

Native Americans in Films

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá reprezentacemi amerických Indiánů v Hollywoodských filmech, obzvláště westernů vyprodukovaných během první poloviny 20. století. Historický kontext poukazuje na situaci amerických Indiánů v americké společnosti. Cílem této práce je popsat stereotypy, které byli filmovým postavám amerických Indiánů přisuzovány. Tato skutečnost bude blíže popsána v podrobné analýze tří westernů z různých časových období.

Klíčová slova:

Americký Indián, film, western, stereotypy, cliché, Hollywood, John Ford, David W. Griffith, asimilace, rezervace.

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with representations of Native Americans in the Hollywood films, especially Westerns produced mainly during the first half of the 20th century. The historical background focuses on the situation of Native Americans in the American society. The goal of this work is to describe the stereotypes which the Native American film characters were assigned. This will be demonstrated in the detailed analysis of three Westerns from different time periods.

Keywords:

Native American, film, Western, stereotypes, cliché, Hollywood, John Ford, David W. Griffith, assimilation, reservations.

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and certify that any secondary material used has been acknowledged in the text and listed in the bibliography.

March 30, 2009

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INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis focuses on the stereotypes of Native Americans which appear in the Hollywood films, especially Westerns from the first half of the 20th century. Native Americans were usually portrayed either as wild killers or noble savages. Their portrayal in the films was often based on the current historical events in the United States which are described in the first section of this work.

The second part of this thesis will deal with the fact how to identify Native American in today's society. The blood quantum requirements and the results of the 2000 census will be discussed in more detail.

The third section is intended to describe the stereotypes of Native Americans characters in the films which were created during the silent era and many of them continued to appear in the sound films. The issues concerning the attitude towards Native American languages, actors, costume and relationships with the white society will appear in this section.

John Ford and David W. Griffith were the founders of Western movie genre. In their movies many negative clichés concerning the Native Americans were created. John Ford later started to disturb this stereotypical image of Native Americans and thus he greatly contributed to the change of the genre. Griffith's negative clichés and Ford's attempts for their change will be analyzed in more detail in the fourth part of this work.

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this section of my work I will provide the reader with an overview of various historical events which influenced life of Native Americans in the time span from the end of the 19th century till the second half of 20th century. I will focus on the policy of assimilation of Native Americans into American society, participation of Native Americans in both world wars and foundation of Native American rights movements.

1.1 The Bureau of Indian Affairs

In the following paragraphs I want to focus on competences of the federal government body called The Bureau of Indian Affairs. Since this organization appears throughout my work as it had and still has a big influence on the situation of Native Americans in the United States it is essential to explain its origin and organizational structure.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or the Office of Indian Affairs, as it was initially called, is “the primary agency charged with the responsibility of implementing legislation related to Indians.”¹ It was established in 1824 and it ranks among one of the oldest offices in U.S. government. Originally, it fell within War Department but when the Department of Interior was created in 1849, the BIA was relocated under this new department.²

Since Native Americans were placed into reservations the main objection for the newly created Department of Interior and subsequently for the Bureau of Indian Affairs was to ensure and keep peace. The fact, that the body responsible with dealing with Native American matters was created, signalizes a chance in perceiving of Native Americans. The new policy did not recognize particular tribes and their governments as individual nations but they were considered as parts of the United States. The policy also aimed to remove the Native American languages.³

The BIA established several agencies whose responsibility was to manage and supervise a designated area. At first, the agents served as mediators between the tribes and U.S. government since they helped to negotiate treaties. Nevertheless, their power was

¹ Kirke Kickingbird et al., *Native American Sovereignty*, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), 27.

² Kirke Kickingbird et al., *Native American Sovereignty*, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), 27.

³ Kirke Kickingbird et al., *Native American Sovereignty*, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), 27.

gradually increasing and many of them started to take advantage of their position, for example, by speculations with the land belonging to reservations.⁴

1.2 Assimilation of Native Americans

The U. S. government influenced the life of Native Americans in many ways and its policy brought many changes. During the 19th century many battles between the Native American tribes and white settlers took place throughout the North America. Eventually, the Native Americans were forcibly relocated into reservations in order not to hinder the white settlers in their progress. They were supposed to find a new home in Indian Territory, which was situated in present-day Oklahoma, or in Dakota. The relocation meant for Native Americans in many cases death since the tribes from the North or West, for example, the Nez Perce from Washington and the Cheyenne from Montana were not accustomed to hot climate. Those who survived had to face the policy of assimilation because the agents and many other bureaucrats believed that the only way how to save Native Americans is to make them adapt to the white society.⁵

The following sections will focus on the impacts of the assimilation policy on the education and living conditions of Native Americans on the reservations.

1.2.1 Education

Education was the most important tool in the attempt of U.S. government to assimilate the Native Americans. Some tribes had their own schools and system of education. The Cherokees, for example, established by 1868 around sixty-four secondary schools. The teachers were chosen from the members of the tribe. Besides basic writing and reading skills the children were taught about the tribe's history and their native language.⁶

At first, the teachers were sent to reservations but in the 1870s the establishing of boarding schools began. Boarding schools have affected Native Americans in the most devastating way. The generations of Native Americans are talked as the Lost Generation. The impact on the Native American community can still be seen today. The disappearance of tribal traditions

⁴ Kirke Kickingbird et al., *Native American Sovereignty*, ed. John R. Wunder (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1996), 27-28.

⁵ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 151-152.

⁶ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 154.

and languages are typical examples of effect of this type of education. The idea of boarding schools was created by former military officer Richard Henry Pratt. His first attempt to reeducate Native Americans took place in 1878 in Hampton Institute in Hampton. Pratt was permitted to bring 50 Native American prisoners who fought in Civil War to Hampton Institute in Virginia and supervise their education. Pratt soon gained support of U.S. government and in 1879 he opened The Carlisle Indian Industrial Training School in Carlisle in Pennsylvania. The abandoned army buildings in Carlisle were used as classes and dormitories. The students were required to wear old army uniforms. When new children came to the school their clothing was confiscated and each boy obtained two suits and each girl was given 2 dresses. The underwear and boots were also part of their new clothing. Many children had to face a big stress when their long hair were cut since some of the tribes, for example the Lakota, connected their hairstyle with sense of honor.^{7 8}

One way how assimilation was to be achieved was by giving each student a new English name, partly because the teachers had problems with pronouncing the Native American names, but mainly because Native American provided with English name and surname was more acceptable for U.S. legal system and thus it helped the assimilation of Native Americans into white society. Since the original Native American names in many cases contained a description of one's personality, the children often felt deprived of their identity. In many cases they were given random names based on white culture, for example Peter MacDonald, the former chairperson of the Navajo Nation acquired his surname from the song "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." It was also common that the students were shown a list of names and they had to choose one of them even though they could not read yet.^{9 10}

Another important instrument in trying to assimilate them was to prohibit using the Native language and practice their religion. Nevertheless, the children started to create secret communities and gatherings. Since the language barrier was no longer present thanks

⁷ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 333.

⁸ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 154-157.

⁹ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 154-157.

¹⁰ Donald Fixico, *Daily Life of Native Americans in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 2006), 47-48.

to newly acquired ability to speak English, many friendships were created among the members of various tribes.¹¹

The education plan was diversified according to gender. The boys studied vocational skills while the girls were taught how to manage different kinds of home chores such as cooking and sewing. During summer vacation the students were put into white farmers' families. The students could observe and try actually living the life of middle-class white people while the school could get rid of the fear of returning them to their native families and therefore risking their not coming back.¹²

Pratt's project in Carlisle was successful with the U.S. government to such a degree, that by 1885 another 114 boarding schools were established. Nevertheless, the tribes were more than reluctant to give up their children since it meant a complete separation from their families and tribal culture. In 1891 the legislation, ordering the Native American youth the compulsory attendance at educational institution either at home or at boarding schools, was passed by Congress. Still some of the Native American parents ignored the newly issued law and did not let their children to enroll the schools. The government reacted by sending U.S. Army patrols in the reservations in order to gather the children that avoided the enrollment and take them away from the reservation. The children were in many cases literally dragged away from their houses by soldiers. Parents who intentionally tried to keep their children out of the reach of military could be put in jail. Nevertheless, this tactics was not very successful and the agents in the reservations had to implement more strict measures such as cutting the food rations.^{13 14}

With the children away the life in the reservations changed. Not only disruption of families but also the inability to transfer the knowledge, the myths and ceremonies of the tribe to the younger ones caused that many of the elders lost the meaning of their lives since they had always served as educators of next generation. It might seem that the attempt of U.S. government to destroy tribal identity and make Native Americans to adapt to the

¹¹ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 156-157.

¹² R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 333-334.

¹³ Donald Fixico, *Daily Life of Native Americans in teh Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 2006), 48.

¹⁴ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 155.

customs and ways of living of the white society succeeded. Nevertheless, many of the graduates of the boarding schools who returned back to reservations subsequently resumed the old practices of their tribe since they could not put in use the skills which they acquired from the education provided by government.^{15 16}

Eventually, around 1900 the BIA decided to modify the strict policy of separation of Native American families. Even though most of the schools located directly on the reservations had the same approach to the education of the Native Americans as the boarding schools, their number grew rapidly. The education was shifted from boarding schools to day schools.¹⁷

1.2.2 Allotments

Another change for Native Americans came with the policy of allotments. Many officials thought that the Native Americans should advance towards the thinking of “civilized” white society and embrace the idea of “individually held private property.”¹⁸ In reality it meant dividing the reservations’ lands into small plots or allotments and distributing them among the individual Native American families.¹⁹

National allotment law was elaborated by Massachusetts senator Henry Dawes during 1880s and the General Allotment or Dawes Act was subsequently approved by Congress in 1887. In order to gain the needed support, Dawes proposed that the process of allotments has to proceed gradually rather than at a time. The Native Americans were also ensured that they can choose their allotments according to their preferences. Nevertheless, the strict rules for dividing the land according to the number of family members and their status within the family were designed. “Heads of households would select 160-acre homesteads, while spouses and other adult family members would receive 80 acres each and children

¹⁵ Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 64-65.

¹⁶ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 157.

¹⁷ Donald Fixico, *Daily Life of Native Americans in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press, 2006), 48.

¹⁸ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 324.

¹⁹ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 324.

would get 40 acres.”²⁰ Dawes proposal also promised that all people who choose and accept the allotment would gain American citizenships.^{21 22}

There were three main reasons while Dawes and his supporters fought for establishing of this policy. Firstly, by dividing the reservations, the tribal community would be disrupted. The Native Americans receiving the homestead would have to shift from tribe’s life to the farming thus they would adapt to the ways of white society and their assimilation will be complete. Secondly, when all the families from the reservation are given their homestead, the remaining land can be designated as “surplus” and subsequently be sold to the white settlers. Thirdly, the miners, farmers and timber men saw in the allotment law an opportunity for getting access to the natural resources located within territory of the reservations. Focusing only the advantages which this policy brings to the American society the supporters of this bill did not see the drawbacks which it brought to the Native Americans. The biggest flaw of Dawes’ proposal was the fact, that the population growth was not taken into account therefore children born after the allotments were assigned had no chance to gain one. Many Native Americans opposed this policy but the Commissioner of Indian Affairs instructed the agents in reservations to prevent the leaders of tribes from traveling east and expressing their objections to the government.^{23 24 25}

The land on reservations was often very dry and infertile thus farming was not possible. After several poor harvests the government offered Native Americans a better way of to gaining profits from their homestead. In 1891 Congress passed the law which provided the Native Americans with the right to lease their land to whites. The process of assimilation of Native Americans was taken into account again since the government believed that living side by side with the white citizens, the Native Americans would be influenced by the white style of life and they will learn to honor American values.

²⁰ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 325.

²¹ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 325.

²² Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 165.

²³ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 325.

²⁴ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 164-165.

²⁵ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 166-167.

Nevertheless, in 1906 the Burke Act was issued, allowing the officials to take away citizenships from some Native Americans. The government justified this law by claiming that the Native Americans have to be protected from swindlers and land thieves. Despite these government regulations, the swindlers were obviously successful. When the allotment began the tribal lands counted around 138 million acres while in 40 years the area decreased to one third of this number.²⁶

1.3 Native Americans in World War I

This section will deal with the situation of the Native Americans in the United States military before, during and after World War I and specifies the outcome of their participation in the war. The most significant change which the World War I brought was in the perception of Native Americans since after war they were seen as heroes and in return for their brave deeds they were given U.S. citizenship.

At the beginning of 20th century there were some attempts to persuade the U.S. government to establish military units consisted purely from Native Americans. The biggest advocate of this idea was Joseph Dixon. When the United States officially declared the war to Germany on 2nd April 1917, Dixon began his campaign for special Native American units. Dixon believed that Native Americans are naturally born warriors and fighting side by side with their comrades will raise their fighting spirit and inborn skills.²⁷

Dixon proposed a scheme for creating all Native American units. He suggested creating of two divisions. The First Indian Division, as he called it, would include two brigades and infantry and The Second Indian Division would consist of two cavalry brigades. The Native Americans would ride ponies not horses as it was common in cavalry. This would help to save the costs. Dixon also claimed that the ponies can endure without water for longer time than regular horses. The headquarters of regiments and battalions were supposed to be located near the most important reservations and Native Americans youths would attend special military schools. All Native American children who would

²⁶ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 164-167.

