



France on Screen: Intercultural Stereotypes in American Romantic Comedies (Forget Paris, French Kiss & EuroTrip)

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Seminar paper from the year 2006 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 2,0, University of Hannover, 10 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Paris has always been a popular setting for American romantic comedies: Vincente Minelli's musical film *An American in Paris*, starring Gene Kelly, enchanted the American audience in 1951. In Billy Wilder's *Sabrina* (1954), Audrey Hepburn's character returns from France as a beautiful young woman, who obviously got enriched by Paris's culture and lifestyle. The comedy *Irma La Douce* (1963), also directed by Billy Wilder, is entirely set in the bohemian Paris of the 1960s. More recently, Lawrence Kasdan's *French Kiss* (1995) and Billy Crystal's *Forget Paris* (1995) provided the American audience with love stories set, or initiated, in France and thus supported the romantic image of the country. Chapter 2 of this term paper will focus on the genre romantic comedy, its main characteristics and origins. Furthermore, the success of romantic comedies will be investigated and linked to ever-changing cultural factors.

In romantic comedies, it seems nearly impossible for film-makers to completely avoid depicting stereotypes about the French and their country. In fact, comedies set in Paris or France intentionally exaggerate these stereotypes. Usually the American characters in these comedies are also depicted stereotypically. By underlining the intercultural differences between the two nationalities comic effect is created, which constitutes one of the main characteristics of a comedy. But what exactly are stereotypes and why do they emerge in the first place? And, more precisely, what are the origins of American stereotypes about France and the French? Why is Paris still considered to be the perfect place to fall in love? Chapter 3 will try to answer these questions in order to provide an insight into the concept of stereotyping.

Since the setting of Paris (and France respectively) and the genre romantic comedy seem to be a perfect match, chapter 4 of this term paper will be concerned with three American romantic comedies set in France: Lawrence Kasdan's *French Kiss* and Billy Crystal's *Forget Paris* (both 1995), and a comedy from the current decade, namely Jeff Schaffer's *EuroTrip* (2004). Here, a short summary of each film will be provided, as well as an analysis of the various intercultural stereotypes. Furthermore, there will be a closer look on the depiction of Paris and what is directly and indirectly associated with the city.

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