well as by several formal devices: Litvak not only had the hero’s name changed to use the real first name of his star - it is Special Agent Edward Renard who breaks the film’s spy ring - but he also injected newsreel
footage as well as clips from Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda film *Triumph des Willens* (1934) to demonstrate Nazi fanaticism.19

The film's reliance on symbols is evident in both in narrative and formal make up. For example, swastikas and SS runes indicate a character's allegiances, but their cluttering presence in Nazi offices also contrasts German extremism with American rationalism, the latter represented by Renard's practical, work-oriented desk. Head Nazi Dr. Kassel (Paul Lucas) indicates his change from clandestine operator to active recruiter of American youths by a change from suit into uniform and boots, and his treacherous character, introduced under a banner that reads “Haltet dem Fuehrer die Treue [Stay Faithful to the Fuehrer],” finally betrays not only his wife but also his associates. His inept sidekick Schneider (Frances Lederer) serves also as a foil character to the honest, industrious, and cunning Renard: Schneider lies indiscriminately to allies and enemies alike, leads a lazy life, and thoroughly underestimates “single-minded Americans.”

Litvak also used symbols as technical devices. The most striking formal tool in *Confessions* is the “swastika iris,” a propagandistic instrument he not only invented, but also used liberally as a transition between scenes.20 Other instances of artistic symbolization are a few carefully lit shots that undergird the film’s message: in the beginning, the narrator is left an anonymous figure in the shadow, giving the production an objective, semi-documentary aura right from the start; another example is a scene in a Nazi office, toward the end of *Confessions*, when the shadow of a swastika falls over a map of the American continents. A further symbol is the use of
the German anthem in minor key during Gestapo persecution of “enemies of the Reich,” a musical announcement of the sad state of the German country. This artistic use of bars from anthems in the score resurfaced in many future anti-German war films.

The German-American Bund, and to a lesser extent, the German Nazi government, were outraged by *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. Hitler’s diplomats initiated a counter offensive that led to a ban of the film in 18 countries, while the Bund’s official newspaper published a rabid criticism of the “Jew-infested” production. The paper, *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter*, concluded that because members of the Bund and its security force were portrayed as brutal thugs - one American character actually exclaims “You guys are just a bunch on gangsters” - the movie resembled a gangster film “shot by Hollywood Hebrews.” These accusations about the film’s Jewish focus seem ironic, since despite the fact that many of the actors were previously persecuted émigrés, *Confessions* does not even hint at the pogrom of European Jews.

Another influential film, which also ran afoul of the Nazi regime and prompted the German Ministry of Propaganda to ban all MGM pictures, was *The Mortal Storm* (1940). The plot about the break-up of a happy family over Nazi ideology, resembles the story line of the smaller and less successful production *Four Sons*, which was released by TCF the same year. For *Storm*, Hollywood again deployed star power to get the message across: James Stewart plays Martin, the pacifist lover of Freya (Margaret Sullavan), whose outspoken non-Aryan father ultimately dies in a
concentration camp. The narrative reveals the perfidy of the Nazi psyche and its ideology: sons betray their loving stepfather, formally loyal servants succumb to fascist coercion, peaceful Bavarian villagers mutate into book-burning fanatics, and Freya’s ex-fiancée even commands her shooting death as she tries to ski across the German border into still-free Austria.

The use of symbolism in Frank Borzage’s film is occasionally heavy-handed but nonetheless effective. He shoots idyllic, almost biblical scenes with animals and humans in a manger and adds an understanding, benevolent mother to this household, who symbolically marries Freya and Martin by serving them apple schnapps in a bridal cup before their fatal journey. Furthermore, the director poignantly films the shadow of a lonely statue - a gift to Freya’s now dead father that resembles the Statue of Liberty - as the sole occupant of the ravished family’s house at the end of the movie. His Nazis use swastika paperweights, flaunt military insignia, and display, according to a German film critic, “strange arrays of teutonic weaponry.” In addition, the already stereotypical Nazi appears frequently to bully old men and girls, divide families, prohibit free speech, and kill dissenters - he stands for all that is undesirable in a free and democratic society.

After the fall of France in June of 1940, the “good,” anti-fascist German, who had received considerable treatment in, for example, The Mortal Storm, Beasts of Berlin (1939), and even The Great Dictator (1940), began to vanish. Hollywood’s message shifted from rousing awareness to the Nazi threat and pleas for peace to openly propagating intervention. Films like The Man I Married (July 1940) and
*Foreign Correspondent* (August 1940) focus on devious, cruel characters who hunger for world dominance and relish the opportunity to denounce and torture. But even these anti-isolationist pictures, despite their similar thrust and symbolism, display considerable differences. The Hitchcock film, as I will show in more detail in chapter two, composes its interventionist propaganda carefully by capping a suspenseful spy adventure with a heroic finale. *The Man I Married*, on the other hand, delivers its anti-German message more bluntly and evenly: the American heroine witnesses the virtual regression of her husband into a "mechanical doll" for Hitler during a visit in Nazi Germany and converts from a "naive" isolationist position to pro-interventionism. Lighting, mise-en-scene and camera angles work to reinforce the stark dichotomy between a free America and a fascist Germany, as does the symbolic imagery of the Statue of Liberty, which is almost mockingly contrasted with the human statues of autocrat Hitler and his over-disciplined myrmidons.26

According to film historians Michael Shull and David Wilt, a substantial number of films made in 1941 were designed to prepare America for war by either glorifying the various branches of the U.S. armed forces and their British counterparts or by stressing the - often deliberately comical - camaraderie of new recruits who had been drafted under Roosevelt’s Selective Service Act.27 Some of these movies chronicled the fates of American volunteers fighting side by side with English or French soldiers; German characters were generally scarce in these films, with the Nazi threat coming from anonymous bombs and planes. A typical and highly popular production was *A Yank in The RAF*, released in August 1941.28 The plot revolves
around a womanizing American pilot (Tyrone Power) who enlists in the British Royal Air Force and encounters his former girlfriend (Betty Grable) during the London Blitz. At the end of his rite of passage, the once frivolous young man is not only ready to marry his serious-minded girl, but has also learned to hate the Germans with a vengeance and dedicates the planes he shoots down: “This one’s for Roger, this one’s for me.” The only German character of the film is introduced toward the end of the film when Power’s character and his friends are stranded in a Nazi-occupied country. A German officer, who holds the small group hostage, displays a sadistic joy in revealing that he - contrary to the prisoners’ belief - understands English perfectly and intends to thwart their escape plan. Combined American-British resolve can finally kill the Nazi and escape the advancing German troops, but not without the loss of one of the friends - a prediction of the sacrifices the future allies will have to make to counter German expansionism.

Pictures that openly called for American intervention in Europe actually got the studios in trouble. In early September 1941, the U.S. Senate assembled a subcommittee to investigate “Moving-Picture Screen and Radio Propaganda” designed to “influence public sentiment in the direction of participation by the United States” in the war. The committee, chaired by isolationist senator D. Worth Clark, included non-interventionist politicians like senators Gerald Nye, Bennett Clark, and Burton Wheeler. The senators compiled a list of films they deemed unnecessarily propagandistic that named, among others, *Foreign Correspondent, The Mortal Storm,* and *The Great Dictator.* Film historians Shull and Wilt imply that the hearings would
not have turned the pro-interventionist tide in Hollywood even if the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had not occurred less that two months later. Charges of anti-Semitism, the confession of committee members that they had not seen all or even any of the listed movies, and a spirited defense of the industry by the 1940 Republican presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie all weakened the senators’ argument. The haphazard compilation of the 20 films might also have worked in Hollywood’s favor; the inclusion of British productions like Night Train to Munich and Convoy looked curious in an attack on the American film industry.29

The successful conveyance of the need for intervention in anti-Nazi films before 1942 relied heavily on the use of stereotypes and symbols. The swastika iris in Confessions, the “teutonic weaponry” in Mortal Storm, the prominent Statue of Liberty in Man I Married, and the international unity in Yank in the RAF and Foreign Correspondent are all examples of Hollywood’s deliberate deployment of shorthand messages that functioned to denounce German fanaticism, elevate the U.S. political system, and rally national support for the allied fight against Nazi terror. Similarly, the introduction of the stereotypical German Nazi, conceived and popularized in Confessions, expressed the anti-isolationist position of American movie-makers in that period. The militaristic, merciless and ultimately horrifying Germanic persona served as a useful, even necessary stereotype in the filmmaking and -consuming community. This stereotype captured the essence of evil and - following Gilman’s argument - explained the disequilibrium in global political realities.
III. Wartime Movies and the Manifestation of the Nazi Stereotype

The American entry into the European conflict changed Hollywood’s perspective once again. Congressional attacks on pro-interventionist movies stopped virtually overnight; instead, the government began to enlist the filmmaking community in the war effort. The Office of War Information, created by president Franklin D. Roosevelt in June 1942, opened its Hollywood subsidiary that same summer. This organization, the Bureau of Motion Pictures, was overseen by the OWI’s Domestic Operations Branch. While it had no censorship powers, the Bureau soon distributed a document called “The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry,” which was apparently widely read and taken into consideration by the studios. The office, which operated under the principle “Will this picture help win the war?” also successfully encouraged the Hollywood community to submit scripts or completed movies for a voluntary review.30

Warner Bros., a studio that cooperated willingly with the Bureau, released a commercially successful anti-Nazi propaganda film - and a subsequent cult classic - in late 1942: Casablanca. The movie is not just remarkable because of its apparently timeless appeal, but also because of its witty use of symbolism in mise-en-scene, props, and soundtrack. Set in September 1941, Casablanca shows its main German character, major Heinrich Strasser (Conrad Veidt), mostly in a drab, gloomy environment: some of his most important scenes are in collaborator Louie Renault’s (Claude Rains) office - where a map of North Africa is obstructed by prison bar-like shadows - and at a foggy airport. Other, more obvious instances of symbolization
are the multi-national cast that lives like a family under American leadership, and literal symbols like the foreboding flood of black umbrellas at the train station where American protagonist Rick (Humphrey Bogart) receives his lover’s (Ingrid Bergman) good-bye note, the mythological Pegasus emblem on the plane to freedom, and Renault’s literal discarding of the products of Vichy after he finally joins the allies.

Arguably the most effective anti-Nazi message in *Casablanca* is conveyed by Max Steiner’s and Hugo Friedhofer’s soundtrack. Throughout the movie, German actions are accompanied by either shrill, alarming music or bars of “As Time Goes By” and the “Marseillaise” in minor key. The only notable exception to this pattern is the scene after Czech resistance fighter Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid) has conducted the French anthem in Rick’s Café and Strasser demands the closing of the bar: here, the audience hears the “defeated” German anthem in minor key. This aural message becomes even more evident through the narrative’s emphasis on music: Strasser and his men have lost the vocal competition against a united international choir, one of the most touching moments of the film and an obvious statement that unison resistance against brutal Nazi occupation can prevail.

Another noteworthy musical device - one that had been employed by Hitchcock two years earlier - is the use of a Nazi enemy’s national anthem as a sound bridge between the final scene of a film and the formal “End” title. Like in *Foreign Correspondent*, which ends with the playing of “The Star Spangled Banner,” *Casablanca*’s final moments are emphasized by the “Marseillaise.” As Rick and Louis affirm their new friendship, the camera cranes up and away from the actors and
the hitherto soft background music swells into a fully orchestrated march, recalling Laszlo’s conducting scene. This musical homage to an ally’s national morale is in accordance with earlier or pro-British productions, like and *Mrs. Miniver* (also 1942) which plays “God Save the King” in its entirety during an award ceremony, and later pro-French movies like *To Have and Have Not* (1944), which repeatedly uses parts of the “Marseillaise” in the soundtrack.

The strong emphasis on symbols in anti-Nazi films seems to be grounded not only in an intentional play on Hitler’s preference for conspicuous German signifiers, but even more in the simplifying, yet powerful effect, of this representational device. By shrouding the German character in a web of symbols, his monolithic depiction becomes a staple for the audience; by 1942, the spectator knows about the evil depths of the Nazi psyche. A painting of Hitler in the background, an adorned uniform, a *heil Hitler* greeting, and appropriate background music are enough in *Casablanca* to identify Strasser as a murderous villain. His inherent brutality does not have to be displayed in the narrative - earlier depictions of killing and torturing Nazis, from 1939’s *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* to the earlier in 1942 released *Reunion in France*, had established a stereotype that audiences recognized and embraced even without explicit visual expression. In *Casablanca*, Strasser’s menace is conveyed by his overconfident arrogance - in his first scene he snubs the Italian officers and exclaims that “Germans must get used to any kind of climate, from Russia to the Sahara” - and his ultimately lethal underestimation of the American: in his last scene, the
German does not even look at Rick when drawing his pistol and is consequently gunned down himself.

Telling evidence of the firmly established stereotype of Germans as sinister Nazis is the fact that Variety mentions Veidt in its review of December 1942 only as playing "the usual German officer."33 The assumption that the mere presence of a Nazi soldier in a film sufficed to trigger visions of German atrocities is undergirded by the fact that postwar overseas releases of the film in Germany and Austria were censored to exclude scenes with Strasser altogether. These heavily edited versions, which had Paul Henreid play a Norwegian scientist who invented the famous "Delta-rays," were designed to spare German audiences the embarrassing encounter with their Nazi past, even though Strasser does no direct physical harm and is occasionally upset as villain by the manipulating and opportunistic Renault through much of the film.34

IV. Main Nazi Stereotypes During WWII and the Names Behind Them

The Nazi officer who combines breeding with brutality is one of the most prominent German stereotypes in American war movies. Actors who were routinely typecast for these roles rage from the tall, lean Conrad Veidt to the almost chubby Walter Slezak; actual physique was therefore secondary to the props and characteristics that ensured a genuine Nazi appearance: uniform, authoritative demeanor and a distinct penchant for torture. In This Land Is Mine (1943), Slezak portrays Major von Keller, chief of the German occupation force in a small French village. While the contemporary reviewer in Variety finds von Keller a
“philosophical and highly literate man who realizes that the terroristic methods he is forced to use are doomed to defeat themselves,” the critic does not observe the actual pleasure the character brings to his job. The major enjoys demonstrating his intellectual superiority to the town’s collaborating mayor and shows no mercy when he has the protagonist’s mentor executed in plain view of the main character (Charles Laughton plays a cowardly schoolteacher). In one of the most disturbing scenes of the film, von Keller literally drives another collaborator, Lambert (George Sanders), to his death by gloating over the killing of a saboteur whom Lambert had betrayed. While the narrative does not explicitly focus on von Keller’s sadistic intentions, the cinematography indicates that his seemingly friendly gesture of placing a rose in Lambert’s buttonhole is the act that triggers the traitor’s suicide. As soon as he is alone, Lambert throws the flower to the ground, opens his desk and takes out a gun, while the camera moves away from the doomed collaborator - a shot is heard and the camera now zooms in to a close-up of the flower, indicating that Lambert might have been able to live with his betrayal, but not with von Keller’s subtle reminders of it.