²⁷ Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and At Home* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 39-47.

enlist in the army and would be between the age of eight and eighteen would have to attend these schools compulsory.²⁸

Dixon's proposal met opponents on both sides. Many Native Americans claimed that creating segregated units signalizes racial discrimination. Others were upset because of the fact that not all of them possessed U.S. citizenship yet they were required to have to be able to go to war and fight for the United States. On the other hand, government believed that establishing of these units would collide with the policy of assimilation since Native American soldiers would not be in contact with the white ones. Thus the idea of establishing the segregated units was abandoned.²⁹

The war brought for the Native Americans the opportunity to show their patriotism. In spring of 1917, special draft agencies were established by the BIA. By September almost 12,000 young Native Americans, many of whom did not possess the U.S. citizenship, enrolled. The white soldiers perceived Native Americans as warriors with extraordinary fighting skills and instincts. Native soldiers were often assigned to the most dangerous missions. Officers from 167th Infantry regiment, for example chose a Native soldier as a courier carrying messages during a battle for twenty-one days in a row until he was killed. Native American casualties were at bigger number than any other race. Among the dead members of the American Expeditionary Force in France 5 percent were Native soldiers and only 1 percent included other races.^{30 31}

The Act of Congress from 6th November 1919 granted to any Native American, who enrolled the military and after the war were honorably discharged, the U.S. citizenship. By this act the government wanted to express the gratitude for the loyal and brave service of Native soldiers in World War I. Finally, in 1924 this citizenship was extended to all Native Americans.³²

²⁸ Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and At Home* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 39-47.

²⁹ Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and At Home* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 46-49.

³⁰ Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and At Home* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 82.

³¹ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 364-365.

³² Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 594.

1.4 The Indian Reorganization Act

The Indian Reorganization Act is one of the most significant proposals which affected the Native American policy by promoting the establishing of tribal governments and abolition of allotments. The Institute for Government Research in Baltimore began to work on the study of the results of U.S. policy towards Native Americans in 1926. The investigation was conducted by Lewis Meriam thus it is often called the *Meriam Report* but the official title of this study, which was issued in 1928, is *The Problem of Indian Administration*. The report criticized the allotment policy and the approach of the B.I.A. for offering only limited help to Native Americans. It also pointed out the fact that Native Americans in the reservations live in poor conditions since they do not have enough food and suffer from diseases such as measles, pneumonia and tuberculosis since their immune system is weakened because of the malnutrition. This report served as an impulse to change the living conditions of Native Americans in the reservations.^{33 34}

John Collier was appointed the commissioner of the BIA in 1933. His objective was to improve the situation of Native Americans and restoration of tribal cultures. In 1934 he and his supporters from the House and Senate drew up a forty-eight-page proposal dealing with the improving of Native American's conditions. The document consisted of four sections. The first section dealt with establishing of own governments for each individual tribe. They "would have the power to operate their own courts, condemn and acquire land, manage Indian Office personnel, review federal budget requests affecting their homelands, and select which federal services they would accept in their communities."³⁵ The second section focused on education. It also promised that the Native Americans who possess an adequate qualification might apply for a job in the BIA and thus work for the U.S. government. The third section suggested abolishing of the allotments and returning the individual plots to particular tribes. Finally, the fourth section put forward the idea of establishing a national Court of Indian Affairs which would be responsible for dealing with

³³ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 364.

³⁴ Roger L. Nichols, *American Indians in U.S. History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 178-179.

³⁵ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 379.

major criminal cases and civil cases which would include Native Americans, tribes, or tribal lands.^{36 37}

The proposal stirred up a lot of negative reactions among both Native Americans and white society. Some Native Americans believed that such a radical change in the U.S. policy is rather suspicious and they refused to believe it. Those who were influenced by the assimilation policy also did not agree since passing of the proposal would mean losing of their allotments. Conservatives in Congress also opposed Collier's proposal as they did not appreciate the idea of tribal governments.³⁸

In the end, Collier step to a compromise. The bill was passed on 18th June 1934 but the sections dealing with establishing national Native American court and supporting of traditional cultures were not included. Nevertheless, the *Indian Reorganization Act*, as the bill was named, included abolition of allotments, establishing of tribal governments on the reservations, increasing of appropriations and appointing Native Americans to the BIA. The bill would also have to be approved by individual tribes.^{39 40}

Since the bill would not be applicable to a particular tribe unless it is accepted by the members of the tribe, the referendums were held on the reservations. 174 tribes voted in favor while 73 were against the bill. Although some tribes did not accept it, the *Indian Reorganization Act* helped to shift the U.S. Native American policy a little bit away from assimilation towards tribal culture restoration and independence.⁴¹

1.5 Native Americans in World War II

Native Americans were given another chance to express their patriotism and courage during World War II. When the United States entered the war, over twenty-five thousand Native Americans joined the army. They were often perceived as natural warriors with

³⁶ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 379.

³⁷ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 214-215.

³⁸ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 214-215.

³⁹ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 380-381.

⁴⁰ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 215-216.

⁴¹ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 215-216.

inborn fighting instincts. This stereotype had already appeared during the World War I and it still endured among both, allies and enemies.⁴²

The question whether the Native American soldiers should be placed into “normal” troops or the segregated units emerged again. John Collier was in favor of establishing the all Native American troops. The chairman of the Navajo Nation, Jacob Morgan, supported this idea by claiming that it would be better for Navajos to fight in segregated units since they speak the same language and thus there would be no language barrier and training would be easier. Nevertheless, this idea was not implemented because it contradicted the U.S. policy of assimilation of Native Americans into American society.⁴³

Besides fighting as “ordinary” soldiers the Native Americans were also used as code talkers. The code talkers, usually members of Navajo tribe, used their native language for encrypting and subsequently deciphering of important messages which were communicated through radio transmissions. The idea of code talkers was invented by civil engineer for the city of Los Angeles Philip Johnston. His father was a missionary in the Navajo Reservation and Johnston himself grew up there and learned the Navajo language. In 1942, he introduced this idea to the Marine Corps officials at Camp Elliott near San Diego. Subsequently, thirty Navajo men were recruited twenty-nine of which reported for duty and were sent to San Diego for military training.^{44 45}

After going through recruit, rifle and infantry training the Navajos were sent to Camp Elliot in order to attend a radio communication courses and work on the code which was supposed to be used against the Japanese in the Pacific. The soldiers had only two months for learning how to operate the radio equipment and then they were sent into action. Two from the twenty-nine group stayed in the United States in order to recruit more Navajos.⁴⁶

Since many of the Japanese soldiers studied in the United States and therefore could speak perfect English, they could easily pretend to be American soldiers and use the radio to give the American headquarters misleading information which could, for example result

⁴² R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 390.

⁴³ Tom Holm, *Code Talkers and Warriors: Native Americans and World War II* (United States of America: Chelsea House Publications, 2007), 33.

⁴⁴ Tom Holm, *Code Talkers and Warriors: Native Americans and World War II* (United States of America: Chelsea House Publications, 2007), 71-73.

⁴⁵ Doris Atkinson Paul, *The Navajo Code Talkers* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., 1998), 6-12.

in ordering the air strike on the U.S. troops. As a result, the Navajos were often called to take care of the transmission with using the code language thus saving life of many of their comrades. The Navajo code was never broken and it contributed to winning the war in the Pacific.⁴⁷

During the war many Native Americans left reservations in order to work in war-related industries. Thus the Native American population started to mingle with the rest of the inhabitants of the United States. The policy of assimilation appeared again when the *Termination Act* of 1953 came into effect. The bill “included repealing laws setting American Indians apart, ending Bureau of Indian Affairs services by transferring them to other federal agencies or to the states, and termination recognition of the sovereign status of specific tribes.”⁴⁸ Between 1954 and 1962 fifteen local termination acts influencing 110 tribes in eight states came to affects.^{49 50}

1.6 Native American Movements

The resistance of Native Americans towards the U.S. policy of assimilation can be seen in the efforts of Native Americans movements fighting for the rights of Native Americans which were formed during the 1960s and 70s. To demonstrate the endeavor of Native Americans to obtain better treatment from government and change of living conditions I will take a closer look at activities organized by American Indian Movement (AIM).

American Indian Movement was founded in Minneapolis in Minnesota. Dennis Banks and George Mitchell were Native Americans belonging to the Chippewa tribe. In July 1968 they decided to create this movement in order to “protect urban Indians from police abuse and to create programs promoting community self-sufficiency.”⁵¹ The organization drew inspiration from the Black Panthers - a militant group from Oakland in California which

⁴⁶ Tom Holm, *Code Talkers and Warriors: Native Americans and World War II* (United States of America: Chelsea House Publications, 2007), 73-74.

⁴⁷ Tom Holm, *Code Talkers and Warriors: Native Americans and World War II* (United States of America: Chelsea House Publications, 2007), 78-83.

⁴⁸ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 528.

⁴⁹ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 398.

⁵⁰ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 528-530.

⁵¹ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 25.

fought for better conditions of Afro-Americans since they often had to face a brutality of local police.^{52 53}

The AIM joined the Trail of Broken Treaties, which was a campaign for Native American rights in 1972. The group of five thousand Native Americans set off to Washington, D.C. in order to present the Twenty Points, which was a list of demands meant to be delivered to the White House. The main ideas of Twenty Points were dismissal of the B.I.A., improvement housing and health care and creating of new treaties. The group believed that they will be provided with police escort and adequate accommodation. Nevertheless, police had no intention of escorting them and the arranged lodgings were filled with rodents. The disgruntled group headed for the BIA where they were supposed to find substitute accommodation. When the new guards came for the shift they were not familiar with the situation and started to use force in order to drive the Native Americans out of the building. The Native group fought back. In the end, they barricaded themselves in the BIA building for 6 days. The whole event was closely watched by the media. Eventually, when the Native Americans agreed to leave the building they were given immunity therefore their acts had no legal effects. The traveling expenses for their journey back home very covered by the government and they were also promised to get the response to the Twenty Points in sixty days.^{54 55}

One of the most noticeable actions led by AIM is more than two-month conflict between the armed forces of the United States and the members of AIM which took place in the village of Wounded Knee in South California during spring 1973. Wounded Knee has a special meaning for Native Americans. In 1890, three hundred Sioux men, women and children were killed there by U.S. cavalry. They were captivated and escorted to Wounded Knee Creek. The commanding officer ordered to soldiers to look for the weapons which the Native Americans could keep hidden. One of the Sioux resisted and probably by accident shot his weapon. Subsequently, the soldiers returned fire and killed all the Native Americans.⁵⁶

⁵² Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 25.

⁵³ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 421.

⁵⁴ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 421.

⁵⁵ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 540.

⁵⁶ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 598-601.

The conflict at Wounded Knee in 1873 was triggered by the complaints of Oglala tribe elders from nearby reservation in Pine Ridge. The tribe invited the AIM since they did no longer trust the Oglala leader Richard Wilson who was supposed to be corrupted. Among others, Wilson used money from federal highway funds to provide the reservation police with weapons. The Oglalas did not agree with Wilson's practices. In January 1873 approximately two hundred armed Oglala tribe and AIM members seized Wounded Knee. Even though, the Oglalas were equipped only with hunting rifles they were immediately surrounded by the police, FBI and U.S. marshals who had state-of-the-art weapons at their disposal. The whole area was observed by military planes and helicopters. The incident drew the attention of the media. On the third day, the shooting started and many people were injured. During following two months the fight continued. In the end, the Native Americans were arrested. Nevertheless, their bravery encouraged many other Native Americans to fight for better lives and recognition of their tribes.^{57 58}

1.7 Summary

It is obvious that Native Americans had to endure many hardships from the U.S. government during the 19th and 20th century. The policy of assimilation near caused the extinction of Native American traditions and values. Nevertheless, thanks to unbelievable courage and determination of Native Americans to fight for the United States in both world wars the approach of the citizens and U.S. governments started to slightly change. The Native Americans realized that they are also part of the American society and have their rights thanks to the manifestations of recognition such as being given U.S. citizenship. In the end, the Native American movements contributed to recognition of Native American sovereignty and rights and compelled the government to give up its efforts for assimilation of Native Americans and suppressing of their culture.

⁵⁷ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 603-606.

⁵⁸ T. V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 134-135.

2 WHO IS A NATIVE AMERICAN?

During second half of 20th century the Native Americans fought for their independence. But the question is: Who is a Native American? The following paragraphs will deal with the requirements for recognizing the belonging to the particular Native American tribe and with the results of the 2000 census stating the Native American population in the United States.

2.1 The Blood Quantum

It is very difficult issue to decide who is and who is not Native American. The definition of Native American has undergone many changes in the legal means. Nowadays, the United States government recognizes around 500 Native American tribes. This number includes around 200 Alaskan Native villages. There are also around 150 tribes which want to gain the recognition from the federal government but they have not achieved it yet.⁵⁹

To be considered a Native American and to claim the benefits connected with this status, one have to enroll one of the tribes recognized by the federal government. The requirements for accepting the individual as a member of the tribe vary from tribe to tribe. They are usually contained in tribal constitutions which are ratified by the BIA. When the individual is accepted as the member of tribe they are given tribal enrollment numbers and cards. These documents can help the members to identify themselves as members of the particular tribe. After the enrolment in one of the federally recognized tribes the individual is also given a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB), which is issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This document defines a blood quantum. That is a particular degree of Native American blood which one possesses. Russell Thornton describes the process of identifying the individual as Native American in these words: “The Bureau of Indian Affairs uses a blood quantum definition – generally a one-fourth degree of Native American blood – and/or tribal membership to recognize an individual as Native American.”^{60 61}

⁵⁹ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 472.

