

Part I

1960–1975

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Setting the Stage

American Film History, 1960–1975

Profound changes rocked American cinema in the second half of the twentieth century, many of which reflected new directions in the history of the nation. A number of these developments occurred or, at least, got under way in the 1960s. By mid-decade, the anxiety that American society had initially kept at bay through a spirit of hope and renewal fully came to the fore, and forces of social and moral cohesion rapidly gave way to tendencies of questioning and confusion. From social rebellion and economic inequality there emerged an impulse toward cultural experimentation that also affected American films, but that, in the late 1970s and 1980s, would give way again to more conservative tendencies, as American politics shifted to the right and the US film industry re consolidated and eventually reorganized itself on a global scale.

Film Industry Decline and Transformation

The old studio system of five majors (MGM, RKO, Warner Bros., Paramount, and Twentieth Century-Fox), vertically integrated with their own theaters guaranteeing certain exhibition of their films, and three minor studios that did not own theaters (Columbia, Universal, United Artists) had been in

place for over 30 years. By the early 1960s this system was largely defunct, its remnants subject to a series of mergers, acquisitions, and restructurings that would install a new generation of leaders at the top of the industry. Their predecessors, the legendary moguls, had run Hollywood as the nation's main purveyor of mass entertainment by defining movie-going as first and foremost a family affair. The new crop faced a dramatically shrinking audience base resulting from demographic shifts brought on by suburbanization and a widening generation gap. During the 1960s, when the nuclear family grew less stable, the industry survived, in part, by targeting the youth market, while not losing sight, for a time at least, of its general audience. And while the relative stability of the classical era had yielded long tenures for studio bosses, enabling them to impart their artistic imprimatur, from the 1960s forward, heads of production became cogs within sprawling corporate structures. In this climate, the rare producers able to flourish long enough to develop a creative oeuvre were semi-independent makers of B-movies, like Roger Corman, and, more recently, writer-director-producers epitomized by Steven Spielberg, whose tycoon status signals a different order of independence.

Hollywood in the 1960s not only found itself in search of a product and an audience, but the industry was also saddled with growing doubt as to how

American it indeed was. By 1966, 30 percent of American films were independently produced and 50 percent were so-called runaway productions – films made in Italy, Spain, and other European countries that beckoned with cheap, non-unionized labor. By that time, also, the effects of the 1948 Paramount Decree, which forced the studios to divest their ownership of theaters, loosened Hollywood's stranglehold on the domestic market. Beginning in the 1950s, exhibitors' burgeoning independence had opened the door to foreign imports. Between 1958 and 1968, the number of foreign films in US distribution would gradually exceed the number of domestic productions (Cook 2004, 427). While in 1955 television was Hollywood's only serious competitor on the media market, ten years later American viewers had an unprecedented array of choices. They could buy a movie ticket to *The Sound of Music* or stay home and watch the *Ed Sullivan Show*; they could (fairly easily) see François Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* (1963) or seek out numerous other examples of what would become known as the golden age of European art cinema – or, starting in the mid-1960s, they could catch the rising tide of third world films. If they were not keen on reading subtitles, their options included artistically ambitious independent films by such directors as John Cassavetes or quirky, independently made horror and exploitation flicks by the likes of George A. Romero and Russ Meyer. Or they could seek out innovative documentaries made in direct cinema style, or avant-garde films like Andy Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* (1966), which had made the leap from urban underground venues and college film societies into commercial exhibition.

In order to minimize risk, studios began to strike international financing deals that shifted their role to co-producer or distributor of internationally made films, exposing the industry to a wave of foreign talent and new artistic influences. Filmmakers like John Schlesinger and Roman Polanski would parlay their new wave cachet into international careers and relocate to the US. Others, like Michelangelo Antonioni and UK-based American expatriate Stanley Kubrick, directed projects that, while financed by Hollywood, were shot overseas. A new generation of American directors, including Arthur Penn, Sidney Lumet, and John Frankenheimer, who had come from television and also were attuned to foreign film, would also help broaden the aesthetics of American films to a significant degree. The so-called “movie brats” of the late

1960s and early 1970s, the first generation of directors trained in film school, including Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, and Brian De Palma, would extend this trend.