A further example of the stereotypical Nazi officer in major and successful war productions is Fritz Lang’s *Hangmen Also Die* (1943), a story about the escape of Nazi-leader Heydrich’s assassin, with Tonio Selwart as the frightful interrogator who relishes torturing helpless women. Selwart reprised his role as jack-booted German officer later that year in *North Star*, directed by Lewis Milestone, where he plays a ruthless captain in charge of taking over a Russian village. Erich von Stroheim, renowned for his interwar depictions of Prussian soldiers, showcases his talents for
playing Nazi officers in another 1943 film: he plays an unsympathetic Field Marshall Erwin Rommel in the Billy Wilder picture *Five Graves to Cairo*.

Joan Crawford and John Wayne are facing ready-made Nazi adversaries in Jules Dassin’s *Reunion in France*, which was released in December of 1942. While John Carradine as the sinister Parisian Gestapo chief Ulrich Windler wears civilian clothes, his military counterparts, General Hugo Schroeder (Albert Bassermann) and Captain Schultz (Reginald Owen), are again arrogant uniformed officers who enjoy showing their dominant status in occupied France. A 1944 production, *The Master Race* by Herbert Biberman, actually shows the transition of a high-ranking Nazi officer to a civilian: Germany has almost lost the war, and General von Beck (George Coulouris) goes undercover in a Belgian village to disturb allied efforts of restoring the country, so that the Aryan race can ultimately rise again to rule the continent. *Variety* attested Coulouris “excellence in his portrayal of a militarist who goes underground for a time,” implying that this German character is defined by his status as a military officer.37

Another Nazi stereotype and main German figure favored by Hollywood was the immoral and ruthless physician who prefers to try his experiments on human subjects. Examples include a performance by Erich von Stroheim as the merciless Dr. Otto von Harden in *North Star* who takes blood from the village children when German soldiers need transfusions, and Walter Slezak as the deadly Dr. Skaas in Richard Wallace’s *The Fallen Sparrow* (1943). The latter movie, fueled by the star power of John Garfield and Maureen O’Hara, tells the story of Spanish Civil War veteran Kit
(Garfield) who has been brutally tortured by the Nazis, escaped to the United States, and finds himself haunted by both his memories and German spies in New York. Toward the end of the film, Dr. Skaas, who poses as a Norwegian refugee, is found out to be the never-seen, but highly sadistic consultant of Kit’s torturers in Spain, and he plans to continue the interrogation by injecting Kit with a “truth serum.” The demonic air of the doctor is amplified by carefully lit shots in which Skaas moves from shadow into light while revealing first his identity and then his sinister plans. His gleefully delivered diagnosis of Kit’s disturbed mental state, which should render the protagonist unable to fight his tormentor, turns out to be flawed, though: Kit manages to shoot the arrogant attacker, despite being physically drugged and psychologically afflicted.

An ancillary device for labeling Germans in a negative manner was the choice of names for the Nazi foes. Wartime Hollywood productions, as well as some earlier anti-German films, were often populated by bona fide aristocrats - enemies of democracy and, since the United States was supposedly a picturebook republic, decidedly anti-American. As Shull and Wilt have noted, the most common signifier of aristocratic stigma is the prefix “von” in a name. In addition to the mentioned characters von Beck (The Master Race), von Keller (This Land is Mine) and von Harden (North Star), the scheming Baron von Luber is a useful example of this naming practice. Played by the Nazi-typecast Walter Slezak in Leo McCary’s box office hit Once Upon a Honeymoon (1943), the baron marries the naïve American golddigger Katie (Ginger Rogers) to cover up his pro-Hitler undercover work. Finally
convinced by war correspondent Pat (Cary Grant) that her husband is activating Fifth
Columns in soon-to-be-invaded countries, Katie manages to escape the baron and
ultimately, if accidentally, kills him when she realizes that his next target is the U.S.

The use of characters' names as tools to evoke audience reaction worked both
ways. The sympathetic protagonists were often fitted with patriotic, wholesome, or
otherwise meaningful names. In the example of Honeymoon, von Luber's antagonists
are Pat O'Toole, who obviously stems from immigrants but is able to realize the
American Dream, and Katie O'Hara, whose surname invokes the heroine of the recent
American epic Gone With The Wind (1939). Kit in The Fallen Sparrow and his
friends Barby and Ab are all called by their nicknames, which likens them to
everybody's neighborhood buddies, while the Nazi characters are formally addressed
as Dr. Skaas and Prince Francois. References to Greek hero mythology are made in
The Master Race and The Human Comedy; the heroine in the former film is a Belgian
Helena, while the latter movie, a piece on life at the home front, has main characters
named Homer and Ulysses. The brave hero of Hangmen Also Die, who assassinates
the head of the Nazi occupation force in Czechoslovakia, gives his real name as Dr.
Svoboda which means "freedom" in three Slavic languages: Czech, Polish, and
Russian. And Victor Laszlo of Casablanca certainly remains victorious in his
dealings with Nazi oppressors.

The Nazi as symbol for evil and terror permeated a wide array of films during the
first half of the 1940s. Gilman argues that symbolization results from the human
need for order, and certainly this need was palpable in contemporary Hollywood.
The war in Europe and, later, the Pacific unsettled Americans and émigrés alike and probably generated the willingness to cooperate with bureaucratic institutions like the Bureau of Motion Pictures. In the wake of officially sanctioned anti-German propaganda films, the desire for a clear categorization of Nazis transcended ethnicity as well as genres. Film scholar Rick Worland has investigated the use of horror films as war propaganda and showcased a very literal stereotype: the Nazi as demon. In Return of the Vampire (1943), Bela Lugosi plays a Romanian bloodsucker who awakens from his slumber after the Luftwaffe blows open his crypt. He terrorizes the British countryside during the German Blitz, kills a decorated RAF flyer, and is eventually destroyed by a resolute woman with anti-fascist convictions.\(^4\) Worland argues that the time of the vampire’s first demise in 1918 - hence the word “return” in the title - is a narrative choice to make the beast synonymous with defeated Germany after World War I, and that the undead count’s Rumanian roots associate him with this minor Axis partner.\(^4\)

The linkage between Nazis and demons is even more prevalent in Black Dragons (1942). Here, the connection with Vampirism is made through the casting, as well as cinematography. Bela Lugosi, who played Count Dracula in the successful 1931 film, stars as a deadly Nazi doctor who sadistically murders his former associates. Lugosi “brought to Black Dragons a decade’s accumulation of roles as mad scientists, sorcerers, and oily villains, performances never far from the persona of the Master Vampire.”\(^4\) Moreover, the Nazi’s menacing presence is emphasized by interspersed close-ups of Lugosi’s hypnotic eyes, made famous by Dracula.\(^4\) This connection
between archetypal Nazi and the classic bloodsucker is stressed by film scholar Richard Oehling who states that Nazi leaders are “often portrayed as aristocrats of sorts, well-educated, sophisticated, with an veneer of civilization. In the world of politics, they became the counterparts of Count Dracula, personification of evil.”

The overall unfavorable depiction of Germans in Hollywood productions, while not originating with World War II, exhibited a dramatic culmination in the years between 1939 and 1945. The “Hun,” in all his manifestations and varieties, had been unpopular even before World War I, and negative German imagery came to a first climax during that conflict. The image of the brutal militaristic autocrat was therefore a latent agent in the American conscience that filmmakers simply needed to reactivate once the Nazis started to threaten their geographical neighbors. After Hitler invaded Poland, and especially after the fall of France, Hollywood’s political message could not be misinterpreted: the U.S. needed to intervene in Europe to save American ideals. Studios successfully expanded the stereotype of the spike-helmeted monarchist into the megalomanic, goose-stepping Hitler disciple who flaunts his disdain for U.S. values like freedom of speech, democracy, and religion.

Arguably the most powerful examples of filmic anti-German propaganda were produced after the United States joined, and subsequently led, the allied struggle against the Axis Powers. The films from early 1942 through 1944 coined the German/Nazi stereotype by virtually eliminating all benevolent German characters from the plot and by transforming perceived positive German traits like thoroughness and musicality into the horrific characteristics of an evil destroyer and his demonic
underlings.\textsuperscript{46} In addition, the explicit symbolism of Nazism - swastikas, raised arms, prominent insignia on lapels and armbands - served as narrative abbreviations for malevolence and antagonism. The merging of Germanness with Nazism and the resulting stereotyping of Germans as the ultimate cinematic villains have forged a lasting legacy for the depiction of Germans in Hollywood productions.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1 For readings about the German image in the early twentieth century see Carl Hodge and Cathal Nolan (eds.), Shepherd of Democracy? America and Germany in the Twentieth Century, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992): introduction, xi. See also Alan Woll and Randall Miller, Ethnic and Racial Images in American Film and Television: Historical Essays and Bibliography, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987): 222. Miller asserts that in reality, German Americans were mostly Americanized second- or third-generation descendants of Germans, divided by religion, class and culture. For Americans’ anxiety about sudden social change see Michael Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987): 98 and 102. According to Hunt, the reversal from a pro-revolutionary stance to an anti-revolutionary position occurred almost immediately after American independence, with the onset of the bloody French Revolution. A second wave of violent revolts around 1848 - with one of the most brutal clashes happening in Germany - settled U.S. suspicion of political uprisings.


3 This statement does not imply that stereotyping was confined to images of Germans; other ethnic groups were also targets of this inscription process.


5 Woll and Miller, Ethnic and Racial Images, 223.


7 Sander Gilman, Inscribing the Other, 13.

8 While media critic Randall Miller believes that the negative screen image of “The Hun” was deflected by the success of German expressionist films in the U.S., other film scholars contend that works like The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) only contributed to the image of Germans as troubled, violent creatures. I agree with the latter assessment. See Woll and Miller, Ethnic and Racial Images, 224, and Donald Spoto, The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1983): 70.

9 This derogatory name probably impressed audiences of Wings especially, since the word appears on intertitles several times during the most moving scene of the film: fighter ace Jack holds his dying friend Dave in his arms, exclaiming repeatedly that he
mistakenly shot Dave’s plane down because “I wanted to get just one more Heinie for you.”


12 In 1939, Hitler asked the German people to “close and harden our hearts. He who ponders on the order of this world realizes that its meaning lies in the warlike survival of the fittest.” In Sam Simone, *Hitchcock as Activist: Politics and the War Films*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985): 53.

13 It is generally acknowledged among historians that Roosevelt’s true convictions were far from isolationist; after 1939, he actually provoked marine incidents in the Atlantic to sway public opinion toward intervention. See, for example, Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932 – 1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 103.

14 Film scholars generally agree on the isolationist stance of the film industry before 1939. See Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, *Politics and Film*, Trans. Kersti French, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971): 63, and Michael Shull and David Wilt, *Hollywood War Films, 1937-1945: An Exhaustive Filmography of American Feature-Length Motion Pictures Relating to World War II*, (Jefferson: McFarland & CO. Publishers, 1996): 46. Shull and Wilt assert, however, that there were a few anti-totalitarian films as early as 1937; none of these movies made open references to Nazism, though. One notable exception to this cinematic neutrality during the mid-30s is *I Was a Captive of Nazi Germany* (1936), a fact-based story of the American journalist Isobel Lillian Steele who was imprisoned in Germany for several months. It should be noted, though, that this film was an independent production, not a Hollywood movie.

15 Furhammar and Isaksson, *Politics and Film*, 63

16 According to *Variety* reviews, other anti-Nazi productions of 1939, like *Beasts of Berlin* and *Everything Happens at Night* (both 1939) did not fare as well at the box office as *Confessions*.

17 All citations in this paragraph are taken from Gilman, *Inscribing the Other*, 3.

18 The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures named it one of the best four movies of the year; this endorsement becomes significant because of the fact that the other three films were instant classics like *Stagecoach*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Young Mister Lincoln*. In Eric Sandeen, “Confessions of a Nazi Spy and the German-American Bund,” *American Studies* 20, (Fall 1979), 74. Significantly, the strong propagandistic and contemporary message of *Confessions* probably prevented it from impressing posterity, while John Ford’s *Lincoln* with a strong performance by Henry Fonda is still considered a landmark work, and *Stagecoach* and *Wuthering Heights* are ranked among the 100 Best American Movies, chosen by the American Film Institute.


20 Ibid. 48.

21 Sandeen emphasizes this point in “Confessions,” 74.

22 Ibid.
The film tells the story of the Czech Berni brothers, two of whom become Nazis after the implementation of the infamous Munich accord and the subsequent annexation of the Sudetenland by Hitler. The conflicting politics of the families result in the deaths of the two older brothers and mother Berni's flight to the United States. Interestingly, the film is a remake of John Ford's 1928 silent movie with the same title which is set in Germany during World War I; the four German sons are also divided in their loyalties: two fight for the Kaiser, the others join the American Expeditionary Force. As in the 1940s version, two of the boys die tragic deaths on the battlefield.


Charlie Chaplin's comedy, The Great Dictator, actually has the "good" German win: the Jewish barber, a doppelganger of the main character, a Hitler look-alike named Hynkel, takes the dictator's place and delivers a rousing plea for peace at the end of the film, looking directly into the camera. The New York Times voted Dictator one of the ten best films of 1940, and audiences found the final speech so moving that Chaplin was asked to repeat it on national radio. The film is also significant not only as Chaplin's first outright talkie (his previous film, Modern Times (1936) contains only a few chunks of synchronized sound), but also as a quasi successor to his World War I spoof, Shoulder Arms (1918).

Ibid. 59.

Shull and Wilt, Hollywood War Films, 51. Charlie Chaplin's comedy, The Great Dictator, actually has the "good" German win: the Jewish barber, a doppelganger of the main character, a Hitler look-alike named Hynkel, takes the dictator's place and delivers a rousing plea for peace at the end of the film, looking directly into the camera. The New York Times voted Dictator one of the ten best films of 1940, and audiences found the final speech so moving that Chaplin was asked to repeat it on national radio. The film is also significant not only as Chaplin's first outright talkie (his previous film, Modern Times (1936) contains only a few chunks of synchronized sound), but also as a quasi successor to his World War I spoof, Shoulder Arms (1918).

Shull and Wilt list the earliest of these films as released by the end of 1940, The Long Voyage Home and Escape to Glory. Other movies by major studios that propagated a U.S.-British alliance in 1941 were International Squadron, Confirm or Deny, and One Night in Lisbon. In Shull and Wilt, Hollywood War Films, 63-64. None of these productions enjoyed the same success as A Yank in the RAF, though.


All information concerning the Bureau of Motion Pictures is taken from Shull and Wilt, Hollywood War Films, 142 and from Rick Worland, "OWI Meets the Monsters: Hollywood Horror Films and War Propaganda," Cinema Journal 37, (No. 1 1997): 50-51. It should be noted that Worland explicitly exempts Paramount from the studios that were cooperative (50).

This call for unity is reiterated, as I will show later, in Lifeboat (1944). Both films extend this plea not only to the Allies, but also to Americans of both sexes and different races - Casablanca and Lifeboat are among the few non-combat films that assign African-Americans a certain, if very limited, agency.

It is an interesting note that this scene plays on a famous German opera in which the corrupt, sinful protagonist not only loses a singing contest but dies as a result of his barbaric misdeeds - much like Strasser. Significantly enough, this work, Tannhaeuser und der Saengerkrieg auf der Wartburg, was crafted by Richard Wagner, Hitler's favorite composer. For the content of the opera, see Opern und

33 Rev. of Casablanca, Variety, 2 Dec. 1942. This quote also supports my assertion that by the time Casablanca hit the box offices, the equation “German equals Nazi” had already been made.