⁶⁰ Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, *A Companion to American Indian History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 76.

⁶¹ Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, *A Companion to American Indian History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 77.

However, the blood quantum requirements differ in the particular tribes. The blood quantum is usually based on investigating one's ancestry when the origin of the relatives is traced through tribal rolls and censuses. The criteria in the particular tribes change from time to time. Eastern Band of Cherokee Native Americans, for example lowered the requirement of blood quantum to one-sixteenth in 1931. On the other hand, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes decided that only one-quarter Native Americans can become tribal members. Walker River Paiute members are required to have at least one-half blood quantum while the Navajo tribes requires one-fourth. There are tribes, generally those located in California and Oklahoma, where the requirements for blood quantum reach only one-eighth, one-sixteenth or even one-thirty-second. Some tribes did not establish the requirements for blood quantum and for accepting a new member they demand only a documented tribal lineage.⁶²

2.2 The 2000 Census

According to the 2000 census approximately 2.5 million inhabitants of the United States considers themselves to be Native American or Alaskan Native. Since the 2000 census was the first one which permitted to choose more than one racial identity, another 1.6 million people claimed to be a mix of Native American and one or more other races.⁶³

The population of 4.1 million people who consider themselves Native Americans or mixed races with a share of Native American ancestry is scattered in all parts of the United States. Nevertheless, 43 percent resides in the West and only 9 percent inhabits the North East. The cities with the biggest concentration of Native Americans are New York with 87,000 and Los Angeles with 53,000.⁶⁴

More than 1 million from the 4.1 million Native Americans did not identify themselves with any particular tribe. This can be caused by the fact that many contemporary Native Americans live in the urban areas since according to the census only about one million live on the reservations. As a result of the city lifestyle and the increase

⁶² Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, *A Companion to American Indian History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 77-78.

⁶³ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 470.

⁶⁴ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 470-471.

of intermarriages, the Native Americans are not able or willing to identify themselves with a particular tribe.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 471-472.

3 NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE MOVIES

The representation of Native Americans in movies has been evolving in the course of time. The perception of their existence has gradually changed from the bloodthirsty heathens taking scalps and resisting the development of modern civilization to noble savages trying to keep their countenance and save the remains of their tribe. Western was the first movie genre showing Native Americans and creating certain stereotypes concerning their behavior, lifestyle and culture and that is why I want to focus for example on Native languages and Native actors in the films, Hollywood portrayal of Native American or the issue of miscegenation.

3.1 Western

Western is a film genre which established the tradition of portraying Native Americans in the form of rebellious savages and later also, at least to a certain extent, contributed to change of this cliché. The origins of the negative attitudes towards Native Americans can be found in dime novels, frontier melodramas and Wild West Shows which are usually mentioned as the predecessors of big screen Westerns. The dime novels took themes from captivity narratives such as *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (1824), travel diaries such as *The Oregon Trail* (1849) by Francis Parkman and from the fiction books written by James Fenimore Cooper. His series of 5 novels called *Leatherstocking Tales* became a source for many authors of the dime novels like Ned Buntline, whose real name was Edward Z. C. Judson. He never met any Native American in his life, yet he wrote a series of dime novels called *Buffalo Bill Cody - King of the Border Men*.^{66 67}

In its original form, Western has specific features which are repeated all over again. It takes place in the particular time period and location. It covers the period from the end of the Civil War (1865) till the end of 19th century. The plot is usually set in the Great Plains of American Midwest. The landscape scenery is presented as the vast open track of land which offers many possibilities but it also contains certain element of inhospitality and insecurity. The typical example is a scene from the *Stagecoach* (1939) where the stagecoach drives through the vast endless and seemingly peaceful landscape when it is

⁶⁶ Barry Keith Grant, *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2006), 357-358.

⁶⁷ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 9-10.

suddenly attacked by the group of Apache. The Western also helped to create many movie stars, such as Hoot Gibson, Tim McCoy and Buck Jones who are famous for their roles in the series of silent Westerns during 1920. From my point of view, the biggest star of Westerns is John Wayne, who appeared in tens of Western movies and often cooperated with John Ford, one of the most famous directors of Westerns.^{68 69}

One could presume that if the plot of Western films takes place on the United States territory then the Western is inevitably only American genre. Nevertheless, the Westerns achieved a great popularity also in Europe. Many Westerns were, for example, produced in Germany during the silent era in 1920s. Several Westerns were also filmed during the Nazi era. Nevertheless, the biggest boom of Westerns in Germany came in the 1960s when Harald Reinl started to direct the adaptations of Karl May's novels featuring noble chief of Apache named Winnetou and his white brother Old Shatterhand. May's novels were published at the turn of 19th and 20th century and became enormously popular in Germany and neighboring countries, including the Czech Republic. However, none of them was translated into English therefore the Winnetou's stories are completely unknown to American audience. Seeing the success of German Westerns the Italian and Spanish producers also became interested in this genre. In the 1960s a series of Westerns directed by Italian director Sergio Leone lay the foundations of what became known as "Spaghetti Western". Leone's first notable movie *Per Un Pugno Di Dollari* (1964) in English speaking countries later known as *A Fistful of Dollars* featured in that time completely unknown American actor Clint Eastwood who thanks to the cooperation with Leone became an international star. Leone's Westerns contained more brutality and violence than Hollywood Westerns but American filmmakers soon took this concept over and created many imitations such as *High Plains Drifter* starring Clint Eastwood who also stepped into the role of its director.^{70 71 72}

⁶⁸ Barry Keith Grant, *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2006), 357-358.

⁶⁹ Cinematheque Education Department, "The History of Film: Study Guide 10 – Genre and Movies," Cinematheque, http://www.cinematheque.bc.ca/education/pdfs/f_h_guide10.pdf.

⁷⁰ Barry Keith Grant, *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2006), 363-364.

⁷¹ Barry Langford, *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 75.

⁷² Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006) 103.

Since the Western as a movie genre was intended as an entertainment for the general public, it generally followed very simple conventions. The hero is often a lonely individual with strong sense of justice. He follows his own code of honor and stands apart from the rest of the society. He has exceptional shooting skills, yet he does not kill for pleasure. In the classic Westerns the hero is not a Native American but usually a former soldier or rancher. Even in the films such as *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) which is supposed to represent the courage of Native Americans the main character seems to be rather the white soldier than the chiefs of the Cheyenne tribe. The villains can be divided into 2 categories. The first category includes bankers, saloon owners, sheriffs and ranchers who seem to be respectable citizens but in fact they are driven by greed and hunger for wealth. In order to achieve their goals they might resort to taking advantage of Native Americans and convert them into the villains as well. The Native Americans fall in the second category of Western villains. They rustle cattle, attack stagecoaches, forts and ranches, kill and threaten the innocent respectable members of white society. Their acts are not usually based on any real motive; they are portrayed as cruel and violent creatures.⁷³

The main theme of Western films is conquest and civilization of wilderness, including reclamation of nature and taming savages that break the established laws of society. Nevertheless, the question is, to what extent are Western movies authentic in the relation with history. In the foreword of "Making the White Man's Indian" Angela Aleiss claims that: "Westerns were not made for educational purposes, but simply to make money."⁷⁴ On the other hand, one can find a lot of references to the famous battles and names of officers almost in every Western film. In my opinion, the objective of filmmakers was not to depict the historical events the way they happened but to entertain the audience. If there were, for example, in the 1940s a movie dealing with the killing of Native Americans by U.S. cavalry at Wounded Knee the audience would loose their white heroes. This kind of movie would not provide the Americans fighting in the World War II with the helpful stimulation as the movies showing the victories of American settlers did. On the other hand, many Native Americans fought in the World War II and seeing their ancestors as the villains, that oppose the development of the country which their descendants now fight for, must have

⁷³ Joseph Boggs and Dennis W. Petirie, *The Art of Watching Films* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008) 476-477.

been very painful. Nevertheless, the mainstream audience was not consisted of Native Americans thus they had to endure this approach.⁷⁵

The Western as a film genre survived many changes and its conventions and basic rules were also many times changed. However, the character of Native American appears in this genre almost all the time as either villain or noble savage.

3.2 Silent era

The term “silent film” refers to the first movies which were shot without sound. During the screening they were usually accompanied by piano music and variety of sound effects such as gunshots represented by a strong drumbeat or the sound horses’ hooves created by coconut shells. The communication between Native Americans was expressed by frowning faces and rigid body movements. The Native Americans made different poses accompanied with melodramatic gestures and audience very quickly identified these gestures as the integral part of typical image of Native American. This cliché was also transformed into sound films.^{76 77}

The popularity of cinema entertainment had spread very quickly and it soon overshadowed other kinds of entertainment like stage melodramas and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows. Nevertheless, these two established forms of relaxation for mass audience contributed to the development of Western since their themes were used as the main themes for Westerns. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show was a kind of public performance which was supposed to enact series of scenes from American history, for example the Battle of the Little Bighorn. It usually included demonstrations of sharp shooting, horse racing and rope tricks. A lot of Native Americans performed in these shows but they were stereotypically cast as the bloodthirsty savages who attack the white. The Buffalo Bill Show also traveled to Europe where the audience could see real Native Americans such as Red Shirt, Rocky Bear, Flat Iron, Cut Meat and many others.^{78 79 80}

⁷⁴ Angela Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005).

⁷⁵ Joseph Boggs and Dennis W. Petirie, *The Art of Watching Films* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008) 476-477.

⁷⁶ David Lusted, *The Westren* (New York: Longman, 2003), 70.

⁷⁷ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 36-37.

⁷⁸ David Lusted, *The Westren* (New York: Longman, 2003), 70.

One of the first silent films showing Native Americans was released by Edison Company in 1894. Its title *Sioux Ghost Dance* explicitly describes the whole plot of the movie. A group of Native Americans perform an ancient ritual of spiritual revival called “Ghost ceremony” which was supposed to be the way of contacting their ancestors and asking them for help in the fight with white people. The cast was composed from Native Americans that were performing in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows. The whole film lasts only about 20 seconds and in my opinion one cannot find there any kind of mockery or representations of cruel Native Americans. The Native Americans simply perform the dance but it seems that they were instructed to look at the camera since they often turn their heads in the viewer’s direction.⁸¹

The popularity of Western films increased in 1908 because the filmmakers spotted the potential of this genre since the future of the movie industry was seen in the systematic production of the movies. The storyline of the Western is simple and can be easily repeated with only small changes and costumes and set decorations can be used in various movies as well. The surprising fact when comparing movies from the silent era with the sound movies is that silent films usually portrayed Native Americans as the noble savages. The plot usually featured stories from tribal life and very often included love stories. William Everson describes this era: “During this period the Indian became accepted as a symbol of integrity, stoicism, and reliability, with the Indian figure and the Indian head used constantly as an advertising trademark on fruit, tobacco, and other goods.”⁸² The stories also very often featured Native American woman as a heroine as in *Daniel Boone (1907)* where Native American woman betrays her own tribe and assists Boone with saving his children kidnapped by the tribe which the woman belongs to. This attitude to the Native Americans in the films reflected the situation in the society at the beginning of the 19th century. The Native Americans started to be enormously popular. They have been permitted to perform some of their ceremonies which were often observed by the white audience that was fascinated with the Native cultures. The Native Americans very not

⁷⁹ Bowling Green State University, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and Exhibition,” Bowling Green State University, <http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/buffalobill/bbwildwestshow.html>.

⁸⁰ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 14.

⁸¹ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.

⁸² William K. Everson, *American Silent Film*, 241.

perceived as a threat but rather as “a nostalgic image of the historical noble savage.”⁸³ They were seen as something which is bound to vanish since the U.S. policy of assimilation started to make them to adapt to the American white society. Many Native Americans became famous, for example, the male athletes who were in fact the students of boarding school in Carlisle.^{84 85 86}

The first Westerns shot in the time span of 1908-10 were most of the time produced in the area of New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. The landscape portrayed in movies from this era includes lakes, streams, Native Americans often use canoes. Disputes are usually resolved during hand-to-hand fights. The plot is very often set within the particular Native American tribe or allows a Native American to be the help that white man needs. Nevertheless, around 1911 the movie industry shifted the Western production from the East Coast to the West Coast. The main reason was that the weather in the West Coast, especially in California, was more suitable for film production. Although the electric lights already existed they were not powerful enough and thus the best way how to illuminate the scene was using the natural light. Besides sunny climate the West Coast also offered vast open spaces and varieties of natural sceneries which could be put to use in the films. Suddenly, the audience could see vast plains, wide grasslands, inhospitable deserts and cruel, ruthless and violent Native Americans. This change in the portrayal of Native Americans stems from the fact that the United States initiated preparation for World War I. The demand for all American hero appeared and the most suitable adept for this role seemed to be a white settler who fights for the better live of the next generations and brings the civilization to savages.^{87 88 89}

⁸³ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 17.

⁸⁴ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

⁸⁵ American Studies at University of Virginia, “Indians and Mexicans: Alternative Cultures in the Silent Western,” University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/hns/westfilm/indian.htm>.

⁸⁶ R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 352-354.

⁸⁷ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

⁸⁸ Hollywood & Los Angeles, “The History of Hollywood – Los Angeles,” Hollywood & Los Angeles, <http://www.hollywoodusa.co.uk/hollywood.htm>.

⁸⁹ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 19.

