The different film genres of the fifties assignment

The different film genres in the Fifties Fifties genres In the fifties Hollywood began to change its films. First the length changed from 90 minutes to 3 hours (in the sixties it became 2 hours). Second every production was presented as a splashy big-budget spectacle whether this was the case or not. Thus most genres lost their original forms and new ones had to be created. The Musical (blz. 486-487) The musical had reached a high point under auspices of MGM producer Arthur Freed. With him were directors as Vincente Minelli, Stanley Donen, Charles Walters and Gene Kelly.

Also performers as Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, June Allyson and Cyd Charisse. This team produce medium-budget musicals as Singin' in the rain (Kelly / Donen, 1952) and Brigadoon (Minelli, 1954). Freed believed that musical production numbers should be integrated with te film's dialogue and not stand-alone intermezzos. In theory it should advance the narrative but it practice id produced the fact that the character began to sing at the slightest dramatic convention. An example of this is The Wizard of Oz (1939). This went on during the fifties and sixties.

By 1955 musicals adapted the popular Broadway stage plays as West Side Story (Robert Wise, 1962) and My Fair Lady (George Cukor, 1964). The stars in these musicals couldn't sing (professional singers and dancers were used as stand-ins) and most directors had never filmed a musical before. Peak in this tendency was The sound of Music (Robert Wise, 1965). This one was followed by more enormous productions wich destroyed nearly the fortunes of the repective studios, glutted tyhe public on musicals and viryually killed the genre by blowing it out of proportion.

In the seventies it returned to its original form (Hair (1979), Pennies from Heaven (1981)). Comedy (blz. 487 – 491) Comedy was another genre that suffered seriously from widescreen inflation and the generally depressed social ambiance of the MacCarthy – Cold War era. There were clear exeptions as Minnelli's Father of the Bride (1950) and Father's little Dividend (1951). The big-budget widescreen comedy was represented by films like How to marry a Millionaire (Negulesco, 1953) and High Society (Walters, 1956). The strong point of film comedies like these was less verbal or visual wit than excellent production values.

This was, after all, the major strategic element in Hollywood's war on television. Bob Hope and Danny Kaye, whose fil careers had begun in the decade past, were both popular in class-A productions throughout the fifties, as was the slapstick team of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis who had succeeded Abbott and Costello. Martin and Lweis made 17 films together and when the team split up, Martin began a successful career as an actor and television entertainer, while Lewis went on to become a major comic star by himself in such films as The Delicate Delinquent (Don McQuire, 1957) and ultimately directing his own films in the sixties.

Much more sophisticated than Lewis, and certainly as briljant as Hope and Kaye, were the era's two major comediennes: Judy Holliday and Marilyn Monroe. Both appeared in a number of witty, adult comedies before early deaths. These films were succeeded by the sanitized sexiness of the expensively produced Rock Hudson / Doris Day battle-of-the-sexes cycle, beginning in 1958 with Pillow Talk (Michael Gordon).

These films and other that imitaded them were in turn succeeded by a cycle of cynical big-budget sex comedies concerned with the strategies of seduction (David Swift’s Under the Yum-Yum Tree, 1963; Gene Kelly’s A Guide for the Married Man, 1967) wich reflected, sometimes rather perversely, the “ sexual revolution” of the late sixties. Related to the amoral cynicism of this cycle was what might best be called the “ corporate comedy” of films, wich dealt openly and humorously with business fraud and prefigured the morass of corporate and governmental deceit underlying the Watergate and “ Koreagate” scandals of the seventies.

The elegant big-budget comedies of Blake Edwards (The Pink Panther, 1964; The Party, 1968)releid on sight gags to provide a ligther kind of humor. But by the eigthies, with such films as The Man who loved Women (1983) and Micki & Maude (1984), Edwards has indisputably become a major practitioner of social satire. The dark genius of American comedy during this period was the German emigre director Billy Wilder, whose Double Indemnity (1944) had been one of the prototypes for film noir. He began increasingly to specialize in comdedie noir. Wilder also enriched the decade with a pair of sparkling romantic comedies.

He entered the sixties with The Apartment (1969), a film about the battle of the sexes made in a dark parody of the Hudson / Day cycle, wich won numerous critical accolades and awards, including some Oscars. In the seventies, Wilder directed, among other films, a contempory version of Lewis Milestone’s The Front Page (1974). Wilder has always coauthored his own screenplays, in close collaboration with such professional scriptwriters as

Charles Brackett, Raymond Chandler, George Axelrod and I. A. L. Diamond (Wilder began his career as a scriptwriter for UFA).