34 Historians Hannes Auinger and Rainer Koeppel make these claims in an online humanities discussion group. Hannes Auinger and Dr. Rainer Koeppel, <a903642@unet.univie.ac.at>, “Faked Versions All Over the World,” in Humanities-Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte, <H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU>, 1 June 1997, archived at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de>. They also found that in Notorious the Nazi spy ring was dubbed to be an organization of drug dealers. This might seem absurd to modern American scholars, but the German confrontation with Hitler’s regime and the Holocaust did not start until the 1960s. For readings on this issue see Reinhard Kuehn, Der Deutsche Faschismus in Quellen und Dokumenten, (Koeln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1980): 476.

35 “This Land is Mine,” Variety, 17 March 1943

36 As I will point out in my discussion on Lifeboat, most of these pictures employed negative German stereotypes in order to promote unity among the politically diverse allies.

37 Walt., Rev. of The Master Race, Variety, 21 Sept. 1944.

38 Shull and Wilt, Hollywood War Films, 221.

39 As chapter three will show, this phenomenon was not restricted to the mentioned time frame.

40 A vast majority of the hundreds of movies that were produced during World War II featured clear-cut heroes and heroines, decisive endings, and lucid narratives. The notable exceptions to this formula were the movies belonging to the emerging genre “film noir.” From Sklar, Movie-Made America, 253ff. See also Shull and Wilt, Hollywood War Films, Furhammar and Isaksson, Politics and Film, and Ken Jones and Arthur McClure, Hollywood at War: The American Motion Picture and World War II, (South Brunswick: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1973).

41 Worland, OWI Meets the Monsters, 57-58. The author contends that the narrative actually establishes Return of the Vampire historically and intertextually as akin to Mrs. Miniver (1942), rather than to Dracula (1931).

42 The choice of a pro-German vampire who is also a count supports my earlier discussion of naming as a device to crystallize the undemocratic and hence supposedly anti-American attitude of the self-professed “master race.”

43 Ibid. 49.

44 Ibid.


46 According to Shull and Wilt’s impressive documentation, anti-Nazi films had significantly declined by early 1945. Their statistics show a strong presence of “Nazi”
as a movie coding term (a verbal or filmic reference to the topic) only from 1942 through 1944. In Shull and Wilt, *Hollywood War Films*, 295.
CHAPTER II
NAZI STEREOTYPES IN ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MOVIES

A film relies heavily on its main villain. The better the villain, the better the film. - Alfred Hitchcock (1966)

I. Hitchcockian Genre Around World War II, Its Villains, and Political Relevance

To assess my argument that the German image in U.S. film is wholly congruent with Nazi characteristics, it will be useful to examine films by an influential, successful director and critically and popularly acknowledged auteur: Alfred Hitchcock. To a degree, the German characters of his films during and right after World War II qualify as stereotypical representations of the Nazi threat: they are arrogant autocrats, scheming spies, and ruthless killers. His unique way of presenting a story, however, reflects upon these characters, adds dimension, and thus renders them unusual by Hollywood standards; it seems that the genre of Hitchcockian suspense thrillers calls for more complex and multifaceted villains, making their evilness familiar, even palpable in the process.¹

Hitchcock scholar Sam Simone acknowledges the importance of a convincing foe in his compilation of the ten indispensable elements for a suspense film. He writes that one of these specific ingredients is a “master antagonist” who threatens to doom the protagonist and therefore, by way of the audience’s identification with the hero, the viewer himself.² The villain also contributes to other suspense elements identified by Simone, like “Conflict (the general contention between the characters),” “The Dreadful Alternative (the horrible fate that awaits the hero should he fail),”
“Compounding Suspense (hero and heroine are subjected to successive mortal dangers),” “The Unexpected Complication (something unforeseen goes wrong and increases the protagonist’s trouble),” “Isolation (the mental and sometimes physical confinement of the hero who, unlike the audience, does not know about the villain’s moves and motives),” and “Mind of the Murderer (the viewer is aware of the antagonist’s willingness to murder).” Therefore, the specifics of the Hitchcock genre often amplify the horrific traits of German villains by animating them to a multidimensional status, making them familiar figures of everyday life and thus creating an uncomfortable intimacy between villain and viewer. This somewhat embarrassing relationship proved even more disconcerting to American audiences of the World War II era who relied on a clear distinction between heroes and enemies and on the resulting filmic stereotypes that helped to justify the huge war effort as well as the escalating casualties.

The favorite Hitchcock criminal who acts educated, well-mannered, and even aristocratic corresponded perfectly to Hollywood’s established film image of German spies, officers, and doctors. The director made use of this stereotypical pattern and indicated Nazi malice even before Hitler’s assaults on neighboring countries, like in the British productions *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), where German actor Peter Lorre plays the mastermind behind a political assassination, or *The 39 Steps* (1935), a story about an aristocratic spy who trades military secrets to an unnamed foreign country. In addition, most of his movies of the period feature a kind of lesser villain or villains, generally brutal henchmen with neither morals nor manners - and hence with less menacing power than their polished partners in crime. But even these
minor characters receive Hitchcock’s attention: they are not only generally played by accomplished actors, but often dominate key scenes, contribute important dialogue and advance the narrative critically - in short, they are indispensable for a Hitchcockian suspense thriller.

After Hitler’s assault on Europe, plots and associated messages in Hitchcock’s films became more explicitly political. Even in his first Hollywood picture after immigrating from Britain in 1939, the seemingly apolitical film adaptation of Daphne du Maurier’s bestselling novel *Rebecca* (1940), Hitchcock might have tried to create a Nazi-like figure in Mrs. Danvas (Judith Anderson), the black-clad, sinister yet regal housekeeper whose tight braids, arrogant demeanor and mind for murder terrified film characters and audiences alike. That Hitchcock had a sadistic Nazi female in mind when he created the film version of Mrs. Danvas seems to be corroborated by the fact that he himself used a figure similar to those in Anderson’s performances in *Notorious* (1946) a few years later: actress Leopoldine Konstantin plays Mrs. Sebastian, the jealous mother of another Nazi spy ring leader who cold-bloodedly plots the murder of her daughter-in-law.

After the interventionist movie *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), which will receive a more extensive treatment later in this chapter, Hitchcock drew attention to the German threat again, with *Saboteur* (1942) - a film that scholars regard as a minor and “not very good” Hitchcock production. Released in 1942, the movie is set shortly after the American involvement in the war - like almost all Hitchcock films, *Saboteur* depicts the present - centering on the actions of a spy ring which disguises itself as an isolationist organization. Although neither Germans nor Nazis are ever
mentioned, the openly totalitarian convictions of the master spies and their underlings strongly suggest that Hitchcock used the plot to pillory Hitler’s dictatorship. The hero, Kane (Robert Cummings), is falsely accused of setting fire to an airplane plant in California and travels across the country to find the real culprits. He links up with the reluctant Pat Martin (Priscilla Lane), repeatedly escapes policemen and German-American spies, and finally traces the Nazi supporters to their headquarters in New York where they plot to sabotage a ship christening.

Again, the head spy, Tobin (Otto Kruger), is a “smoothly articulate and respectable” individual who “[is] not quite what he seems.” In a plot twist that left critics as well as audiences unsatisfied, Tobin escapes in the end, but not without sneering at the “moron masses” of America and praising “the competence of the totalitarian nations...They get things done.” The actual saboteur, Frey (Norman Lloyd), meets his deserved fate, though, in a highly symbolic and stylized sequence that concludes the film by having Frey fall from the Statue of Liberty. The ruthless saboteur, a perfect example of the “lesser villain” in Hitchcock movies, shares Tobin’s fascist disregard for human life: he shoots innocent bystanders to ensure his escape from a movie theater. What sets him apart from the arch foe is his crudeness; he speaks slang and acts rudely toward the heroine, telling her to “quit stalling,” when she tries to detain him until the police arrive and - in an assault on a national symbol for democracy that reveals his true political convictions - calling her “little Miss Liberty.”

Other villains in Hitchcock films during World War II, while not directly connected to German totalitarianism, also display traits that were associated with Nazi
terror. *Suspicion* (1941) - at least originally - and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) both feature sophisticated murderers who do not shy away from killing close family members, acts that expose cold-blooded evil under a cultured veneer. In the case of *Suspicion*, the story’s end was altered by the studio, RKO, to protect Cary Grant’s star image: in the original script, Grant’s character murders his wife; the released version of the film concludes with the discovery of the husband’s innocence. A murderous doctor, a familiar character from many anti-German films, is the villain in *Spellbound* (1945). Spoto applauds the performance of Leo G. Carroll in the role of Dr. Murchison as “splendid;” the actor portrays the doctor as “malevolently cool, ““elegant and urbane,” traits that fit the film image of Nazis precisely.9

Hitchcock did not shy away from far more direct anti-German messages, however. Three of his major productions during and right after World War II center on the Nazi menace: *Foreign Correspondent, Lifeboat*, and *Notorious*. In these movies, which will be the focus of this chapter, the filmmaker urges audiences to face the actual geopolitical threats of the respective points in time: in *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), he stresses the necessity of American involvement in the European war; with *Lifeboat* (1944), he pleads for allied cooperation even in the face of insurmountable ideological differences; and in *Notorious* (1946), he emphasizes the tenacity of fascist ideas and their unscrupulous followers.

II. **Liar and Gentleman: Fisher’s Fight Against the Foreign Correspondent**

Alfred Hitchcock released his second Hollywood production in August 1940, *Foreign Correspondent*. The film, which begins with a dedication to “foresighted
foreign correspondents," tells the story of American journalist Johnny Jones (Joel McCrea) who is sent to England just before the outbreak of the war to cover the developments in Europe. He stumbles across a German spy ring, headed by Mr. Stephen Fisher (Herbert Marshall), falls in love with Ms. Carol Fisher (Laraine Day), and eventually rescues the kidnapped Dutch diplomat van Meer (Albert Bassermann) with the help of Englishman Scott ffolliott (George Sanders). A second climax follows when Jones’ U.S.-bound plane is shot down by a German ship and the survivors are rescued by a still-neutral American vessel where the correspondent tricks the ship’s captain into letting him phone the explosive story to his editor. The last scene of the film is set in London again, with Jones broadcasting live to America during the German Blitz, standing in the blacked-out studio and pleading for support while the “Star Spangled Banner” plays in the background:

Don’t tune me out, hang on, this is a big story and you’re part of it. It’s too late now to do anything expect stand in the dark and let them come as if the lights are all out everywhere except in America. Keep those lights burning, cover them with steel, build them with guns, build a canopy of battle ships and bombing planes around them and, hello America, hang on to your lights. They’re the only lights in the world.

The distinct anti-isolationist message of the film, which landed the production on the black list of the neutralist senatorial Nye-Committee, was Hitchcock’s first outspoken creative contribution to the allied war effort. Some of the most rousing and chilling scenes did not rely on dialogue, though. The initial scene that served as an exemplar and critique of fascist disregard for life is the assassination of van Meer’s
doppelgaenger - he is shot in the face by a killer using a camera to disguise his gun.

The murder takes place on the stairs of Amsterdam’s town hall, and the assassin takes advantage of a virtual sea of black umbrellas to escape, gunning down security guards in his wake. This scene predicates the display of ruthless Nazi practices, like kidnapping and drugging an elderly diplomat who is later tortured to obtain the secret section of a peace treaty.

Johnny Jones is introduced to Stephen Fisher in the offices of the New York Globe. A connection between the supposed peace activist and Hitler is made right away: Jones muses about the Fuehrer’s intentions with Europe when a secretary announces Fisher. This link between the German spy and his true intentions is enforced in the scene where Jones has discovered van Meer in a Dutch windmill and summons local policemen who, strangely enough, find no evidence to corroborate Jones’ story: Johnny exclaims that “there is something fishy going on around here,” linking the name of his future adversary to the Dutch incident in particular, and by implication, to the situation in Europe in general.

Fisher is discovered to be a “master antagonist” when the audience learns (before the hero) that the false peace activist is actually in cahoots with the Nazis, plotting Jones’ murder with one of van Meer’s kidnappers. With this direct assault on an American subject, who displays and therefore represents the democratic ideals of individualism and free speech, Fisher emerges as the Nazi villain. He calmly discusses the logistics of Jones’ killing and then convinces the journalist to take a bodyguard for protection - the ultimate deceit since Rowley (Edmund Gwenn) is actually a hired assassin. The unabashed belief in a master race - another trait of
film Nazis - is only thinly disguised by Fisher when he indicates his admiration for the Germans who “combine a mad love of country with an equally mad indifference to life - theirs as well as other’s.”

In the following scenes Hitchcock shows how Fisher fits that pattern himself. The torturing of van Meer, who knows a secret passage of a peace treaty that would help Nazi invaders, reveals the treacherous depths of this German character: the spy first tries to trick the diplomat into divulging the treaty’s secret section voluntarily, but when he does not succeed, he callously witnesses the physical torture of the old man, implemented by his murderous confidante, Krug (Eduardo Cianelli). When van Meer refuses to tell Fisher the confidential information, Hitchcock draws another connection between the head spy and Adolf Hitler; in a brief soliloquy, the Dutch diplomat accuses Fisher of “have[ing] cried peace and there is no peace, only war and death. You’re a liar, Fisher, a cruel, cruel liar” - the resemblance to the discrepancy between the Fuehrer’s assurances at the Munich conference in 1938 and his actions in Poland in 1939 seems clear.15

Still, while Fisher has all the markings of a typical Nazi character, Hitchcock assigns vulnerable traits to him that are unusual for contemporary Hollywood treatment of the German foe, thus making him a figure of identification for audiences. A major characteristic of the master spy in Foreign Correspondent is affection for his daughter, who is a staunch English patriot. Hitchcock emphasizes this fatherly love in three key narrative situations of the movie, each one stressing Fisher’s willingness to sacrifice his political aims for Carol. The first example occurs in the middle of the movie, after Fisher is exposed to the audience as the chief villain: Carol indicates her
love for Johnny and Fisher actually considers calling off the murder plan he has been hatching with Krug.

Hitchcock draws attention to this scene without much dialogue; Fisher has just closed the door behind Jones and his would-be assassin, Rowley. The next cut shows a medium shot of Carol, crying, when her father walks into the frame from the right to form a medium two-shot, inquiring “Why, Carol...” as he sees her tears. She replies, sobbing, “Nothing must happen to him, father, I just couldn’t...” while the camera holds them in the center of a medium shot, indicating intimacy. Carol turns around and walks away from the camera, Fisher moves his head in the opposite direction, toward the door he has closed behind assassin and victim, then looks back at Carol and seems to make up his mind to rescue Jones: he turns around again and takes a step toward the door, but suddenly hesitates. The next cut shows Johnny and Rowley standing outside the Fisher residence, talking. The audience knows that the spy master will not reconsider the hit when the camera moves with the pair toward the street - closed door in background - where the first attempt on Jones’ life is made by Rowley: he pushes the hero in front of an approaching truck. With the exception of the cuts that show the vehicle swerving around Johnny, all shots of this scene include the door through which Fisher should have come to the rescue.

