

**Native American Stereotypes from the Westerns of the 1930s up
to Contemporary Movies**

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Introduction

Stereotyping is still a burning issue nowadays. Human negligence is one of the main reasons of stereotyping because some people usually ignore the differences so it is more comfortable to generalize certain types of nations, cultures and people. Most people have prejudices against members of different race and ethnic minority while these prejudices can really make people's lives miserable. For instance stereotypes can make harder for some people to apply for a job or even to study. Although different programs are introduced against discrimination and stereotyping, it is still a very problematic issue and it has damaging effects. Media and especially moving pictures have played a major role in the development of stereotypes. The topic which I intend to discuss in my study is Native American stereotypes appearing in different movies from the 1930s Western film period to contemporary Indigenous movies. My overall aim is to present the progress of stereotypes concerning Native Americans with the help of the chosen movies. I am analyzing the stereotypes appearing in *Dancing with Wolves* (1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), *Little Big Man* (1970), *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Buffalo Bill* (1944), *A Man Called Horse* (1970), *Smoke Signals* (1998), *The Great Sioux Massacre* (1965), and *They Died with Their Boots On* (1941). I also provide a brief summary about the stereotypes of Indigenous people in visual arts from the Colonial Period to the portrayals in different fields up today.

I intended to analyze movies from that particular period on because I believe that beyond the artistic merits, some silent films have weaknesses. The soundlessness of those movies makes it more difficult to understand the intention of each character. With the invention of talking picture, the audience has a more comfortable situation understanding the intention of the characters but the critical thinking of the viewer is challenged when stereotypes come to the picture. The speech of the characters, the clothes and the stereotypical representation of Native Americans in films play a tremendous role in the complexity of the characters. As a consequence of Hollywood Indian stereotypes, the viewer can easily be manipulated and confused. I have chosen this topic since it is very interesting how the Indian stereotypes became so popular and world-wide known because of the Hollywood movies. Their status is extraordinarily difficult because it so well-known in contrast with for example the situation of the largest ethnic minority, the Roma people in Hungary. They are known for some people as thieves and beggars and probably it is known as well in the surrounding countries. But there is one huge difference. These stereotypes about Hungarian Roma people

are not necessarily known for example in Australia, but Indian stereotypes are. Even in Belgium or in Brazil, “savage” and “noble savage” have sure been heard. The topic is also interesting for me because in most of the movies, especially in westerns, there are always two categories: the “good Indian” and the “bad Indian”. This dualistic depiction can be traced back to religious theories, cultural and social reasons. They are always compared with either the “white men” or the other tribe. Their nobility and their good deeds are always shown in contrast to the wrongdoings of the white men or the other people. There have to be another cruel man in order to depict him as a good person. It is incomprehensible that Native Americans have to be depicted in contrast with someone else in most of the cases, and they cannot stand as individuals. The fights of the Indians in movies are also shown cruel and pointless and usually there is no indicated reason for the fight in order to depict savagery. Even if the reason is given it is usually the stealing of the horses or revenge because of a massacre. The theme of massacre is an important one in the mentioned movies, especially in westerns, which I will explain in my study later on, and these massacres and fights between the two parties served the role of showing how barbarous the Indians were and create a positive atmosphere around their enemy.

Even though motion picture developed a lot during the 20th century, unfortunately, stereotypical attitude in film making has not changed much since the typical, over-generalized examples of western movies, though the movies of the last two decades tend to concentrate more on the natural beauties and romanticize Indigenous people. The impression is still there when someone watches these movies that even the more recent films contain the most stereotypical Native American characters such as the Indian Princess, the drunken Indian and the Wise Old Chief. Consequently, I also include an analysis of the external features, behavior and speech and the common themes and attitude in movies towards Indigenous people in each period of film history.

Chapter 1: Native American Portrayal in Visual Arts

With the “discovery” of the New World and “new” people, visual arts became influential among the settlers, travelers and colonizers. Those who once had seen the new land began to spread pictures and descriptions about the conditions of the place and the people who lived on the land. Besides letters and diaries, there were also paintings and drawings which were sent back to the Old World in order to describe the harsh conditions in their lives. These pictures either depicted Native Americans as exotic people or frightening depending on whether they were made to persuade relatives from Europe to travel to the New World or they wanted to convince them to stay at home. When the aim was to persuade them to come and to depict the Native people exotic the emphasis was on the seemingly mysterious procedures, tools and methods. There were many paintings on which the artist displays ceremonies of a given tribe such as the works of John White. He painted watercolors and he was one of the first artists who brought back pictures of the New World to Europe. His works were special because of his use of vivid colors and detailed depictions of Indigenous people and their tribal ceremonies. We can even see the feathers and accessories and even the physiognomy of the characters (see fig. 1.).



Fig. 1. White, John. “Festive Dance.” Around AD 1585-93. BritishMuseum.org, Web. 12 Sept. 2013.

With his genius use of watercolors, White was able to paint the color of their skin, the muscles and even the smallest details of their bodies. His works were inspirational for other artists, especially for Theodore de Bry, who used White’s paintings as models. But de Bry’s works were distorted.” He used European standards for landscape and figure types and, as a Lutheran, emphasized the cruelty of the Catholic Spanish conquerors toward the Peruvian natives” (“Theodor de Bry”). He depicted Indigenous people often with weapons (see fig. 2.)

so that he could emphasize how cruel they were and he could also increase the interest about them.

Fig. 2. de Bry, Theodor. "A Werowan or great Lorde of Virginia" From De Bry's America 1590. bp.blogspot.com, Web. 12 Sept. 2013.



After a somewhat positive period in the portrayal of Indigenous people, the 18th and the 19th centuries were mostly negative, since common themes were the massacre, the scalping or the abduction of White people. These images were the so called “captivity images”. In these pictures, Native Americans were depicted as cruel, merciless savages (“Stereotypes” *Indians of the Midwest*). Pictures and paintings of the period often told stories about the abduction of White women, which emphasized the cruelty of the Indians (see fig. 3.). These frightening pictures and paintings played a significant role in the development of stereotypical characters. In addition, later these prejudiced roles were transferred into films.

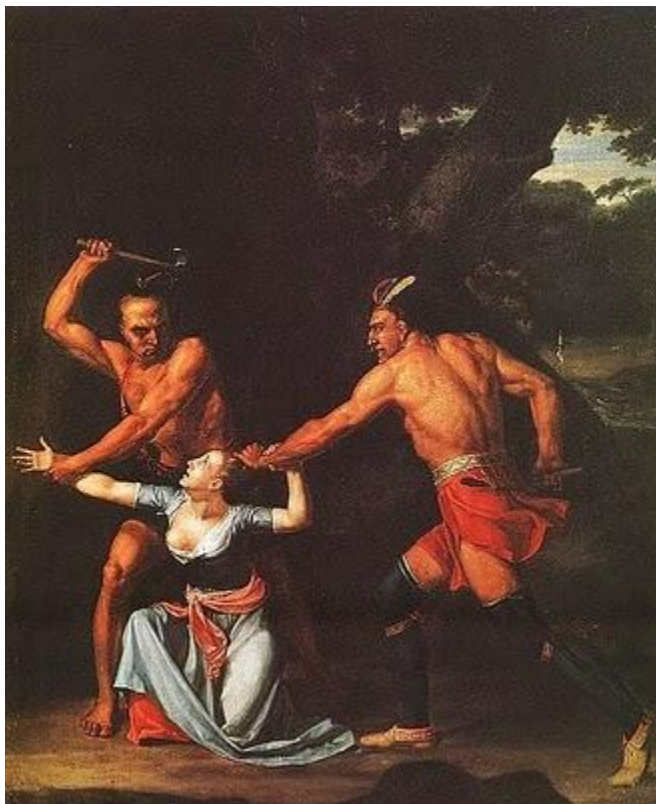


Fig. 3. Vanderlyn, John. "The Scalping of Jane McRea" 1804. flintlockandtombahawk.blogspot.hu, Feb. 2010; Web. 12 Sept.2013.

There were many paintings and drawings in which the Native Americans depicted during horse stealing or attacking the wagons of the Whites. One of the best examples is Oscar Edmund Berninghaus' painting, "A Fight Over the Overland Mail" (see fig.4.). These works of art often shows similarities with some of the western movies of the 20th century. We can find parallels both with the story and the representation of the actions for example with *The Great Sioux Massacre*, *They Died with Their Boots On* and *Little Big Man*, where Indians attack the carriages of White people.



Fig. 4. Berninghaus, Oscar Edmund. "A Fight Over the Overland Mail". around 1925.
artexpertswebsite.com, Web. 14 Sept. 2013.

Beside the mostly negative depictions of the Indigenous people of the earlier centuries, nowadays Native Americans also give their voices. One of the attributes of their art is that they "almost always use their cultures (songs, legends, traditions) and religions as their source of inspiration" ("Native American Paintings, Native American Art"). Paintings by American Indian people are usually very colorful and the characters are surrounded by nature, so the emphasis is not necessarily on the portrayed native. Indians in the pictures frequently have paintings on their faces and feathers in their heads. It seems that they try to use the universal, romanticized and lost character of the Indian because there is a huge demand for it. This romantic image is in demand so that is also one of the reasons why movies with the same theme and depiction are successful and famous (see fig. 5.).



Fig. 5. Native Americans by the riverside. nativeamericanpaintings.artgallery2000.com, Web.12 Sept. 2013.

Among the numerous fields of arts, one of the most significant is photography. Considerable amount of photos have been taken of Native Americans. Several photographers became successful during the 19th and 20th centuries, but one of the earliest photographs were taken by Antonio Zeno Schindler and Edward S. Curtis. These works of art were mostly posed, sepia pictures. Usually there were only one person on the photo and the theme was cultural. The people on these photographs were dressed up in feathered headresses, fringed leather shirts, and accessories (see fig. 6.). The intention of these pictures was to preserve Native American cultures and traditions. As Curtis explained his aim with his photos was “to form a comprehensive and permanent record of all the important tribes of the United States



and Alaska that still retain to a considerable degree their ... customs and traditions” (qtd. in Historic Photos of Native Americans). As a consequence of this preserving aim the impression of these pictures is nostalgic, romantic and because Native people have the title of the ‘Vanishing Americans’ we can also trace a bit of sadness or a loss of something. According to Brian W. Dippie, Curtis played a major part in engraving the myth of the Vanishing American (Dippie, W. Brian).

Fig. 6. Curtis, S. Edward. "Chief Joseph" 1903. callihan.com, Web. 16 Sept. 2013.