Through the influence of Wilder and others, American comedy became increasingly sophisticated trough the fifties and sixties, until it emerged in the seventies as a wholly adult genre. Films like M. A. S. H. (Robert Altman, 1970), and the work of comic auteurs like Woody Allen and Mel Brooks all bear testemony to the increasing maturity of American film comedy – much of it undertaken in parody of other traditional genres. Allen, especially, has emerged as an important and extremely intelligent filmmaker, moving from the broad socail satire of his earlier works to pointed social commentary.

All of Allen’s work is filmically literate, and he has produced self-reflexive meditations on the film experience ranging from the narcissistic Stardust Memories (1980) to the ingenious The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985), wich deconstructs the psychology of spectatorship in the manner of Keaton’s Sherlock Jr. (1924). Allen’s most mature films to date are Hannah and Her Sisters (1986), a seriocomic narrative of adult relationships ste among Manhattan’s upper-middle class, and Radio Days (1987), a personal memoir structured around a nostalgic history of America’s first broadcast medium.

Although it is generally agreed that he has been less succesful with straight dramatic material, ther can be no question of Allen’s seriousness of purpose and genuine cinematic talent. The Western (blz. 491 – 493) The genre that seems to have best survived the widescreen inflation of the fifties and the sixties is the Western, where the landscape provides a naturally important element, altough Westerns, too, experienced some major changes in attitude

and theme corresponding to changes in American society. The heroic, idealized, epic Western of John Ford and his imitators remained opular in the fifties but was gradually replaced by what was called the “ adult Western”. This genre concentrated on the psychological or moral conflicts of the individual protagonist in relation to his society, rather than creating the poetic archetypes of order characteristic of Ford. The foremost director of adult Westerns in the fifties was Anthony Mann. Mann’s Westerns tended to be more intensely psychological and violent than those of his peers, and he was among the first to discover that the topography of the genre was uniquely suited to the widescreen format.

In films like Bend of the River (1952), The Tin Star (1957) and Man of the West (1958), Mann carried the genre permantly into the adult entertainment and created an austre visual style. Mann’s successor was Budd Boetticher, who directed films like Seven men from Now (1956) and Comanche Station (1960). In such films Boetticher forged elemental and even allegorical dramas of ethical heroism in wich men alone are forced to make moral choices in a moral vacuum.

The Fordian tradition of the epic romance was carried on, of course, by Ford himself and by makers of such “ big” widescreen Westerns as Sheen (George Stevens, 1953) – a film shot n the old ratio and disastrously blown up for widescreen exhibition. It was the Mann-Boetticher tradition that won out in the suxties, as the early films of Sam Peckinpah (The Deadly Companions, 1961 and Ride the High Country 1962) clearly demonstrate. But the new-style Westerns were soon deeply influenced by the Japanese samurai film (honor, fatality and violence).

This influence was first demonstrated in John Sturges's violent and popular The Magnificent Seven (1960). It was a popular succes and sparked an international trend toward samurai imitations wich ultimately produced the " spagetthi Western" – violent films of the American West starring American actors that were shot in Italy or Yugoslavia by Italian filmmakers. The master craftsman of the spaghetti Western was Sergio Leone (1921-89), whose A Fistful of Dollars started the cycle in 1964.

It was followed by For a Few Dollars More (1965), The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (1966) and Once Upon a Time in the West (1967). The films of Leone and his many imitators tended to be stylish, colorful and excesivly bloody (by graphically depicting, for the first tim on the screen, impact and exit wounds produced by bullets. For this mainly the spaghetti Westerns were enormously succesful in the United States. They also played a major role in conditioning American audiences to he new levels of violence that were to emerge at the end of the decade in the non-Western gangster film Bonnie and Clyde (Arthur Penn, 1967) and the apocalyptic The Wild Bunch (Sam Peckinpah, 1969). Mann, Boetticher, Sturges, the Italians and Peckinpah evolved a Western counter to that of Ford – one that was antiheroic and realistic. One important index of this change was a complete reversal of the genre's attitude toward Native Americans. Good " classical" Westerns continued to be made in the sixties by such Fordian craftsman as Henry Hathaway (True Grit, 1969) and by maverick individualists like Howard Hawkes (Rio Bravo, 1959).