One of the first directors of Western, in whose films can be traced the transition in Western genre caused by relocation of movie production to West Coast, is D. W. Griffith. In *The Redman and the Child* (1908) he follows the story of a Native American who tries to help the white boy by giving him gold. The boy is kidnapped by the villains who also kill his father. The Native American who saw everything decides to revenge boy's father and rescue the boy. This is a typical example of portraying Native American as a noble savage. On the other hand, in Griffiths later movie *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch* (1914) can be found stereotypical image of Native American as a wild savage who kills innocent whites. D.W. Griffith can be seen as the founder of Western movie stereotypes. These were then repeated in silent Westerns over and over again and majority of them was included in the Western films with the sound.^{90 91}

3.3 Sound Film and Native Languages

During 1930's sound films spread through cinemas around the world and Western was one of the most popular genres being showed on the big screen, mainly those in the United States but also in Europe. Despite the fact that the sound film provided the cowboy hero with power to state his opinions aloud it seemed that the Native American had nothing worth saying on his mind. From time to time he was allowed by the scriptwriters to utter some incomprehensible grunt which could stand for invitation to tribal fire as well as the declaration of the war.⁹²

In this paragraph, I want to focus on the changes which the sound brought to the Western genre. While the film Native Americans could finally use their voice, the "real" Native Americans had to face the decision whether to accept the *Indian Reorganization Act* elaborated by John Collier who proposed establishing of tribal governments and thus improving the relationship between federal government and Native Americans. The invention of sound film has given the movie Native Americans the attribute of communicating by different animal sounds. Many Westerns show how the convoy of white settlers is attacked by violent Native Americans. This action is usually preceded by loud

⁹⁰ Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4-5.

⁹¹ American Studies at University of Virginia, "Indians and Mexicans: Alternative Cultures in the Silent Western," University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/hns/westfilm/indian.htm>.

cries of various types of animals, usually birds. The audience soon recognized this stereotype and whenever the animal sound was heard in the film it was clear that Native Americans are close and ready to attack. The similar effect has the sound of “tom-tom” beat of drums. This sound should have also implied the close presence of the Native Americans. Its purpose could also be to somehow represent a kind of Native American art as the real Native American music was not usually included in the Western film’s soundtrack. One of the reasons for not using Native American music in Westerns could be the fear of response from the audience. The average Western moviegoers probably did not listen to Native American chants in their free time and there was probably also no way how to acquire them. Instead, they were used to listening popular folk songs which had become the usual musical accompaniment for Westerns. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick talks about one of the rare cases when was Native American music and dance included in the film. She refers to the film *A Man Called Horse* (1970): “The wild drumming, movements, and costumes in addition to the hero’s near-delirium, produce a chaotic image closely resembling a Dionysian orgy. Purpose and beauty are absent from the scene.”⁹³ This description implies that such basic element of Native American culture as music and dancing was perceived and depicted as something wild and impudent.^{94 95}

In the late 1930s the movie Native American finally started to speak but most of the time his language did not resemble any of the languages spoken among Native Americans. Hollywood has its own conception of Native American language. Sometimes during the hunt for originality filmmakers came up with rather extreme ideas as in *Scouts to the Rescue* (1939). The language of Native Americans in this film was created by running the dialogue recorded in English backwards. Of course, for better synchronization with the picture the celluloid had to be printed in reverse. By adding edited sound and picture together the new Hollywood Native American’s language was created. Nevertheless, the content of the Native American conversation was not very important for both the audience

⁹² Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 36-37.

⁹³ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 38-39.

⁹⁴ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 80.

⁹⁵ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 38-41.

and the script. Subtitles virtually did not appear in the sound movies since it would look as reminders of “ancient” times of silent film.⁹⁶

Genuine Native American languages did not occur very often. In my point of view it is caused by unwillingness of the scriptwriters who would have to study the language themselves or hire someone who would understand it and this would bring additional cost to the film budget. The actors plying the Native American roles would also have to learn the language and since the main Native American roles were usually cast by non-Natives this process would also be time-consuming and expensive. Therefore when the script provided the white hero with the ability to speak Native language, the film conveniently transformed this language into English as in *Broken Arrow* (1950) where the leading white character initiates the audience into the story like this: “This is the story of a land and its people in the year 1870. And of a man whose name was Cochise. He was an Indian, leader of the Chiricahua Apache tribe. I was involved in the story and what I am telling happened exactly as you’ll see it. The only change will be that when the Apaches speak, they will speak in our language.”⁹⁷ This for some maybe brilliant idea has without doubt helped the movie studio to save a lot of money when comparing it with the method of editing the sound of the movie by running it backwards and printing the picture in reverse. This cliché was disturbed by John Ford in *Cheyenne Autumn*. The Cheyenne have long speeches which are most of the time left without translation and there are no scenes in which the white characters could be used as a channel through which the audience would understand the meaning of the conversation of Native Americans. Even though this language was not authentic, since the actors representing Cheyenne were in fact from Navajo tribe, Ford’s attempt of portraying actual native language did not stay unnoticed. Twenty six years later, in 1990, Kevin Costner came up with *Dance With Wolves* which is considered as one of a few exceptions among films including Native Americans which portrays genuine native language. The Lakota language is said to be spoken very accurately in this film. The audience can understand the Native speech by subtitles.^{98 99}

⁹⁶ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 37-38.

⁹⁷ *Broken Arrow*, dir. Dalmer Daves, 93 min., Twentieth Century Fox, 1950, DVD.

⁹⁸ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 38.

⁹⁹ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 79.

Often we can see that the white leading characters are capable of speaking particular Native language while the Native American characters cannot speak English at all or use only simple sentences and make grammatical mistakes. This might insinuate that the Native American was perceived as less capable and intelligent. The Native American utterances in English language contain characteristics features such as broken syntax and rather simple choice of vocabulary. In *Broken Arrow* one can hear the Apache leader Cochise saying: “My mind must work on it.”¹⁰⁰ He could have easily said: “I have to think about it.” However, saying this sentence in the way it has appeared in the movie gives it a notion of something odd, something distant and foreign as if the Indian would not belong among the white settlers who speak perfect English and some of them even perfect Native language. “Me friend to white-eyes” is an example sentence from one of the early Westerns which Jacquelyn Kilpatrick mentions when focusing on reasons why movie Native American uses such a type of speech. She states: “[it] could be delivered by a very dignified and obviously powerful chief, but his language was a clue that he was a part of the past, no a part of the audience’s world. Since a number of lawmakers, educators, and even Hollywood producers placed as the test of cultural survival the ability to assimilate, many in the audience presumed that the chief was an anachronism at best, linguistically and perhaps mentally deficient, and bound to lose/die/vanish.”¹⁰¹ This statement implies that not being able to speak white men’s languages was understood as not being able to fit in the white society, thus the Native American was condemned to death. The federal government’s tendency to assimilate Native Americans to American society continued during the World War II and the 1950s. Nevertheless, in the 1960s the movements fighting for Native American independence and sovereignty emerged and the government finally changed its policy by legal recognition of some Native American tribes. Passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1968 guaranteed that the Bill of Rights will be applied to Native Americans.^{102 103 104}

¹⁰⁰ *Broken Arrow*, dir. Dalmer Daves, 93 min., Twentieth Century Fox, 1950, DVD.

¹⁰¹ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 38.

¹⁰² Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 38.

¹⁰³ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 79.

3.4 Hollywood Native American

The foundation of Hollywood is connected with relocation of the film industry from the East Coast to the West Coast during 1910. The first studio was Nestor Studios founded in 1911. There is no doubt that Hollywood has indeed created his own image of the Native American. The stereotypes established by silent Westerns directed by David W. Griffith existed and evolved in the sound film. Nevertheless, Griffith was not the only one who helped to create Native American stereotypes. John Ford started his directing career during the silent era and successfully continued directing Westerns in the era of sound film. As Griffith's successor he took over some of already established Native American clichés and created many more. On the other hand, in his late works he tried to break away from stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans and wanted to show them in better light as in *Cheyenne Autumn* which will be described in more details in my film analysis.^{105 106}

The Hollywood Native American in the 1930s, 40s and 50s was usually given two features. He was an obstacle of civilization and a source of violence. The white man was shown as someone who had to conquer the piece of land he now owns. It took him a lot of time and effort to get it. He had to face many dangers during his long voyage for free life. He brings civilization which can make life easier. The Native American has no right to oppose the civilization. It was believed that the land belonged to the white settlers since they created their residences on it and divided it among themselves. Christopher Columbus was the one who discovered American continent and the Native American claims to the land were not taken into account. When the Native Americans in the movies attack the homesteads of the white settlers no one thinks about the fact that they are actually fighting the intruders who invaded their country and occupied their lands. Instead, they are perceived as murderous savages who do not understand the progress which the settlers brought over to their continent. The star of many Ford's Westerns John Wayne in one of his interviews said: "I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from them. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly

¹⁰⁴ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 70.

¹⁰⁵ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 79.

¹⁰⁶ Hollywood & Los Angeles, "The History of Hollywood – Los Angeles," Hollywood & Los Angeles, <http://www.hollywoodusa.co.uk/hollywood.htm>.

trying to keep it for themselves.”¹⁰⁷ This was more or less general opinion. It was believed that Native Americans were not able to use the land properly thus they do not have the right to hinder the white settlers from their attempt to bring the civilization into wilderness.¹⁰⁸

Concept of Westerns is based on the fight between the hero and the villain. The need for heroes emerged mainly in the 1940s when American soldiers fought in the war. The image of hero was very clear. He was a white man with courage and the sense of justice, ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of others which appeared in most films and novels. But every hero needs a villain and for the cowboy hero the only villain there is left is Native American. The Hollywood Native American represents ultimate evil as in *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941) which depicts the battle between famous general Custer commanding the legendary Seventh Cavalry and his Native American counterpart Crazy Horse and his barbarian horde of merciless killers. Custer is shown as a brave man who tries to keep order and provide the white settlers with safety. He and his army boldly face up to Native American odds. On the other hand, Crazy Horse and his warriors are portrayed as bloodthirsty beasts that vastly outnumbered the “American heroes” and put them to death. The actual battle was initiated by the attitude of the U.S. government. The Treaty of Fort Laramie from 1868 assigned the Sioux a reservation covering the area of present South Dakota west of the Missouri River. The access of white settlers to this reservation was supposed to be prohibited. Nevertheless, many prospectors violated this treaty by their gold-seeking campaigns to Black Hills which the Sioux considered sacred. The government tried to persuade the Sioux to sell the Black Hills but its offer was refused. In 1875, the federal government decided to give the Sioux an ultimatum. They were to surrender themselves or the military forces would be used. The Sioux ignored the ultimatum and the Seventh Cavalry was ordered to arrest them and the Battle of the Little Bighorn was commenced. In his early works John Ford also works with the idea of violent Native Americans. In *Stagecoach* (1939) he uses some innovative film making techniques and still keeps Western clichés. The film shows attack of Apaches on the stagecoach. The stagecoach itself can represent the civilization which is constantly being threatened by rebellious Natives. The stagecoach is ambushed while riding in open space. The Native

¹⁰⁷ Richard Warren Lewis, “John Wayne: The Playboy Interview,” *Playboy Magazine* Volume 18 (1971): 78.

Americans are equipped only with bows and arrows. The white men bravely defend their lives. No one cares that in reality the Native Americans would have to travel a long distance through open space without being noticed and their arrows would probably had a little effect since the gun-range of white men's rifles is definitely longer. On the other hand, in *Cheyenne Autumn* Ford tries to show the Native Americans as human beings who actually have a reason for their angry behavior.^{109 110 111}

Hollywood also created its own style of clothing for Natives Americans. Different elements from various tribes were used to create a homogenized Native American. Most of the costumes were designed from the items belonging to Plain Native American tribes. Since Plain Natives represented the typical warriors, Hollywood did not hesitate to make warriors from all the remaining tribes. Accurate history never belonged to main characteristics of Westerns so the prototype of universal Native American warrior was created. His attire was consisted of a breech cloth, his head was covered by feathered headdress, he wore moccasins and as a weapon he used tomahawk. The Princess – his sister – was dressed in long beaded buckskin dress and her hair was decorated with beaded headband with a single long feather attached to it. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick sees their life in this way: “They lived in a tipi, and he hunted buffalo – or settlers – and carved totem poles while she picked berries, slaved away at the buffalo hides, or fashioned potter. A man described as Sioux might have been found wearing a Navajo blanket over his chest plate, carrying weapons from a northeastern tribe, wearing an Apache bandanna, and standing in front of a northwestern tribe's totem pole.”¹¹² These contradictions stayed unnoticed by the audience. The Native Americans could do nothing about these stereotypes. They became accustomed to this portrayal of their culture and some of them actually started to copy the

¹⁰⁸ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 40-45.

¹⁰⁹ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 52-54.

¹¹⁰ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 80.

¹¹¹ Carole A. Barret, *American Indian History* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2002), 330-331.

¹¹² Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 51.