By the early 1970s, Hollywood had assimilated stylistic elements from numerous outside sources. The pre-credit sequence it took from television. The long take – while already present in 1940s prestige productions and 1950s widescreen cinema – was extended further through emerging auteurs influenced by European art cinema, independent documentaries, and the avant-garde. These cinemas also helped trigger the opposite trend in Hollywood – the acceleration of cutting and the fragmentation of the image into split screens, multiple slivers (showcased in the credit sequence of *The Thomas Crown Affair*, 1968), or collage-type arrays (as featured in the famous “Pusher Man” sequence from the 1972 blaxploitation film *Superfly*). Finally, the prominence of new wave cinemas inspired a loosening of Hollywood continuity editing conventions. Individualists like Sam Peckinpah, who pioneered slow motion, and Hal Ashby, who popularized the use of telephoto lenses, further broadened the formal palette of studio releases.

When Hollywood staged a return to classical topics and treatments during the Reagan era, some of these devices would be toned down. What ultimately characterizes the era from the late 1960s to the present, however, is the studios' openness to using most any formal and narrative technique, provided it can be placed in the service of contemporary Hollywood storytelling. Since the 1990s, especially, the increased accessibility of filmmaking equipment (brought about by the digital revolution), the diversification of exhibition outlets (generated by the internet and convergence culture), and the emergence of new generations of auteurs (like Steven Soderbergh, Gus Van Sant, Baz Luhrmann, Todd Haynes, Joss Whedon, and Guillermo del Toro, who work on a global scale and cross over between big studio and indie productions, as well as between film and television) have generated a more elastic, globalized film aesthetic for a youth audience weaned on graphic novels, YouTube, and cellphone movies.

Cold War Anxiety

Even before the emergence of the late 1960s counterculture and its wide-ranging critique of American

institutions, filmmakers challenged the long-standing political consensus that had underwritten the Cold War.¹ After over half a century in which the movies had lent their support to American military campaigns, celebrating the GIs and the officers who led them, a cluster of films released between 1962 and 1964 no longer marched in step with the Pentagon. *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) and *Fail-Safe* (1964) told essentially the same story, the former through black humor and the latter through straight drama. Both questioned the hydrogen bomb as a peacekeeping device and argued that the technology of destruction threatened humanity's power to control it. Although *Fail-Safe* ended with a powerfully frightening montage of freeze frames showing people on the streets just before nuclear detonation – vividly illustrating a population at the mercy of the nuclear age – it was *Dr. Strangelove's* absurdist satire and its eerily incongruent ending – as bombs explode to the song “We’ll Meet Again” – that would resonate for decades after its release. Here, citizens are totally absent as the buffoons in charge of their safety channel their own sexual fears and fantasies into a race toward the apocalypse. *Seven Days in May* (1964) imagined a *coup d'état* planned within the Joint Chiefs to stop the President on the verge of signing a treaty with the Soviets. Even more shocking, if ideologically less coherent, as R. Barton Palmer argues in Volume I of this series, was *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), a returning veteran story at its cruelest, in which Raymond Shaw, falsely decorated a Korean War hero, is brainwashed to become a communist assassin. Caught in the crossfire between Red China and the US, sacrificed by his power hungry mother, and forced to kill his wife, Shaw embodies the myriad suicidal and twisted psycho-sexual impulses woven into Cold War thinking.