The second scene which highlights Fisher’s complex character by contrasting his subversive agenda with his love for his daughter is set shortly before the first climax (van Meer’s torture and ultimate rescue), when ffolliott claims to have abducted Carol and demands information on van Meer’s whereabouts. Hitchcock heightens the suspense in this sequence by informing the audience that Carol might be thwarting the
rescue of van Meer by returning home early - the result of an ironic misunderstanding between the lovers. The German agent displays genuine concern for his daughter when he finds out that she is not at her intended destination. The *mise-en-scene* amplifies the notion of worry with bizarre shadows, as does the score with low-key, yet dramatic music during the scene. Fisher promises Scott he will give up the location of van Meer after his daughter’s safe return, and he returns to his usual calm, even smug demeanor only after he senses her untimely arrival.

In the third, and pivotal, scene the German collaborator offers a sacrifice that is utterly uncharacteristic for the Nazi villain: his life in exchange for his daughter’s and her allied friends’ survival. Here, it turns out that Fisher fits the Nazi profile only partly; he might show a “mad indifference” toward his own life, but not toward Carol’s. During the second climax of the film, after the America-bound plane has been shot down by a German ship and before the crew’s rescue by an American boat, the survivors of the crash cling to plane debris. Hitchcock illustrates Fisher’s decision by having him realize that the fuselage cannot support any more people: the pilot offers to vacate the tenuous life support. Cuts and reverse cuts show the spy and his point of view - a huddled group of Carol, Johnny, and an old woman - until the frame rests on a medium close-up of the German. The next cut shows him in a long shot, removing his life jacket and sliding into the waves. Notwithstanding the fact that his arrest upon arrival in the U.S. was imminent, this sacrificial suicide seems rather unlike the behavior of a stereotypical Nazi who generally only gives his life for Hitler and the cause of the “master race.”
The other German spies in the film, while only “lesser villains,” are no simple stock characters, either. While *Variety* called Ciannelli’s character, Krug, the “usual hissable villain,” Hitchcock seemed to have something more in mind; Krug is certainly supposed to be an evil henchman who hires assassins, and kidnaps and tortures a kind old man - but he also has probably been tortured himself. In the fight scene where ffolliot interrupts van Meer’s confession of the secret “clause 27,” Krug’s collar is ripped open and the director cuts to a close-up of his neck which is circled by apparent strangling scars. The second memorable criminal in Fisher’s group is Rowley, the assassin who poses as a bodyguard and specializes in pushing his victims to their deaths. Small in stature and seemingly harmless - Jones asks him during their introduction “Who’s going to protect who here?” - Rowley is nonetheless known to the audience as a successful killer. The interesting dichotomy of his character surfaces only in a few brief shots, when he faces the camera in medium shots, moving in for the deadly offensive with outstretched arms and a crazed expression on his face. In the remainder of his screen time, Rowley is presented as a loquacious, generous person (he pays the cab that brings him and Jones to Westminster Cathedral) who even likes children.

The unusual complexity of Hitchcock’s German villains in *Foreign Correspondent* contributes to the film’s quality as a suspense thriller. The narrative pattern of this genre demands that the hero is frequently endangered without his explicit knowledge, so his adversaries need to be believably ordinary and even sympathetic characters. The vulnerability of the evildoers in turn forces the audience to identify with them at least to a certain degree, thereby heightening the experience of terror. Still, Hitchcock
consciously used stereotypical Nazi traits to vilify these characters. The head spy
might genuinely love his daughter and sacrifice his life for her but he is also capable
of treason and murder. Furthermore, the brutality and callousness of the group of
criminals in this film, as well as faceless German bombers and attackers - an
especially grueling shot is of the machine-gun death of an upset woman in the plane,
right before the crash - had to arouse and appall the audience to forcefully support
the interventionist message of *Foreign Correspondent*.

III. A Pragmatic Killer: Willi Rows and Rocks the *Lifeboat*

When *Lifeboat* premiered in New York City on January 12, 1944, it drew
substantial criticism from reviewers. Unlike *Foreign Correspondent*, which was
supposedly “prematurely anti-fascist,” this film was attacked for its lack of patriotic
bravado. Dorothy Thompson gave it “ten days to get out of town” in her column in
the *New York Herald Tribune*. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* proclaimed
the film dangerous because he detected traces of German propaganda in the plot,
unwittingly reiterated by Hitchcock, his screenwriter, Jo Swerling, and the author of
the original script, John Steinbeck. Crowther claimed that writers and director “failed
to grasp just what they had wrought. They certainly had no intention of elevating the
‘superman’ ideal.” A similar attitude was expressed by the Office of War
Information; the OWI read the movie as “the triumph of Nazism over democracy” and
insisted on changes. Audiences followed suit: *Lifeboat* was not much of a
commercial success.
Later critics thought differently about the film and its message. Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol praised the movie in the late 1950s as “a unique moral experiment,” and Hitchcock scholars like Spoto and Durgnat might criticize character development and a choppy script, but they still “admire much of its technique” and appreciate the pro-Allied meaning of the story, shrouded in “a study of human behavior.” Others who have given the film extensive scholarly treatment are German sociologist Lothar Bredella and Jesuit academic Gene Phillips, who have reevaluated it in the last few decades. *Lifeboat* is also still popular with audiences; exhibitors showed the film at a sold-out 1993 Hitchcock retrospective in Berlin cinemas, and the cable channel American Movie Classics included it in a 24-hour-homage to Hitchcock in 1997. And the anti-Nazi propaganda of the movie has become so evident to critics in the years after its release that author John Russell Taylor even devalues the film because “it gives us the feeling that we are being preached to, [it] makes us too aware of being manipulated for the manipulation really to come off.”

Hitchcock, who did the final revamping of the script, was surprised by the contemporary criticism. He had intended to make a picture that strongly admonishes the allied powers to stop the fighting and bickering among themselves, unite, and fight the real enemy: Nazism. Associated with this message was a secondary, minor objective: since racism was at the core of Nazi ideology, some of the scenes and dialogue with the African American steward Joe (Canada Lee) suggest an anti-racist stance. In this sense, *Lifeboat* was in accordance with many other prestigious wartime movies which communicated what Shull and Wilt call the “We’re in This Together” spirit. Examples of successful pictures with this ancillary message are *Casablanca,*
where Dooley Wilson’s Sam plays a pivotal role as Rick’s sidekick - important enough for Woody Allen to name his 1972 comedic *Casablanca*-homage *Play It Again, Sam* - and the Howard Hawks production *To Have and Have Not* (1944), a film partially set in an integrated nightclub; moreover, charter boat captain Harry Morgan (Humphry Bogart) informs one of his customers (Walter Sander) that the extra hand on his boat, black fisherman Horatio (Sir Lancelot) is a “necessary” crew member. Another star-studded movie, *Reunion in France* (1942, starring Joan Crawford, John Wayne, and John Carradine), contains a scene set in occupied Paris, where a black jazz singer (not listed in the credits) addresses uniformed Nazi patrons by singing “I’ll be glad when you’re dead, you rascal, you.”

That Hitchcock’s intentions for *Lifeboat* were so thoroughly misread by critics might have been a result of the film’s genre; audiences and reviewers did not expect an allegory of the world situation in a suspense thriller. An even stronger possibility, while related to the question of Hitchcockian genre, is the atypical depiction of the German villain, submarine commander Willi (German émigré Walter Slezak). In early 1944, film audiences were used to Nazi soldiers as dehumanized monsters, like the brutal torturers of Fritz Lang’s *Hangmen Also Die* (1943) or the Nazi characters of Slezak’s earlier wartime performances: sadistic Major von Keller in *This Land is Mine*, torturous Dr. Skaas in *The Fallen Sparrow*, or intimidating Baron von Luber in *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (all 1943). Instead, Willi is a superficially ordinary man who reveals himself to be rather accomplished in crisis situations. He eventually offers the “alarming implication,” as Crowther wrote, that he is “the most efficient and resourceful man” in the boat. Worse, he is “not altogether [a] repulsive or
invidious type,” but “practical, ingenious, and basically courageous in his lonely resolve.” The critic goes as far as to suspect that “with some cutting here and there, [the Nazis] could turn *Lifeboat* into a whiplash against the ‘decadent democracies.’”

This anguished criticism suggests that Americans feared a complication of the hitherto used monolithic, even mechanical stereotype of the German who had served so well as a clear-cut foil to Allied heroes. The resolute rejection of a complex Nazi villain might be the sign of a latent fear of identification with the murderous antagonist - the character that was supposed to be confined to the “other” suddenly encroached upon the American collective “us.”

The film is set exclusively - with the exception of a handful of shots - in a lifeboat on the Atlantic. The story begins with the sinking of a passenger ship that has been torpedoed by a German submarine. A small group of survivors make it to the raft: the materialistic American journalist Connie Porter (Tallulah Bankhead), four members of the ship’s crew, Stanley, sailor Gus, engineer Kovac, and steward Joe (Hume Cronyn, William Bendix, John Hodiak, Canada Lee), and a few passengers, nurse Alice (Mary Anderson), entrepreneur Rittenhouse (Henry Hull), and Mrs. Higgins (Heather Angel), who drowns herself after her baby is discovered to be dead. The survivors pull Willi into the boat, and he subsequently coaxes the allies into letting him steer the insecure group toward the known position of a German ship. When Willi kills Gus, who had found out that the German was hiding supplies, the crew collectively lynches him. Surviving a near-collision with the German boat, the drifting group is finally rescued by an American ship.
Hitchcock himself, as well as later critics, agreed that the film is an allegory of the world in late 1943: a still strong Nazi Germany stands against bickering and uncompromising allies who are often uncertain of their direction - just like the heterogeneous occupants of the lifeboat. Thus, the raft was meant as a micro-cosmos in which the warring factions must come to terms. The timid Stanley stands for Great Britain - the allied power that had repeatedly delayed a U.K.-U.S. attack across the English channel. Stan gets romantically involved with Alice, an American, symbolizing the close relationship between their countries. Kovac, a blue-collar worker from Chicago’s southside, represents the Soviet Union and its anti-capitalist ideology. That Kovac, who actually admits to Slavic (Czechoslovakian) roots, triumphs over U.S. capitalist Rittenhouse in card games, orders Stanley around, and brings Connie to risk her beloved diamond bracelet signifies his importance and power. Translated to world politics, this influence calls for close American-British-Soviet cooperation - the allies had learnt during Word War I, when the newborn USSR made a separate peace treaty with Germany, that without an eastern front, Anglo-American losses would be even more staggering.

Hitchcock’s summons for peaceful cooperation also extends to U.S. domestic problems, like class and race antagonisms. Kovac stands therefore also for the working masses who resent the upper-class politics of connection and money - but Kovac finally mends fences with wealthy Connie when they discover their similar roots. By the same token, Joe represents a racial minority that, in Hitchcock’s call for unity, has resolved to peaceful coexistence and general support of the dominant whites - both in American society and the filmic allegory on the lifeboat.
Following this pattern of delineation, Willi, whose name signals “will”-power and determination, stands for a single-minded Germany, bent on exercising his plan to reach his goal: world domination, represented by the powerful German supply ship in the *Lifeboat* parable. He tricks naïve as well as skeptical boat occupants into following his nautical course, while at the same time endearing himself to the allies by saving Gus’ life with a daring operation, guiding the boat through a life-threatening storm, and rowing the raft all by himself after the makeshift sail is lost. With Willi, Hitchcock created a stunningly multidimensional and therefore horrific criminal. For much of the movie, the German (as Willi is actually called in all the contemporary reviews) is an almost amiable character: a polite, educated, slightly overweight man who savors *kitschy* love songs and impresses the allies with medical and navigational knowledge, as well as physical strength. His skills, which reflect the Nazi myth of the “master race,” make him so valuable to the other passengers that they leave him in charge even after they find out that he is concealing a compass - a fact the audience knew long before the characters - and plans to deliver the lifeboat crew to German authorities. The allies can only get rid of him when they band to form a mob - Hitchcock called them a “pack of dogs” - after they find out that Willi is hiding food supplies and has killed Gus to keep that secret. On a more subconscious level, the lynching might have been also motivated by their discovery of his ultimate lie: Willi’s physical strength and mental stability did not result from superhuman genes, but from vitamin pills and water; hence, their earlier resignation to Willi’s alleged superiority becomes a moral burden, as Connie suggests after the
savage execution: “We weren’t a mob when we killed him, but when we sat around, prisoners of a man we saved.”

Willi, despite his treacherous deceits, seems to be an atypical Nazi villain - so much so that Crowther suspected that Willi’s “careful deceptions would be regarded as smart and heroic if they came from an American in the same spot.” He neither tortures nor kills out of pleasure - his only murder is motivated by ration (Gus has discovered that Willi hides a water flask) and maybe even a misguided kind of compassion (he later claims to have helped the delirious cripple out of his misery). And while Hitchcock probably points at the Nazi practice of euthanasia with Willi’s latter reasoning, these is no trace of sadism in the German’s actions; on the contrary, he tries to lull Gus into one of his hallucinations, an encounter with girlfriend Rosie, before he pushes the handicapped man overboard - certainly a convenient way to get rid of the witness without waking the crew, yet a move that might have partially - if perversely - been motivated by mercy.

The cinematography in Gus’ last scene seems to support this assumption. Willi is not positioned as the threatening, dominant slayer, but presented in the same manner as Gus: most shots are close-ups from the point of view of each of the men who sit - as a rare medium two-shot shows the viewer - very close to one another as they contemplate Gus’ imagined reunion with Rosie. The injured sailor even asks and gratefully receives advice from the German, who had earlier counseled Connie on her dealings with Kovac. Willi shrewdly manipulates Gus when he urges him “not to wake the others” and when he evades Gus’ question about why he is “holding out on
us," but he apparently does not take pleasure in the ultimate resolution of his problem, the murder of Gus.

It seems significant that the German finally kills another German who denies his role in the Fuehrer’s scheme. Gus, a German American with strong ties to his motherland, has changed his last name from Schmidt to Smith, negating a heritage that should, from Willi’s point of view, be sacred to him. This ideological conflict resurfaces during Gus’ last delirious moments, when Willi reminds him that his “name is Schmidt” shortly before the killing. A second reason for Gus’ murder is his apparent mental and physical weakness. In Willi’s world, there is no place for Gus, an unambitious sailor with a penchant for frivolous ballroom dancing, who can perform neither profession nor hobby after his leg amputation, and who matches this disability with the mental inability to restrain himself - he finally gives in to his thirst and drinks salty ocean water.

It is this display of a combination of efficiency, iron determination, and immoral ideology in an outwardly almost pleasant person that make Willi a much more frightful killer than, for example, the silent murderer Banat (Jack Moss) who hunts Joseph Cotton’s character in Journey Into Fear (1942). Willi’s indifference toward the allies (contrasted by the crew’s palpable hatred when they execute him toward the end of the film), his rejection of self-pity (whereas the other survivors continuously complain about their fates), and his calm resolve (the diametrical opposite of the perpetually disputing allies) make him superior and dangerous, despite his disadvantage of being essentially a prisoner on the lifeboat. As a result, he nearly succeeds in defeating his enemies, who can only overpower him in a united, albeit
savage, attack. Hitchcock’s message in *Lifeboat* seems clear: the only way to stop Hitler’s methodological murderers is a joint, concerted effort by the Allies, who might even have to sacrifice their own humanity temporarily in order to vanquish the Nazi evil.