The representation and portrayal of Indigenous people nowadays is changing. After the romanticized Indian pictures and the deeply negative portrayals, photographs about them are far more positive than for instance hundred years ago. Pictures are mostly not posed and most of them usually wear jeans and shirt. The only allusive signs of their origin and culture are the accessories they wear. These artworks are vivid and colorful in comparison with Curtis' works. It seems that the conserving function also can be observed here. In the pictures it is clearly seen that hair is still a very important to them and it can be understood as a sign of preserving their cultural heritage.

On the other hand, there are still a lot of negative and stereotypical depictions which can offend American Indians. Sport mascots and their stereotypical images are still very controversial. Among many others, there are two really famous teams that use degrading and offensive mascots (see fig. 7. and 8.). The first one is the Washington Redskins. In this case the most outrageous is the name itself but the sign of the team can also be displeasing since it is face of an Indian with feathers. The controversial situation is described by Moni Basu:

proponents believe that Native American mascots pay homage to the people and help promote a better understanding of those who dominated America before Europeans landed. But opponents say the mascots perpetuate stereotypes that are void of context and history. They argue that even if the mascots themselves are not racially insensitive, they portray native people as one-dimensional. (Basu)

Even the sign of the team is a face of an Indian with feathers so it can be also offensive to



some of them. The second one is the Cleveland Indians, whose mascot is a smiling, red Indian head with feathers whose name is Chief Wahoo and it is "criticized by Native Americans as a racist caricature" (Basu). Opinions are divided in this issue but as Basu describes there have been a lot of movements and policies against these mascots, so it seems that hopefully the opponents may gain victory in the near future (Basu).

Fig. 7. "Cleveland Indians' mascot, Chief Wahoo." allipadwallpapers.com, Web. 16 Sept. 2013.



Fig. 8. "Washington Redskins' mascot." wikipedia.org, Web. 16. Sept. 2013.

As a consequence of the development of moving picture and television, cartoons became very successful. Animated cartoons that are rich in negative stereotypes can be very harmful since the audience of the genre can be easily manipulated. One of the most widely known Indian figures is obviously Pocahontas. She is the exotic beauty who serves the role of a mediator between her tribe and white people. This stereotypical portrayal is often referred to as Indian Princess though Native Americans never had such titles. As Cornel Pewewardy explains:

the "Indian Princess" stereotype is rooted in the legend of Pocahontas and is typically expressed through characters that are maidenly, demure, and deeply committed to some white man. The powerfully symbolic Indian woman, as Queen and Princess, has been with us since she came to stand for the "New World," a term that in and of itself reflects a Eurocentric value judgment. (Pewewardy)

The figure of Pocahontas was also controversial because of the historical accurateness. Disney depicted her as an exotic young princess while in reality she was not so gorgeous. The other

inaccuracy is that in Disney's version she falls in love with John Captain Smith while in reality she had married John Rolfe. Cartoons helped to spread this image and we can also observe the Indian Princess in almost every movie of the 20th century. Although Disney's version is full of colorful images and nature also plays an important role in it, it is still can be negatively influential for children, especially if they take seriously the whole. Another example of stereotypical characters in Disney movie is the Native Americans in *Peter Pan*. Disney's *Peter Pan* is based on

J. M. Barrie's children's books, almost any stereotype of the cultures (save for alcoholism and gambling) imaginable pops up in the movie. The sequence for the song "What Makes the Red Man Red?" alone involves a peace pipe, use of the words "paleface," "Injun," "squaw," and ... stereotypic accents, clapping of hands to mouths...("10 Disney Characters Who Stirred Up Controversy").



Even the name of the character Princess Tiger Lily (see fig.9.) is stereotypical since it contains princess and as I have discussed earlier is a clear misnomer. All of the children in the movie have war paint on their faces and feathers in their hair while they are sitting around, piping and singing the above mentioned song.

Fig.9. Disney, Walt. *Peter Pan*, 1953. Walt Disney Productions. graphicdesigndegrees.org, Web. 15 Sept. 2013.

Of course there were a huge amount of cartoons in which racial stereotypes were striking for instance the works of Warner Brothers, and in the course of time they have been banned.

In conclusion, it can be clearly seen that different fields of visual arts were the indicators of the further spreading of Native American stereotypes. As any other fields, visual arts also portrayed Indigenous peoples in many different ways. While we can discover neutral or almost positive depictions, especially in the early paintings where Native Americans highlighted as exotic and "different" creatures (the Other), negative portrayals are still present. We can see that these stereotypes are so engraved in popular culture that even sport

logos and children's movies are infected and we can just hope that one day culture and society will be free from oversimplification.

Chapter 2: The Attitude Towards Native Americans In Movies Between 1930s And 1950s

Diaries, letters, dime novels and other types of literature as well as paintings and other works of art have played a huge part in the development of motion picture. With the development of the moving pictures, stereotypes were also shaping and spreading. As I stated earlier, I will omit the silent film period of film history. The invention of talking motion picture and cinemas helped to spread stereotypes about Native Americans further in the mainstream culture. Sound has become an important part of the movie and helped to understand the intentions of the characters and even the situation better. As Kilpatrick describes “not only were the words of more importance – so was the diegetic noise (coming from within the scene) and nondiegetic noise (such as a voice-over). With sound, the nuances of story lines became more accessible, and the melodramatic form of the silents appeared unsophisticated by comparison” (36). The attitudes towards Native Americans in this era were ranging from the “obstacle to the civilizing”, “noble savage” and even the “bloodthirsty savages” (Kilpatrick 39). According to Kilpatrick

the views of Native Americans continued to be distorted and mutable, ranging from sympathetic or empathetic to hostile. If articles like the one in *Time* are any indication, the general public still thought of Native Americans as shuffling, red-skinned primitives more at home in a tent than a house. At best they were looked on nostalgically, as relics of the past. (41)

It was of course essential that these views and attitudes became apparent in movies, and these views have become so engraved in movies and in popular arts that deconstruction is a really troublesome task.

2.1 Common Themes, Attitudes and Stereotypes in Movies from the 1930s to the 1950s

As I mentioned earlier, the stealing of horses and attacking of white people were the mostly widespread depictions of Native Americans in film history. This period was not an exception either. The movie, *They Died with Their Boots On* (1941) is one of the most

outstanding examples of the time. Although, it is mostly about the life of George Armstrong Custer, when the Indians come into question the portrayal is really stereotypical. The attitude towards Native American people in this movie is of course very negative just as in the case of many other films. As Kilpatrick states, the movie sets the good against the evil and in this dualistic depiction the Indians have the role of evil (52), which has been the most vicious and harmful image of the Colonial discourse ever since. By the time that *They Died with Their Boots On* was made “the conventions of invention for Indians in western films were already so deeply engrained that they were virtually unquestioned. As Crazy Horse rides down upon and kills Custer, the audience sees a savage killing machine” (Kilpatrick 52). Typical denominations are often heard during the film, like “redskin” and “savage”. The confrontation between the Indians and the Americans begins with stealing and it is one of the most typical portrayals of the era. The conflict is because of stealing (either a girl or horses) or maybe to take revenge on the slaughtered family members. One of the strong points of the movie is that with the help of music it clearly shows the intention of the characters. When Custer appears with his men the music is panegyric, therefore he is depicted as the good guy, but the music becomes strange when the Indians first shown behind the rocks. With the change of the music, it is clearly indicated that they are cunning and they have bad intentions. Beside music, the movement of the camera is the other tool for the directors to show the purpose of the characters without words. Before attacking Custer and his companion the camera is focusing on the horses so it is one of the signs that the Indians want to steal them. On the other hand, according to Alex von Tunzelmann “Custer is shown trying to make peace with the Lakota Sioux nation” (theGuardian.com). Even at the end of the movie, he leaves a letter in which he tells that the place of the American Indians should be protected. The other scene in which we can detect some sympathy and positive attitude is when Custer prepares for the fight and asks Butler to take his letter back to Fort Lincoln. The following conversation is the other example of the positive attitude the movie creates and also of Custer:

Lt. “Queen’s Own” Butler: Why are you asking me to go back with it?

George Armstrong Custer: Well, for one thing you’re an Englishman, not an American.

Lt. "Queen's Own" Butler: Not an American! What do you Yankees think you are? The only REAL Americans in this merry old parish are on the other side of the hill with feathers in their hair.

George Armstrong Custer: You're probably right about that. (*They Died with Their Boots On*)

The theme of “spreading civilization” also appears in the movie such as in *Buffalo Bill*. Indians are seen as obstacles of this advancing process and presented as primitives. The other interesting thing is that while the Indians and whites are discussing peace and conditions of this peace treaty they usually say “give words”. But in spite of the fact that Native Americans are depicted as cunning, violent and even primitive and whites are seen as honest, the ones who break the treaty are still white people. As a result we can say that this era is really indeterminate about the attitude towards the American Indians because different attitudes can be observed even within the same film.

The other movie which is rich in stereotypical characters and themes is *Buffalo Bill*. It is also an indeterminate movie in connection with the attitudes as well as the protagonist of the movie. Buffalo Bill is an ambiguous character because at the beginning of the movie he shoots Indians and he is addressed as “the best scout, the best shot, and the best man on the Plains” and later he also gets a medal for killing Indians (*Buffalo Bill*). While at the end of the movie he is depicted as the only person who is interested in the well-being of the Native Americans. He also states that everybody except him is interested in “the Indians on your pennies” (*Buffalo Bill*). Similar to *They Died with Their Boots On*, there is a statement of Bill at the end of the movie that “Indian is a freeborn American, who fight for his folks, for his land and for his living, just like any other American” (*Buffalo Bill*). He also mentions that Westerners together with the Indians had to suffer because of the Easterners’ wrongdoings. With this statement he clearly takes the side of the Indians and becomes a sympathetic figure, although the famous sentence and belief also appears that “the only good Indian is the dead Indian” (*Buffalo Bill*). So, this movie is a clear example to the fact that the attitude towards the Indians is still highly questionable and controversial.

The opening scene is really telling; Indians are chasing white people on their carriage. The reason is not indicated in this case but the theme of attack is still very typical of the era. In the movie the spread of civilization is often mentioned and that the Indians are the obstacle of the process. On the other hand, we can still observe examples of positive attitude and depiction in the movie. In the scene where Yellow Hand and the white leaders are talking, Buffalo Bill seems to be more understanding than the others. He stands between the two nations figuratively and also literally. He even reminds them that if they want something from the Indians, they should “treat their chiefs the way you would the heads of other nations [...]”

try to understand them, what they are of against, and maybe they will be able to understand you” (*Buffalo Bill*). The reaction is typical: “savages?” (*Buffalo Bill*). After that it becomes clear from the conversation that the land of the Indians is threatened so the movie creates a sympathetic context, because we know that they just try to protect their land. This way viewers can easily identify themselves with the situation.