Gender Roles and Sexual Mores in Early 1960s Hollywood

During the 1960s, the movies' representation of gender and sexuality underwent dramatic changes, particularly in regard to Hollywood's portrayal of women. Initially, however, change seemed slow to come, as Hollywood's star machinery reflected 1950s ideals of beauty and morality. The reigning box office

star from 1959 to 1963 was Doris Day, whose persona in a string of popular, old-fashioned comedies combined Cold War ideals of feminine virtue and propriety with increasingly progressive attitudes towards female independence. In contrast to the best screwball comedies of the 1930s, in which a man and a woman meet, fall in love, separate, and then “remarry” as true equals, in Day's films marriage was not merely the default mode of heterosexual partnership. It became the idealized goal of her protagonists who, in their mid- to late thirties, were afraid of missing the boat that would carry them into the conubial haven of motherhood and domesticity. Glossy Madison Avenue settings in *Pillow Talk* (1959) and *That Touch of Mink* (1961) function as a backdrop for Day's smartly coutured female professionals, as she conveys her characters' conflicted feelings about acting on or reining in her carnal desires with comic verve – all indicative of pressure on Hollywood to acknowledge, however timidly, American women's increasing sexual agency.

Fear of female sexual independence also played itself out in a number of early 1960s dramas about prostitutes: the Hollywood prestige film *Butterfield 8* (1960) starring Elizabeth Taylor, the quirky overseas production *Never on Sunday* (1960) shot by grey-listed Hollywood director Jules Dassin, and two of Billy Wilder's satirical comedies, *Irma La Douce* (1962) and *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964). Sex for sale served as a displaced arena for exploring various facets of America's uneasy relation to female sexual agency, while ultimately conforming to the logic of a deeply puritanical and patriarchal culture. In best Academy Awards tradition, *Butterfield 8* depicts the prostitute as a tragic, doomed figure whose choice of profession is rooted in an unhappy childhood. *Never on Sunday* and *Irma La Douce* draw on the stereotype of the hooker with a heart of gold, though both are social satires, with left-winger Dassin exploring what happens when prostitutes organize and Wilder lampooning the role of the state in upholding bourgeois mores. *Kiss Me, Stupid* is more abrasive in its indictment of male greed and hypocrisy, as Robert Sklar argues in his essay on Wilder in Volume I of this edition. Perhaps not surprisingly, the film's zany plot – revolving around a small-town composer's scheme of trafficking women to trick a Las Vegas crooner into buying one of his songs – was widely panned as offensively tawdry. As these films indicate, Hollywood was willing to entertain the notion of female sexual agency

only if the woman ultimately was punished or the story was moved off-shore to exotic locations and couched within comedy's more outlandishly carnivalesque conventions.

“A Jumpin’ Jackpot of Melody”: The Musical in the 1960s

In their efforts to domesticate the sexual revolution, the studios were eager to manipulate genre conventions, and none more so than those of the musical. A case in point is MGM's cannibalization of Elvis Presley, whose anarchic musical talent and erotic charge were wasted in dozens of mediocre musical comedies during the 1960s. Even the mildly self-reflexive *Viva Las Vegas!* (1963), one of Presley's better films, heeds mainstream mores by turning his Rusty, a daring race car driver with a musical streak, into an old-fashioned romantic suitor of his sweetheart (Ann-Margret). The film reflects the contradictions of its time by straddling various musical subgenres. Backstage conventions serve to exploit the couple's sexual magnetism in steamy yet safely contained stage rehearsals and show numbers, while off stage the romance plot unfolds with the help of fluidly integrated serenades. Added to the formula are elements of the folk musical and action-packed car racing and crash sequences. Touted by its trailer as “A Jumpin’ Jackpot of Melody,” *Viva Las Vegas!* is exemplary of how Hollywood, by 1963, extended its time-honored strategy of blending various genres into the musical (Altman 1999), having become so uncertain of its target audience that it tried to be all things to all people.