IV. Effeminate Evildoer: Sebastian’s Penchant for the *Notorious*

Mostly shot in 1945 and released in 1946, *Notorious* is on the narrative level something of a sequel to *Foreign Correspondent*. The half-German heroine, Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman), tries to cope with the spy activities of her late Nazi father but is caught in a web of intrigue and betrayal. Like Carol in *Foreign Correspondent*, Alicia is fiercely committed to her adopted country, and both women assert their patriotism in conversations with their respective fathers. Alicia, like the female protagonist of *Correspondent* who endangers herself in the final scene when the German bombers attack London, is willing to risk her life for the hero’s anti-Nazi agenda. The similarities remain superficial, though. Unlike Carol, Alicia is inscribed with stereotypical German characteristics like blond hair and a distinct accent, which make it harder for her to claim her American allegiance; these traits probably also contribute to her guilt complex and result in her acquiescence in Devlin’s proposal to work for the CIA. Alicia’s painful contradictions are echoed by the main story line; Alicia, though in love with U.S. agent Devlin (Cary Grant), marries spy ring leader Alex Sebastian (Claude Rains) because Devlin resents her former, promiscuous, lifestyle and will not believe that she has changed for him. Until the very end, the agent does not change his negative opinion of Alicia, despite her effective and
dangerous work that leads the CIA to a momentous discovery: the Nazi spies are assembling a nuclear weapon. In her desire to impress Devlin, Alicia goes too far and is found out by Alex who, following his mother’s suggestion, starts to slowly poison her. Devlin rescues Alicia at the last moment, leaving her murderous husband in the hands of his nefarious accomplices.

With Alicia, Hitchcock developed another complex and fascinating character of German origin. Although she is not a villain, she lies, steals, drinks, and prostitutes herself - a distinct departure from the virtuous Carol, who merely assists Johnny in a harmless trickery. Alicia demonstrates her contradictions when she takes on her unwanted roots: she defies Nazi Germany’s propagated “pureness” standards for women - virginity before mandatory marriage and motherhood - as she parties with her “playmates.” On the other hand, she desires a homely lifestyle with Devlin, as evidenced in the scene after their arrival in Rio de Janeiro: Alicia prepares to cook dinner for the two of them and announces “marriage must be fun with something like this going on every day.”

Alicia’s sexual agency in Notorious, the main difference between her and Carol, whose almost prudish morality dictated that she leave the hotel where Johnny had booked two adjacent bedrooms, has been a topic for many film scholars. Tania Modleski calls Alicia “the woman who was known too much” and charges Hitchcock with the “disembody[ment of] the sexual woman” in the course of the film, where Alicia is ultimately purified by poison, desexualized by loose clothing, and needs to be brought back into the fold by the male protagonist. Adrian Martin argues that the opening scenes of Notorious, the situation in the court room where her father is
sentenced and the following party scene where Alicia is in charge of both her provocative body and her house guests, “evoke the perhaps dangerous enigma of Alicia’s sexuality and her political affiliations,” thus making the connection between the heroine’s sexual identity and her (half-) Germanness.

Despite her ethnicity - which actually makes her an unlikely heroine for the early post-war era - there are important differences between Alicia and the other Nazis in Notorious. Her balmy European accent (amplified by numerous soft focus close-ups of her face) is contrasted by the harsh brogue of her female antagonist, Mrs. Sebastian (Madame Konstantin). Her lifestyle is lavish and decadent, again very unlike the almost ascetic and disciplined life that Alex’s mother leads. The dissimilarity of Alicia and Sebastian’s houseguests is even more striking. Hitchcock establishes the strenuous relationship between spies and counterspy in a memorable scene, set after Alicia arrives at the Sebastian residence. As soon as Alex welcomes her, after she had a cold exchange with his mother, he rushes Alicia through several rooms to meet his associates, denoting the importance and dangerous impatience of his guests. The director shows with a long three shot how Alicia is escorted through the mansion, then cuts to a glamorous close-up of her face and the diamond necklace that indicates her precarious status as CIA agent.

The tension rises when Alex, who is now off frame, starts to introduce the other Germans to her. A curiously lengthy shot by a subjective camera starts with a cut to a procession of Nazis, who all walk toward Alicia, kiss her hand and say formal pleasantries while changing the shot property from a medium shot to a close-up. While the audience remembers Alicia from the soft-focus close-up, the approaching
men walk into sharp, almost menacing focus, the lingering threat accentuated by their
number, grave facial expressions - only the doomed simpleton Emil (Eberhard
Krumschmidt) smiles amiably - piercing gazes, icy voices, and close proximity. The
combination of a point of view camera, lack of cuts, and tight framing give this scene
an additional sense of urgency and jeopardy.

Arguably the most defined male character of the movie is Alex Sebastian. Alex is
 charming, well-mannered, and genuinely in love with Alicia. Dana Polan observes
that “romance and evil become split into two clear camps in Alex - a split that allays
any kind of doubt or suspicion.” This transparent allocation makes Sebastian
predictable and sympathetic. His blind faith in Alicia’s affections becomes
understandable, his jealousy excusable. Hitchcock presents him as even more
sympathetic than the hero; Devlin is introduced with a shot from behind as he
scrutinizes Alicia at her party in the beginning of the film. He then proceeds to punch
her out in her car and, later, to kick her horse so Sebastian, “who proves to be far
more gallant and kind than Devlin,” can ride to the rescue. Worse, whereas Alex
loves and marries Alicia, Devlin treats her with cynical contempt until the showdown
at the very end of the picture, demonstrating that “any man - husband or not, Nazi
figure or benign authority - can be a source of dread.”

While Hitchcock devises Devlin as the conflicted figure who has to fight against
murky preconceptions and prejudices (when he carries Alicia down the stairs in the
last scene, he admits: “I was a fat-headed guy filled with pain”), Alex’s psychological
profile seems more easily assessable. With Sebastian, the director introduces his first
villain trapped in an obviously Oedipal family structure, a character he perfected with
one of the most famous sons in film: Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) in *Psycho* (1960). Alex is dominated by his mother and, according to film scholar Robert Corber, "politically and sexually dependent on her." To free himself from her influence, he insists on marrying Alicia, another strong woman who rules and ultimately ruins his life. When he finds out about her betrayal, Alex hands the power back to his mother, affirming his own weakness by consenting to slowly poison his wife - with the proverbial murder weapon of a woman.

There are even traces of homosexuality in the character. Alex finds Devlin "very good-looking" and also has eyes for Devlin’s superior, Paul Prescott, whom he judges to be “very handsome.” This conjunction of “momism,” homoeroticism, and ultimate power deprivation has induced critics from Spoto to Martin to refer to Sebastian as “poor Alex.” His essential helplessness climaxes at the film’s ending: Alex, scared of being discovered by his fellow spies, is forced to assist Devlin in bringing the semi-conscious Alicia down the stairs and into his car, only to be shut out by the agents and abandoned to the same fate that Emil had suffered earlier. Hitchcock evokes the viewer’s pity in this scene not only with the established story line, but also via cinematography: the last shots of the movie are not dedicated to the reunited happy couple, but to Alex, who slowly returns to the house to face the consequences of his fatal mistakes.

The decidedly effeminate traits of Alex, as well as his tragic-villain positioning are reiterated in Hitchcock’s choice of the actor, Claude Rains. His roles in three previous box office hits were probably fresh in the minds of the audience: Rains played a sensitive, yielding psychologist with possibly homosexual preferences in
Now, Voyager (1942), a garrulous, petite Frenchman in Casablanca (1942, a foil to Bogart’s manly misanthrope), as well as the title character in Phantom of the Opera (1943), the tale of a pathetic killer whose unrequited love for a woman leads to his death - a little like Notorious. Rains’ tragic appeal in the Hitchcock film prompted Francois Truffaut to remark: “It’s rather touching, a small man in love with a tall woman.”

Truffaut also judged Rains to be one of Hitchcock’s best villain actors - together with Joseph Cotton (Shadow of a Doubt, 1943, and Under Capricorn, 1949) and Robert Walker (Strangers on a Train, 1951) - obviously not because he could forcefully project Nazi brutality but because of his emotional and human charge.

V. The Evolution of Villainy: Hitchcock Uses and Diffuses German Stereotypes

As I have previously indicated, Hitchcock’s anti-Nazi films seem to have been strongly influenced by American foreign politics, as well as U.S. domestic realities. As a result, Foreign Correspondent propagates anti-isolationism and interventionism while Lifeboat and, to a lesser degree, Notorious advocate internationalism. In addition to carrying explicit policy messages, the auteur’s three main movies about World War II mirrored actual events of the conflict, most notably espionage: “Hitchcock relied on his audience’s exposure to such events through newsreel, radio, and newspapers, to create a sense of deja vu.” In this scenario, the positive characters represent democratic values whereas the “master antagonists” stand for Nazi ideology.

Similarly, the villains undergo a metamorphosis according to the respective film’s message and its point in time. The interventionist Foreign Correspondent shows Nazi
collaborators running amok in Europe; they kill, kidnap, spy and torture in various
countries, virtually without interference by these states’ authorities, tearing the
continent apart “like a steer in a slaughterhouse.” To get the meaning across,
Hitchcock employs some established Nazi stereotypes, only to deconstruct these
images in the course of the film. Head Nazi Fisher is aristocratic, well-mannered, and
sufficiently ruthless in his means, but he is also devoted to his daughter and gives his
life for her. The typical Nazi, as projected in other productions of the era, feels
allegiance only to the Fuehrer or himself: in Confessions, Nazi spies betray their best
friends, close family ties do not keep the Nazis in Mortal Storm from shipping the
family patriarch to a concentration camp, and the German infiltrators of All Through
the Night not only betray, but kill each other in the end. An additional device that
diffused the Nazi stereotype in Foreign Correspondent is the choice of actors. In the
film, none of the Nazi characters is actually played by a German; on the contrary, the
starkly British Herbert Marshall was known to American audiences mostly as an
elegant Englishman starring in films like Breakfast for Two (1937, with Barbara
Stanwyck), Mad About Music (1938, with Deanna Durbin), and Zaza (1939, with
Claudette Colbert).

By contrast, Lifeboat’s Walter Slezak had entertained U.S. viewers as the
contemptible Nazi villain in efficacious productions like The Fallen Sparrow, Once
Upon a Honeymoon, and This Land is Mine. But in the openly internationalist
Hitchcock movie, Slezak’s character, like Marshall’s, contradicts his own
stereotypical traits: he might kill Gus in the end, but he first saves his life and allows
Gus to reminisce; Willi is a remorseless murderer, yet he savors folklorist love songs
and gives Connie valuable advice in her budding relationship with Kovac; he is single-minded and deceitful, but his malice does not include torture or sadism; his supposed “superhuman” strength turns out to be a myth, but his superiority in medicine and navigation is bona fide. Conventional contemporary German antagonists display much less diversity of traits. In successful films like *Hangmen Also Die*, *The North Star*, and especially *The Seventh Cross*, the villains are stereotypical “jackbooted thugs,” evil torturers and mass murderers.

*Notorious*, while not as strong in its internationalist message as *Lifeboat*, deals with the historically accurate fact of a residual Nazi threat in South America and warns its audiences about possible consequences of subversive nuclear science. With Alex Sebastian, who is again played by a British actor, Hitchcock returns to the Fisher-like elegant and refined Nazi villain. Like Fisher, he is capable of sincere emotions, but Alex transcends the image of the previous antagonist with his complicated psychological texture. Sebastian seems to be Hitchcock’s attempt to cast the postwar Nazi threat in gendered terms: defeated and ravished (castrated) Germany is represented by an effeminate romantic who might be still willing to murder, but who lacks the demonstrative - and seemingly perpetually victorious - masculinity of his American counterpart. That this role is played by a British actor, from a country that had just been rescued by the potent military power of “Uncle Sam,” undergirds this interpretation.

Alex is the most evolved Nazi villain in Hitchcock’s oeuvre - and also one of the few humane German antagonists in early postwar films. Even his accomplices, stereotypical depictions of the gifted scientist, the executioner, and obedient
followers, are a comparatively benign group - Emil’s murder occurs only in the
dialogue, and unlike Fisher’s associates, they do not torture their victims.  
Comparative productions, like Charles Vidor’s *Gilda* (1946), preferred Nazi stock
characters. Like *Notorious*, the film is set in South America, and tells the story of an
emotionally dysfunctional triangle: the female protagonist (Rita Hayworth) is caught
between the American man she loves, Johnny (Glenn Ford), and her older husband,
Mundson (George MacReady). Although Mundson is never referred to as German, he
fits the classic Nazi-as-demon persona. The blond, aristocratic casino magnate is
constructed as a brutal and sadistic autocrat, bent on dominating the world market
with a tungsten monopoly. His Nazi affiliation becomes obvious when he avoids
Johnny’s invitation to drink to the German surrender; his cold facial expressions,
unemotional demeanor, and the admission that “hate is the only feeling that ever
warmed me” reflect Nazi depictions from *Confessions* to *The House on 92nd Street*
(released in early September 1945).

Hitchcock, like most other filmmakers of the 1940s, created German stereotypes
probably to bring order to a chaotic time in history. As artist and auteur, he could
inscribe his villains with distinct characteristics, a means of order to cope with a
physical world that had spun out of control. The Hitchcockian peculiarity of
simultaneously using and diffusing established German stereotypes in his World War
II movies might have been caused by two factors. The director’s generic specification
demanded at least partially sympathetic villains; Hitchcock often stated that his films
aroused audiences because the murders are committed by outwardly respectable
people - only the audience and the hero (in this order) find out about their evil
Therefore, when the director chose Nazi villains, they still had to conform to the successful recipe of the suspense thriller antagonists. Melodramas like *The Mortal Storm* (1940), *The Seventh Cross* (1944), and *Cornered* (November 1945), where the hero suffers painful losses at the hands of Nazis, needed perhaps a more openly evil force and hence employed one-dimensional German characters.

The same holds true for the self-professed semi-documentaries and docudramas, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *Mission to Moscow* (1943), and *The House on 92nd Street* (September 1945), among others, which had to contrast brutal Nazi authoritarianism with ingenious democratic Americanism. Other genres also relied on German foil characters for their plots: adventure films like *Escape* (1940), and *To Have and Have Not* (1944), spy thrillers like *All Through the Night* (1941) and *The Fallen Sparrow* (1943), romance dramas like *Casablanca* (1942) and *Gilda* (1946), even comedies like *The Great Dictator* (1940) and *To Be Or Not To Be* (1942); horror movies like *Black Dragons* (1942) and *Return of the Vampire* (1943) actually took this role one step further when the Nazi virtually becomes a demonic fiend and dominates the narrative.