The depiction of the Indian girl is also significant. She is smart, sensitive and teaches the children in the village and also helps to write a letter for Bill. This way she is depicted as “civilized” in opposition with Bill, who is illiterate. The young Indian woman even corrects the written letter many times so she tries to create a perfect and polite letter. She plays the role of the Indian princess in the movie. The girl becomes offended when Louisa accuses her with stealing. She feels that Louisa uses the word “Indian” to offend her and as a result, she runs away. The girl uses English language in a very appropriate way so that she can be seen as an educated person. Language and illiteracy also become significant matters of the movie. When the two nations are making a peace treaty, the Indian leader puts an x as a signature, which indicates that he is untutored or unintelligent.

There are also other signs of indicating the misconception of Native American inferiority. For instance when Bill explains the custom of courtship it seems that he tries to ridicule their tradition. Then he tells that the Indian girls wear the courting blanket and that the “brave” “does not even open his mouth, he just hangs around all day and makes faces” (*Buffalo Bill*). Louisa’s response is that “it sounds like very dull courtship”. Although the scene makes the impression of ridiculing, Bill’s proposal is still the same as the Indian’s custom, so the situation is a bit cynical. The other example of the indication of their inferiority is when Louisa and Bill are traveling to the West and they see an old Indian woman. Louisa does not seem to understand that why the old Indian woman is left alone. Bill explains to her that “she is just old, and when Indians get too old to travel, why they are left behind with a little food and fuel” (*Buffalo Bill*). Louisa is shocked and immediately would like to help. According to Bill “that is the way of her people, so there is nothing we can do”. She is still worrying but Bill tries to reassure her that “is nature's way, Louisa. When anything becomes too old to be useful, it's just pushed aside” (*Buffalo Bill*). Louisa outrages: “it shouldn't be! That's why we have civilization” (*Buffalo Bill*). The latter part of the conversation is really telling because we have the impression that other than the white man’s culture there is no other one that could be good enough. It also shows that Louisa is not able to understand their ways she just wishes to change them. Although this understanding that Native Americans leave elders behind is definitely not true since they are respected part of their society. In this

way the authenticity of the movie becomes questionable and as Buffalo Bill's show the movie also "reinforced and reified the simplified and largely erroneous conceptions of what an Indian "is" for American and European audiences of his time and for film audiences around the world since that time" (Kilpatrick 12).

It is interesting that while the film puts a false conception on Indian society with theories like leaving elderly people behind, there are also parts where it shows Native American society in a positive light. For instance the theme of civilization appears again when Bill's child dies. The screenwriter uses this as a sardonic tool to set the two societies against each other. As Bill learns that his son dies because of a disease of civilization, he rages and accuses Louisa: "If you'd left him there, he'd be alive today" (*Buffalo Bill*). So this way the Indian West with its simplicity gains a much better light where there are no such diseases. The significance of the story is that it creates a new attitude towards the Indians. With the Wild West Shows he "provided grist for the Hollywood mill for over a hundred years" (Kilpatrick 13) and the "city folks saw for themselves the true pioneer spirit of the West", but not the true Indians (*Buffalo Bill*). He has the intention to do something for Native Americans, but he does not realize that this promoting is not so helpful. Distinction between the tribes appears in this movie as well as in *Broken Arrow*, but here only Native Americans differentiate themselves from other tribes and White men still use the homogenizing, universal word "Indian" for all Indigenous people, so it is a clear example of the disinterest and negligence of them.

The other significant movie of the period is *Broken Arrow*. The story is mainly about the clash of cultures and the process of peace talk. There is a romantic storyline in the plot, namely between the main character and the Native American girl. The story begins with the scene where the main character, Tom finds the Indian boy almost dying in the bushes. From his first sentences we learn that he respects and is scared of Indians, when he says that the boy's "kind was more dangerous than a snake. He was an Apache" (*Broken Arrow*). He even makes a distinction when he uses the name of the Apache tribe. It is telling because it means that he knows the difference between tribes and he does not just use Indian as a collective name. Therefore he respects them and learns about their culture and society, and at the same time he does not underestimate them, and the mixture of respect and fear can be discovered in his words. However, it is interesting to hear that Tom has never thought about that an "Apache woman could cry over her son like any other woman." It is degrading in a way but he explains the reason of this opinion when he says "Apaches are wild animals- we all said" (*Broken Arrow*). With this sentence he lets us know a lot about the universal attitude towards Indians, and when he says "we" he alludes to that he was also thinking in this way. In the

beginning he also tells about that a cruel and endless war is going on, so it is not surprising to see that when the Apaches find them, they are not friendly at all. They even indicate that they return the favor of saving their boy and do not kill him.

Negative ethno cultural stereotypes about each other can be seen when Tom is speaking with the Apache men. Both parties think that the other is cruel and wild, and there are no exceptions among them. But Tom recognizes that there was “cruelty on both sides” (*Broken Arrow*) and he does not just accuse Native Americans. The director creates a situation where the White man is shown as innocent, therefore the audience feels pity and sorry for him, and the Native American characters gain negative light. White men in town blame Tom for not killing the Apache boy and accuse him to be on the side of the Apaches. The story takes place in 1870 and the scene shows the typical attitude towards Native Americans of that time. The protagonist is first also controversial, like Buffalo Bill. At the beginning he indicates that in the past he shared the negative view about Native Americans and shortly after we find out that he feels sympathy for them. According to Tom “Apache men had a sense of fair play” and he is shown as somebody who sympathizes with the Indians. He acknowledges that White men killed a lot of women and children, but he also states that both parties are cruel. He plays the role of a middleman, because he is willing to learn their language, learn about their culture and helps making the peace treaty with the tribe. He does not feel superior and it turns out later that he is able to learn their ways when he marries Sonseeahray. Therefore the theme of assimilation also appears in the movie, but in this case the White man will be the one who will become part of the other’s society. It is a counterexample of the one in *Buffalo Bill*, where the young Indian woman assimilated into the White society and she was teaching young White children. But the young Indian woman in *Buffalo Bill* and Tom in this movie has in common that they both would like to become part of another culture and society. The scene in *Buffalo Bill* is very telling, when Louisa happens to see the young Indian woman in her cloth. It indicates that he would like to resemble to White women and she becomes offended when Louisa uses the word “Indian”.

The theme of attack can also be discovered in the movie right in the beginning, and of course the reason is revenge. Later on the war situation is given as an explanation and both parties list the wrongdoings of the other. As typical of the movies of the period, White men also think that they are “bringing civilization here” (*Broken Arrow*). The basic mistake with this ideology is that they think that Native Americans are not as developed as they are and what is more, they are dumb. It can be originated from the first explorers, travelogues and reports from the settlement period and of course it found its way to literature and later on the

film industry. According to Robert Berkhofer, the root of this opinion was that the explorers “saw Native Americans in light of the Christianity and civilization they knew and valued and therefore made ...comparisons” (13).

The stereotypical, Pocahontas-like figure becomes part of the story, like in *Buffalo Bill*. She is an exotic beauty, her name is Sonseeahray, or Morning Star, and we can immediately discover the longing in her eyes for Tom. He immediately falls in love with her and they are married “in a ritual that includes the slicing of wrists and mixing of blood, an occurrence more likely found in children’s pacts than Indian cultures” (Kilpatrick 59). The quote from Kilpatrick is very telling, because in spite of the fact that an attempt was made to create “multidimensional human beings who were Apaches”, the way of representing their culture, their identity and their habits were still inappropriate and unauthentic (58). Love between the members of two tribes was a common topic in movies of the period, and continued after that, but usually miscegenation did not lead to happy ending. In most of the cases, directors and screen-play writers used the motive of death by revenge or other violent acts in order to avoid miscegenation.

The widely-known drunken stereotype also becomes apparent from the following conversation:

Slade: “Cochise don’t do favors for nothing. He got something.”

Tom: “What? What’d he get?”

Slade: “You tell us. Was it guns, or was it whiskey?” (*Broken Arrow*).

Although the drunken stereotype is mentioned, the leader of the Apache tribe is depicted as a calm, democratic person, who is open for new things like marriage between one of the members of his tribe and a White man. According to Kilpatrick, the character of Cochise is the first portrayal of a chief “without “ughs” and without the characteristically rigid body language and fierce scowl” and he is able to “show cultural differences in a positive light” (58-59). Notwithstanding that the portrayal is still not irreproachable, at least it is a positive change in comparison with the stereotypical depiction of a chief of the earlier periods. Although inaccuracies and mistakes are still can be found in the movie, it is one of the first films that “made an attempt to create multidimensional human beings” (Kilpatrick 58).

In contrast with the earlier period, when the Native American character served the role to show the “all-American hero” in a positive light, the forties and fifties was the period when

Indians were shown in a more positive light. The binary oppositions, the good and the evil are still apparent in this era, but this time usually White people were the villains. We could also see attempts to create multidimensional Native American characters and movies which tried to apply to the viewers understanding of the attitude of Indigenous people, their feelings, and reasons. Unfortunately, this period still could not reach the stage when Native Americans can be portrayed without comparing them to somebody.

2.3 Visible and Audible Features of Native American Characters in Movies of the 1930s and 1950s

As time went by, the Hollywood Indian character became so engraved in culture and film industry that it was a real challenge to change it, and regrettably it was long prevailed. Therefore, the audible and visible features of the Indigenous people could not change a lot either. The portrayal of the era still resembles to the previous period, since feathers, body paintings and fringed clothes were still very popular parts of the Indian characters in films. The other important fact was that producers usually still “felt that anyone could play an Indian” (Kilpatrick 34). In most of the movies of the time, it is striking that white actors with a huge amount of make-up on their faces plays the role of the “Indian”. The image of the “typical Hollywood Indian man of the forties and the fifties wore a long, flowing, feathered headdress, a breech cloth (with swimming trunks underneath, of course), and moccasin. His sister the Indian Princess wore long, beaded and fringed buckskin dress and beaded headband with one feather sticking straight up in the back” (Kilpatrick 51). Since the improvement of the film industry made it possible to understand the characters and their intentions, speech also became very significant and telling. The combination of speech and facial gestures were a great help in improving from one dimensional character to more complex ones. While in the silent era these tools were not available, the audience could not understand the reasons for some of the intentions. So that way “there was no middle ground between good and evil” (Kilpatrick 33).