In general, it is the way in wich the elements are viewed by American filmakers and their audiences wich has changed. That change is profound,

but it has more to do with alterations in the way America percieves itself and its past than with the evolution of a film genre. The Gangster Film and the Anticommunist Film (blz. 493 – 497) The gangster film, wich had been replaced by the domestic espionage film during the war, re-emerged in the late forties under the influence of film noir.

At that time, “ dark” crime films like The Killers (Robert Siodmak, 1946), They Live by Night (Nicholas Ray, 1949) and Where the Sidewalk Ends (Otto Preminger, 1950) tended to concentrate on the on the individual criminal in his relationship to the underworld. In the paranoid fifties, the emphasis shifted from the individual wrongdoer to the existence of a nationwide criminal conspiricy, commonly known as “ the syndicate,” wich was responsible for many of America’s social ills – murder, gambling, prostitution, narcotics and labor racketeering.

Since Prohibition, American gangster films have been firmly rooted in the reality of American crime, and – paranoia notwithstanding – that such a criminal conspiricy did exist and that it was closely connected with the Sicilian secret society known as the Mafia was demonstrated by the findings of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime, headed by Senator Estes Kefauver, in 1951.

The syndicate cycle experienced a decade-long haitus in the sixties – execpt for Martin Ritt’s The Brotherhood (1968) – only to re-emerge with unprecedentedly graphic violence in the blood-soaked seventies with The Godfather and the Godfather, Part II (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972 and 1974) and Honor Thy Father (Paul Wendkos, 1971; released 1973). Another type of

gangster film, the biography of the Prohibition and/of Depression criminal, was initiated by Don Siegel’s Baby Face Nelson (1957).

Films in this cycle tended to rely on period reconstruction, and their apotheosis came in the late sixties with Arthur Penn’s Bonny and Clyde (1967 and John Milius’s Dillinger (1973). Two interesting subtypes of the gangster film wich appeared in the fifties were the “ caper” film and the “ anti-Red” action thriller. The caper film, wich began with John Huston’s The Aspalt Jungle (1950), concentrated on the mechanics of pulling off a big heist and is still a very popular type.

It is sometimes deadly serious, sometimes light and witty. The anti-Red action film was a localized, primitive type endemic to the early fifties and exemplified by Robert Stevenson’s I Married a Communist (also known as The Woman on Pier 13, 1950) and Samual Fuller’s morally ambiguous Pickup on South Street (1953). In this type, the crimal figure is a communist spy and the syndicate is the “ international communist conspiracy,” but the traditional iconography of the gangster film is maintained.

The communist-as-gangster film was part of a larger cycle of more than fifty anticommunist films produced by nearly every studio in Hollywood between 1948 and 1955 in ritual self-abasement before HUAC and the minions of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Many of these had their roots in the WWII espionage film and simply substituted villainous Reds for villainous Nazis. Others were set inside the Iron Curtian and focused on innocent individuals attempting to get out, while still others posed as domestic melodramas,

semidocumentaries, science fiction, Westerns, combat films or even South Sea adventures.

But the ultimate anticommunist film was indisputably My Son John (1952), written, produced and directed for Paramount by the talented Leo McCarey (1898-1969), one of the great comic filmamkers of the thirties, who had apparently lost his sense of humor. So impassioned and vicerally engaging is this film that it desreves to be ranked with The Birth of a Nation and Triumph of the Will among teh cinema’s definitive works of authoritarian propaganda, and like them, it has remained controversial since the day of its release.

The anticommunist cycle coincided almost precisely with the period between the first HUAC Hollywood hearings and the U. S. Senate’s censure of Joseph McCarthy, but a trickle of films continued. Through the end of the decade when the last communist-as-gangster appeared in The FBI Story (Mervyn LeRoy, 1959), wich also dealt with Prohibition / Depression gangsters and Nazi spies. The central impulse of the anticommunist film was preserved in the James Bond espionage thrillers of the sixties, wich were adapted from the novels of British writer Ian Fleming and produced by Albert R.

Broccoli and Harry Saltzman’s London-based Eon Productions for distribution by United Artists. These immensely popular films and their imitators in effect usurped the gangster genre between 1962 and 1969 by positing criminal conspiracy on a worldwide scale and offering violent gangsterism on the parrt of both the conspirators and the superhero (“ licensed to kill”) sent to stop them. Eon’s sexy, gadget-ridden James Bond series became one of the

most succesful in motion picture history, earning nine Academy Award nominations and over half a billion dollars in rentals from 1969 trough 1985.