A second reason for the multi-dimensional German villain in Hitchcock’s films might be his lack of experience with the totalitarian regime. Living in Berlin in the 1920 and watching expressionistic directors like Fritz Lang, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau and Ernst Lubitsch left him with an overwhelmingly positive personal impression of Germany. Spoto writes that 1924 was a major year
in the artistic life of Alfred Hitchcock: from Germany’s filmmakers, technicians, history, and culture he learned the nature of tension in a sequence, the elements that create powerful expression within the frame image, the dynamics of the relationship between light and shadow and between characters and decor. But most important of all, he came to understand the nature and power of an unstable and distorted image.\textsuperscript{54}

This positive experience, reinforced by subsequent stays in Germany where he shot his first film as director in 1925 with \textit{The Pleasure Garden}, could have affected Hitchcock’s subsequent imaging of German characters. In addition, he never experienced the German Blitz on London himself. Hitchcock left England in 1939 to shoot \textit{Rebecca} - a move that caused a flurry of criticism in the British press where the director was denounced as deserting “Britain when she needed him most.”\textsuperscript{55} He went back for only twelve weeks in 1944 to shoot two short films about the French resistance, \textit{Bon Voyage} and \textit{Aventure Malgache}, residing in a luxurious hotel suite and enjoying “long luncheons”\textsuperscript{56} - it seems that Hitchcock in Hollywood as well as during his brief stay in London was somewhat removed from the Nazi terror. By contrast, émigré directors who had lived in fascist Germany, who were Jewish or whose relatives were suffering from Nazi oppression, delivered some of the most grueling accounts of German atrocities; examples are Herbert Biberman’s \textit{The Master Race}, \textit{Hangmen Also Die} by Fritz Lang, and Fred Zinneman’s \textit{The Seventh Cross}, as well as \textit{Reunion in France} by Jules Dassin and Jean Renoir’s \textit{This Land is Mine}.\textsuperscript{57}
With the creation of a new and unusual Nazi villain, Hitchcock helped the fusion of Germanness and Nazism - but, more importantly, his unique method of inscribing the criminals with humane traits also produced a lasting stereotype that proved to be believable as well as horrific. By attributing positive and realistic characteristics to Nazis, Hitchcock introduced a seemingly benign German persona with latent lethal potential that surfaces only in the course of the plot. The familiar and predictable is suddenly also savage and implacable - the ultimate nightmare. The induction of this multi-faceted Nazi made not only for more frightful film characters, though. The audience’s ability to at least partially identify with the Nazi villains leads to the possibility of more common ideological ground with the fascists. After all, the driving forces behind Hitchcock’s culprits - Fisher’s fatherly love, Willi’s practicality and determination, and Sebastian’s devotion to mother and wife - are *bona fide* American values.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1 Donald Spoto argues that Hitchcock developed the suspense film as an alternative to mystery movies and whodunits which, as Spoto quotes the director, were “not Hitchcockian genre[s] at all.” In Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, (Boston: Little, Brown, &Co., 1983): 504.


3 The other elements on the list are “Audience in Superior Position (the viewer has information that the hero lacks),” “The Subjective Camera (the frame becomes the viewpoint of the audience),” and “Claustrophobia (protagonist and audience are deprived of open views or freedom of action.” Simone compiled these elements from the books *Writing the Script* by Wells Root and *Suspense in Cinema* by Gordon Gow. In Simone, *Hitchcock as Activist*, 12-14.

4 Anderson reprised the role’s characteristics in the thriller *All Through the Night* (1941), where she plays a German woman called “Madame,” the partner of a spy ring leader (veteran film-Nazi Conrad Veidt).

5 Donald Spoto criticized the picture because it has “too much of its muchness,” a mass of ideas that clutter the result. In Donald Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock: Fifty Years of his Motion Pictures*, (Garden City: Doubleday andCo., 1976): 131.


7 This quote is from *The 39 Steps*, according to Donald Spoto the first masterpiece of the director. Critics have generally agreed that *The 39 Steps* and *Saboteur* are very alike in plot and characters, both picturing the cross-country journeys of falsely accused men who force the initially unwilling and suspicious romantic interest to follow them on their quest to unmask an allegedly respectable citizen as a spy. The criminals in both films are also very alike: outwardly caring family men and members of the community who turn out to be greedy traitors with no allegiance to their countries.

8 *Saboteur* does not get as extensive a treatment in this paper as *Foreign Correspondent, Lifeboat*, and *Notorious* because of its status as a minor Hitchcock
film, its rather unoriginal political message, and the marginality of its main German character. That does not imply, though, that \textit{Saboteur} is less worthy of being studied and investigated as a film document of World War II.

9 Spoto, \textit{Art of Hitchcock}, 154 and 156.

10 The strange spelling of George Sanders' character is explained in the narrative, with an anecdote that illustrates ffolliot's arch-British ancestry and serves to solidify his patriotic stance.

11 \textit{Foreign Correspondent} (1940). In this context, it is significant that \textit{Foreign Correspondent} was released in late August of 1940. Ten days later, on September 7, Germany began its massive air raids on London. Sam Simone credits the film with predicting the blitz. In Simone, \textit{Hitchcock as Activist}, 55.

12 Hitchcock himself states this intention in his 1966 interview with Francois Truffaut. In Truffaut, \textit{Hitchcock}, 152.

13 Shull and Wilt, as well as Simone, suggest that the phony peace organization serves as a surrogate for the America First movement, the largest isolationist group in the U.S. which was suspected to be supported by German spy rings. In Michael Shull and David Wilt, \textit{Hollywood War Films, 1937 – 1945}, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 1996): 57.

14 Simone, \textit{Hitchcock as Activist}, 42.

15 Ibid. 53.

16 Carol questions Johnny's honorable motives when he orders two hotel rooms with a connecting door, whereas he planned to keep her under close surveillance in order to help maintain ffolliot's kidnapping farce.


18 Quoted in Spoto, \textit{Dark Side of Genius}, 269.


21 Truffaut, \textit{Hitchcock}, 150.


27 Simone, \textit{Hitchcock as Activist}, 89.

28 Hitchcock was apparently well informed about the British war effort; he claims to have been good friends with Sidney Bernstein, a high official in the U.K. Ministry of Information, in Truffaut, \textit{Hitchcock}, 152.

29 The repeated criticism of Connie's and Rittenhouse's materialism probably reflects not only John Steinbeck's known leftist convictions, but also Hitchcock's ideology: in
earlier movies like *Shadow of a Doubt* as well as in later films like *How to Catch a Thief* and *Frenzy*, he questions the value of wealth and jewelry; real value, he seems to imply, lies elsewhere - mostly in true emotions.  


31 I would like to thank Australian Hitchcock scholar Ken Mogg for bringing the German’s signifying name to my attention. The conscious naming of film characters is also discussed in chapter one.  


33 I am referring to the sequence in which Johnny calls his editor, Mr. Powers, from the American rescue ship pretending to speak to a relative because the captain insists on the vessel’s neutrality.  


37 Mrs. Sebastian’s frugality is emphasized by her absence during the party, as well as the scene where Alex and Alicia come home from their honeymoon to a dimly lit, nearly empty house.

38 This notion is later substantiated when the Germans decide to murder Emil for a comparatively slight misdemeanor. Emil’s execution, in turn, delivers the pretext for the Sebastians’ decision to poison Alicia, so their associates will not discover that Alex has married an American agent.


41 Polan, 280. Adrian Martin suggests Polan’s analysis refers to the “spectre of interchangibility between Alex and Devlin, the reversal of their ‘typed’ good and evil positions.” In Martin, “Around *Notorious*,” *The MacGuffin*, 18-19.


43 Spoto, Art of Hitchcock, 169.


46 Simone, *Hitchcock as Activist*, 163.

47 Ibid.

48 The quotation is from Jones’ monologue at the end of the movie.

49 Other main Nazis in the film were the Italian character actor Eduardo Cianelli (torturer Krug) and British actor Edmund Gwenn (Rowley, the assassin).

50 I have to disagree with Spoto’s assessment that *Notorious* is not a spy melodrama, but about “the serious issue of common humanity...” In Spoto, *Art of Hitchcock*, 162.
While the personal drama of the love triangle between Alicia, Devlin, and Alex certainly takes center stage, the political ramifications of nuclear weapons in the wrong hands seems to be a strong subtext. This assumption is undergirded by the clear political messages of Hitchcock’s other Nazi-inspired films, as well as his extensive research on the issue of nuclear fission as reported by Taylor, *Hitch*, 200. Noteworthy interpretations of the movie’s main issues were published by Modleski, who sees the film as example of the “female gothic,” where the female protagonist is victimized by the man she loves, as well as by Andrew Britton, who detects a “thematic concern with the male need to possess and subjugate female sexuality.” Adrian Martin expands this discussion when he focuses on the character evolution of Devlin and calls the experience “a terse but trembling ‘male weepie.’” In Modleski, *Women Who Knew Too Much*, 57. Britton’s and Martin’s quotations are taken from Martin, *Around Notorious*, 16.

A commentary on Hollywood’s curious practice to cast Englishmen as Nazi villains will be furnished in chapter three. For a discussion of the American tendency to view their nation as the masculine savior of weak, effeminate countries, see “Politics and Gender: A Symposium,” in *Foreign Affairs* 3 (Sept. 1993), 23-67. See also Andrew Rotter, “Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947-1963,” *Journal of American History* (Sept. 1994), 518-542.

*Notorious* is on the whole much less bloody than *Foreign Correspondent* (which features various brutal killings, graphic displays of attempted murder, torture, drowning victims, and a suicide) or *Lifeboat* (the narrative includes a drowned baby and the suicide of its mother, a makeshift amputation, a murder, and finally a lynching); this lack of a violent outlet compounds the suspense and anticipates the climactic finale.

Hitchcock and Truffaut agreed that a convincing villain is paramount to the verisimilitude of the entire film. In Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 187.

Spoto, *Dark Side of Genius*, 70.


Biberman, Lang, Zinneman, and Dassin were of Jewish ancestry, while Renoir had served in the propaganda film branch of the French army.
I use certain images because I need them, because I know of their power.

- Jean-Luc Godard (1977)

[In my first 8mm film,] the Germans wore black-died T-shirts.


I. The Stereotype Proliferates: A Variety of Nazis Terrifies the Genres

Hitchcock’s unusual Nazi villains helped to create a new German stereotype that sealed the fusion of Germanness and Nazism. By depicting Nazi soldiers and even spies as vulnerable and by assigning them positive traits, he inaugurated a film persona whose prodigy permeates American cinema and TV to this day. The director’s influence as filmmaker contributed to the perpetuation of a uniquely successful stereotype: the Nazified - and therefore Germanized - villain who is humane and heinous at the same time, a multi-faceted killer with ordinary features. This new stereotype proved to be especially useful in films where the German antagonist plays a prominent role, most notably in period productions.

The Nazi prototype of World War II movies spawned an array of variations with three main character thrusts: the quasi-sympathetic wartime soldier of the past who paradoxically fights and kills for the Nazi cause, the gifted, but ruthless - sometimes even mad - scientist, and the relentless present-day (neo-)Nazi criminal.¹ The latter type does not even have to be an outright German anymore - Russians, South
Africans, and men of obscure nationality, like the various James Bond antagonists, have been inscribed with Nazi traits and became Germanized in the process. In addition, the powerful German/Nazi stereotype pervades virtually all genres and even comes to inflect earlier German images, such as the mad, ingenious scientist of various 1920s expressionist films - the evil doctor invariably received Hollywood’s Nazi stamp after the war. While the Nazification of film characters has become a popular mode of representation, most genres still adhere to the pre-Hitchcockian, monolithic villain.

With the onset of the Cold War, movies about Nazi foes in contemporary settings became rare - for a while. Instead, Hollywood churned out scores of war stories in the late 1940s, 1950, and into the 1960s, meant to affirm U.S. military might, as well as political and moral superiority of the American system. A direct descendant of the Hitchcockian German is the honorable soldier, a formidable enemy who practically forces the cooperation of future NATO-partners to assure the Allied - albeit American-dominated - victory. This phase produced such “historical epics” as *Battle of the Bulge* (1953), *To Hell and Back* (1955), *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), *The Longest Day* (1962), *The Victors* (1963) as well as dozens of other successful films, often featuring U.S manhood icon John Wayne or war hero Audie Murphy fighting emotionally ambivalent German soldiers.

A fascinating example of the metamorphosis of the German soldier from evil villain to respected foe is the 1951 movie *Rommel - The Desert Fox*. The German field marshal, played by James Mason, is portrayed as a very human soldier and congenial strategist, who actually plotted to overthrow his Nazi overlords. In the
wartime film *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), Rommel’s character had been shown in a much less flattering fashion: Erich von Stroheim gave a reprise of his famous World War I impersonation of the arrogant Prussian officer who sneers at the Allied effort and intimidates his subordinates with a riding crop. Other examples of the German soldier as quasi-hero are *The Sea Chase* (1955) and *The Enemy Below* (1957), both naval dramas featuring proud and capable German sailors. Film historians and critics have called this development “face-saving exercises” for the new ally by American filmmakers who “worked overtime to make beauties of the beasts.”

Still, it is important to remember that even the “beautified” antagonist wore a uniform and remained confined to the authoritarian, hierarchic structure of the military - the film *German* was in no danger of becoming democratic.

By the mid-1960s, this war film formula experienced a slight change. While the German opponents remained challenging, magnificent fighters and the American protagonist(s) cunning and victorious, the U.S. characters were now occasionally allowed to move away from untainted heroism and to display more colorful traits. The most successful examples of these films are *The Dirty Dozen* (1967) where a band of outlaws takes a German stronghold - and thereby redeems itself - and *Patton* (1970), the award-winning biography of the controversial American general. This occurrence was probably influenced by the extraordinary success of the so-called Spaghetti-Westerns with their awe-inspiring anti-heroes. In addition, World War II pictures experienced an overall decline in the 1970; by the second half of the decade, Hollywood’s combat scenes were generally set in Vietnam.
The picture of the brave, humane, even tormented German soldier was to stay in Hollywood. Superstar Marlon Brando gave a memorable performance of a confused German fighter whose senseless death evoked viewers’ empathy in *The Young Lions* (1958) and James Coburn portrays a valorous *Wehrmacht* officer with anti-Nazi convictions in the celebrated film *Cross of Iron* (1976) - a production that generated a quasi-sequel with *Breakthrough* (1978), starring Richard Burton as the German protagonist. These images might have inspired later films like *Restless Conscience* (1992), the story of the “noble” officers of the 20th July movement who tried to assassinate Hitler. While nearly all of these pictures contain characters that fit the goose-stepping Nazi stereotype of the war era - a reminder that this type of villain was well and alive - the German protagonists are presented as exceptionally positive; they were unpolitical, hard-working soldiers, trapped in a senseless war - much like their American counterparts. Significantly, the original emergence of the “good” German soldier in the early 1950s came right after the Berlin Airlift of 1948 and 1949, coincided with the implementation of the Marshall Plan and reflected the new friendship between vanquished and victor.

While the German soldier was whitewashed by the movie industry and the American hero became grittier, the evil Nazi returned to the contemporary film world just after the Cuban Missile Crisis - this time as mad scientist, as greedy despot, or as a combination of the two. The former stereotype was probably conceived as a fusion of the sinister German genius Dr. Mabuse, an influential cinematic creation by Fritz Lang in the 1920s, and real-life Nazi scientists like Josef Mengele, whose unimaginably heinous human experiments had caused thousands of deaths. Stanley
Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and to Love the Bomb* (1963) features one of the earliest and most famous examples of these characters. The cynical scientist with no regard for human life remained a popular stereotype during the Cold War - the fictitious British agent James Bond fought plenty of them in U.K. productions and proved that this German image was not confined to Hollywood.8

Two of the most malevolent Bond villains are the monocled Blofeld, starkly reminiscent of Stroheim’s performances, and Stromberg, played with a heavy accent by the German actor Curt Juergens.9 To a certain degree, almost all evildoers in this popular series followed Nazi goals, from world domination in *Dr. No* (1962) to racial purity in *Moonraker* (1979) and manipulative propaganda in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997). This overdrawn stock character, who loses his terror as the clearly doomed antagonist to the invincible Bond, comes full circle in *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997), a spoof of the James Bond movies, where Mike Myers fights himself in a dual role as Powers and his arch-nemesis, the demented “Dr. Evil.”