In *They Died with Their Boots On*, the appearance of Indians is typical of the era. They wear feathers and the chief of course a feathered headdress (see fig. 10.). It is interesting that when different chiefs are sitting around the fire, they do not seem to wear different clothes, so the authenticity is highly questionable. According to Kilpatrick, “homogenized, packaged

stereotypes in the films...bearing little relation to reality” (51) and clothes of the characters were not collected inaccurately because “much of the Hollywood Indian’s outfit was a costume designer’s interpretation of what a Plains warrior would have worn” (Kilpatrick 51). Beside the external features, language and the speech of the characters are another important thing to analyze. It is uncharacteristic of the era that within the same movie we hear Native Americans using their own languages and English, as well since it was more comfortable for everyone to hear the conversations in English. It was more usual that the Indian used their “pidgin speech” (Kilpatrick 8), which was also a useful tool for directors to degrade them. The movie is full of “pidgin speech” and it is interesting that when Crazy Horse uses sentences like “no kill with rope” after a few awkward seconds Custer formulates his language in a way that Crazy Horse can understand it. The other significance of speech in the movie is that while Native Americans speak their own languages, there is no subtitle. Depending on the intentions, it can be in a way degrading as well. It can be interpreted as a scornful sign that even the director thought that their language or what they said is not so important in the movie.



Fig. 10. Crazy Horse is captured by white people. barracadadvd.blogspot.hu, Web. 2 Nov. 2013.

The other important question to ask is whether the roles of Indians are played by real Native Americans or not. Well in most of the cases, especially in the earlier movies of the period, the roles were played by actors and actresses with strong makeup and contact lens and Indigenous people were used only to take part in the crowd. Although, the Indian in *They Died with Their Boots On* “is represented by Anthony Quinn- who actually is of Tarahumara ancestry - as Crazy Horse, the only individualized Indian in the film...” (Kilpatrick 52).

Not as in the movie *Buffalo Bill*, where the Indian girl, who helps to write Bill the letter, is obviously not an actress of Native American origin (see fig. 11.). Luckily, there are Indigenous actors in the movie and besides Yellow Hand, who is one of the main characters of the movie, there are also other roles played by Native American actors. Yellow Hand is played by Anthony Quinn and Crazy Horse’s role is represented by Chief Thundercloud or Victor Daniels.



Fig. 11. Native American teacher in *Buffalo Bill*. selfstyledsiren.blogspot.hu, Web. 2 Nov. 2013.

When the accuracy concerning the external features of the Native Americans in movies comes into question, it should be noted that “Native Americans either laughed at the images, ignored them, or sat in stunned silence” (Kilpatrick 50). The typical fringed clothes, feathers and body paintings in this era were all parts of the well known Hollywood Indian. It was a common mistake in movies to mix the outfit of various tribes. As Kilpatrick states “a man described as Sioux might have been found wearing Navajo blanket over his chest plate, carrying weapons from northeastern tribe” (Kilpatrick 51). However, the representation of different tribes is more striking than for instance in *They Died with Their Boots On*, where chiefs around the fire seemed to wear almost similar clothes. In this case, chiefs around the fire have very different clothes and accessories. Yellow Hand for example wears a headdress with horns applied on it, while Crazy Horse, the chief of Sioux, has a long, feathered headdress. The movies of the period created a very uncomfortable situation for Native Americans and reactions were various. As James Denton states: “They laughed and joked over their costumes...When Chief Thundercloud [Cherokee actor Victor Daniels] explained torture scene in the picture, wherein the Cheyenne proved his bravery by having his back cut, the Navahos [sic] laughed uproariously; they thought such action was downright nonsense” (quoted in Kilpatrick 48).

Language use and audibility play an important role in the movie. Although Bill is illiterate and seems to have trouble with proper eating, as we can see at the end of the movie, delivering a speech is not a problem for him. Since we know this about the main character it is outrageous that Native American characters in the movie are still not depicted in a more

positive light. As I already mentioned before, when the peace treaty is signed, Yellow Hand only uses an x as a signature. It is a way ridiculous, because it tries to depict Indians as uneducated and dumb, while the American hero, the big Buffalo Bill himself is illiterate. However, this scene can be interpreted as degrading for Native Americans.

The same problem appears in this movie as in *They Died with Their Boots On* in connection with language. Principally English is spoken in the film, but when Native Americans are speaking their own language there is no subtitle to understand them. It serves as an allusion that genuine Native language cannot be significant. As Kilpatrick says there could be another reason for avoiding subtitles other than significance or importance. She states that the audience would think that it is old-fashioned because it was widely used in the silent film period (38). Moreover, Yellow Hand still seems to have trouble with speaking English language, and the actors are really good in picturing that difficulty. When actors speak Native language they seem to speak in a more fluent way, while Yellow Hand is speaking with Bill in English, it is still a bit slow and stuttering. One of the weaknesses of the film is that we can still hear yelling and the typical “war whoops”, which is one of the inventions of Hollywood and it has been the part of the Celluloid Indian character ever since.

The external features presented in *Broken Arrow* are different from the ones shown in the other movies I have already analyzed. The clothes of the Apache tribe are not the common buckskin clothes, but they are more colorful and even patterned. Feathered headdresses are missing, instead of that they have headbands. Cochise, the chief of the tribe does not wear clothes to differentiate himself, yet he is even simpler than the others (see fig. 12.).



Fig. 12. Jeff Chandler in *Broken Arrow*. buddiesinthesaddle.blogspot.hu, July 2010; Web. 5 Nov. 2013.

A little body painting can be seen on his chest, but when the Dance of the Spirits of Good and Evil begins, those who are taking part of it wear painting on their whole bodies.

Although the low profile role actors seem to resemble more to Native Americans, the main Indian characters in the movie are still white actors with makeup. It would have been important to find actors of Native American Indian origin for these roles in order to assure accuracy. Especially that the movie is a trailblazer in many aspects, such as in the attitudes towards the Native American culture and in the portrayal of the main Indigenous character, so it is natural that it made the critical part of the audience disappointed. In this way accuracy and authenticity can be questioned. Besides the choice of the starring actors, the movie also has weaknesses.

Unfortunately, the “whooping yells” are still the part of the audible features in violent scenes. At the beginning of the movie, Tom tells that all the conversation between the two parties will be heard in English. In spite of the fact that their language is translated into English, their speech is represented as slow and it is a big mistake, since originally they speak their mother tongue and they still seem to have problems with speaking. So this way they are

portrayed again as uneducated and inferior. The other error in connection with language is that we are told that Tom has acquired the language of the Apache, but in the scene when they are discussing peace, it seems that the General also learned Apache, because Tom is not shown as an interpreter for him.

Based on these movies, we can say that this period serves as the first step reaching the multidimensional portrayal of Native Americans, this long process in which the final stage is to depict Indigenous people as individualized characters and not “homogenized, packaged Indian stereotypes” (Kilpatrick 51) which was a determining part of the movies. The roots of the stereotypes of the silent film era and stereotypes of the time of James Fenimore Cooper are still visible, but they are definitely changing. The Indian Princess, the wise Chief can also be seen but the Manichean worldview of good and evil seems to be fading. The distinction is not so sharp and usually there is a villain among the Indians and among Whites as well. But “the Indian was generally depicted as a person of little culture and less language. Speaking how! and ugh! dialogue and wearing a combination, if not phony, tribal dress, Indians were usually portrayed with little concern for tribal differences in language, customs, or beliefs. Whites and Asians frequently acted the leading Indian parts, and those Native Americans hired for background action had to play any tribe because all Indians looked alike to movie and television directors” describes Berkhofer brilliantly the era (103).

Chapter 3: The Attitude Towards Native Americans in Movies of the 1960s and 1970s

Owing to the well-known notion of Native American people as a Vanishing Race and the ongoing political events of the era, the attitude towards Indigenous people arrived to a transition period. Because Indigenous people have been seen as vanishing, the society realized that values of American Indians. “During the 1960s, for a growing segment of society, particularly the younger generation, the idea of “mystical” people who valued “unity” and lived in shared communities, who revered the Earth and her creatures and who were (apparently) naturally at peace was very attractive” (Kilpatrick 65). Evidently it created a nostalgic attitude towards them, and I firmly believe that it is one of the reasons why most of the movies from the earlier periods up to this era take place in the late 19th or the early 20th centuries. During the 1960s, the situation of the minorities became an important issue, and as a result of that Native American people also gained a central position. According to Kilpatrick, “The images and stereotypes of Native Americans during this period made them ideally complex, sympathetic subjects. Indians were seen as not only poor and oppressed but also mystical and natural” (71). Therefore, the audience could have expected more than the well-known “bloodthirsty savage” or the “noble savage” stereotypes. Similar to the earlier periods where we can observe wide range of attitudes and stereotypes, it is still an ambiguous era, though writers and directors increasingly employed the Indian as the hero and the White man as the villain” (Berkhofer 108). The period is controversial in a way that many films still contain the old White stereotypes of the Indian, and applies different attitudes. Thus the surely positive attitude towards Native American is still missing, since we can still observe robbery, ambush and attack by Indigenous people in movies as in the previous periods. The other positive change besides the achievement of more complex characters is that the story is usually placed in a humorous context or it is spiced up with humorous scenes, like in *Little Big Man* (1970) and *A Man Called Horse* (1970).

3.1 Common Themes, Attitudes and Stereotypes in Movies from the 1960s to 1970s

The basic conflict between Native Americans and White people in *The Great Sioux Massacre* (1965) is almost changeless compared to the earlier periods. The Indians attack White people and kidnap a woman, which has been a persistent portrayal of the brutality of

Native Americans. Of course there is no reason indicated here, but we soon realize that it was an act of reprisal because they just wanted to regain their captives. In spite of the fact that at first they are depicted again as bloodthirsty savages who attack, abduct or even kill without reason, White man is highlighted here as the real villain. One of the examples of White brutality is the scene when after the ambush one Indian surrenders and Dakota shoots him. Captain Benton is outraged, but he is surely familiar with that kind of unnecessary cruelty. Dakota says idly that “it was an act of mercy. I did not want the poor guy to starve to death on one of those filthy reservations” (*The Great Sioux Massacre*). The positive attitude toward Indians appears when Benton says that White people have been unfair to Native Americans: “How can the Indians respect our rights if we disregard theirs? Trespassing on their land, sending them to filthy reservations, starving them to death while the corrupt Indian agents steal the food out of their mouth” (*The Great Sioux Massacre*). This way the audience can sympathize with Indigenous people.

In spite of the fact that the attitude towards Native Americans is changing, we can still observe the typical denominations in the film. Dakota is the one who uses “blood-hungry, stinking Indian” and “savages” to address them. He explains that his family was butchered by Indians and for a moment, we feel sorry for him, but we cannot know who had started brutality. Although cruelty is not a surprising matter in the movie, since it takes place in 1876 and tells the story of Little Big Horn. The film is full of changes of attitudes, first Indians are depicted as poor fellows, then they are seen as vicious killers and the same applies for White people as well.

As in *They Died with Their Boots On* music has also become an important tool in this movie. Music is a tool of allusion in fighting scenes since it becomes glorious when something good happens, or when Gen. Custer appears with his men and it changes when Native Americans appear. In this case, music is not only for emphasizing the wiliness of Indians, but to highlight action in the movie and intensify excitement and fear.