The trajectory of the musical during this period poignantly illustrates that, despite babies of the earlier boom having grown up to be among the nation's most sophisticated and regular of moviegoers, and the youth market having become an increasingly important demographic, Hollywood still often aimed at a general audience. Family fare remained popular through such vehicles as *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *The Sound of Music* (1965). Industry attempts to recreate that film's overwhelming success failed, however, in such hopelessly old-fashioned yet high-budget extravaganzas as *Dr. Dolittle* (1967), *Camelot* (1967), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968), *Star!* (1968), *Paint Your Wagon* (1969), *Darling Lili* (1970), and *On a Clear Day*

You Can See Forever (1970) (Cook 2000, 496). The reasons for such failures in the post-studio era are multiple, as Karen Backstein argues in this volume.

As America's musical tastes greatly expanded in the post-war period, especially under the influence of rock 'n roll and rhythm and blues, the repertoire of Hollywood music adapted as well. While a growing number of films incorporated songs by new and emerging artists – Simon and Garfunkel for *The Graduate* (1967), Leonard Cohen for *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971), Isaac Hayes for *Shaft* (1971), and, of course, a small catalog of rock hits for *Easy Rider* (1969) – there remained an important place for traditional scores, especially given the later box office success of futuristic or spectacle cinema. Among those whose music crossed over into popular listenership, but were best known for the movies, was Henry Mancini. After a year at Juilliard and World War II service, Mancini went to work at Universal where he created the stunning music for Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958). Best known, perhaps, for the soundtrack to Blake Edwards's comedy *The Pink Panther* (1963), the Mancini sound became attached to the early 1960s, with sophisticated scores tinged with sadness, as those written for *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) and *Days of Wine and Roses* (1962).

Gender, Race, and the American Family

Hollywood had been furnishing sober, at times ominous, assessments of the state of the American family even before the inception of suburbia. In the 1960s, however, when the family was far less stable, surprisingly few films dealt with this subject. One reason was the decline of the melodrama – a genre traditionally focused on the family. Peaking in popularity with such films as *Written on the Wind* (1957), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), and *Home from the Hill* (1960), 1950s-style depictions of family strife would appear overwrought just a few years later. Stories involving sex and social mores, as featured in such films as *Peyton Place* (1957) that, upon release, were considered daring and controversial, by the mid-1960s found themselves serialized for television. The family dramas that did get made in the early and mid-1960s were just as claustrophobic as their precursors, but they were

filmed in a more realistic style that no longer relied quite so heavily on melodramatic excess and overly ornate mise-en-scène. Adult themes, however, continued to function as a signifier for realism in these films, even as directors like Otto Preminger and Elia Kazan raised the bar on what “adult” would come to mean. As had been the case in the previous decade (and, to a certain extent, before World War II), the industry continued to look to the Broadway stage for adult source material, reaffirming the link between American film and American theater throughout the 1960s.

Kazan had been one of Hollywood’s top directors in the 1950s with such adult dramas as *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *On the Waterfront* (1954), *East of Eden* (1955), and *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) – several of which had led to clashes with censors. His 1961 *Splendor in the Grass*, set in late 1920s rural Kansas, is a story about two teenage lovers whose relationship is stifled by a poisonous climate of materialism, sexual repression, and family hypocrisy. Written by William Inge, whose 1950s plays on small town sexual mores, *Picnic* (1955) and *Bus Stop* (1956), became Hollywood box office hits, the film dealt with such issues as premarital sex, rape, abortion, and society’s double standards concerning male and female promiscuity. As Cynthia Lucia points out in Volume I of this edition, such issues were just as prevalent in early 1960s America of John F. Kennedy as they were in 1929 – both moments in history on the cusp of sweeping change. *Splendor in the Grass*, like many 1960s family dramas, reflects Hollywood’s own anxieties about changing perspectives on gender and sexuality.

Although Hollywood made fewer family dramas during this period, it expanded the scope of the genre by incorporating the issue of race in films like *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961), which depicts a black working-class family’s internal and external struggles as they aspire to leave their inner city apartment and move to a white suburb. Made independently by Broadway and TV producers David Susskind and Philip Rose for Columbia Pictures, *A Raisin in the Sun* was, of course, a white production. The studio, however, did allow black playwright Lorraine Hansberry to write the script (under tight supervision), adapting her own 1959 New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award-winning Broadway play, which skillfully combined an indictment of racism with so called “cross-over issues” concerning education, entrepreneurship, and

home ownership. The film got made, in large part, because of Hollywood’s interest in filmed literature and in the rising African-American star Sidney Poitier (Reid 1993, 58).

