

Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the phenomenon of stereotype. It uses Walter Lippman's theory that human beings use stereotypes to form ideas in their heads before they see the actual things or people. The way we see things is determined by individual experience as well as the collective experiences from which we form the so-called stereotypes. The thesis more specifically deals with the stereotype of the Indian in American Cinematography and lists the most profane and more typical stereotypes, which can be observed in film. The following analysis is divided into four sections. Each section concentrates on a certain time period, examines the historical context and its cinematic counterpart. The first section explores the Cowboy Westerns of 1930s, 40s and 50s. This section focuses on The Indian Citizenship Act and The Wheeler-Howard Act and discusses the influence of WWII. It also shows the importance of the invention of sound to movies and addresses the frequent recurrence of themes connected to Native Americans such as the frontier. The film analysis concentrates around the director John Ford and films *They Died With Their Boots On*, *Stage Coach*, *Broken Arrow* and *The Searchers*. The second section deals with the period of the 1960s and shows the influence of the hippie era on contemporary film. It focuses in detail on films *Cheyenne Autumn* and *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*. The next section discusses the situation in the 1970s and 1980s and speaks mainly about the stereotype of 'White Indian' – a white man who "out-Indians" the Indian himself. This phenomenon appears in *Little Big Man* and *A Man Called Horse*. This section further questions the influence of media on public opinion about Native Americans. In connection to this, the films *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Powwow Highway* are mentioned in this chapter. The last section analyzes the situation in film from the 1990s until now. It discusses the present attempt to demythologize Native Americans and free them from the burden of stereotype. Here, films *Dances With Wolves*, *Smoke Signals* and *Dream Keeper* are used as examples of such endeavor.