The Nazi scientist proves to be as resilient to time as the militaristic stormtrooper. The satire *Dr. Strangelove*, for instance, found a realistic counterpart in *The Right Stuff* (1981), a fact-based film about the American space program in which the cynical but brilliant German rocket scientist calls the American crews “so-called astronauts” who are “merely redundant components.” Another explicit treatment of a Nazi doctor who is also a greedy tyrant is provided in the 1976 movie *The Marathon Man*. The film contains grueling scenes where protagonist Babe, poignantly played by the Jewish actor Dustin Hoffman, is tortured by a Nazi dentist who drills holes in his teeth - a not so subtle reference to the Nazi practice of ripping gold teeth out of their
victim's mouths. That the German scientist - both as survivor of the Third Reich and his ideological offspring - still holds the power to terrorize becomes clear with a 1998 episode of the weekly Fox-series *Millennium*. In this homage to the 1974 neo-Nazi thriller *The Odessa File*, investigator Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) fights the undercover spy ring “Odessa,” a fascist organization which conducts human experiments in order to develop chemical weapons.

Hollywood’s obsession with Nazi war criminals in present-day settings escalated recently with *Apt Pupil* (1998). Here, a former concentration camp commandant (Ian McKellen) is forced by an American high school student (Brad Renfro) to retell the gruesome details of the Holocaust. The student’s obsession with Nazism and genocide leads to his gradual moral decay; by the end of the film, he has lied, cheated, and murdered. The film’s narrative serves as a useful reflection on the necessity of the Nazi stereotype: the boy’s cruelty and sadism are explained as a result of his fascination with the Third Reich and his mutation into a scheming killer is due to the direct influence of his German “teacher” - the culminating aggression is therefore contained in the specific context of Nazism. More important, however, is the movie’s conscious play on the Nazi stereotype. By depicting Nazi brutality as a contagious agent that is fascinating even to a brilliant young American, the movie challenges the comfortable and wishful notion that “it could never happen here.” In the Hitchcockian style of a suspense thriller and with his notion of creating a complex antagonist, the filmmaker shows the emerging main villain, the “apt pupil,” as an ordinary kid in an ordinary American neighborhood, impairing the viewer’s confidence in his own inability to torture and murder.
The depiction of Germans as Nazis has not been limited to the genres of war films, fact-based dramas, or thrillers. The comical quality in Nazism's compulsive attributes were first exposed by Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* (1940). After the discovery of the extent of German atrocities, the "funny Nazi" became rare - until *Hogan's Heroes* (CBS), a 1960s TV series that draws laughs by pitching inept Nazi wardens against clever Allied prison inmates. Its British counterpart, *Allo Allo* (BBC), was produced in the 1980s, a decade that saw a resurgence of the farcical Nazi: Stephen Spielberg created pathetic villains in the first and third installments of his Indiana Jones cycle (1981 and 1989),¹ and in his satire *1941* (1980), while comedian Steve Martin battles Germans in the film noir parody *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1985), where the type-cast actor Erich von Stroheim reprises his role as cocksure German officer.

Nazified villains in adventure and action movies, even when their German connection is only implied, are easily identified as "Germanesque" with an arsenal of Nazi traits. The tall blonde South African villains in *Lethal Weapon II* (1989), for example, are clearly displaying characteristics and convictions of a self-proclaimed *herrenrasse* - to an extent that Mel Gibson's character actually imitates a "Sieg Heil" greeting to provoke a confrontation. The intimate relationship between Nazis and white South Africans is reiterated in several other anti-Apartheid films, but most notably in *The Dry White Season* (1989), where German actor Juergen Prochnow plays a Gestapo-like secret police officer. In the second and third installments of the *Rambo*-trilogy, filmed during the Reagan era of strict antagonism to the "evil empire," Russian characters display all the viciousness of stereotypical Nazi torturers, implying
that in the 1980s, Hitler’s totalitarian progeny lived behind the Iron Curtain.\textsuperscript{11} Nazi traits also apply to the openly German antagonists of Bruce Willis’ character in \textit{Died Hard} (1989) and \textit{Die Hard with a Vengeance} (1995).\textsuperscript{12} The rigid command structure of the crews and their militaristic clothing evoke visions of Germans as order-barking officers who readily inflict death and destruction. Furthermore, the teutonic terrorist in the third installment of \textit{Die Hard}, Simon Gruber, tries to dispose of his enemies (one of whom is black) by incinerating them with a fire bomb - an obvious allusion to concentration camp execution practices.

Cartoons and science fiction films are equally charged with abundant contemporary Nazified villains. Another modern hero who faces the ongoing Nazi threat is the animated character McBane, a cartoon within a cartoon, created to amuse Bart and Lisa Simpson in \textit{The Simpsons} (Fox, 1990s). McBane, a cross between Superman and Rambo, flies through the air to kill a “Nazi-Communist,” whose swastika-like insignia are prominently displayed on his uniform.\textsuperscript{13} The sci-fi classic \textit{Star Wars} (1977) features parades of faceless soldiers, termed “stormtroopers,” and the hero of \textit{The Fifth Element} (1997) fights a nemesis who bears an uncanny resemblance to Adolf Hitler - only the futuristic version has received a stylish makeover and sports a 1990s “goatee” instead of the “Fuehrer’s” characteristic cropped mustache. Studios even create entire alien races with Nazis in mind; the robot-like “Borg” in \textit{Star Trek: First Contact} (1996) try to conquer Earth as part of their “assimilation” of the universe, and the “Cromags” in the TV show \textit{Sliders} (Fox and SciFi Channel, 1990s) wear uniforms much like the \textit{Wehrmacht} while they execute their “final solution” - the mass-incineration of dissenters.\textsuperscript{14}
The application of the traditional, largely one-dimensional evil German stereotype, which survived Hitchcock’s attempt at complicating the villain, seems to coincide with certain genres. Comedies, like *Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid* and action/adventure films with humorous characters, like Indiana Jones’ antagonists, rely on simple stock characters. Similarly, propagandistic dramas like *The Dry White Season*, science fictions like *The Fifth Element*, and action thrillers like the *Rambo* and *Lethal Weapon* series demand the channeling and personification of maleficence for dramatic purposes - the mad scientist and the Nazi(fied) villain are, while essential stereotypes in these stories, primarily foils for the hero and therefore confined to pre-Hitchcockian representation.

Contrarily, the war film as a period piece after 1945 could draw from the Hitchcock’s presentation of the villains. These productions, like the before-mentioned films with honorable, even noble German soldiers, often qualify simplifications, diffuse the established stereotype and thus craft a new one that is related to Hitchcock’s images. Significantly, a sub-genre of this type of period movie also adheres to the use of polymorphous Nazis: films that deal with the Jewish genocide. Hollywood’s “first major commercial film” on this topic, the TV miniseries *Holocaust* (1978) features ordinary Germans who are corrupted by the Nazi regime. The main “Aryan” protagonist, Eric Dorf (Michael Moriarty), is originally conflicted about his involvement with the SS and the narrative explicates his continued doubts about the Jewish pogrom. Furthermore, Dorf is portrayed as an essentially weak person who leans heavily on his ambitious, domineering wife, has tearful bouts of confusion, and finally takes his own life when he cannot face the
consequences of his actions. The many close-ups of Dorf’s stoic, even trance-like facial expression when he plans or justifies the *Endloesung* are juxtaposed with long shots of his animated family life, suggesting a tormented person who desperately tries to defend his contribution to the Jewish mass murder.

The ambivalent, almost agonized villain is also a main feature of one of the most acclaimed motion picture accounts of the Holocaust, *Schindler’s List* (1993). Labor camp commandant Amon Goeth (Ralph Fiennes) is a rather complex character whose contradictions seem to finally drive him into madness. Like Dorf, he is basically weak, a chain-smoking, lecherous drunkard who is easily influenced by the corrupt Oskar Schindler (Liam Neesen). His biggest vulnerability is his obsession with the Jewish girl Helen Hirsch (Embeth Davidtz) whom he wants “to grow old” with.16 Director Steven Spielberg emphasizes Goeth’s vulgarity and ordinariness by showing him drunk on the floor and urinating into a toilet. On the other hand, the commandant is shown throughout the movie as a cold, indiscriminate killer with a substantial part in the extermination of millions. This discrepancy of traits - akin to Hitchcock’s German characters - make Goeth a formidable, multi-faceted villain.17

This particular variation of the Nazi stereotype marks a prominent post-World War II form of Nazi representations. The makers of warfilms, Holocaust treatments, and certain suspense thrillers like *Apt Pupil* deploy Hitchcockian concepts to showcase the ordinariness of malignity, by making the fiend more complex and therefore more frightfully real. Hitchcock convincingly demonstrated that the evils of war and genocide did not spring from some demonic force or non-human monstrosity, but was committed by ordinary people with vulnerabilities and idiosyncrasies. As a
consequence, period pieces like war epics and pictures that address German atrocities are influenced by the Hitchcockian approach to villainy - the “good” soldier, the confused Holocaust perpetrator, and the modern Nazi collaborator are probably related to Stephen Fisher, Willi, and Alex Sebastian. The observation that the specifics of genre influence the dimension of the Nazi antagonist seems to corroborate my earlier claim that the complex Nazi villain arose as a necessary ingredient for Hitchcock’s suspense thriller genre.

II. German (and British) Actors as Nazis: Typecasting Manifests the Stereotype

The World War II practice of casting German actors as Nazis to achieve verisimilitude was continued after the surrender. As a result, Germans are quasi-synonymous with Nazis in Hollywood. This observation is undergirded by the fact that almost all successful male postwar actors of German or Austrian origin spent and are spending their American careers as Nazified villains, uniformed autocrats, or outright Nazi soldiers - of the evil as well as the “benevolent” type. The most acknowledged and efficacious Germanic actors between 1945 and the present are probably the late Curd Juergens, Gert Froebe and Klaus Kinski, as well as the current actors Maximillian Schell, Juergen Prochnow, and Armin Mueller-Stahl.18

Juergens starred in his second Hollywood film, The Longest Day (1962), as the stereotypical honorable German officer with ambiguous feelings on D-Day.19 He reprised that character in the combat pictures Battle of Britain and Battle of Neretya (both 1969), as well as in Breakthrough (1978), where he negotiates the German
surrender at the end of the war. He was joined in his efforts to play a noble, politically ambivalent soldier by the rest of Hollywood’s postwar German notables. Froebe co-stars in *The Longest Day* as a German sergeant who shares his superior officers’ reluctance to sacrifice young men, and he was also cast as German general Dietrich von Choltitz who agonized over - and finally disobeyed - Hitler’s order to burn Paris before retrieving the occupation troops in *Is Paris Burning?* (1966). Kinski portrays an eager Nazi deserter in *Decision Before Dawn* (1951), and Schell plays Nazi officers with Brando in *The Young Lions* (1958), and opposite Coburn in *Cross of Iron* (1976). He has larger roles as unhappy German officers in *The Plot to Assassinate Hitler* (1961) as the historical head conspirator count Schenk von Stauffenberg and in the star-studded *A Bridge Too Far* (1977), where he plays Wehrmacht general Wilhelm Bittrich, who defended a strategically important bridge at Arnheim in 1944.

Juergen Prochnow has probably been the most successful German actor in Hollywood thus far. His signature performance as the harrowed captain of *Das Boot* (1981) brought him a similar part in the ghoulish thriller *The Keep* (1983), where he - unsuccessfully - tries to prevent his greedy troops from accidentally freeing a deadly demon. With his blue eyes and pock-marked skin, he is predestined to a career as a type-cast Nazi or Nazified villain: a striking example is his part as a German torture master in the award-sweeping World War II epic *The English Patient* (1996). When he is not cast as a German officer, Prochnow still exhibits traits of that character in contemporary or futuristic settings; he plays the authoritarian ruler of a fascist society in the science fiction film *Dune* (1984), an aristocratic murderous mastermind in

His German colleagues also terrify as crazed doctors, neo-Nazis, and evil subversive schemers. Curd Juergens scares audiences with the take-over of Alan Alda’s body in Mephisto Waltz (1971), and he spars with Roger Moore in The Spy Who Loved Me (1977). Froebe portrays another sadistic Bond antagonist in Goldfinger (1964), after he shocked audiences as a fiendish child murderer in the U.S.-German production It Happened in Broad Daylight (1958). Maximilian Schell plays a dictator in space in The Black Hole (1979), and he chills viewers as a vicious neo-Nazi in The Odessa File (1974), as well as in the film version of the Broadway play The Man in the Glass Booth (1975), where his character, an outwardly respected Jewish businessman in New York, is gradually revealed to be a wanted Nazi war criminal.

Yet another alleged altruist with a shady Nazi past is played by Armin Mueller-Stahl in The Music Box (1989); the blue-eyed actor also stars as unscrupulous conspirator Conrad Strughold in The X-Files (1998), the leader of an exclusively white male spy ring with ruthless means and questionable goals. Mueller-Stahl also appears - uniformed - as the corrupt, if benign, Russian colonel Dimitri Vertikoff in The Peacemaker (1997). Klaus Kinski portrays the son of a war criminal who follows
in his father's footsteps as a barbarous murderer in *Crawlspace* (1986). In minor productions, Kinski was also a popular choice for the mad scientist Nazi stereotype; he appeared as a futuristic inventor in *Android* (1985), bent on populating the world with his race of robots, and he exploited his image as a psychopath - both on and off-screen - in the TV movie *Timestalkers* (1987), bringing death and destruction to earth from the 26th century.