One of the weaknesses of the movie is that in spite of the fact that it was made in the period of transition regarding stereotypes and attitudes, we cannot observe real, multidimensional characters. What is more, there is no Native American actor in the movie in major role. Indian people do not gain as much space themselves in the movie, as in others and as they should have. Since the movie is mainly about the story of the battle of Little Bighorn, it is not surprising that it created a context in which Indigenous characters are depicted as violent. The only achievement of *The Great Sioux Massacre* is that it is more “sympathetic to

Indians” (Berkhofer 103) than movies in the past, but this positive light is still not certain enough.

As Berkhofer states, the movies of the 1960s and 1970s reversed the stereotypes of earlier periods, so this way White man became the villain of the story (103). In the case of *A Man Called Horse* (1970) is not true for the whole portrayal, since the Indians kidnap the White man and not vice versa, but few of the stereotypes are already reversed. At the beginning of the movie we can see two drunken men which can be interpreted as a reversal of the well-known drunken stereotype of Native Americans.

Although the audience may expect a lot more from the movie, at the beginning we still face with the accustomed and nerve-racking scene of attack. What else could be the reason if not horse stealing? The director uses the camera to draw the attention to the horses, so the audience can understand the reason immediately without any words. The fact that they kidnap John naked is also a kind of reversal of stereotype, since American Indians were seen by White people as naked savages from Colonial Period. Even though these are negative stereotypes towards White people, unfortunately it does not mean that Native Americans are portrayed in more positive light than in the past.

Scalping still remained as a portrayal of the brutality of Native Americans, though it was not exclusively done by them. In spite of the fact that the movie itself was promoted as a sympathetic and authentic description of American Indians (Kilpatrick 79), there are smaller mistakes and basic errors of authenticity in it. As Ward Churchill explains, the movie “depicts a people whose language is Lakota, whose hairstyles range from Assiniboin through Nez Percé to Comanche, whose tipi design is Crow, and whose Sun Dance ceremony and the lodge in which it is held are both typically Mandan” (237) and the result is again the “hybrid Indian(s)” (Churchill 237) which can be deceitful for the interested and credulous audience.

Unfortunately the typical portrayal of the era can be found in the movie: there are “Good Indians—including Yellow Hand, his mother, and Running Deer—and the Bad Indians. The Good Indians have much paler skin and have distinctly European features...” (Kilpatrick 82). Before this depiction, it was more dominant that White people were compared to Indians. The problem with comparison is that it does not allow American Indians to be individuals, and they always have to be set against either non-Native culture or against another tribe in order to be depicted or analyzed. This and the earlier periods have not recognized the fact that every character has to have virtues and vices, nobody is entirely good or bad, and usually the audience can identify with a character that is more human.

At the beginning of the movie, Native Americans and their culture are depicted as brutal and primitive and they treat outsiders as animals. The attitude of the movie towards elderly people is similar to what we have seen in *Buffalo Bill* and it reflects on Indigenous people. The language of the tribe is also shown primitive and the members of the tribe “all seem to be language-deficient” and they “manage just fine with childish whoops” (Kilpatrick 83).

The stereotypical character of the Indian Princess is also part of the movie and we can observe the longing for the White man as usual in Western movies. Communication causes problems between them but the marriage is permitted and he only has to perform the Sun Vow. Although the members of the tribe do not seem to mind the marriage, the director uses the well-known tool to avoid miscegenation. The situation is the same in most of the films: Running Deer has to die at the end.

Horse did not become part of their society from his own free will but when he changes his situation in the tribe, he thinks that he should teach modern or civilized ways of fight. At first, he is planning with Batise the escape back to “civilization” (Kilpatrick 82) but at the end he learns to respect the culture of the tribe. Luckily, the common conception of the earlier periods that “we bring civilization here” seems to be fading, but some allusions can be discovered. In *A Man Called Horse* the two captives’ longing for their mother countries and as they refer to them as “civilization” is one of the first allusions. It is not accidental that they think that Indians are brutes at first, because we have learned that they were treated like animals, so it is surprising that towards the end after all these tortures John still wants to become part of the tribe. It is also interesting that, Native Americans in this movie are depicted as really brutal and still they are not referred to as “bloodthirsty savages” through all along, while in the previous movies, Indians for smaller vices were called “uncivilized savages”. A clear example is the opening scene of *Buffalo Bill*: for a so called average attack without human toll, they are depicted as violent and uncivilized brutes, while in this film Indigenous people are really cruel and violent. The other allusion is the way how Horse teaches the tribe to fight in a proper and effective way, which refers to the attitude of “natural superiority of the white man” (Kilpatrick 82).

The theme of assimilation and acceptance appears in the movie in various forms. We can observe the assimilation of a White man, and signs of assimilation of Native Americans. The first one is when the chief puts the hat on his head, and puts feathers on it. This way he shows that he is willing to learn new things. Of course it can represent the victory over white people in this situation. The next form of assimilation can be observed when John or Horse

begins to wear clothes as the other members of the tribe. At the same time he does not have to behave like a horse anymore, so it means that he achieved a different position in the tribe. On top of that, when he scalps a malignant Indian, it is the next step in his assimilation process. As a result, he receives a feather from Yellow Hand. Seemingly it means that the tribe accepts him, but when marriage comes to question it turns out that he has to do the Sun Vow. The ritual seems to be one of the last steps in the process of assimilation, and he even sees a vision of himself in Indian clothes, that is in this case means that he is almost naked. The above mentioned nakedness appears again, this time as a reference to simplicity and assimilation. Running Deer is also naked in his vision, but I believe she embodies love and peace. At the end he acquires the language of the tribe, so he becomes a full member and what is more the chief of the tribe. The Sun Vow also serves the role to prove courage, which becomes a common theme of the period. It is interesting that while in the previous periods the Indians had to integrate into White society, in this era it is more typical that the White man has to become a part of the Indigenous society and culture. It is an indication that Native American culture is worthwhile enough to become a part of it. The examples of integration are usually seem to be forced rather than voluntary neither in this nor the earlier periods, but it is telling that at the end of *A Man Called Horse* John seems to be happier than for example the Indian teacher in *Buffalo Bill*.

Assimilation is also one of the major questions or problems in *Little Big Man* (1970), since the main character is shifting back and forth between the two societies. Jack Crabb tells the story of his life, and among the first experiences he explains the way how he became part of the Cheyenne tribe. His family was slaughtered by “wild Indians” (*LBM*), the Pawnees, and what he then thought was his captivity, it turned out to be his salvage. He becomes part of the Cheyenne tribe at first as a captive, so the basic conflict is still chosen from the good, old stereotypical variety, but they accept Jack and take care of him. The opening scene still refers to violence between White people and Indians, though the movie is based on a humorous novel of the same title. Although the attack itself cannot be seen in the movie, we can still assume from the opening scene what could have happened. The reason of course is not given, as usual, since it has become a tradition to open with a violent scene without explanation in order to create a negative light around Native American characters. The theme of assimilation can be seen in many ways in the movie. Among the first things he is taught to use the language and to read trails. He describes it as he “was not just playing Indian but living Indian” (*LBM*). He also receives a feather from one of the members of the tribe as John in *A Man Called Horse* which symbolizes his assimilation process. Jack even calls Old Lodge

Skins as his “adopted grandpa” (*LBM*), so it is a clear indication of his position. When he goes to fight against Pawnees, and he saves the life of Younger Bear he becomes a brave. The Cheyenne people are depicted as understanding and sympathetic, for example when Old Lodge Skins says Jack that he “can stay out of that fight” (*LBM*). He is in a difficult situation, because after a fight, he is captured by White people and he has to assimilate into another society. In order to make himself accepted by White troopers and to save his life, he says to the soldier: “God bless George Washington, God bless my mother” (*LBM*). The name of God is a reference to the White, Christian society in which he finds himself not long after the encounter. The actor Dustin Hoffman is a real talent, and I believe he is brilliant in that scene and how he manages the “pidgin speech” of Indian characters of the previous periods. Although they speak English through the movie, we know that Jack learnt the language of the Cheyenne, therefore he has to represent the way how hard is to speak English again. So with this encounter, there is another assimilation process waiting for Jack, but this time he has to learn the ways of the White society.

Negative stereotypes of the movie can also be seen right from the beginning, where the interviewer asks Jack about the “primitive lifestyle of the Plains Indian” (*LBM*). Another prejudice in the film is when Caroline thinks that she will be raped by Indians. The root of this fear from rape is originated from the literature and arts of the Colonial Period. These negative stereotypes do not refer to the Indians only, but to white people as well. For instance when Old Lodge Skins says that white men kill “because they are strange” (*LBM*), in other words it is indicated that they kill without any reason. When Jack arrives to Silas Pendrake’s house, his time spent among the Indians is only mentioned as “suffering, depravation and hardship among those awful savages” (*LBM*), and they cannot imagine that he was a respected member of the Cheyenne tribe. According to Pendrake Jack’s “depravation has been more spiritual than physical” since “the Indians know nothing of God, and moral right. They eat human flesh, fornicate, adulterise, misogynise, and commune constantly with minions of the devil” (*LBM*). It is sardonic and also sarcastic that it turns out during the movie that Mrs. Pendrake cheats on her husband and what is more, she becomes a “falling flower” (*LBM*). It shows the hypocrisy of White society that although she is the wife of a Reverend, and gave Jack as an instruction that everybody has to “resist temptation”. The drunken stereotype also can be discovered in the movie when a man says that: “For a drink of whiskey, they will give you one of their squaws” (*LBM*) and we can see Indians begging for whiskey and fighting.

The theme of miscegenation is also a determining factor both in the period and for the movie. When Jack is looking for his wife Olga, who was taken by Indians, one soldier repeats

the old adage that the kindest thing he could do for her would be to put a bullet in her brain” (Kilpatrick 91) so it alludes to the fact that at that time the marriage was not admissible. At the end of the movie there is another allusion to the unwanted intermarriage, when Sunshine gives birth to their child, she and the baby are almost immediately killed.