Hollywood Native Americans in order to get attention and primarily money of the curious tourists.^{113 114}

In this paragraph I want to take a closer look at the differences in depiction of death of white settlers and Native Americans in the Westerns. The death of white people is usually glorified. Their bodies are buried with all respect while the Native American funerals are almost never shown. This fact helps to make the audience not to feel sorry for the Native Americans. John Ford kept this clichés in many of his Westerns but in *The Searchers* (1956) he shows a death of Look, Native American woman who in this movie serves as a comical character. Her death raises in a viewer a lot of sympathy.¹¹⁵

Another pattern which also appears in the films directed by John Ford is not showing the results of violent crimes that the Native Americans are blamed for. A mutilated body of the victim of Native American raid can be hardly seen. This is most of the time explained by the presence of the members of the opposite sex. Gentle and fragile lady would not be able to bear the look on scalped men and dead children. The white women and children are usually shown as potential victims in the movies. They are threatened by the existence of Native American itself. Jeopardizing of Native women and children is not shown so often. The exception may be found the Ford's *Cheyenne Autumn* where he shows how Native families suffer from the presence of U.S. military.¹¹⁶

As mentioned before Western usually takes place in the period between 1860s and 1900s. One could presume that Westerns will be trying to accurately show not so far away history but most of the time it does not do so. Frank Nugent, the author of scripts for Ford's *Fort Apache*, *Wagonmaster*, *The Searchers* and *Two Rode Together* says about writing the script for *Fort Apache*: "He [John Ford] gave me a list of about fifty books to read – memoirs, novels, anything about the period. Later he sent me down into the old Apache country to nose around, get the smell and the feel of the land... When I got back, Ford asked me if I thought I had enough research. I said yes. 'Good,' he said. 'Now just forget everything

¹¹³ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 48-51.

¹¹⁴ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 13.

¹¹⁵ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 80-81.

¹¹⁶ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 80-81.

you've read, and we'll start writing a movie."¹¹⁷ Ford films are based on history but he adapts it to his needs. He usually takes a fictional white character and confronts it with historical Native American character that usually creates background for the whole story. Even though Ford's films are freely based on actual historical events, for example, *Cheyenne Autumn* depicts the travel of Cheyenne Native Americans from Oklahoma to the Tongue River Reservation in 1878-79; the ending of these films is rather mythical and not based on real history.¹¹⁸

3.5 Miscenegeneration

Another issue that was presented in Hollywood Westerns from the 1930s to 60s was miscenegeneration, or mixing of races. Is it possible to show the amatory relationship between a white man and an Native woman or a white woman and an Native man? The answer to this question might be – yes, but only to some extent.

The Western draw inspiration from stage melodramas which usually shown young couples in love including the Native American ones. The relationship between main hero and white damsel in distress which he is supposed to save is a typical feature of Westerns. However, how to depict the image of love between the couple of different skin color? Especially in the time when America was immersed in the policy of racial segregation. The solution of this question has laid foundations for another cliché. If an Native American male and a white female had a sexual relationship, regardless of the fact whether they were in love or not, the Native American had to die because it was impossible to show the Native man who would rule to the white woman. By associating with the Native American, the white woman has destroyed her own life so she is subtly suggested that being dead would be a better choice for her. In case she gives birth to the child of mixed blood she is considered as a woman of loose morals. Her child is doomed for life since it has no change for being acknowledged by Native Americans and whites will always despise him. Nevertheless, if a white man falls for an Native woman they usually experience a great love story. Their marriage can bring peace to both white and Native American side but their love also does not include a happy ending. This time the Native American woman has to

¹¹⁷ Lindsay Anderson, *About John Ford* (UK: Plexus Publishing, 1996), 77-79.

¹¹⁸ Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 74-78.

die. She might be a victim of scurvy villain or she might sacrifice herself for the sake of her white lover. This cliché starts to break down in Ford's *The Searchers* which came with the question whether a woman captured by Native Americans can return back to her "white life".^{119 120}

3.6 Native American Actors

The Native American roles were not always played by Native American actors. Some of them had indeed come to the movie making thanks to their preceding performances in the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows. During their performances they acquired a lot of experience which they could later put in use in the film. A Winnebago Native American called James Young Deer who was one of the Natives enacting the big battles in Wild West Shows later appeared in David W. Griffith's *The Mended Lute* (1909) and became known as the first Native American actor.¹²¹

The Native American became a very cheap labor. They were willing to work as extras for little money, food or alcohol. When the movie production was moved from the East Coast to Los Angeles, Native Americans were hired as actors, stunts and technical advisors. Nevertheless, the main Native American roles were most of the time cast by white actors. The reason was very simple, the name of the Native American in the credits would not attract many viewers but if the main Native American part is played by famous white actor the movie has a big change to break the box office. As a response to this malpractice in 1930s Native actors established the Indian Actors' Association (IAA). This association helped the actors to find work and support them.¹²²

Native American actors had to withstand the Hollywood image of themselves. Since they were paid for their work on the movie they could say nothing to this, for them strange, portrayal of Native American. In 1944 Native Americans from Navajo tribe were taken from Tuba City in Arizona to the Utah mountains in order to play Cheyenne and Sioux in

¹¹⁹ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 60-63.

¹²⁰ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 60-64.

¹²¹ Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 14-15.

¹²² Native American Tribes of US & Canada, "Native American Actress and Actor Profiles," <http://www.aaanativearts.com/native-american-actors.htm>.

the movie named *Buffalo Bill*. James Denton describes their behavior in his movie review from 1944: “The Indian lined up before the wardrobe tent, and costumes were handed out. They had to be shown how to wear the feathered headdress, leather breeches, and fringed leather shirts. They didn’t think this was the kind of thing to wear in the summer heat, but they put their costumes on uncomplainingly. When it came time to have the war paint smeared on their faces by the makeup experts from Hollywood, the Navajos objected at first. They thought this was a bit thick and that Hollywood was overdoing the thing. ... They laughed and joked over their costumes. ... When Chief Thundercloud [Cherokee actor Victor Daniels] explained a torture scene in the picture, wherein the Cheyenne proved his bravery by having his back cut, the Navajos laughed uproariously; they thought such action was downright nonsense. There is nothing stoic about the Navajos. They do not bear pain with fortitude nor do they practice self-torture as a sign of bravery.”¹²³ From this review one can see that writer himself believed the portrayal of the Native American which Hollywood offered to its audience. The “real” Native American has to be a warrior with war paint all over his face and feathered bandanna on his head. The Native actors could do nothing about this distorted image of themselves but to laugh at it. The feathered headdresses were common on the Great Plains but this accessory was stereotyped and assigned to all Native American tribes appearing in the movies. Generally, when looking at the portrayal of Native Americans in the Hollywood movies produced from the 1920s to 1980s the costumes usually remind the attire of the Great Plains tribes. In 1940, the previously mentioned Cherokee actor Victor Daniels tried to draw the attention to this stereotype. He and a group of other Native American actors demanded from the Bureau of Indian Affairs recognition of the new tribe whose members would be only Native Americans working in film industry. This was obviously a joke, yet Daniels attempted to point out the monotonic image of Native American which Hollywood filmmakers created.

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¹²³ James F. Denton, “The Red Man Plays Indian,” *Colliers* 113 (1944).

¹²⁴ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 47-48.

¹²⁵ David J. Wishart, *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007), 82.

4 ANALYSIS OF SELECTED FILMS

This analysis deals with three movies of Western genre and tries to show and describe the creation and development in the stereotypes connected with portraying Native Americans in films. *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (1914) deals with the typical picture of Native Americans as the savages. *The Searchers* (1956) draws attention to the question of miscegenation. *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) represents an attempt to show the suffering of Native Americans while being oppressed by white government.

4.1 The Battle at Elderbush Gulch

The Battle at Elderbush Gulch is a silent movie which I have chosen for the analysis because it contains many classical stereotypes of Native Americans. The members of an unspecified Native American tribe who appear in this movie are depicted as savages who want to kill the white settlers. This is the main cliché used in the silent movies produced after 1910 when the film production was moved from the East to the West of the United States.

The Battle at Elderbush Gulch was directed by one of the most successful directors in silent era – David W. Griffith. It was filmed in 1913 in San Fernando Valley in California and premiered in the United States on 28th March 1914. Twenty minutes long film with predictable storyline quickly gained an incredible popularity probably because of its simple plot and the depiction of the vast landscape which did not occur in the previous Westerns.¹²⁶

4.1.1 Plot Analysis

In the following paragraphs the plot of the movie and the most significant scenes will be described. When analyzing this film we have to take into account the fact that the movie footage is only 20 minutes thus the plot is not very complicated.

Young Sally and her little sister go to visit their uncles – Cameron brothers – to the frontier. They travel by stagecoach where they get acquainted with Melissa Harlow and her husband who bring their newborn baby to the settlement where Cameron brothers live.

¹²⁶ M. Paul Holsinger, *War and American Popular Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (New York: Greenood Press, 1999), 151.

After the arrival and warm welcoming the girls are taken to the Cameron cabin but uncles have a problem with letting the girls to take inside the puppies which they brought with them from home. Meanwhile in the near Native American camp there is The Feast of Dogs celebrated. Unfortunately, chief's son and his friend are late and there is nothing to feast on left. Sally is worried about the puppies and goes to check on them but she finds out that they are gone. The puppies are seized by the chief's son. Sally tries to save them but the Native American attempts to hit her and is killed by one of Cameron brothers. When the chief is told what happened he signalizes to the tribe to get ready for an attack. In this scene, we can observe that the chief's son is capable and even determined to kill the puppies and if needed also Sally while the uncle kills the Native American by mere coincidence when protecting his niece.

The next day Mr. Harlow goes to the town to show his baby to the townspeople. While the baby is being handed from one hand to another, the Native Americans commence the attack. The big battle begins and scared Melissa is going out to find her baby. After a while of desperate searching she is taken into the cabin where Cameron brothers and Sally barricades themselves. In my opinion, nothing can demonstrate the cliché of Native American savages more explicitly than putting the baby in the middle of the attack. The viewer is instinctively on the side of white settlers since the baby belongs to one of them and is constantly in the danger of being killed by the wild savages.

In the end the baby is saved by brave Sally who goes out and brings it inside the cabin. The rampage of Native Americans is stopped by soldiers who have been informed about the attack by the messenger whom Cameron brothers sent to the fort. Sally returns the baby back to Melissa. As a reward she is allowed to have the puppies in the cabin.

The scene which I find the most intriguing from the whole movie appears at the very end. The settlers are surrounded by savages and it seems that they will soon get in the cabin. Melissa is sitting on the stairs. She is very scared. There is a man sitting behind her but we cannot see his face. When the savages are about to enter the cabin the man points his gun at Melissa's head but she is not aware of it. Eventually, the savages are defeated by the soldiers but if they managed to get into the cabin it is probable that the man would kill Melissa. This could be seen as an attempt to save her from scalping, raping or other violent actions which were often assigned to Native Americans in Westerns.

When looking at the poster which can be found in Appendix I we can see a typical example of depiction of Native Americans in Westerns from the 1910s. They are shown as murderous savages who are not afraid of killing women and children.

4.1.2 Representations of Native Americans

The Native Americans in *The Battle in Elderbush Gulch* are portrayed as absolute savages. Not only they scalp and kill honorable citizens of the town but they also want to kill and eat the adorable puppies. Their celebration is accompanied by wild moves reminding some kind of pagan ceremony.

Their attack is violent and ruthless. They kill and scalp anyone who crosses their way. Nevertheless, Cameron brothers, Sally and Mr. and Mrs. Harlow are able to survive this ambush even though they are surrounded by the great number of Native Americans. That implies that Cameron brothers are probably better shooters and since the justice is on their side – they are just respectable settlers who want to live in peace and take care of babies and puppies – they are rescued by brave soldiers. On the other hand, the wild bloodthirsty Natives killing and eating puppies and murdering settlers are inevitably destined to be punished and die.

4.2 The Searches

In this section I intend to analyze film *The Searches*. The reason for choosing this particular movie is the fact that it deals with the theme of miscegenation and disrupts the stereotypes which were usually applied when depicting the sexual or romantic relationship between the individuals of white and Native American origin. It also uses the concept of antihero which in my opinion was not so common in the 1950s.

The Searchers is a Western directed by John Ford. It was shot during the spring and summer of 1955 and released in May 1956. The story is based on the book written by Alan LeMay which was published in 1954. Ford and his longtime collaborator Frank Nugent, who is responsible for writing many of Ford's legendary Westerns, edited the original plot of the novel, making many changes, such as using the character obsessed with killing his

only living relative as the hero of the story, by which aroused a lot contradictory emotions in both film critics and film viewers.¹²⁷

The shooting of the film was kind of family business. Ford's son Patrick was associate producer, Ford's brother-in-law Wingate Smith was assistant director, Ford's son in law Ken Curtis was cast into role of country simpleton Charlie McCorry and the main part was, of course, given to the unforgettable star of most of Ford's Westerns - John Wayne. Surrounded by his family and best friends Ford could shape the story according to his will. The studio (Warner Bros.) was accustomed to the fact, that Ford would never allow anyone to try giving him advice or orders concerning the shooting or the story of the movie. He was given free hand and he was sure to take advantage of it properly.¹²⁸

4.2.1 Plot Analysis

In the following paragraphs I will analyze some of the most important scenes of the movie and provide the reader with plot overview. Some of the most significant scenes will also be analyzed in the section dealing with the characters and representations Native Americans in *The Searchers* since they are often closely connected.

The story takes place in Texas in 1868. Ethan Edwards who fought in Civil War on the side of Confederation and after its surrender he kept traveling around the country comes to visit his brother Aaron and his family – wife Martha, and daughters Lucy and Debbie. Another member of the family is Martin Pawley is said to be one-eighth Cherokee. His mother was killed by Native Americans when he was still a baby and Ethan was the one who found him and gave him to Aaron and Martha who brought him up as their own son. From the moment when Ethan sees Martin, or Marty as he is later referred to, a viewer can see that Ethan feels a certain kind of grudge and anger towards Marty and certainly makes no effort to hide it. This attitude is present almost throughout the whole movie therefore one can see that Ethan is not very likeable character since he openly expresses his racism.