For black-themed treatments in Hollywood, Poitier’s popularity proved a blessing and a curse. He became the first black superstar in American film, but the success of his vehicles hinged on stripping his characters of any political dimension. The formula was at its peak in the biggest – and, as it would turn out, the final – hit of Poitier’s career, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967), a mixed-race family film in which a white family’s liberal ideals are put to the test when their daughter announces that she intends to marry a black man. While hugely popular, the film deeply divided the black community given Hollywood’s knee-jerk attempt to ennoble and whitewash Poitier’s character – an overachiever and paragon of moral virtue embodying a stereotype Poitier often was forced to play. Although the Civil Rights Movement was at the forefront of national attention in the early 1960s, the studios limited their treatment of race to fewer than a handful of dramas, many of which featured mostly white casts, as true of many Poitier films.

It fell to independent cinema to furnish overtly political stories of black families and black struggle, although these films still were made by white filmmakers. Paul Young and Michael Roehmer’s nuanced and gripping drama, *Nothing But a Man* (1963), tells the story of Duff, a railroad worker in the deeply racist South, who struggles to overcome racism and economic adversity in order to found his own family. While the film was poorly distributed, it launched the career of its male lead, Ivan Dixon, who ten years later directed *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973), a film both serious and satirical about the history of the civil rights struggle. These films, as Alex Lykidis discusses in this volume, provide enlightening bookends to the civil rights era.

If Hollywood’s adaptation of Hansberry’s drama indicated that the industry was becoming interested in black-themed plays, the playwright most popular with studios up until the early 1960s was Tennessee Williams, whose dramas about dysfunctional and taboo aspects of white southern family life had generated solid box office. In 1962, however, a new play signaled a changing of the guard. *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by the then unknown Edward Albee upped the ante with its unsympathetic, at times

absurdist, portrait of the combative marriage of a middle-aged couple, George and Martha. With a nod to Williams's legacy, Albee's play references the older playwright's 1947 drama *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Although *Streetcar* concludes with the birth of a child, however, *Virginia Woolf* ends with the death of a child – a child that was never more than a fantasy functioning as both tonic and glue for a marriage founded on lies, denial, and false hopes. This same toxic combination dramatically alters the marriage of *Streetcar*'s young couple, the Kowalskis (with Stella Kowalski choosing to stay with her husband even after learning that he raped her sister). As bookends to the baby boom years, both plays represent American families devolving from dysfunction into horror story. Warner Bros. adapted both into highly acclaimed and commercially successful films. The 1951 Williams adaptation, produced under the watchful eye of the still intact Production Code, changed the play's ending, forcing Stella to leave her brutish, rapacious husband. The film thus suppresses the true meaning of Stella's acquiescence in the play, which penetrates the sheen of morality and emotional commitment to reveal the family as an institution driven by practicality and accommodation aimed at securing material comfort and economic stability. With the Production Code all but buried, the costly, high-profile 1966 adaptation of *Virginia Woolf*, by contrast, placed such hypocrisy front and center. The horror of middle-class family morality heavily informed Elizabeth Taylor's Oscar-winning performance as Martha, a character who, like Poitier's Walter Young in *A Raisin in the Sun* and Ivan Dixon's Duff Anderson in *Nothing But a Man*, takes the frustrations of her stunted existence out on her family rather than society. While Walter and Duff's anger must be seen in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, Martha's rage gained resonance with the publication of Betty Friedan's 1963 bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*, arguing that beneath the façade of married middle-class existence, American women were roiled by unhappiness and frustration. Soon, the facts unearthed by Friedan seeped into an increasing number of films debunking the myth of a "consensus society," including Arthur Penn's 1965 tale of small town violence, *The Chase* – a film as notable for its coterie of unhappy, promiscuous housewives as for its study of male paranoia and violence and that, in many ways, may be regarded as a sequel of sorts to Kazan's stinging depiction in *Splendor in the Grass*.