The movie provides new portrayals with the help of satire and irony. Although most of the movies could be funny for the critical audience because of the stereotypical and oversimplified depictions of Native Americans, but *Little Big Man* is an example of a movie which shows the hypocrisy, the vices and virtues, and also stereotypical characters with the help of humor. One of the examples of humor is when Caroline “is dramatically certain the Indians will rape her at any moment, and when they don’t, she just sneaks out of camp” (Kilpatrick 86). The next example is sardonic because it shows how the Cheyenne fights against white people. Jack explains the differences between the two ways of fighting and how the Cheyenne people hit the enemy with sticks in order to humiliate them. It is funny and also sad in a way that they think it could be enough against White men who used guns. One of the funniest scenes is when Old Lodge Skins wants to die and he goes to the burial place and performs a dance, the willing death is missing, only the rain comes. It is comic how he says: “Am I still at this world?” and “sometimes the magic works, sometimes it doesn’t” (*LBM*). The movie makes fun of the stereotype of the raping Indian, when Old Lodge Skin asks Little Big Man: “Does she show pleasant enthusiasm when you mount her? I’ve never noticed it in a white woman” (*LBM*) According to Kilpatrick, it refers to that “White women in prior films were not supposed to allow it, much less enjoy it” (90) and in the earlier movies the white woman’s only fate was that she was raped by Native Americans, so in a way it is a play-off of the stereotype. Another one is when we learn that Jack’s wife Olga is afraid of Indians, and General Custer assures her that there is nothing to be feared of. In the next scene the wagon on which Jack and Olga travels is attacked by Indians. In the same scene the other passenger, who reads the Bible, is killed by an arrow which goes through the Bible. It indicates that at the moment of attack, faith has no power and that symbolically Native Americans triumph over white society.

One of changes of the movie is clearly satire, and that it creates an almost positive attitude towards Native Americans. It is also good that the movie makes a distinction between the tribes and the usage of universal word “Indian” is fading. In spite of the fact that the tribes are differentiated from each other as Pawnee and Cheyenne, these distinctions are still used for comparison, to set the two tribes against each other, and to imply “Good Indians” and “Bad Indians”. The characters in the movie are “not as fully realized as in the novel, but much

more so than in previous films. We have heard their voices, laughed with them, and cried with them. We care about them personally, so their slaughter is ...heartrending” (Kilpatrick 93). As a result, it can be clearly seen that the multidimensional character is not so far away from this point. However, there are unchanged notions in the movie, for example Jack’s wife Sunshine has to die at the end, in order to avoid miscegenation. So the amalgamation of the two people still prohibited.

3.2 Visible and Audible Features of Native American Characters in Movies of the 1960s and 1970s

The external features of the Indigenous characters have not changed a lot since the previous period, since feathers, body paintings and fringed clothes are widely seen in movies of the era. Though these parts of the costume remained permanent, it is more common to see Native Americans wearing a piece of garment or accessories that are from non-Native people. The language of Indigenous people is either translated into English or it is left the way they speak it. It is usual that White man has to assimilate into the community and culture of the given Indigenous tribe. Of course the hospitality of the tribe is ranging, but usually the result is the same: total acceptance like in *Little Big Man* or *A Man Called Horse*. The other change in compare to the previous period is that the role of the Indian character is most often played by a Native American actor. In spite of the fact that negative depictions still can be found in movies of the 1960s and 1970s, the overall impression is that their communities are better than the society of white people. These changes have led to a more sympathetic portrayal of the Indian characters in this period.

The appearance of Native American characters in *The Great Sioux Massacre* varies. Feathered headdresses, buckskin clothes, colored, patterned shirts, headdresses with horns can be discovered during the film. In the first scene when they appear it is not known whether they are from different tribes or the movie has the indication that they do not have to wear similar clothes as none of the people do. They only wear war paint on their faces, and the authenticity of the costumes and accessories is still highly questionable.

It is interesting that this period still has not reached the stage where the Native languages gain as much importance as English language in the movie. It is not surprising that there is no subtitle for the language of the Sioux in the film, and we can hear them speak their mother tongue and English, too. When for example Sitting Bull speaks with Custer, we can

discover that, in comparison with the previous era, he speaks English more fluently. It is usual in the movies that both parties speak English when they meet, but it is confusing that during *The Great Sioux Massacre* we can hear that Sitting Bull gives orders to his tribe in English. Of course that is one thing that the audience has to understand what he is speaking, but it should be applied to his mother tongue too. So it is one of the weaknesses of the movie that the speech of the Native American people is not understandable, however, it can be fixed either with a subtitle for not translated parts, or with a proper translation. The other audible features like the well-known “whooping yells” and screaming can be discovered in the story, as well as almost every Western movie.

Regarding the cast of the movie, the main Indian characters are not of Native American origin. Actors with Australian and Italian origins play the role of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse with make-up on their faces. It is more probable that among the crowd there are American Indians, and as we have seen in the previous period too, it seems that it has become a practice. Unfortunately, the movie still used the “Hollywood Indian” image, rather than Native American actors and one of the first alterations that can be useful in movies is to represent the characters genuinely.

In *A Man Called Horse*, the costumes of the Native American characters are mainly from the Smithsonian Institute, as we can see at the beginning, so it is natural to assume that the external features of the characters are accurate. At the beginning of the movie, Indians wear a lot of paint on their bodies, especially on their faces, but the other parts of their costumes do not contain any new element. We can see fringed clothes, moccasins, loin-cloth, feathers and feathered headdresses, the well-known pieces of the Hollywood Indian’s wardrobe. However, it is interesting that they change their clothes when they are on their way back home after having attacked John and his companions. They also put more paint on their bodies and they go home. The other significance of the clothes is that they wear accessories of white people, too. At the beginning, when they attack John’s little camp, they also collect things for themselves. The hat is one of those things, and Yellow Hand immediately puts it on his head and modifies it with a little feather. The other example is when the Soshone tribe attacks again at the end of the movie. They are seen in costumes resembling to the clothes of British soldiers, and one of them even wears sunglasses. At the ending scene, when John becomes a member of the tribe, and he is totally accepted, we can see that he still does not wear the clothes of the Sioux. It can be an allusion that he does not really want to become a member of the tribe, because we know that he never stopped missing “civilization”, what is more, in the last scene it is not indicated where he was going. So with the help of the external

features the director created allusions to the assimilation into the Native American or White cultures.

The audible features of the movie are unusual, since Native Americans speak their mother tongue and they did not say a word in English, but it does not help to understand their speech better. I believe that the movie is to symbolize that how communication worked at the beginning of the encounter of the two people. It is one of the first movies in which Native Americans do not speak the degradingly slow English. However, the movie does not provide subtitles and the only interpreter, Batisse speaks “pidgin speech”. Indigenous people are rather silent in this movie in comparison with the earlier periods, but in case of fight “whooping yells” remained. According to Kilpatrick, “they all seem to be language-deficient, even among themselves... and “they seem to manage just fine with childish whoops, squeals of pagan delight, and a little bit of sign language” (83).

The question of the actors concerning *A Man Called Horse* is interesting, since there is only one actor of Native American origin among them the other actors are of non-Native origin. For instance the role of Yellow Hand is played by a Fijian actor and Running Deer is acted by a Greek actress (see fig. 13.). The only Native American actor is Eddie Little Sky who plays the role of Black Eagle. Although his role is not so significant in the movie, it is definitely positive that he did not have to be the part of the crowd. Unfortunately, the actors with more relevant roles are not Indigenous people, though they have characteristic and pronounced features and resemble to Native Americans.

Fig. 13. Corinna Tsopei
as Running Deer. TheMakeupGallery.info. Web. 10 Nov.
2013.



Regarding the external features in *Little Big Man*, there is no radical change in the costumes. Indigenous people wear fringed, buckskin clothes and accessories, and we can also see patterned shirts on them. Feathered headdresses are worn in case of fight and fur hat with horns are worn at the winter. Differentiation between Pawnees and Cheyennes is easily accomplished with different hairstyle and accessories.

Crabb tells that he was taught to speak Cheyenne language when he lived with them, so it is a tool of the director that after that everything is translated into English. We can also discover humor here, when Crabb says that “Olga never did learn much English, but she sure in hell had learned Cheyenne” (*LBM*). It can be an indication that the Cheyenne language is simpler than English or that she is happier here than in the society of White people. Besides the translation the over-voice of Jack Crabb is provided for a better understanding. Although we know that the Cheyenne conversations can be heard in English, when the Pawnee speak English they use the well-known “pidgin speech,” like “Little White not mad, ha?” and “See, Pawnee friend” (*LBM*).

In *Little Big Man*, the role of Old Lodge Skins is played by the actor, Chief Dan George, who “was born with the names Geswanouth Slahoot, which was anglicized as Dan Slaholt, to a tribal chief on Burrard Indian Reserve No. 3 in North Vancouver” (Hodson, “Chief Dan George, Biography”). Chief Dan George acts brilliantly the role of the wise old chief and has a good sense of humor (see fig. 14.).



Fig. 14. Chief Dan George as Old Lodge Skins in *Little Big Man*. uploadsociety.com. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.

Among the cast, there is no other Native American actor in the movie, so it managed to create humorous characters and depictions but did not manage to employ Native American actors for Native American roles. According to Ralph and Natasha Friar “while...the Cheyennes’ costumes and customs were fairly authentic, they remained characters, not human beings” (quoted in Kilpatrick 89).

In summary, it is significant that the movies of this period showed fairly positive attitudes and depictions, and even humorous portrayals, however, the “good old” stereotypical

denominations still can be found. The cast of the movies usually needs a refinement, since we can still discover Greek, Italian, or Fijian actors in leading roles.

Chapter 4: Representation of American Indians in Movies From the 1980s to Nowadays

It is interesting to see the transition of the Native American characters from one-sided villains to multidimensional characters. The “views of American Indians were becoming much more connected to contemporary events and cultures than in previous decades” (Kilpatrick 101) and “the images of Natives in the eighties...were also sometimes grossly modified by new misperceptions. Sympathizing with Native Americans in movies was more common and the dualistic representation is fading. While in the earlier periods the story took place in the 19th and 20th centuries, and usually the Civil War was the event that intertwined with the plot, since the movies of this era bring change to this fashion. There are numerous examples, like *Legends of the Fall* (1994) which takes place in the first half of the 20th century and *Pathfinder* (2007) which takes place in Pre-Columbian North America. Luckily, the genre of the movies also seems to be changing from the typical Western movies. Although Native Americans in the 1990s were more active in politics and in business, Americans still saw them as mythical and romanticized them. In this chapter, the emphasis will be on *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), and *Smoke Signals* (1998).