Marty and Ethan join the company of the Texas Rangers who set off to investigate who killed the cattle of local farmers. When they realize that the cattle was killed in order to lure them out of their farms they rush back but, it is already late because Edwards' farm

¹²⁷ Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 1-32.

¹²⁸ Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 1-32.

was already ambushed, Marta and Aaron killed and Lucy and Debbie kidnapped. The scene where Ethan and Marty discover the burned farm is full of negative emotions. Ethan does not allow Marty to enter the house where the dead body of Marta is located. This approach was probably chosen because the director did not actually want to show Martha's mutilated body. Even though, the Native Americans are shown as murdering savages the outcome of their actions is not shown. This pattern often appears in Ford's Westerns and it can signify the director's awareness of the deformed image of Native Americans in the movies. We can say that he does not dare to show the hideous crimes which the Natives were supposed to commit but he is not brave enough to show them as protagonist of his movie, at least yet.

The rest of the movie focuses on the journey of Ethan and Marty who set off to search for kidnapped Debbie and do not give up even after five years. Finally, somewhere on the board with Mexico they find a man who knows where the Comanche tribe led by chief Scar is. When Ethan finally meets Debbie she looks like a "normal" girl. Nevertheless, there is a little hint that she might be Scar's wife. The audience never gets to know whether it is truth or not therefore we cannot tell if there was any sexual relationship between Debbie and Scar this might be the reason why Debbie did not die at the end of the movie. In my opinion, this situation might reflect the change in the perception of Native American culture. It is possible that white person can live among the Natives without any harm. Therefore the Native American culture does not have to be eliminated. Nevertheless, this idea is not discussed any further as Debbie is in the end returned among whites.

When Debbie comes to Ethan and Marty, she refuses to go back and believes that Comanche are now her family. Ethan is very upset by this reaction and intends to shoot her. It is a very strong moment because the audience together with Marty finds out that the only reason why Ethan kept searching Debbie was his intention to kill her because she became one of the Comanche and maybe even Scar's wife. With this attitude Ethan represents the idea that any white person which spent a longer time among Native Americans becomes one of the wild savages and cannot be recovered back to white life. Nevertheless, Debbie is saved for now because Comanche attack Ethan and Marty and during this action Ethan is wounded. Marty and Ethan escape and hide in a cave. Ethan gives Marty his last will, declaring that he has no blood kin and he leaves all his property to Marty. Marty gets angry because Ethan still has his blood kin – Debbie. This implies that Ethan would rather accept a one-eighth Native American who was brought up in white society than his relative who was living for five years among Comanche thus Debbie is again condemned to die. This

scene represents the idea that the Native American who is completely assimilated is acceptable for the white society while the renegade who adopts and recognizes the values of Native Americans has to be eliminated.

When the company of soldiers and Rangers is about to attack the Comanche camp Marty wants to go first and try to save Debbie. Ethan strongly opposes but Marty goes even against his will. This makes the viewer still think that Ethan will not let Debbie alive. In the end Marty manages to shoot Scar and rescue Debbie. While hearing gunshots the Ranger company charges. Ethan enters Scar's tipi, finding him dead, he draws a knife and starts to scalp him. In this scene one can see a disruption of Western stereotype since until now those who took scalps were usually Native Americans. Ethan then mounts his horse searching for Marty and Debbie with Scar's bloody scalp in hand. Suddenly, Ethan reminds the bloody savages more than anyone of the Comanche. The moment Debbie sees him she starts to run. Ethan pursues her on the horse. Debbie trips over a stone and falls down. She is completely scared. Ethan slowly approaches her. Debbie averts her eyes away from him. Ethan comes closer and takes her in his arms lifting her up as if she was a little girl again. He takes her back home. Debbie enters the house of Jorgensen's together with Mrs. and Mr. Jorgensen followed by Marty and Laurie. Ethan is left alone; he turns back and walks away. The door of Jorgensen's house closes down and the movie ends. In this scene we can observe another controversy. Why is Debbie who was living among the Comanche for five years and accepted them as her people allowed to come into the house with all the respectable white settlers while her savior Ethan stays outside and walks toward the empty vast landscape? In my opinion, Ford tried to insinuate that Ethan's deeds influenced by racism are more serious than the fact that Debbie identified herself with the Native American community.

When looking at the movie poster which can be found in Appendix II one notices that the main characters of the movie are obviously Marty and Ethan who are riding their horses during the sunset. This is a typical cliché of Westerns. When comparing with the previous movie poster the Native Americans on the poster for *The Searchers* are not even present.

4.2.2 Main Characters

The Searchers draw the attention thanks to the complex story and mainly to its not so typical characters as one would expect in the Western. The three main characters which push the story forward are Ethan Edwards, Martin Pawley and the Comanche chief Scar.

4.2.2.1 *Ethan Edwards*

The audience was accustomed to the fact that the character played by John Wayne was usually the main hero fighting for justice. Ethan Edwards stands far away from this assumption. He is an unscrupulous and racist. He hates Native Americans by all his heart. When he sees Marty for the first time he addresses him with words: “Fella, I could mistake you for a half breed.”¹²⁹ He even forbids Marty to call him “uncle”. He also shoots two bullets into the eyes of dead Comanche just to prevent him from going into Native American equivalent of heaven. The Comanche believed that they will be able to enter the Spirit Land unless they have been strangled or scalped or they had died in the dark. In my opinion having no eyes equals being in the dark, therefore Ethan must have used this analogy when shooting the Cherokee in the eyes.¹³⁰

Arthur M. Eckstein in his collection of essays about *The Searchers* describes Ethan as “one of the most sinister yet compelling figures in all American cinema.”¹³¹ By choosing such a contradictory character for the main hero, Ford contributed the evolution of the Western genre by including the “dark” or “psychological” overtones. Similar concept of using an antihero as main character appeared in 1960s in the Italian Westerns directed by Sergio Leone and then was also brought over to American mainstream Westerns.¹³²

The character of Ethan Edwards can be analyzed through his relationship with other characters – his sister-in-law Martha Edwards, the one-eighth Cherokee Martin Pawley and Martha’s daughters Lucy and Debbie.

Ethan’s relationship with Martha can be seen as his disrespect to the traditional Christian values. She is his brother’s wife, nevertheless, it is evident to a viewer that there is or were some kind of romantic interaction between them. When Martha takes out Ethan’s coat from the chest she gently brushes off the dust from it and without a word she gives it to Ethan who softly kisses her brow. The moment Ethan sees Martha’s dead body, he loses his senses. The one possible reason why he insists on finding the kidnapped girls might be that they are the children of the woman he loved and he would rather see them

¹²⁹ *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

¹³⁰ R. Kent Rasmussen, *American Indian Tribes* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2000), 203.

¹³¹ Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 2.

¹³² Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 2-4.

dead than disgraced by the wild Native Americans. The burial ceremony means nothing to him since he rudely interrupts the reverend who is saying grace for the dead. He even shows a kind of respect, or at least acknowledgement for other religions since he believes that the Comanche without the eyes would be deprived of his afterlife.

Martin Pawley is a victim of Ethan's racist remarks. Martin obviously likes his step uncle and considers him as an idol. Ethan is very cold to him and always expresses his objections to Marty's Native American origin. Even one-eighth Cherokee is in Ethan's eyes unacceptable. But in the end he would rather entail all his property to Marty, who is partly of Native American origin but was raised among white people and has a nice white fiancée, than to Debbie, who is indeed white but refuses to leave the Comanche who took care of her for five years.

Lucy and Debbie became Ethan's driving force as well as the source of anger and hate. Lucy was discovered by Ethan. She was probably raped, although it is not absolutely sure because Ethan refuses to answer this question clearly by saying: "Don't ever ask me! As long as you live, don't ever ask me more!"¹³³ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick proposes the theory that Ethan killed Debbie with his own hands: "We're left to wonder whether or not he actually does kill the older girl because only he finds her, and he tells the brother not to go look for her. He says this while repeatedly thrusting his knife into the sand as though to cleanse it."¹³⁴ According to Kilpatrick this gesture it could be possible that Ethan found Lucy raped therefore disgraced by the Comanche and thus he killed her. The case of Debbie is more complex since she had lived among the Comanche for some time and there is no sign of maltreatment. But for Ethan she is doomed. She became one of the Comanche. When Marty wants to take her back to her white life, she says: "These are my people."¹³⁵ According to Ethan "Living with Comanches ain't being alive."¹³⁶ Hence Debbie is long dead for Ethan. Anyone living with Native Americans is not white again but simply becomes one of the savages. In the military camp when Marty and Ethan search Debbie among the white women taken from the slaughtered Native American tribe, one of the soldiers remarks that it is unbelievable that these women are in fact white. Ethan replies:

¹³³ *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

¹³⁴ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 61.

¹³⁵ *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

¹³⁶ *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

“They ain’t white. Not any more. They are Comanches!”¹³⁷ But in the end Ethan acquires at least some features of Western hero. He is unable to kill Debbie and brings her back home, where she belongs – among white.

4.2.2.2 *Martin Pawley*

Martin Pawley is a very interesting character thanks to the fact that he has a Native American blood. The Native American origin of Marty was made up by Ford himself since in the original novel Marty is white. In my opinion, by transforming originally white character into one-eighth Native American Ford tried to bring the theme of assimilation to the movie. Marty represents fully assimilated Native American since he was brought up in white family and he acts according to the principles of white society. He wants to protect his relatives from the wild savages and he wants to become the husband of a young white lady. In the story he acquires himself a Native American wife what greatly angers his white love Laurie. The squaw Look dies in the end in order to make way for Marty’s marriage to respectable white woman. Very surprising fact is that Laurie is actually a racist. She loves one-eighth Cherokee Marty but when he wants to go and bring Debbie home Laurie says: “Fetch what? The leavings of Comanche bucks sold time and again to the highest bidder with...”¹³⁸ Laurie as well as Ethan believes that Debbie was disgraced by the Comanche and therefore is beyond saving.¹³⁹

Marty is the only character in the film who all the time truly believes that Debbie can be rescued. He saves her life twice, first shielding her with his own body before Ethan’s gun and the second time while crawling into Comanche camp and killing Debbie’s kidnapper Scar. From this point of view, Marty can be perceived as the hero of the film since he certainly shows more sympathetic features than Wayne’s Ethan Edwards.

4.2.2.3 *Scar*

Chief Scar is the main villain in the movie. He is the creator of most of the bad deeds – killing Martha, capturing Debbie and Lucy and by the end of the movie a viewer gets to

¹³⁷ The Searchers, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

¹³⁸ The Searchers, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

¹³⁹ Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 1-32.

know that Scar is also responsible for the death of Marty's mother. On the other hand, Scar's actions are a little justified by the fact that his sons were killed by the white men.

The character of Scar is played by an actor of German origin Henry Brandon. His at the first sight noticeable blue eyes can be perceived as carelessness while choosing the cast of the film, but Ford chose Brandon exactly because of his blue eyes. Throughout the 1950s it was still common to cast the non-Native actors into main Native American roles hence the audience did not find it strange. Nevertheless, Ford's intention was to insinuate that Scar himself is not one hundred percent Native American. He was supposed to be the son of white woman captured by Native Americans.¹⁴⁰

Of course, Scar cannot be left unpunished since his deeds are too great. The villain dies not by the hand the main character but by the bullet shot from Marty's weapon. Ethan only gets his scalp – a little satisfaction and the punishment for scalping Lucy and Martha.

4.2.3 Representations of Native Americans

The Native Americans in *The Searchers* represent the evil. There are also few shots that show them in the better light. The fact, that they did not hurt Debbie is one of them. The cruel death of Marty's Native wife Look and the killing of the whole camp of Comanche by U.S. military might indicate a certain change in the Hollywood portrayal of Native Americans. However, the negative elements that assign the Native Americans to the category of villains prevail.

The first shot in which the audience can see the face of a Native American is when Lucy hides herself behind the tombstone of her grandmother. Suddenly she is being covered by long shadow which in viewer evokes the image of some ghost, a childhood nightmare. Then we can see Scar with his face covered by war paint and with a long feather in his hair, he menacingly stares at the frightened child.

The typical costume of Hollywood Native American is worn by all Comanche. The big feathered bandanna on Scars head, the war paint, the chest armors and feathers in the braided hair, those are examples of Hollywood Native American equipment used in *The Searchers*. Comanche live in the tipi, ride horses and scalp white enemies.

¹⁴⁰ Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 13.

The arrows and lances still belong to the standard equipment of Comanche but they are also given rifles. Nevertheless, they are rather incompetent while shooting them in comparison with Ethan and the Rangers. During the gunfight at the banks of river, the Comanche outnumber the white company approximately five to one but it is rather strange that the Rangers manage to escape with only one wounded while the Native Americans suffer significantly more casualties. In addition, the big chief Scar is being shot down from his horse twice which makes him to lose his face in front of his warriors.

On the other hand, Ethan at one point praises the skills of Comanche. When Brad during the pursuing desperately cries that: "They gotta stop sometime. If they're human men at all, they gotta stop!" Ethan replies with a joke: "No, a human rides a horse until it dies, then he goes on afoot. A Comanche comes along, gets that horse up, rides him 20 more miles...and then he eats him." This joke among others provides Comanche with some mystical power which makes them to some extent more capable than white men. Of course, the ending of the joke turns Comanche into savages who eat horses but the idea of the Native American being more skilled than white man is rather unique.