The sixties Bond films greatluy influenced the decade’s popular culture, spawning imitative television series like The Man from U. N. C. L. E. (1964-68) and Mission Impossible (1966-71). In the late fifties and early sixties, the young directors of the French New Wave borrowed heavily from the conventions of the American gangster film in works like Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960) and Shoot the Piano Player (Francois Truffaut, 1960), but the genre remained dormant in America itself until 1967, when Arthur Penn’s Bonnie and Clyde revitalized it fot the seventies.

Since Bonnie and Clyde, the gangster film, like the Western has re-entered the mainstream of American cinema as the vehicle for serious artistic and social expression (e. g. , The Godfather and The Godfather, Part II) that it was during the thirties. Science Fiction (blz. 498 – 509) Another interesting development of the fifties was the emerge of the science fiction (s. f.) film as a distinct genre. There had been films of s. f. long before WWII.

One of the first important narrative films, George Melies’ Le Voyage dans la lune (1902), fits the description, as does Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1926). But s. f. before WWII concentrated on individual conflicts rather than global ones. With the war and the threat of nuclear holocast came a widespread recognition that science and technology were in a position to affect the destiny of the entire human race, and shortly after, the modern s. f. film, with its emphasis on global catastrophe and space travel, began to take shape.

The first important example of the from was Destination Moon (Irving Pichel, 1950), soon followed by films as The Thing (Christian Nyby, 1951) and Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956). All of these films were well-produced on budgets of widely varying scale, and the element common to most was some form of world-threatening crisis produced by buclear war or alien invasion (and, in the Siegel film, an invasion wich threatens not destruction but conversion) with obvious political implications.

In fact, with their constant warnings against infiltrations and invasion, the paranoid politics of the Cold War permeated the fifties s. f. boom almost as thoroughly as state-of-the-art special effects, wich reached a new plateau in the early years of the decade with the films of producer George Pal (1908-80) and special effects director Ray Harryhausen (1920-?). Pal (native-born Hungarian) won Special Effects Oscars for Destination Moon, When Worlds Collide and War of the Worlds. His career begun at UFA as a setdesigner and became a puppet animator in Hollywood during the war.

Harryhausen was a prototege of special effects pioneer Willis O’Brian (1886-1962), who specialized in a 3D, stop-motion process that enabled him to combine animated models with live action (patented as Dynamation in 1957). All of the decade’s s. f. films contained an element of dread, but The Thing, wich concerned the coming to earth of a dangerous creature from an other galaxy, started a phenomenally popular cycle of films about monsters and mutations produced by nuclear radiation or materialized from outer space wich dominated the genre for the next ten years. S. f. urists argue that the monster films of the fifties were less s. f. than horror, but the line between the two categories is sometimes quite difficult to draw. Often s. f.

seems to be concerned with the catastrophic impact of technology on civilization – an impact wich means the end of evolution – while horror focuses upon the potential evil within the human heart. But monster films pose specifically modern (that is, postwar) problem of how human evil and technology combine to threathen the exictence of the race, and therefore they seem to straddle the generic fence between s. . and horror. By mid-decade, monster films had largely become the province of exploitation producers, but there were clear exceptions in the inventive work of Jack Arnold (1916-92), who directed It Came from Outer Space (1953, 3D), a major scource for Steven Spielberg's E. T. The Extra-Terrestrial (1982), and The Space Childeren (1958), one of the era's first antinuclear science fiction films. The Japanese, recent witnesses to nuclear horror themselves, entered the atomic monster field with a well-crafted series of films directed by Inoshiro Honda (1911-? , beginning with Godzilla, King of Monsters (Gojira, 1954) and continuing with films as Rodan (1956), and Battle in Outer Space (1959), and with increaing silliness, King Kong vs. Godzilla (1962) and Godzilla vs. The Thing (1964). Typically, American distributors enchanced the box-office appeal of these imports by peppering extraneous footage of American actors like Raymond Burr, Russ Tamblyn or Nick Adams, with the result that their plots, never a strong point, became vitually incoherent.

But dureing the fifties, at least, yheir imaginative special effects and model work made the Japanese monster films very popular with audiences all over the world. Most of the American low-budget s. f. quikies of the fifties wer made by Allied Artists (AA) or American International Pictures (AIP), The successors to the B-film studios of the thirties and forties. AA was in fact a

reincarnation of Monogram Productions, wich had changed its coporate name in 1952. The ultimate exploitation producer of the era, however, was AIP.