The Family According to Alfred Hitchcock

Perhaps no director furnished more disturbing portraits of the American family during this period than Alfred Hitchcock. Adapted from a pulp novel and filmed in black and white on a low budget, *Psycho* (1960) – the story of disturbed serial killer Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), who, after killing his mother, adopts her personality and dresses in her clothes when stabbing his female victims – became a box office hit and now is regarded as a modernist masterpiece. While Hitchcock's understanding of the American family as locus of horrific crimes dates back to the immediate post-war era with *Shadow of a Doubt* (1948) and while the intersection of horror and crime already characterized his Gothic dramas *Rebecca* (1940) and *Suspicion* (1942), it was Hitchcock's late work that both rediscovered and elevated the psychological thriller by demonstrating its suitability for telling critically inflected stories about deep disturbances rooted in family.

If *Psycho* anticipated developments in the horror film (it is now widely considered a precursor to the slasher sub-genre, with the 1974 classic, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, in its own way, very much a family film), Hitchcock's next effort, *The Birds* (1963), on first glance looks back at the genre's 1950s preoccupation with monstrous creatures, in this case, swarms of birds bringing death and destruction to a coastal town in northern California. Yet, more significantly, as mundane inhabitants of our natural world whose behavior remains unexplained, the birds allegorically embody the abysses of the modern age. They thus function as a narrative framework for probing the state of the family – as true also, in a different setting, of the source story by Daphne du Maurier. Intimations of failed relationships, hints at female homoeroticism, constant reminders of an absent, deceased father, and, most of all, the birds' attacks on the town's children convey a deep, multi-layered skepticism as to whether the very concept of family is capable of surviving or, for that matter, worth saving. As in so many of Hitchcock's films, the cast of characters includes attractive women who, because they know too much (to cite an argument by feminist critic Tania Modleski, 1988), cause male anxiety, for which they are punished in one or another way. *The Birds* also extends

the Hitchcockian tradition of a domineering mother who attempts to wield influence over a long line of male protagonists and antagonists. Although *Psycho* attributes Norman's pathology at least partially to the abusive effects of maternal power, *The Birds* shifts emphasis by depicting the mother's possessive behavior primarily as a symptom of her inhabiting a role she did not choose – that of family matriarch expected to uphold patriarchal structures.

In *Marnie* (1964), the mother is once again key to what, within limits, may be regarded as an indictment of patriarchy. Here, mother and daughter are two parts of a broken family whose story the film uncovers by tracing the behavior of the daughter, Marnie (“Tippi” Hedren) – a thief with fake identities, a deep distrust of men, and a phobic response to the color red – to a traumatic childhood episode in which she killed a client of her then prostitute mother. The secret is uncovered through “therapy” undertaken by a man (Sean Connery) who forces Marnie to marry him and then rapes her, thus rendering the film problematic, if perhaps also more realistic, as its narrative becomes complicated through characters' mixed motives. These qualities link Hitchcock's 1960s horror-inflected family dramas to films of the European art cinema, even as they made his films less popular with mass audiences. After flocking to *Psycho*, audiences were confused by *The Birds*, all but shunned *Marnie*, and showed little more interest in his cold war spy thrillers *Torn Curtain* (1965) and *Topaz* (1968).

With no musical score, *The Birds* relies heavily on atmospheric sound design, on which composer Bernard Herrmann was a key consultant. Herrmann's contributions to Hitchcock's films cannot be underestimated. His scores range from the screeching violins of *Psycho*'s shower sequence – an aural assault on the audience matching the violent knife-stabbing assault on the body of Marion Crane – to the persistent, insistent chords of urgency that drive Marnie simultaneously forward into her schemes and backward into her own entrapping psyche. Most notably, Herrmann masterfully tempers the lush Wagnerian romanticism of *Vertigo*'s musical score (1958) – in which longing and unrequited desire pulse palpably at key moments – with haunting minor-key melodies that darkly hint at the inevitable deceptions lurking beneath the ideal surface of voyeuristically-inspired attraction.