Except for the gunfight by the river and the final attack of the Rangers on Comanche camp, Ford does not show the bloody fights and sometimes also denies a viewer a look on the mutilated bodies as in Martha's case. The presence of the Native Americans before the attack on the Edward's homestead is stereotypically indicated by the cries of birds. The farm is covered by the light of setting sun which suggests that the blood will be spilt soon. In the same manner is shot the scene of massacre in the Native American camp. The viewer sees the cavalry riding through the snow and taking away the captives. The next scene shows Ethan and Marty entering the camp filled with dead bodies including Look. In this moment Marty expresses the regret over her death: "What did them soldiers have to go and kill her for? She never done nobody any harm."¹⁴¹ Look is presented as innocent this breaks down the cliché of bloodthirsty and always guilty Native Americans.

The attack on Comanche camp is based on the real event. It is supposed to represent a portrayal of massacre of Cheyenne in the battle of the Washita in western Oklahoma in November 1868. The U.S. forces were commanded by legendary general Custer. In the original script by Frank Nugent the Custer's character should have made an appearance but

¹⁴¹ The Searchers, dir. John Ford, 119 min., Warner Bros., 1956, DVD.

Ford later crossed him out of the movie. The whipping of the Comanche captives is also historically accurate since this kind of behavior was very common.¹⁴²

Another break-through in the Western movie's cliché is the fact that Ford allows his Comanche to speak a real Native language. Nevertheless it is not a Comanche language. They speak fluent Navajo language but this is no surprise given the fact that the most of the Native Americans who were hired either as actors from minor roles or extras were from the Navajo tribe. However, the stereotype of language capability is absolutely kept. Ethan can speak fluent Comanche and even Spanish. Scar can speak both Spanish and English but his utterances carry the notion of broken syntax and not knowing particular vocabulary.¹⁴³

The main theme of *The Searchers* is the question of miscenegenation. Is it possible to bring the white woman taken by the wild savages back to her life among whites? *The Searchers* claim that is possible. Nevertheless, the movie shows, only for a while but still, that Debbie could be happy among the Natives. She is depicted as a beautiful and smart woman in contrast to the white women recovered from winter Comanche camp by military that were shown as absolutely mad. Her character might be the foundation for another famous movie figure, namely Stands-With-A-Fist in the movie *Dances With Wolves* in which the concept of assimilation of white woman into Native American community was show into more detail. If Debbie stayed with Comanche, the film would be deprived of its happy end. Ford probably thought that the audience is not ready for this kind of ending yet.¹⁴⁴

4.2.4 Reactions to The Searchers

While writing the essay concerning the Native American reactions to *The Searchers*, the director of the American Indian Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle and the member of Santee Sioux tribe Tom Grayson Colonnese invited a few of his Native American colleagues from university, namely Bernice Elke – Oglala Sioux, Augustine

¹⁴² Arthur M. Eckstein, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 22-32.

¹⁴³ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 340.

¹⁴⁴ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 341.

McCalffery – Comanche and Scott Pinkham – Nez Perce, to watch the film together and to put down their comments.¹⁴⁵

The first observation made by all present was the fact that what they see is not a real West but some pseudo West created by John Ford. The Monument Valley which is located in northern Arizona is supposed to represent Texas. Colonnese points out that Monument Valley is situated in the Navajo Reservation. He states: “Prior to World War II, the Navajo Reservation was one of the most isolated places in the United States, and Navajos had to have written permission to leave it.”¹⁴⁶ Now thanks John Ford’s Westerns it is a popular tourist venue.¹⁴⁷

While watching the movie all the viewers realized that the movie was filmed on the reservation and the Native Americans, mostly Navajos, were hired as an extras. It was a good thing for them since the Navajos lived in poverty and they took the needed money not caring in what manner will be their tribe depicted in the movie.¹⁴⁸

All the Native American viewers very, of course, agitated when they saw the representation of Comanche in *The Searchers*. The ranchers are the good ones but Colonnese proposes a question: “Where did that ranch come from? Indian viewers are aware that these supposedly peaceful ranchers, interested only in making a living through raising cattle, are living on land that has been seized.”¹⁴⁹ The attack of Native Americans on the settlers is in fact a counterattack but instead Comanche represent the biggest evil in the movie and their appearance is accompanied by ominous music¹⁵⁰

The incompetence of the Native Americans is also very strange for the Native viewers. Augustine McCalffery says: “Why can’t those Indians shoot better? Why are those whites so accurate? It confused me, because my uncles and my dad were all good shots.” Colonnese also mentions the scene of the Edwards’s homestead after the Comanche attack.

¹⁴⁵ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 335-342.

¹⁴⁶ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 336.

¹⁴⁷ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 336.

¹⁴⁸ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 336.

¹⁴⁹ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 337.

¹⁵⁰ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 337-338.

The fact that Aaron and his son Ben killed seven Comanche warriors seems very unlikely to him.¹⁵¹

In conclusion Colonnese admits that Ford to certain extent pushed the boundaries of Westerns a little further but *The Searchers* still contain many clichés typical for Western movies. Nevertheless, he point out that this movie is by the Native people referred to as “the fairest Indian movie.”¹⁵²

4.3 Cheyenne Autumn

The last movie which I have chosen for the analysis is *Cheyenne Autumn*. As the movie title insinuates the story is focused on the story of one particular Native American tribe. When comparing this film with the previous two, one notices that the representation of Native Americans in the *Cheyenne Autumn* is absolutely different since it portrays their suffering which stemmed from the life in the reservation controlled by federal government. Therefore this film can be also perceived as criticism of U.S. policy towards Native Americans.

Cheyenne Autumn, released in 1964, is John Ford’s last Western. In this film Ford tried to abandon the Western’s clichés which he personally helped to create. However, his attempt to show the Native Americans in a better light ended up with failure, since the film was not very successful financially.¹⁵³

The story is based on a novel by Mari Sandoz. The film script was written by James R. Webb. Nevertheless, Ford adjusted the plot according to his own vision. The film studio – Warner Bros. – was accustomed to this kind of attitude and let Ford having his way hoping that *Cheyenne Autumn* will be a blockbuster of the year. Ford filmed the movie in his favorite shooting location in Monument Valley in Arizona and as in many of his films he hired Navajo to play the minor parts in the movie. However, the audience’s reactions to

¹⁵¹ Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 337.

¹⁵² Tom Grayson Colonnese, *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 335.

¹⁵³ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 67-68.

the film were rather cold, thus Ford's hope for creating the great movie, which he will be remembered for forever, seemed to be buried in the low box office's earnings.¹⁵⁴

4.3.1 Plot Analysis

In this section I will provide the reader with information about the plot of the movies as well as the most notable scenes.

The story begins on 7th September 1878 in the Cheyenne reservation in Oklahoma. The whole tribe led by 3 chiefs – Tall Tree, Little Wolf and Dull Knife – prays for the fulfilling of white men's promises. The soldiers in nearby camp, which is soon specified as Cheyenne Agency of U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, are getting ready for the Congressional Committee arrival. The Committee led by a certain senator is supposed to discuss the conditions which the Native Americans live in and try to reach an acceptable agreement with Cheyenne.

The Quaker teacher Deborah Wright, Captain Thomas Archer and Major Braden are discussing when the Committee arrives while the Cheyenne enter the camp. The Native Americans wait for several hours but the senator and his party send the telegram that the journey is too exhausting for them and they will rather stop in Reno in order to attend an officer's ball. In my opinion, this scene shows the lack of interest in the Native American conditions from the federal government. The Cheyenne believed that they will be able will discuss the improving of their situation with the Committee but they were betrayed and thus they decided never to trust the government again.

The Cheyenne leave saying that white men's words are only lies. From now on the Cheyenne children are forbidden to attend the school and learn English language. Next morning the soldiers find the reservation empty. The Cheyenne left in order to get to their original home – the Yellowstone in Wyoming – and Deborah left with them. Archer and his troop including young Second Lieutenant Scott, who expresses big enthusiasm over the Cheyenne escape since he hopes he will have a chance to kill some of them, set off in pursuit.

The first fight between the Cheyenne and the military takes place in canyon. Archer sends two scouts to look around; subsequently one of them is shot down of his horse by the

¹⁵⁴ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 67-68.

son of Dull Knife. Archer is getting ready for counterattack but Major Braden arrives with cannons and not taking into account Archer's arguments that most of the Native Americans are women and children he gives order to fire. In this scene Braden is portrayed as thoughtless killing machine. This feature of wild killing in the Westerns was usually assigned to Native Americans by transferring it to white character is this was cliché disrupted. During the fight Major Braden is killed and Cheyenne manage to escape. Deborah takes care of a little injured girl and continues with the Cheyenne on their way.

The soldiers continue their pursuit but they are not able to catch up with the Cheyenne. Meanwhile, the chief Tall Tree dies and the sacred bundle, the sign of war chief, is handed over to Little Wolf thus he becomes the ultimate leader of the Tribe. The news about the Native Americans on the run spread quickly and white people start to panic. Archer's troop finally gets close to the Cheyenne but because of the rush attack led by Second Lieutenant Scott the Cheyenne escape again.

After the scene where a group of cattle drives kills and scalps an Native American who asks them for food the plot takes the viewer into Dodge City. The soldiers are leaving the town in order to fight the approaching Native Americans. Wyatt Earp leads the fight hungry citizens purposely in wrong direction in order to avoid the Natives. Nevertheless, one Native American appears on the horizon and the men start to shoot wildly causing the wagon with munitions to explode but nobody dies. This scene is rather comical. Ford transforms the townspeople into simpletons who set off to fight the Native Americans while being accompanied by the piano music. They are stupid enough to let themselves to be led in the wrong direction.

Meanwhile Little Wolf and Dull Knife discuss how to proceed. The journey is too exhausting and the children and the elder ones might not survive it. Dull Knife suggests going to Fort Robinson and surrender. Little Wolf disagrees and the Cheyenne split in two groups; one following Little Wolf to Yellowstone and the other going with Dull Knife to Fort Robinson. Little Wolf's young wife runs away from her husband's party and joins Dull Knife since she is in love with his son.

When the Cheyenne group arrives to Fort Robinson they are welcomed by Captain Wessels who seems to be a person with the great interest in the Native American culture. He gives them food, blankets and firewood. However, the orders from headquarters instruct him to bring the Natives back to reservation. Cheyenne refuse to go thus Wessels tries to break their spirit by locking them up in the warehouse and depriving them of food and

warmth. When Wessels tries to persuade the Cheyenne to let him take them into reservation the Native Americans are depicted as proud people who do not go back on their words. They silently endure Wessels's threats. Archer, who arrived to the camp shortly after the Cheyenne, does not agree with Wessels's orders and sets off to Washington to discuss this matter with Carl Schurz – the Secretary of the Interior.

The Cheyenne decide to fight their way out of the camp and they succeed leaving many dead behind them. In the scene of the fight the viewer can see a change in the behavior of Second Lieutenant Scott. He abandoned his hatred towards the Native Americans after spending some time with the little injured Cheyenne girl in the infirmary. Now he tries to stop the soldiers firing the escaping Cheyenne.

The remaining members of Dull Knife's group meet Little Wolf's party near the place they called Victory Cave located in Dakota. The military troops are there too. They want to attack but the Secretary Schurz goes to negotiate with the chiefs. Schurz promises them that their heroic journey will not be forgotten and people will be told about their bravery. They make peace by smoking cigars since the Cheyenne run out of the tobacco for the peace pipe.

In the end the Cheyenne get back to their original home. The relatively happy ending is disturbed by the scene in which Little Wolf kills Dull Knife's son and takes his runaway wife back. Then he passes the secret bundle to Dull Knife since according to their law the one who spills the blood of another Cheyenne cannot be a chief.

When analyzing the plot one can see the change in the approach to depiction of Native Americans. As the movie was released in the 1960s when many Native American movements fought for the recognition of their sovereignty and rights, Ford might have tried to contribute to their efforts by showing the hardships which they had to withstand. He gave them the part of heroes who bravely tried to preserve their tribe and culture. When looking at the movie poster which can be found Appendix III it is obvious that the Native Americans are playing the roles of victims while the U.S. soldiers pose as villains.

4.3.2 Main Characters

The film brings the idea of showing the Native Americans as the protagonists of the story while the antagonists are the white man. Nevertheless, not all whites are portrayed as villains and characters like Thomas Archer and Deborah Wright convey the picture of white men's kindness and concern over Cheyenne's fate.

The relationship between the individual characters is not always explicitly expressed so that the readers of the original book, which the film is based on, have an advantage over rest of the audience. There are cases when the viewers do not even get to know what the names of certain characters are.

4.3.2.1 Thomas Archer and Deborah Wright

The most noticeable white characters are Deborah Wright and Thomas Archer who as mentioned show the features of lenience towards the Native Americans. Deborah is a Quaker. She tries to teach Cheyenne how to speak and write in English. She witnesses all the maltreatment which the Cheyenne had to suffer and she defends them in front of Major Braden, Captain Wessels and even Captain Thomas Archer. On the other hand, Archer is not so unprejudiced from the very beginning. During his military career he experienced many battles and he is convinced that under the mask of woe and poverty the Cheyenne are the most lethal warriors in the world.

At the beginning when Archer pursues the Cheyenne one can not be sure if he is driven by the determination to get back his love Deborah or he just obeys the orders of his superiors who want to prevent the Native Americans from spilling the blood of “innocent” whites. Nevertheless, after the Cheyenne are restrained in warehouse in Fort Robinson he dares to question the orders and at his own risks heads to Washington to plead for their sakes.