Most films in the fifties were made for adults. The majors were always happy to make a family film, but only Disney made films for kids. But AIP discovered a market of kids alone, kids who were ready to pay good money for the cheapest kind of audiovisual thrills, so long as their cultural values weren’t offended. During the fifties AIP produced its share of bargain-basement Westerns, crime thrillers and teenage exposes, but its real profit center was the monster film, the more sensational and lurid the better.

The idea was so successful that other exploitation producers copied it, with the result that nearly all of the low-budget films described, were seen by their original audiences as parts of a two-film program, yoked with their mates through dual promotion an publicity. AIP was set up as a constallation of five independent producers, among them Bert I. Gordon (1922-?) and Roger Corman (1926-?). Gordon specialized in low-budget special effects with the use of rear-screen projection, often quite successfully.

Corman, a much more important figure, initially specialized in monster / horror quikies, some of wich were reputedly produced in less than three days. But he also produced the much-admired black-humor trilogy A Bucket of Blood (1959), Little Shop of Horrors (1960) and Creature from the Haunted Sea (1960) and when AIP decided to make its films in CinemaScope and color, Corman was given the first assignment, House of Usher (1960), adapted from Edgar Allan Poe.

Corman demonstrated his continued prescience by producing two visually imaginative films that helped to shape the “ youth cult” boom of the late sixties, The Wild Angels (1966), a graphically violent biker epic, and The Trip (1967), a guided tour trough a LSD experience, both starring Peter Fonda. Corman also made two excellent medium-budget gangster films. In 1970, Corman left AIP to form New World Pictures (NWP), wich over the next decade was to become the largest independent producer/distributor in the US.

Here, as at AIP, Corman was able to back a number of talented but unknown young directors (Francis Ford Coppola, Joe Dante, Ron Howard and Martin Scorcese) in their first features. Furthermore NWP became the American distributor for some of the most important foreign films in the seventies. Although he did not personally direct any film between 1971 and 1990, Corman continued to exert an important influence on the American cinema as a producer trough NWP until he sold it in 1983 to form Concorde Pictures with his wife.

NWP continued to produce such Comanesque films until its demise in 1987. In the sixties and early seventies, s. f. too became more mainstream, if frequently less exciting. In the US a series of medium-to-high budget films replaced the exploitation quikies in productions like The Time Machine (George Pal, 1960) and Planet of the Apes (Franklin Schaffner, 1968). From England came a number of inventive, well-crafted features, including Gorgo (Eugene Lourie, 1961) and The Day of the Triffids (Steve Seleky, 1963). That s. f. ad become a fully respectable genre in the sixties was demonstrated by the filmmakers: Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut and Stanley Kubrick.. In

the seventies, American s. f. proved to be a rather dreary affair (e. g. the four Planet of the Apes sequels). However, there were notable exceprtions, such as George Lucas's Star Wars (1977) and its sequels, as well as Steven Spielberg's Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977) and E. T. (1982) and the Star Trek series. These films combine computerized effects, Dolby stereo sound and a fantasy-adventure plot containing folkloric elements to create a new breed of American s. . During the eighties, this continued in films wich had a more serious edge, including Ridley Scott's Alien (1979), David Lynch's Dune (1984), James Cameron's The Abyss (1989) and Paul Verhoeven's Total Recall (1990). Distinct subgenres of s. f. that emerged during the decade were the pornographic, the parodic/satiric and the punk. In the years surrounding the Reagan administration's deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe, there was a rash of films dealing with the immediate effects of a nuclear war – rather than life in some postnuclear future. Other s. f. ubtypes include the witty if sometimes juvenile Superman-cycle, as well as the occasionally loathsome s. f. /horror of David Cronenberg – Scanners (1979) and The Fly (1986) and s. f. films involving " medical" research (Coma (Michael Crichton, 1978)), gene-splicing and the cloning of DNA (Jurassic Park (Steven Spielberg, 1993). pp. 509-530 The " Small Film": American Kammerspiel (blz. 509) The final generic development of the American fifties was the brief appearance of the " small film" , a low-budget black-and-white film shot in the Academy frame format with television techniques and concerned with the everyday lives of ordinary people.

Clearly influenced by Italian neorealism, these films were independently produced, shot largly on location and usually adapted from original teleplays

for live drama. The first small film was Marty (Delbert Mann, 1955). But as live drama began to disappear from television in the late fifties, the small-film movement vanished too. The barrier between cinema and tv has been broken by small-film, however, and the relationship was to remain an open one, so that ultimately the two media learned to co-exist and even to subsist upon one another.