When Hollywood did not use Germans in productions about World War II and postwar spy rings, filmmakers generally cast British actors as Nazis and German soldiers. The previously analyzed Hitchcock films *Foreign Correspondent* and *Notorious* are examples of this practice which continues to this day. In fact, some of the most impressive performances of Nazi villains were given by actors like Laurence Olivier (Dr. Szell in *The Marathon Man*), Ralph Fiennes (Amon Goeth in *Schindler's List*), and Ian McKellen (Kurt Dussander in *Apt Pupil*).24 The stereotypes of the disgruntled soldier and the mad scientist can also be projected by Englishmen: Richard Burton is Sergeant Steiner in *Breakthrough*, and Peter Sellers stars as the title character in *Dr. Strangelove*. This seeming interchangeability between German and British characters is reinforced by the industry's tendency to use English actors to dub German films before their release in the U.S., a convention that might be due to a perceived need to identify foreign productions. In addition to the denotation of foreignness via accent, the choice to use Englishmen to depict Germans is probably the result of the connotation of Britishness with totalitarianism; the country is, after all, still a monarchy that frequently honors its most prominent actors with knighthood.25
That the use of British actors as Nazis has not resulted in a close association of the two is obviously a result of historical realities. While England did harbor some characters like Herbert Marshall's Stephen Fisher who admired Hitler's fascist regime - most notably king Edward VIII who repeatedly visited the Reich with American wife Wallis Simpson after his abdication - the British were known to Americans as staunch U.S. allies during and after the war. Furthermore, British accent has for centuries been a positive signifier for Americans; it usually denotes education, culture and even noblesse, while the harsher German brogue has traditionally been linked to poor immigrants.26

III. Conclusion: The Continued Necessity of Nazi Stereotypes as Shorthand Symbols

By the 1990s, the Nazi stereotype is so familiar that filmmakers do not need to spend much time developing their antagonists to provoke the desired effect. Images of German evildoers have cumulated over the decades to form a potent cinematic staple that takes effect even in small doses. In the 130 minutes of *The Fifth Element*, prime villain Zorg occupies the screen for all of 20 minutes. Another poignant example for the thoroughness with which the Nazi villain has been ingrained in the American consciousness is his commodification for inherently short TV commercials, situation comedies, and music videos - ultimate manifestations of U.S. popular culture. In one advertisement, the male driver of a Mercury Cougar sedan approaches a roadblock which is manned with uniformed soldiers and protected by armored vehicles; the "officer" in charge (Udo Kier) is not only dressed in the long black leather coat of the Gestapo, but outfitted with short-cropped blond hair, bulging blue
eyes, and a scarred face - the arch-stereotype of a Nazi. On the search for a spy, he
sticks his head in the car window and interrogates the driver, who outsmarts the
suspicious apprehender by having suddenly turned into a woman, thereby
demonstrating the superior wit of the American consumer.

That the advertising agency uses this specific German stereotype for a 30-second
spot is evidence for the power of that representation. The audience does not need a
lengthy introduction to the evil character - drawing from his formal education and
previous encounters with similar-looking images, the viewer instantly recognizes
mortal danger for the fictitious spy who has to employ extraordinary means to escape
impending arrest and, by the implication of Gestapo-methods, torture and murder.
The fact that the context of the commercial is deliberately humorous does not reduce
the suggestive violent potential of the stereotype. A similar example that aroused
heated discussions and shows American preoccupation with high-impact Nazi
notoriety is an episode of the 30-minute situation comedy Seinfeld, entitled “Soup
Nazi.” Unlike the 1960s comedy series Hogan’s Heroes, which revolved entirely
around Nazis, this contemporary version does not need to explicate the - German-
made - threat. Indeed, it takes only a short amount of screen time for the viewers to
identify a soup cook’s obsession with order and discipline as an - openly stated -
Nazi trait, and the protagonists’ intentionally brief contacts with the cook serve to
highlight the vigor of the Nazi image. In music videos, Nazis and their swastika
symbols are used to signify totalitarianism, as in the various video clips taken from
Alan Parker’s Pink Floyd - The Wall (1982), to illustrate history, like in Pearl Jam’s
Do the Evolution (1998), or to tell short fictions, as in Pat Benatar’s Shadows of the Night (1994).³⁰

Germans as scheming Nazis with a thirst for world domination have seen many incarnations over the past decades, obvious and implied, serious and satirical, acted and animated. The image of Germans as Nazis and the subsequent symbiosis of these characters is, in light of recent British and American TV and movie productions, obviously not a phenomenon that ended with unconditional surrender in 1945. During World War II, filmmakers inscribed the German so thoroughly with Nazi traits that a separation has proven nearly impossible. The lineage of upstanding Americans who battled Nazism stretches from Edward G. Robinson and Donald Duck before and during the war, to contemporaries Lance Henriksen and McBane - and the encounters always end with the triumph of U.S. values.³¹

A possible explanation for the persistent Nazi stereotype is its usefulness as a tool to deal with deeply unsettling occurrences for Americans, both at home and abroad. The second half of the twentieth century brought major changes to U.S. society and the geopolitical situation of the country. The domestic turmoil started with the homecoming of traumatized veterans, and continued through the McCarthy era, civil and women’s rights struggles, Vietnam protests, the rise of crime and the perceived deterioration of family values, to name a few. America’s foreign affairs were even more chaotic after 1945 and the onset of the nuclear era: the Cold War brought on the Korean and Indochina wars and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the conflicts in the Middle East spawned various U.S. policy crises like the Iranian affairs and the Gulf War. The collapse of the communist empire with all its destabilizing ramifications
also serves as a source of dread for Americans. The ability of virtually all citizens to follow the country’s, as well as the world’s, dire political and social situation via TV only compounds the awareness of chaos and instability - stereotyping becomes not only convenient, but necessary. All these events are of course experienced and reflected in Hollywood - and in the filmmaking community, the basic desire for order can be easily fulfilled with the deployment of the known evil German/Nazi stereotype.

That the American movie industry often chooses this particular stereotype to "preserve [their] illusion of control over the self and the world" might also be a result of the ongoing discourse on the Holocaust - the apex of a historically documented German tendency toward totalitarianism and inhumane brutality. Obviously, American filmmakers and audiences are still deeply shocked by the Nazi genocide, as evidenced for example by the Oscar-winning Schindler’s List, a current documentary series on the History Channel named Hitler’s Henchmen, and non-filmic publications like the 1996 bestseller Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust by Harvard historian Daniel Goldhagen.

Additionally, Americans have worried about Germany’s commitment to democracy. After the war, policy makers contemplated the punitive Morgenthau Plan, which would have de-industrialized the country, and ultimately implemented the Marshall Plan - billions of dollars were paid to ensure loyalty against a perceived Communist threat. The ensuing wirtschaftswunder and rapidly rising prosperity in the former enemy country must have unsettled Americans, who had to accept Germany as an economic superpower again and to respect the production stamp
“made in Germany” as well as luxury products like Porsche and Mercedes. However, the main psychological reason for maintaining the Nazi stereotype is probably only to a small part economically motivated. The deep political American distrust of Germans and the fear of a country that had threatened large parts of the world with war for the first half of the century still lingers; the recent reunification of the Federal Republic of Germany with the German Democratic Republic helped sustain the image of the imperialistic German who might again strive for world domination. This American suspicion was voiced very clearly in a five-part feature series that aired on NBC in 1990; the title of the Tom Brokaw-moderated series (which was later copied by ABC): “One Germany - A Fourth Reich?”3 4 The shows included clips of Holocaust-documentaries, 1940s newsreel material of endless columns of marching Nazi soldiers and Hitler speeches, and statistics that proved to Americans that Germany does now have the largest population in Europe by 20 Million - a thinly veiled allusion to Hitler’s demand of more Lebensraum for his expanding citizenry. And while, in its final installment, the news special concluded that Germany has seen too much suffering during the wars and the years of its formal division, it still provided gripping evidence that Americans - and this includes, as Sander Gilman has suggested, the artist - are stereotyping the German as Nazi to express a terrifying angst of a new war with the long-proven German aggressor. This anxiety, in conjunction with ongoing public and filmic discourse on the incomprehensible realities of the Holocaust and the horrors of World War II combat will probably sustain the German/Nazi image indefinitely.
Germans, who have never been popular film characters, are perpetually inscribed with Nazi traits, and German actors are widely relegated to play variations of the Nazi stereotype: the "good" soldier, the mad scientist, and the Nazi(fied) villain. According to genre, these characters were either confined to monolithic antagonism - and are therefore akin to the one-dimensional Nazis of mainstream World War II films - or emerge in the Hitchcockian tradition of the conflicted, humane killer - like Germans in war films or Holocaust accounts. The former stereotype serves as a shorthand for evil, a flat but potent force that bears little traces of humanity and therefore requires little attention or responsible reflection by audiences. The latter, Hitchcockian representation evokes a more powerful response, for viewers are prompted to face the similarities between themselves and the villain and therefore their intimate relationship with human-made evil.

The Hitchcockian German stereotype functions as an agent to not only relegate human aggression and sadism to Nazism - thus controlling these disturbing phenomena - but allowing positive traits and vulnerability in Nazi characters, which in turn heighten the usefulness of the stereotype as antagonist. This usefulness is achieved by the familiarity, even intimacy that exists between spectator and villain, suggesting that it is not just the conveniently distant "other" who subscribes to havoc and destruction, but the very "self." Consequently, the Hitchcockian stereotype evolved to work both as a tool to help the viewer cope with the unsettling surroundings within his society and as a reminder that he himself is an integral part of that flawed system.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1 An exception to this pattern are period pictures of a more distant past, like Luther (1974) or the Beethoven biographies Magnificent Rebel (1961) and Immortal Beloved (1994).

2 The obvious target for this display of superiority was the communist Soviet Union.

3 Exceptions to this trend are films like Decision before Dawn (1951) and Stalag 17 (1953) which are set in prison camps. These movies feature at least one “good,” trustworthy German, though.


5 Examples of such films are Green Eyes (1976), The Deer Hunter (1978), and Hair (1979). The decline of World War II productions continued through the 1980s; by the 1990s, however, they made a comeback, with a focus on life in Germany during the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Examples are Restless Conscience (1992), the story of a plot to assassinate Hitler, Schindler’s List (1993), which chronicles the protagonist’s attempt to save Jewish Germans from concentration camps, and Mother Night (1996), a film about an “ordinary” German who becomes unwittingly involved in Nazism and, later, neo-Nazism. The World War II combat film becomes a rarity after 1980 and has only recently made a comeback with Spielberg’s Saving Private Ryan (1998) and Terrence Malick’s The Thin Red Line (1998).


7 Leab cites film critic Dwight Macdonald, who points to the Soviet Union’s blockade as the origin of this shift: “the population of Berlin . . . were transmuted from cowardly accomplices of one kind of totalitarianism into heroic resisters of another kind.” In Leab, “Deutschland, USA,” 175.

8 It should be noted, though, that most Bond movies were financed by American studios like Unites Artists and MGM. Three of the more recent installments of the series are actually U.S. productions.

9 Juergens was known to American audiences because of his diabolic character in Mephisto Waltz (1971), where his Germaness is again manifested by an accent, as well a penchant for German composers.

10 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam find it noteworthy that in Raiders of the Lost Ark the Jewish director created an epic scene in which the cruel Nazi and his French collaborator - allusions to the Vichy regime - are miraculously dissolved by the Hebrew ark, “saving Indiana Jones from the Nazis, who, unlike the Americans, ignore
the divine injunction against looking at the Holy of Holies. The Jewish religious prohibition against looking at God’s image, and the censure of ‘graven images,’ triumphs over the Christian predilection for religious visualization. Instantiating the typical paradox of cinematic voyeurism, the film punishes the hubris of the “Christian” who dares to gaze at divine beauty, while also generating spectacular visual pleasure for the viewer.” In Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, (New York: Routledge, 1994): 222-223. It should also be noted that in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, the villains are again destroyed by their greed for a biblical artifact which, although of nominal new-testament origin, kills the trespassers with old-testament wrath.

That Russians were the new Nazified villains in Hollywood became evident as early as 1949 with the MGM production *The Red Danube*. In the contemporarily-set film, Soviet soldiers persecute Russian citizens who have escaped to the Western occupational zones and deport them in overcrowded trains - much like Nazis treated their Jewish countrymen.

In both films, the head foe is incidentally played by a British actor, Alan Rickman in the first *Die Hard*, and Jeremy Irons in the third. A more thorough discussion of this phenomenon will be made in the next segment of this paper.

The equation of Communism with Nazism - obviously the point of this satire - during the Cold War was a political reality that has often been criticized by historians. See Reinhard Kuehnl, *Der Deutsche Faschismus in Quellen und Dokumenten*, (Koeln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag): 10.

The equation of the Borg with Nazis is made by the Trek-creators themselves: in an episode of the weekly series *Star Trek Voyager* (UPN, 1990s), crew members are trapped in a holographic reenactment of occupied France and one officer informs an historically uninformed colleague that “Nazis were kinda like the Borg of their time.”


Helen Hirsch is also the catalyst that reveals Goeth’s pathological mental state: his progressing trouble with reality becomes clear when he compliments Helen on her housekeeping skills and offers to write her a reference for “after the war.”

The tendency toward complex antagonists in Holocaust treatments is also observable when the Germans have smaller roles. An example is Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Hoess (Guenther-Maria Halmer) in *Sophie’s Choice* (1982). Hoess, who is only seen in a handful of flashbacks, presides over mass murder while quibbling with his wife, fighting debilitating seizures, and considering an affair with the female protagonist (Meryl Streep won an Academy Award for her portrayal of a concentration camp survivor.

The obvious exception is Arnold Schwarzenegger, who, unlike the listed actors, has not received formal theatrical training and came into the movie business because of his success as a championed body-builder. Still, he plays convincing autocratic villains in some of his most successful films, like *Terminator* (1987) and the star-studded *Batman and Robin* (1997).
Juergens debuted in the U.S. with *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958), playing a Chinese officer, Ingrid Bergman's love interest; American audiences were therefore used to the tall blond actor wearing a uniform.


In the latter film, Schell provides the foil character for Coburn's benign German soldier, by playing an ambitious officer.

This latest film also stars another German actor, Til Schweiger, as a silent killer. Schweiger, who made his Hollywood debut with *Replacement Killers*, started his German career with comedies.

Other German or Austrian actors who match wits with 007 are Lotte Lenya as the murderous Rosa Klebb in *From Russia With Love* (1969), the Austrian-born and German-trained Klaus-Maria Brandauer in *Never Say Never Again* (1983), and, more recently, Gottfried John, who plays renegade Russian general Ourumov in *Goldeneye* (1996), and Goetz Otto, the blond assassin in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997).

Incidentally, all main German characters in *Schindler's List* were played by British actors: Liam Neesen portrayed Oscar Schindler, Ben Kingsley was his secretary, Itzhak Stern.

Interestingly, Hollywood also casts British-accented actors for the few positive postwar Germanic characters. A famous example is *The Sound of Music* (1964) with English Julie Andrews and Canadian Christopher Plummer. Still, my claim that the Germanic male in film generally displays Nazi traits seems to hold true even in this popular musical: Baron von Trapp (Plummer) is an autocratic nationalist - highly decorated by the totalitarian regime of the Austrian Kaiser - and compulsive militarist whose personal family policy (a multitude of well-disciplined children) complies exactly with the official NSDAP party line.

Daniel Leab finds that German-Americans "were not well liked" in the U.S., even before 1914. In Leab, "Deutschland, USA," 158.

Kier is known to American audiences as a James Bond villain-type with his role as shady entrepreneur Ronald Camp in *Ace Ventura - Pet Detective* (1994) who "collects" endangered animals and keeps a pet shark. He also starred as Ralphie in *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), where he not only subjects the protagonist to a dangerous experiment, but also betrays Johnny (Keanu Reeves).

This commercial is also an obvious allusion to the Bond series, made to have the audience identify with the master spy who always defeats the fascist Nazified villain.

The Nazi connotation of the soup cook is strengthened by the fact that he has an Arabic name and appearance, whereas the show's main character in Jewish - a clear allusion to the sporadic Israeli accusation that its Islamic neighbors are Hitler's heirs.

Benator's clip has, according to VH1, never been shown in Germany because of its offensive content: the singer poses as a World War II fighter pilot who thwarts a Nazi plot.
According to Shull and Wilt, animated characters had shown an awareness of world events as soon as 1933. In Shull and Wilt, *Hollywood War Films*, 78-79. Donald Duck is exposed to Nazi terror in the feature-length film *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943). In Furhammar and Isaksson, *Politics and Film*, 58.


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