4.1 Common Themes, Attitudes and Stereotypes from the 1980s to Present Day Movies

One of the most common depictions of the period is the transformation and assimilation of the white man into Native culture. There are plenty of examples, such as *The Last of The Mohicans*, *Pathfinder* or *Dances With Wolves*, where the main characters become part of the tribe. The reason why they became part of the society is not the fact that they were kidnapped, as in the previous periods, rather they were saved by Indigenous people who accept the hero either during childhood or as an adult. So the theme of assimilation is still a significant part of the movies, moreover, it is becoming more important. However, in *Dances With Wolves* this process is slow, since they have to bridge communicational problems and the hero is an adult when he meets Native Americans, he manages to integrate into their society. This process starts with the exchange of goods and later when he warns them about buffalos, the process accelerates. He becomes a respected man, though not the member of the tribe yet. He goes hunting with them and with many of the personal articles he amazes Kicking Bird and his company. He spends the whole hunting with them and he is surprised by

their kindness. He even gets a tent when Kicking Bird asks him to take care of his family while he is away. In the meanwhile he starts to learn the language of the Sioux, which is the other step in his assimilation process. He is renamed to *Dances With Wolves* which is the next step of his transformation. Of course there is a romantic side of the story, and after the marriage of Dunbar and Stands With a Fist, he seems to be fully “Indianized”.

It is interesting that in the movie negative stereotypes about White people are dominant. We can discover many examples of white brutality thorough the movie. For instance Wind In His Hair’s opinion about white man is stereotypical, too. He thinks that White men are stupid and dirty, so in the movie they are the villains. Besides White man, the Pawnees are also represented as cruel and vicious people so the ubiquitous stereotypical characters are given: the bloodthirsty and the noble savage. So the problem of the dualistic representation appears again and as a result we can say that with this portrayal Costner could not achieve the multidimensional characters. One of the saddest scenes in the movies is when they kill Two Socks. White soldiers are depicted as cruel and dumb like Indians in the previous periods so their roles are inverted. The other significant stereotype about white people is that they are crazy and “the mentally unbalanced officer is quickly becoming the new stereotype in films attempting to be sympathetic to the Indians...or other oppressed groups” (Kilpatrick 128). The first encounter of Dunbar and Kicking Bird is also stereotypical, since his intention was to steal Dunbar’s horse. This portrayal has been really determining during film history, but in this case the violent attack is missing. The portrayal of the Lakota tribe is very different from the examples of the previous years, since they seem to be more human and complex, but the fact that in order to achieve this, another tribe is needed, is depressing. The other interesting statement in the movie is when Dunbar tells about his “knowledge” about Native Americans and he realizes that they are neither thieves, nor beggars.

Miscegenation is still not permitted, but this time it is avoided in a different way. Stands With a Fist is also from white society, so in this way it is the marriage of two white people according to the Lakota customs. So as Kilpatrick states “the old taboos apparently still exist in Costner’s film” (129).

At the end of the movie it is stated that the “last band of free Sioux submitted to white authority...and the American frontier was soon pass into history” (*DWW*) which clearly indicates that Native Americans are vanishing (see fig. 15.). So in the 1990s it was more typical to depict Native Americans in a more nostalgic way and as Berkhofer states one of the

reasons is that “historians treated Indians as “dead” after the early contact with Whites” (30). As a result Native Americans are rarely portrayed in contemporary context in the 1990s.

Fig. 15. Stands With a Fist and Dances With Wolves are leaving the tribe at the final scene. members.chello.nl Web. 10. Nov. 2013.

The achievement of the movie is that it creates a sympathetic portrayal to Native Americans, but certainly it contains errors. As Churchill explains, “If Kevin Costner...held an honest inclination to make a movie which would alter public perceptions of Native America in some meaningful way, it would, first and foremost, be set in the present day, not in the mid-19th century” (246) and in order to achieve a realistic presentation, directors should place contemporary issues and events into the story. *Dances With Wolves* also creates individualized characters, but I believe that they are still not multidimensional ones, since Costner uses comparison in order to depict them and it seems that they are not too complex. Native Americans in the movie are portrayed as wholly good, while in the previous periods they were wholly bad. However, the accuracy of the movie is almost questionable, since Costner “filmed on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota and defied conventional Hollywood wisdom to assemble a large and talented Native American supporting cast” (Dorris 262).

In *The Last of The Mohicans*, the archetypes of portrayal can be discovered: the noble and bloodthirsty savages. It is not surprising that the movie contains stereotypical depictions about Native Americans, since it is based on James Fenimore Cooper’s novel, but the director,

Michael Mann intended to omit much of the book itself, which is rich in “colonial ideals” (Kilpatrick 141). The embodiments of these archetypes are the Mohican people, who are the Good Indians, and the Hurons, who are the Bad ones. So there is base for comparison and since there is a war going on, it gives another aspect of contrast, and in this way the Mohicans gain another opposite: white people. In order to picture Native Americans in positive light, violence was the main tool, describes Robert Baird in his essay, “Going Indian” (202) so that is the reason why the story takes place in 1757. In *The Last of The Mohicans* the prejudices seem to be reversed. The usual approach that the other is stupid or strange can be detected in the conversation of Hawkeye and Cora Munro:

Hawkeye: My father warned me about you...

Cora Munro: Your Father?

Hawkeye: Chingachgook, he warned me about people like you.

Cora Munro: Oh, did he?

Hawkeye: He said "Do not try to understand them".

Cora Munro: What?

Hawkeye: Yes, and, "do not try to make them understand you. That is because they are a breed apart and make no sense". (*The Last of The Mohicans*)

While in the previous movies we have seen that white people had such prejudices against Indigenous people, it is clearly an inversion of the mentality of the white people. The other important theme of the movie is that, same as in *Dances With Wolves*, Hawkeye was also saved by Native Americans and they accepted him. So the theme of rescue and assimilation is the same as in *DWW*, although we do not see the process of assimilation only the result of it. While Dunbar in *DWW* becomes a member of the tribe as an adult, *Standing With A Fist* and Hawkeye were children and they hardly remember to be White so they are totally assimilated.

Of course there is a romantic storyline in *The Last of The Mohicans* as well as in many others but in this case there are two examples of that. Cora Munro and Hawkeye fall in love with each other and at the end none of them die. Of course they stay alive, since they are both White originally so in this way miscegenation is avoided in this movie as in *Dances With Wolves*. The other lovers, namely Uncas and Cora's sister, are not so lucky, evidently because they are from the two cultures and their destiny is to die at the end because intermarriage is still not permitted.

The romantic or nostalgic apprehension of the Vanishing Indian is the main allusion in the movie and it is clear at first from the title. At the beginning a few sentences are written on the screen in order to clarify the situation of Mohicans and there is also a statement in the movie proving that “they are doomed to die” (Kilpatrick 142). According to Berkhofer, “Whites regarded the Indian as a threat to life and morals when alive, they regarded him with nostalgia upon his demise—or when that threat was safely past” (29) so it is not surprising that movies in the 1990s depict them as the Vanishing Americans. Since both of the movies create a nostalgic portrayal about Native Americans and thus both directors use the beauty of nature in order to emphasize the loss of a valued culture.

Smoke Signals (1998) is the most outstanding movie of the period and it differs from the previous movies in many aspects. The first and one of the most important things is that it was not only played, but it was directed by an Indigenous director, Chris Eyre who used the book of Sherman Alexie, *Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. The significance of the movie is that it creates a context where the audience can easily imagine Native Americans and they do not have to question the authenticity of the movie itself, the costumes or the language. According to Joanna Hearne, the movie is “reshaping American cinema from within” and “it reaches out to both Native and non-Native viewers” (Hearne, xvi).

One of the strong points of the movie is the representation of Indigenous people’s (Coeur d’Alene) feelings, emotions and concerns. It happens in a way with the help of humor in most of the cases for example when at the beginning the traffic report is going on the KREZ radio. Lester Fallsapart reports about the traffic and he says: “Big truck just went by. Now it’s gone” (*Smoke Signals*). It is funny because it indicated that there is no need for traffic report in the reservation since and even funnier when in 1998 the same process happens every morning, with the only change that Lester became a “tribal meteorologist”. The other humorous and significant scene is when Thomas and Victor meet the two girls. After they arrive, the girl asks them whether they have their passports with them because they are leaving the reservation. Thomas does not seem to understand the joke and when he says that they are just going to the USA she says it is “a whole different country, cousin...That’s as foreign as it gets” (*Smoke Signals*). In my opinion she alludes to the way non-Native people see Indigenous people.

The movie is really genuine in depicting the reflections of non-Native people about Natives and how they see these stereotypes. These stereotypes are deconstructed usually with the help of humor and there are many examples in the movie of that. For instance in the scene

when they are traveling to Phoenix on the bus and Victor wants to make Thomas realize that he is still naïve and romantic.

Victor: You're always tryin' to sound like some damn medicine man or something. I mean, how many times have you seen Dances with Wolves? A hundred, two hundred? Aw, geez. You have seen it that many times, haven't you? Don't you even know how to be a real Indian?

Thomas: I guess not.

Victor: I guess I'll have to teach you then, ain't it?

Victor tries to make Thomas understand that they cannot live in movies or in the past anymore and they have to be realistic. As he gives instructions about the looks of an Indian, the well-known stereotype of the stoic Indian becomes apparent. It can be seen as a reflection on Native American themed movies of the past and this opinion of White people of Indians or he just simply tries to live up to the stereotypes. According to Victor, they have to look like a warrior in order to make people scared of them and in a way they will be respected. After that when they get off the bus and they want to sit back to their seats the white man uses very offensive words for them like "Super Injun" and when they cannot do anything with the situation Thomas just says: "I guess your warrior look doesn't work every time" (*Smoke Signals*) which is funny and frustrating at the same time. The Indian princess also appears in the movie. It is different from the previous ones, since the character is not so romanticized, but she still serves the role of a mediator. Suzy tries to convince Victor that his father was a good man, and he has to forgive him because he left the family. Fortunately, the typical "longing for the white man" is missing, since there is no significant non-Native character in the movie. *Smoke Signals* depicts non-Native notions and opinion of Native Americans well and one of the most striking examples to that is when Victor and Thomas help to save the life of the girl. The white woman says that "It's like you're the Lone Ranger and Tonto" (*Smoke Signals*) so the first thing which comes to her mind is the stereotypical depiction of the Westerns cowboys and sidekicks, but it does not cross her mind that they simply acted out of humanity. Thomas corrects her, when he says that "it's more like we're Tonto and Tonto" (*Smoke Signals*) which clearly an indication that he realized the stereotype.

The movie represents unconventionally the stereotypes of the two sides of each other. For example at the beginning when the girls give a ride to the boys, Thomas tells a story about Victor's father and he describes the situation as "all the hippies were tryin' to be Indians

anyway” (*Smoke Signals*). Of course there is some truth in it, since hippies liked the idea that Native Americans are so connected with nature, but not necessarily true for every hippy. The other example is when Victor and Thomas are questioned by the officer and when Victor tells him that he had never drunk in his life, the Officer’s reaction is: that ”Well, just what kind of Injun are you, exactly?” (*Smoke Signals*). This question is clearly interpreted in the movie as where they are from, but it is a clear reference to the drunken stereotype. Alcohol and drunkenness is one of the most significant allusions of the movie. It turns out that Victor’s father had caused the death of Thomas’ parents because he had been drunk, and this horrible accident led to his alcoholism. This way the movie gives an explanation to this alcoholism, unlike the previous films in which Indians were just drunken by nature.