4.3.2.2 Little Wolf and Dull Knife

Little Wolf and Dull Knife represent the main decision-making force for the whole Cheyenne tribe. Together with Tall Tree they are the leaders of the Cheyenne people. After Tall Tree's death Little Wolf acquires the secret bundle thus becoming the war chief and main leader. Dull Knife obeys his commands. However, the exhausting journey makes Dull Knife to reconsider the changes for the Cheyenne's survival and he decides to give himself and his followers into the hands of military in Fort Robinson. Such decision is unacceptable for Little Wolf so the Cheyenne have to resolve who they will follow.

Little Wolf's ego is hurt when his young wife chooses to join the Dull Knife's group and actually elopes with Dull Knife's son. Despite this public disgrace Little Wolf keeps his pride knowing that it is not Dull Knife's fault. However, in order to undone this insult he kills Dull Knife's son. Nevertheless, he acts as an honorable man and leaves the secret bundle with Dull Knife thus obeying the law of the tribe. Dull Knife grieves over the loss

of his son but eventually he accepts his death knowing that it was rightly justified. Both chiefs are the man of honor and their primary objective is the future and wellbeing of the Cheyenne tribe.

4.3.2.3 Red Shirt and Second Lieutenant Scott

Red Shirt is the only son of Dull Knife. The actual name Red Shirt does not appear in the movie, yet the main attribute which helps to recognize this character is his clothing – red shirt. He is portrayed as a bold young man who often acts very rashly by shooting after the soldiers without thinking. As well as Second Lieutenant Scott he believes that fighting is the best possible solution of the conflict.

Both characters have reasons for holding the grudges against the other side. Red Shirt grew up in the reservation seeing his people suffer and die. Scott is motivated by the urge of revenge for his father who was killed by Native Americans. The nature of these characters seems to be alike but their fate is rather different. Scott becomes aware of the fact that many of the Cheyenne also had to suffer the same way he did since the young injured Indian girl is an orphan. On the other hand, Red Shirt stays violent even when the Secretary Schurz and Captain Archer come to discuss peace to Victory Cave and he tries to shoot them. His crime of stealing another man's wife cannot also stay unpunished thus he is bound to die.

4.3.3 Representations of Native Americans

The portrayal of the Cheyenne is rather different than the representation of Native Americans shown in the Westerns filmed so far. When we see the Cheyenne for the first time they are praying for better future. The ceremony is accompanied by the sound of drums which can be confusing for the audience since this sound is in Westerns usually associated with the Native American getting to ready to an attack. Yet there is no war paint on the faces of the Cheyenne which indicates that there will not be any fight, at least for now.

The Cheyenne are attired in the “white clothes” which they were obviously given by the government. Even though the women wear long dresses and the men have hats and their clothes are decorated with different accessories such as belts and feathers which are supposed to represent the remains of their culture.

What strikes the viewer the most is the way of picturing the Native American life. The Cheyenne are presented as the victims of treacherous white officials who promised to

provide the Natives with needed supplies and keep them safe. However, the promises were not kept and many Cheyenne died because of the white intruders. Deborah Wright describes the situation while talking to Captain Archer: “You've watched them die of smallpox and measles and malaria. You've watched them starve.”¹⁵⁵ The Cheyenne are in fact given a motive not to believe the white promises anymore and leave a reservation.

In my opinion, the suffering of the Cheyenne is just a part of the complex picture presented in this movie. The Cheyenne are not just poor creatures lacking the food and dying from white men's diseases. In spite of their miserable situation they are still proud to be Cheyenne. When waiting for the senator and his party at the beginning of the movie they stand on the open sun for several hours without any kind of movement. The old chief Tall Tree suddenly faints but the women are not allowed to help him. He stands up without any aid and takes the same position as before. Little Wolf and Dull Knife are greatly respected by the whole tribe and their orders are always obeyed. In many cases the chiefs even possess better qualities than the white men. The objective of Cheyenne chiefs is the welfare and freedom of their people yet they are willing to make a peace with the white men seeing that fight would bring too many casualties. The chiefs are wise and thoughtful, on the contrary high rank officers from the military are presented as greedy villains who want to restrain Native Americans to reservations in order to get the valuable land.

The Cheyenne are often more skilled than the soldiers. It is rather unusual that the Native American group comprised mainly from women and children traveling most of the time on foot manages to avoid capturing by soldiers, who pursuit them on horseback, for such a long time. When the cattle drivers attack a pair of hungry Native Americans they succeed in killing one of them but the other gets away by jumping over gorge. The cattle drivers are too scared to jump too and let him escape. The fighting skills of Cheyenne are highly praised. Archer says: “They Cheyenne are the greatest fighters in the world – fierce, smart, and meaner than sin.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore the cliché of portraying Native Americans as reckless warriors shooting while hardly ever hitting anything is disturbed.¹⁵⁷

Dull Knife and Little Wolf can speak English but most of the Native conversation is in Cheyenne language. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick sees the usage of native language as “one of the

¹⁵⁵ Cheyenne Autumn, dir. John Ford, 154 min., Warner Bros, 1964, DVD.

¹⁵⁶ Cheyenne Autumn, dir. John Ford, 154 min., Warner Bros, 1964, DVD.

most striking and positive aspect of the film.”¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, none of the actors in main roles is played by the real Cheyenne and in fact they are not even Native Americans. Nevertheless, the native language gives the film a feeling of reality and makes the viewer to think since none of these conversations in Cheyenne language are translated.¹⁵⁹

4.3.4 Reactions to Cheyenne Autumn

In the review from 24th December 1964 written by Bosley Crowther and published by New York Times *Cheyenne Autumn* is described as “beautiful and powerful motion picture that stunningly combines a profound and passionate story of mistreatment of American Indians.”¹⁶⁰ The review praises the film in quite positive manner yet there is one fact that is pointed out as a drawback. Crowther obviously did not like the ending of the movie since according to his opinion it was not identical with the ending in Sandoz’s book.¹⁶¹

M. Paul Holsinger, the author of *War and American Popular Culture*, states that the biggest disturbing element of the whole movie is the unconvincing performance of the actors cast in the Native American roles. Holsinger draws attention to the fact that none of the actors is Native American so the only attribute which can contribute to identifying them as Native Americans is dark makeup.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ William Darby, *John Ford's Westerns: A Thematic Analysis, With a Filmography* (Jefferson: Mcfarland & Company, 1997), 259.

¹⁵⁸ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 69.

¹⁵⁹ Jacquely Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 69.

¹⁶⁰ Bosley Crowther, “Screen: John Ford Mounts Huge Frontier Western: Cheyenne Autumn' Bows at Capitol 3 Other Films Open at Local Cinemas,” *The New York Times* (2002), http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?_r=1&res=9B0DE3DB1F3FE13ABC4C51DFB467838F679EDE.

¹⁶¹ Bosley Crowther, “Screen: John Ford Mounts Huge Frontier Western: Cheyenne Autumn' Bows at Capitol 3 Other Films Open at Local Cinemas,” *The New York Times* (2002), http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?_r=1&res=9B0DE3DB1F3FE13ABC4C51DFB467838F679EDE.

¹⁶² M. Paul Holsinger, *War and American Popular Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (New York: Greensood Press, 1999), 154-155.

CONCLUSION

My research showed that the image of the Native Americans in the movies is rather deformed. The Hollywood filmmakers created their own Native American who in the most cases serves as a villain. The clothes and traditions of particular tribes were not taken in the account, thus most of the Native Americans in the Westerns wear the costume containing various accessories from different tribes.

The behavior of the Native Americans was also highly stereotyped since they are in most cases shown as the source of violence as in *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch*. In the rare cases there are also attempts to show them in a better light as the analysis of John Ford's *Cheyenne Autumn* showed.

While working on this thesis I was surprised that it was John Ford who realized that the image of the Native Americans in the films does not correspond with the reality. In *The Searchers* suggested that the survival of the white individual in the Native American tribe is possible. He was the one who helped to establish Western clichés and yet in his late works he tried to abandon them.

When comparing the period during which the particular movies were released we can trace the impact which the actual historical events had on the film plots. *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* was released prior to the World War I thus it shows the need for creating the brave white heroes in order to encourage the American soldiers fighting in Europe. Unfortunately, the only villain which the white settlers in the Westerns come across is Native American who is depicted as particularly violent. *The Searchers* produced in late 1950s show the increasing benevolence for Native Americans. They are depicted as violent savages but they are also provided with a motive for their actions and their fighting skills are often praised as it happened in the American society during the World War II. There is also an insinuation that the Native American culture does not necessary had to be eliminated as the white individual is capable of living among the Natives without any problems or disputes. *Cheyenne Autumn* which was released during the 1960s when many Native American movements were formed corresponds with the efforts and ideas of these movements and tries to show the maltreatment of Native Americans during the history. By showing the Natives in a better light Ford intended to point out the fact that they deserve recognition of their unique culture and traditions.

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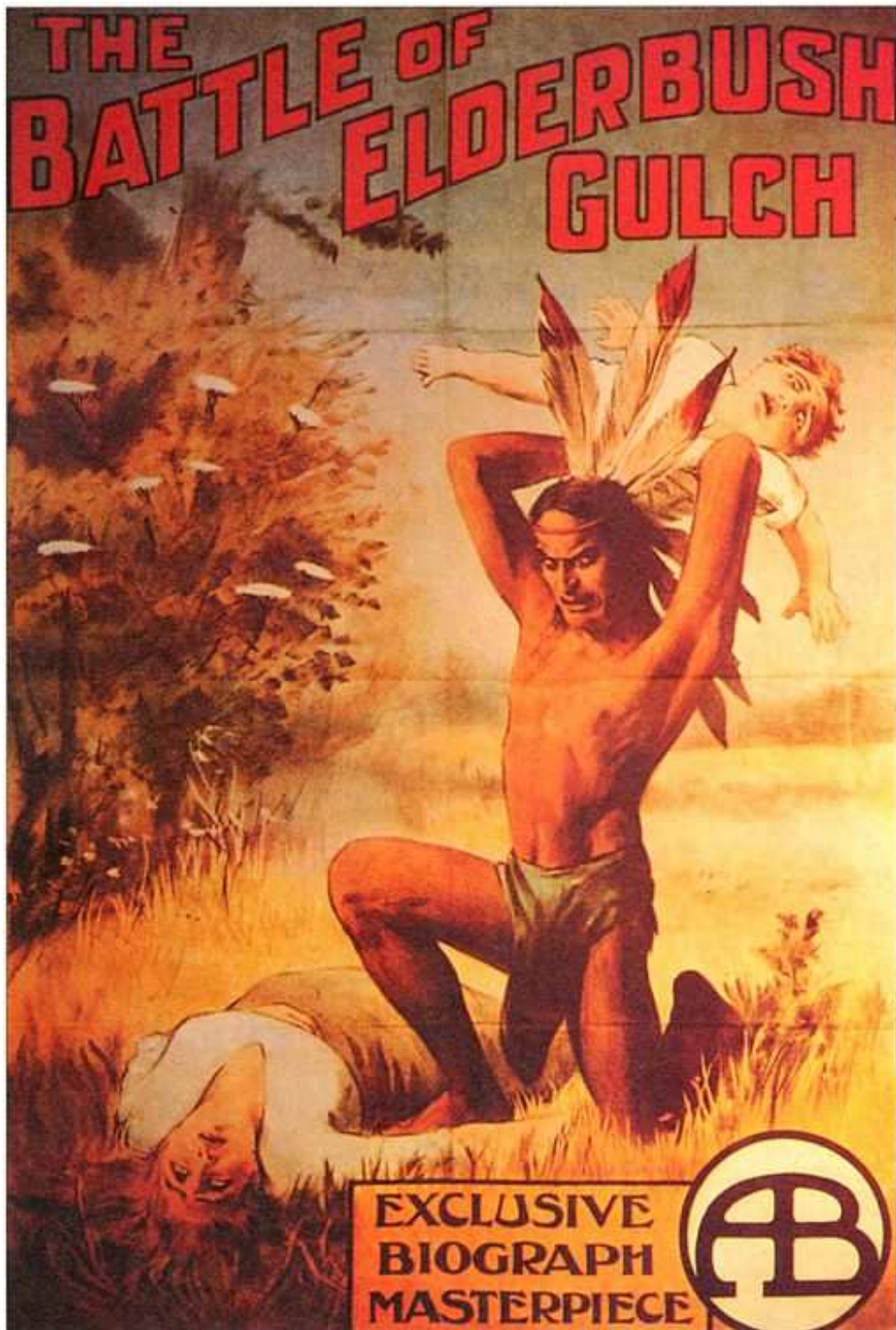
APPENDICES

P I The Battle of Elderbush Gulch Poster.

P II The Searchers Poster.

P III Cheyenne Autumn Poster.

APPENDIX P I: THE BATTLE OF ELDERBUSH GULCH POSTER



Movie Poster Gallery

http://www.impawards.com/1914/posters/battle_at_elderbush_gulch.jpg

APPENDIX P II: THE SEARCHERS POSTER



Movie Poster Database

http://www.movieposterdb.com/posters/06_02/1956/0049730/1_91300_0049730_169b4ede.jpg

APPENDIX P III: THE CHEYENNE AUTUMN POSTER



Movie Poster Database

http://www.movieposterdb.com/posters/08_04/1964/57940/1_57940_a5d46c3f.jpg