By the late fifties, for instance, the major studios were devoting a substantial percentage of their production facilities to the filming of weekly tv series modeled on the B-pictures of the thirties and the forties. And by the mid-sixties some of the American cinema’s most important new directors had begun their careers in studio tv production. Independent Production and the Decline of the Studio System In the fifties independent productions outside of the studio was on the rise.

Four of the decade’s most brillant american films were independently produced, all of them for United Artists. Stanley Kramer started his independent productions as early as 1948. United Artists, which distributed most of Kramer’s films, found that its liabilities of the thirties and forties became assets during the fifties and sixties. United Artists had become the most important independent producer in Hollywood by 1956. They also produced much of John Huston’s major work during the period. The Hecht-Lancaster Company was another succesfull independent.

By 1958, in fact, 65 percent of Hollywood’s motion pictures were made by independents, as the focus of production shifted away from the studios to the production unit itself. As the search for new formats in the war with

television intensified in 1959-60, several filmmakers introduced Aromarama and Smell-o-Vision , systems designed to let theatre audiences smell what they saw on screen. Like 3D earlier in the decade, neither system survived its novelty period, although, when working properly, both could create an impressive oldfactory illusion.

The old studio production system remained in operation throughout the fifties, but continued to crumble under the combined threats of political pressure, television, rising independent production and, perhaps most serious, loss of the exhibition chains. From the peak in 1946, when American theatres had averaged nearly 100. 000. 000 admissions per week, film attendance dropped to forty-six million in 1955. Production fell from nearly five-hundred features per year throughout the thirties, to 383 in 1950, to 254 in 1955.

American filmproduction and audience attendance both continued to decline, while production costs soared, until, by 1966, 30 percent of all films made in the USA were independently produced, and 50 percent of all american films were “ runaway” productions – that is, films shot on location in foreign countries to economize on sets and labor. By the mid-sixties, 80 percent of all american films were made outside of the once ironclad studiosystem. The foreign industries had recovered from the war by the late fifties and for the first time were offering Hollywood vigorous commercial competition.

Between 1958 and 1968 the number of foreign films in distribution in the USA would actualy exceed the number of domestic productions, often by a ratio of two (and sometimes three) to one. As the studio system declined

throughout the fifties, so too did the star system with which it had been intimately linked for over thirty years. There were american stars in the fifties, to be sure, and many whose careers had begun under the studio system, but they now worked more independently of the studio system than had earlier stars. The scrapping of the Production Code

A final important development of the fifties in America was the breaking of the Producion Code and the achievement of an unprecedented freedom of expression for the cinema. Ever since a U. S. Supreme Court decision of 1915 involving D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation , the movies had not been considered part of the press, whose freedom is guaranteed by the First Amendment tot the Constitution. This changed by 1952, after the state of New York attempted to prevent the exhibition of the Italian film Il Miracolo (Roberto Rossellini, 1948) on the grounds that it commited ' sacrilege'.

Producer Josep Burnstyn took the case to the U. S. Surpreme Court, which ruled in May 1952 that movies were " a significant medium for communication of ' ideas' and were, therefore, protected against the charge of sacrilege by both the Firth and Fourteenth Amendments. Thereby all the early sixties films were guaranteed full freedom of expression. While these battles were in progress, the Production Code was challenged from within by the influx of " unapproved" foreign films and, especially, by the rise of the independent production.

In 1968 the Production Code was scrapped in favor of a rating system administered by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which does not proscribe the content of films but rather classifies them as

appropriate for certain segment of the public, according to age. In about 1955, human sexuality began to be overtly depicted on the American screen for the first time since The Code’s imposition some twenty years before, and more generaly, a fascination with veiled (and increasingly unveiled) eroticism came to pervade American films in the late and early sixties.

Other taboos were broken too, as a new realism of content entered the American cinema after a long period of repression. Juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, drug addiction, and even race were suddenly fair game for filmmakers working both inside and outside the studio’s. Crime began to be treated less moralistically and melodramatically, so that it became possible by the end of the decade to sympatize with with criminals as human beings. EINDE EXCERPT COOK 5, pp. 392-515 EXCERPT COOK 6, pp. 516-606 Hoofdstuk 13, “ The French New Wave and its Native Context”, pp. 16-567. Hoofdstuk 14, “ New Cinemas in Britain and the English-Speaking Commonwealth”, pp. 568-606. Hoofdstuk 13, “ The French New Wave and its Native Context” The Occupation and Postwar Cinema During the German Occupation of France, a new generation of French directors emerged, most of whom had worked as scriptwriters or assistants under major figures of poetic realism in the thirties. Claude Autant–Lara (b. 1903) directed a number of sophisticated period films during the occupation (including Le Marriage de Chiffon (1942), Lettres d’amour (1942) and Douce (1943) . is reputation rest more firmly upon a series of stylish literary adaptions written by Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost that he made the postwar era. These writers also worked closely with Rene Clement (b. 1913). they wrote two of his greatest films of the postwar era (Jeux interdits, 1952 and Gervaise,

1956. These films won multiple international awards. Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), who had confined himself to writing scripts during the occupation, returned to filmmaking in the postwar years. He incarnated the literary tendency of French cinema during this period (including La belle et la Bete, 1946).