It is interesting in *Smoke Signals* that there are certain references to magic, visions, and even to sign like in *Little Big Man*, where the Old Lodge Skins wishes his own death. With these tools the romanticized Indian is partly preserved, as Victor refers to the problem that Thomas still lives in the past and lives according to the stereotypes. Arnold Joseph also concentrates on the magical aspect of Indigenous people and he even calls himself as “Houdini with braids” (*Smoke Signals*) which is a certain allusion to medicine man. He also express his concerns in a funny way when he says that he would like to make things disappear, like the reservation, white people, and tribal school. The other romanticized theme in the movie is the Vanishing Indian. Thomas voice-over says that Arnold Joseph “practiced vanishing, until one day he jumped into his yellow pickup and did vanish” (*Smoke Signals*). He also says that when Indians go away they never come back, and he gives the examples: *The Last of the Mohicans*, “The Last of the Winnebagos”. It refers to the notion of the earlier periods when people thought that Indians are doomed to vanish, so it also means that Thomas believes in that and it is a negative allusion to the future of Native Americans. According to Kilpatrick the movie is based on the themes of

alcoholism, injustice, and loneliness... and the fact that it is also very funny doesn’t keep it from showing a Native present that is devoid of much hope for the future. In significant ways, it falls into the clichéd stereotypes of mainstream Hollywood films; its saving grace is that the Native Americans are shown as contemporary human. (230)

All in all, it is an excellent movie of the period and it “bookended a decade that began with the 1990 release of the nostalgic, romanticized representations of Plains Indians in *Dances with Wolves*” (Hearne, xvi) and it also “challenges widely accepted misconceptions about Native Americans” (Hearne, xv). One of the greatest things in *Smoke Signals* is that it finally manages to describe Native Americans and their feelings, problems and concerns from their view and the main characters are not White people. As Michael Jones states, there is no need for “Kevin Costner to suffer for them” (qtd. in Kilpatrick 230).

4.2 Visible and Audible Features of Native American Characters in Movies from the 1980s to Present Day

The external features of Native American characters in movies have not changed radically and it is understandable in the case of those movies which depict Indigenous people in previous centuries. Fortunately, we can discover more realistic portrayals in movies like *Smoke Signals* or *Powwow Highway* (1989) where Native American characters are in present-day context and they wear standard clothes instead of the familiar costumes. A definite change in the movies of the period is that usually the roles of Indians were played by Indians and it was also more common to hear Native American languages in movies.

In *Dances With Wolves*, Lakota language is spoken and subtitles are provided to understand it. As Kilpatrick states, people from Lakota culture helped in the creation of the translations, so we can assume that the subtitles are accurate (130). It is a positive change in comparison to the earlier movies, in which Native Americans seemed to speak their own languages, but subtitles were not provided. Whooping yells still can be heard in case of attack and fight, and little Lakota children are also “whooping” when they try to steal Dunbar’s horse. It was used in case of war, but in the movie we can also hear it when Dunbar goes to the tribe to tell Lakota people that he has seen buffalos. They probably misunderstood his intentions and because of that they attacked him.

Kevin Costner definitely paid great attention to collect authentic costumes for the actors. The difference is evidently seen on the costumes of the Pawnees and the Lakotas, so it is a huge difference from the earlier movies in which the homogenized Indian was more widespread. Pawnees are half-naked in the movie and wear feathers and accessories, and their hairstyle is half-shaven. The costume of the Lakota people consists of feathered headdresses

and fringed clothes, and they also wear patterned and colored clothes. With these differences in costumes, it is clearly indicated who is the good and the bad Indian.

In *Dances With Wolves*, most of the Native American characters' roles are played by Indigenous actors, for instance Graham Greene as Kicking Bird and Tantoo Cardinal as Black Shawl. This way Costner could achieve more authenticity, but I believe that one of the weaknesses of the movie is that in the leading parts there are still white American actors, but that is the problem of the plot itself that it is not mainly about Native American people.

Language use in *The Last of The Mohicans* is an interesting question. While Nathaniel and Uncas speak English well, Magua sometimes speaks "pidgin" English in spite of the fact that he is in touch with non-Native community. We learn that Uncas and Hawkeye have learned English at school. Although subtitle is provided, it does not cover all parts when Native Americans speak and it causes difficulties. In the beginning of the movie, Native Americans and white young adults are playing and we can hear the typical "whooping yells". During the attacks these "yells" also present in order to indicate primitiveness.

Nakedness seems to also picture primitiveness, like in *Dances With Wolves*. In *The Last of The Mohicans*, the Huron tribe embodies the bloodthirsty savage stereotype and they are differentiated by their costumes or the lack of it. They are half-naked and wear paint both on their bodies and their faces. Their hairstyle is usually half-shaven while the Mohicans have long hair. The costumes and accessories of the Mohicans are simpler than that of the Huron's.

The actors of *The Last of the Mohicans* are well selected, since the roles of the American Indians are played by such talents as Russell Means and Wes Studi. Luckily, Native American actors finally play the lead parts and not only part of the crowd anymore, but the problem is that this movie is still not particularly about Native Americans and the depictions about them are still seen from non-Native point of view.

Smoke Signals is a radically different movie from the above mentioned two movies, concerning both the stereotypes and attitudes and the external features of Native Americans. One of the most important external features of the characters in the movie is hairstyle. Victor says that "an Indian man ain't nothing without his hair" (*Smoke Signals*). So it is sort of an explanation that why Arnold Joseph has his hair cut. He wanted to punish himself because he caused the death of Thomas's parents and without his hair he started to decay. Otherwise, the clothes of the characters are usual and normal, except Thomas, who wears a ridiculous suit.

The characters speak English in the movie, and this is a clear indication of their assimilation and also a reference to the boarding school experience. However, this situation is in a way more positive than in the previous movies, where in spite of the fact that Native

Americans spoke their own mother tongues, there were no subtitles provided in order to understand it, because it seemed as unimportant.

One of the most significant changes in the movie is that it employs Indigenous people for each character in the movie (see fig. 16.). It is a very radical and positive change even in comparison with *Dances with Wolves* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. Of course it is because the intentions of the other two movies were totally different from *Smoke Signals* and the story itself also differs from those.



Fig. 16. Adam Beach as Victor and Evan Adams as Thomas Builds-the-Fire.

blasiannarrative.blogspot.hu. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.

To sum up, this period was the real transformation concerning the attitudes and the stereotypes about Native Americans. At first Indigenous people were represented in a more positive way, and they were usually romanticized (*Dances with Wolves*, *The Last of the Mohicans*) but after a few years of this way of depiction, the more modern and contemporary Indigenous people came into the picture with *Smoke Signals* and *Powwow Highway*. Of course Native American characters are part of the more recent movies, like *Twilight* saga (2008), but in my opinion in these movies the portrayal of Native Americans tend to be more romanticized than realistic, although they are placed in a contemporary context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the transformation of Native American stereotypes and attitudes in movies has taken a long time and I believe that the transition period has not ended yet. There are still movies in which the Indigenous people are rather mystic or mythic, like in *Twilight* saga, where some of the Indians are able to turn into werewolves. There are still films in which the context is not contemporary, like *The Lone Ranger* (2013) but luckily movies like *Smoke Signals*, *Naturally Native* (1998) and *Older than America* (2008) are movies with contemporary context and Native American actors. These movies help to create a better understanding of Indigenous people, their lives and their problems. These movies are also a great assistance in the deconstruction of the stereotypes sometimes with humor and sometimes with play of. Nowadays the multidimensional character is achieved, since they have vices and virtues, just like Arnold Joseph in *Smoke Signals*. He is a complex character, because it is clearly seen that the struggling with guilt causes his alcoholism, but he also saved the lives of the two children. In this way, the viewers can easily identify themselves with the character.

From the period of Westerns audiences have seen noble and bloodthirsty savages, drunken Indians, wise old chiefs and Indian princesses and these stereotypes highly affected the thinking of the viewers. We have seen that these stereotypes had effects not only on non-Natives but even on Native American people, like Thomas in *Smoke Signals* and the movie also gave the audience a hint about how Indigenous people feel about non-Natives.

Stereotyping has a long history and Native American stereotypes had a huge effect on film industry. Indigenous portrayal had begun after the “discovery” of the New World and at first they were not necessarily seen as savages but rather exotic creatures. After that they were also depicted as brutish infidels. These portrayals had appeared on pictures and paintings and in travelogues and diaries, and after that these stereotypical depictions circulated. Of course it had an effect later on on literature and on dime novels and it led to the depiction of Indigenous people in moving pictures.

With the invention of film and movie theatres these stereotypes had become more widely known. The first portrayals were mostly negative or cruel but it also tended to depict American Indians with the help of Manichean view of good and evil. The next period seemed to become more sympathetic to them and there are many reasons for that. It is partly because Native Americans and their ways of dressing and thinking became popular among Hippies. As Melinda Micco explains in *Reel Injun* (2009), “One of the ways you could honor Native

people was to dress like a Native person” (*Reel Injun*) and Hippies respected their culture. The other reason is that “Native American people became a great allegorical tool to stand in for virtually any oppressed people” (*Reel Injun*) during Civil Rights Movement. So of course historical events played an important role in the transformation of stereotypes and attitudes.

Common themes were revenge, ambush, attack and stealing from the 1930s to even the 1970s and the representation of Indigenous roles were usually closer to the one-dimensional character than multidimensional. Attempts were made to achieve multidimensional characters like for instance in *Little Big Man* or in *Broken Arrow* but the results were not satisfactory. The only significant achievement of the period between 1960s and 1970s was that Native American actors more commonly played the role of an Indian in movies.

After this period, the era of romanticized and idealized portrayals followed, but these movies were still not created a picture about Native American people in contemporary context. In most of the cases the whole story took place in the 19th or 20th centuries and it is problematic because these stereotypes are so deeply engraved in people’s minds that it is a really tiresome mission to change it. Fortunately, Indigenous filmmakers and artists do everything to deconstruct these stereotypes, which also have become popular even as team mascots. As Brendan Frederick R. Edwards states, “Aboriginal schools in the U.S. and Canada have thus begun to use their own symbols and mascots with Indian names and images. Aboriginal artists of all genres now employ stereotypical images ironically, in an effort to empower and assert control over their own image” (Edwards). Of course prejudices will always be part of our lives since we face them everywhere and their numbers are still increasing, but we have to be critical of them. We have to keep in mind that even if some of these stereotypes have some truth, there are always exceptions and should not be taken as rules or universal truth.

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