Cocteau returned to the surreal, psychomythic regions of Le Sang d’un Poete (1930) to create his most brilliant film. Jacqus Becker (1906-1960 is another figure who emerged during the postwar years. He intended to direct films that cut accros traditional class barries of french society. Becker directed his masterpiece, Le Trou, (1969) shortly before his death in 1960. Henri-Georges Clouzot’s (1907-1977) second film , Le Corbeau (1943), established him as the chief progenitor of french film noir.

He was apolitical, but his films were typically dealt with the brutal, the sordid and the neurotic. His entire carreer was marked by an aura of scandal. With Le Salaire de la peur (1953) he achieved a masterpiece of unrelenting horror and alienation. Yves Allegret (1907-1987) became also something of a specialist in film noir with films like Dedee d’Anvers (1947) and Maneges (1950). Andre Cayatte (1909-1989) was another popular director of dark films in the late forties, as was Jacqueline Audry (1908-1977). Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati

Clearly, except for film noir, the prevailing mode of postwar French cinema was literary adaption, which caused French films to become increasingly verbal and theatrical. It was against this tendency that the New wave reacted in the late fifties and sixties. In fact, the war had not produced a

break with cinematic traditions in France as it had in Italy and other European nations, except for the inovative work of Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati. Robert Bresson (b. 1907) , a former scriptwriter was the more important of the two.

Bresson displayed a highly personalized style whose psychhological realism is predicated upon an absolute austerity of acting, dialogue and mis-en-scene. His masterpiece, Un Condamne a mort s'est echappe (1956), takes place almost entirely in a condemned man's cell. Most of Bresson's subsequent films were derived from literary sources and dealt with humanist themes. All of Bresson's films are painstakingly crafted attempts to bring to life the spiritual dilemmas of the race through the moral struggles of individuals, which makes Bresson a kind of contemporary Carl Theodor Dreyer. Jacques Tati (b.

Jacques Tatischeff, 1908-1982), a former music-hall entertainer and pantomimist, became one of the international cinema's great comic talents in the postwar era, rivaling such masters of the silent film as Max Linder, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. As in all of Tati's films, the humor, which is largely visual, is achieved through scrupulous planning and briljant mime. Playtime (1967), is today wideley regarded as a modernist masterpiece, which clearly represents Tati's finest achievement. Although it was a multimillion dollar failure. Tati made only five feature films in his entire carreer.

Nevertheless, he was a master cinematic humorist, whose concept of comedy was almost purely visual, and he deserves to be ranked with the

greates of the silent comedians for the breadth of his humanity and the restrained brillance of his comic achievement. Max Ophuls Another major figure working in French cinema in the fifties, and one who had the profound influence on the New Wave generation that succeeded him, was Max Ophuls (b. Max Oppenheimer, 1902-1957). Ophuls was a German Jew who had directed films for UFA between 1930 and Hiltler’s rise to power in 1933.

Ophuls was forced to Hollywood when France fell to the Nazis in 1940 and after four years of anonymity, he was finally able to make a series of stylish melodramas for Paramount (including The Exile (1947), Caught (1949) and The Reckless Moment (1949), which are among his very best films). He had always worked within the studiosytem, so that the subject matter of his films was never as important to him as visual style. All of Ophuls work is marked by meticulous attention to period detail and by an incessantly moving camera.

Lola Montes (1955) is generally considered to be Ophuls’ masterpiece, the consummation of his entire life’s work. Ophuls was initially opposed to CinemaScope, but his sense of visual patterning was such that he turned Lola Montes into a stunning exhebition of composition for the widescreen frame. He frequently broke the horizontal space of the screen with vertical dominants and framed shots through arches, columns and drapery. As with Intolerance (1916) and Citizen Kane (1941) the narrative technique of Lola Montes was so unconventional that audiences stayed away from it.

The key to Ophuls’ style is his mastery of the long take and, especially, of the continuously moving camera. He was also a geenius at composition

within the frame, and the influence upon him of both German expressionism and French pictorial impressionism was profound. Influence of the fifties documentary movement and independent production By 1955, French commercial cinema was approaching stagnation because many filmmakers who had emerged during the occupation were firmly ensconced within the studio system or working on big-budget spectacles and international co-productions.

The cinematic individualism of Bresson and Tati, and also of Cocteau, offered the succeeding generation of French directors examples of how film could be used as a medium of personal expression. But the major stylistic influences upon this next generation of filmmakers came from the French documentary movement of the fifties, which was their training ground and from the films of independent directors working outside the studio system of production. The documentary movement can be said to have begun in 1946 with Georges Rouquier’s Farrebique.

But the master of French documentary cinema during this period was Georges Franju (1912-1987), a totally original filmmaker who was deeply influenced by German expressionism and has often been called a surrealist. Is first major film was Sang des Betes (1949), about the daily activity of a slaughterhouse. His La tete contre les mures (1958), which was his first feature and is often cited as the forerunner of the New Wave. Alain Resnais (b. 1922), whose first feature, Hiroshima, mon amour (1959) became the clarion call of the New Wave, was another important figure in the French documentary movement.

He also made Nuit et Broullard (1955), a profoundly disturbing meditation on the horrors of the nazi death camps and on the way time and memory affect our perception of them. Other figures associated with the documentary short in the fifties were Chris Marker, an original and highly personal filmmaker who would later organize the radical cooperative, la Societe pour le Lancement des Oeuvres Nouvelles (SLON), for the production of Loin du Vietnam (1967) and similar polemical work; the etnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch, who became the apostle of cinema verite in the sixties.

The example of independent production outside the traditional studiosystem was another important influence upon the emergient New Wave generation. Jean-Pierre Melville (b. jean-Pierre Grumbach 1917-1973) was a vastly significant figure in this regard. The commercial success of Quand tu lira cette lettre (1952) allowed Melville to puchase his own studio and move into totally independent production. The result was a much admired gangster film Bob le flambeur (1955), a highly personalized work whose production methods – location shooting, amall crew, use of unknown actors – became the model for New Wave filmmakers.

Another independent production that foretold the New Wave – and that some critics called its first manifestation – is Agnes Varda’s La Pointe-Courte (1955). It was the early films of Roger Vadim (b. 1928), however, that contributed most to the economic development of New Wave. The spectacular commercial success of his independently produced first feature, Et Dieu crea la femme (1956), demonstrated to the stagnant French film industry that young directors and new themes could attract large audiences. Moreover it was Vadim, more than any single other figure in French film, who

opened the doors of the industry to his generation of ilmmakers, and provided the economic justification for the New Wave. Theory: Astruc, Bazin and Cahiers du cinema The theoretical justification for the New Wave cinema came from another source: the film critic Alexandre Astruc (b. 1923), who published a highly influential article in Lecran francaise (no. 144) in March 1948 on thhe concept of the camera-stylo, which would permit cinema “ to become a means of expression as supple and subtle as that of “ written language” and would therefore accord filmmakers the status of authors.

Like Bazin, Astruc questioned the values of classical montage and was an apostle of the long take, as exemplefied in the work of Murnau, Astruc later became a professional director. Astruc was succeeded as a theorist by the vastly influential journal Cahiers du Cinema, founded in 1951 by Andre Bazin (1918-1958) and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze (1920-1989), which gathered about in a group of young critics –Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Charbol, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer- who were to become the major directors of the New Wave.

Georges Franju and Henri Langlois founded the amazing Cinematheques Francaise in Paris in 1936, a magnificent film archive and public theatre. It is the largest public film archive today. The Cahiers critics had two basic principles. The first, deriving from Bazin, was a rejection of montage aestethics in favor of the mise-en-scene, the long take and composition in depth. The second tenet of the Cahiers critics, derived from Astruc, was the idea of personal authorship.

This christened the auteur theory by the American critic Andrew Sarris, states that film should ideally be a medium of personal artistic expression and that the best films were those who most clearly bear their maker's ' signature'. The Cahiers critics wre able to to partially vindicate the auteur theory by becoming filmmakers themselves and practicing it. The New Wave's challenge to the ' tradition of quality'was economic as well as aesthetic. Truffaut's concept of ' un cinema d'auteurs was realized in France by placing the control of the conception of a film in the same hands that controlled the actual production.