The Star System in Transition

If horror infused several subcategories of the American family film in the 1960s, it was Elizabeth Taylor's mid-decade transformation in *Virginia Woolf* from 1950s glamour goddess and nervy heroine of Williams adaptations into a middle-aged harridan that would foreground yet another facet of horror – what critics have called “the horror of personality” (Derry 1974). The trope was showcased to great popularity in a string of Gothic family dramas about murderous, diabolical spinsters, which included *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford; *Hush ... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964), starring Bette Davis and Olivia de Havilland; and *Strait-Jacket* (1964), starring Joan Crawford. While the frightening and freakish nature of characterization and casting placed these films in the horror tradition, the fact that the horrors generated by spinster rage hailed from psychological trauma and emotional frustration rather than Transylvania or outer space illustrated nothing so much as the abiding influence of the melodrama. It seems apposite that the stars of this new brand of horror were Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, two great actresses of the studio era who shrewdly recycled their respective star personas – each closely shaped by the woman's film – for the twilight phase of their careers.

Whether it suffused a low-brow shocker or was performed in the register of prestige drama, the horror of personality heavily drew on camp, an act of recycling an outdated artifact or style to ironic effect and a phenomenon that in the 1960s became influential on all arts. Despite all their differences, what 1960s superstars such as Taylor and Burton had in common with faded Hollywood greats like Crawford and Davis was that, in a decade of rapidly evolving tastes dictated by youth culture, their styles quickly became outdated, which made them subject to recycling. Crawford and Davis's horror vehicles shrewdly referenced their stars' old movies, while Taylor and Burton allowed their movie roles to become conflated with their widely publicized real-life relationship. While camp has multiple facets and implications, its presence in Hollywood films of the 1960s was a portent that the star system was about to undergo a sea change. The days of stars created by the studios were numbered, with successive generations of thespians including Susan Hayward, Lana Turner, Ava

Gardner, Doris Day, Rita Hayworth, Kim Novak, and Janet Leigh bound for retirement, while others, like Davis, Crawford, Olivia de Havilland, and Gene Tierney were enjoying a comeback (however short-lived), and still others, like Barbara Stanwyck, had transitioned to television.

While many of their successors possessed beauty, none of them would become goddesses. And while some had blond hair, none were archetypal blondes like Marilyn Monroe, whose untimely death in 1962 widely signified the death of old Hollywood. Male actors were affected in a similar way, though the movies proved more forgiving of aging male stars. If Montgomery Clift suffered a similarly tragic, premature death as Marilyn Monroe, Paul Newman and Marlon Brando never lost their superstar status after experiencing mid-1960s career slumps (Newman rebounded at the box office with *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, 1969, and went on to play leading roles in the 1970s). Burt Lancaster skillfully picked roles that enabled him to showcase both his imposing physique and his acting talent. In many ways

the most successful male star of the 1960s, Lancaster turned in memorable performances in many of the decade's high-profile films, including Luchino Visconti's internationally produced art film *The Leopard* (1963) and the Hollywood prestige films *Elmer Gantry* (1960), *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), *Seven Days in May*, and *The Swimmer* (1968). By contrast, Rock Hudson's career as a leading man in movies came to an end during this period, though he was able to transition to television, while John Wayne, Henry Fonda, and William Holden garnered attractive roles into the 1970s, continuing to hold their own against the new generation of stars that included Warren Beatty, Robert Redford, Dustin Hoffman, and Steve McQueen.

The generational turnover was paralleled by the shifting status of the star in the industry. Already the 1950s had seen a change in ground rules "from the studios who owned stars to the stars who owned the picture," as David Cook points out (1994, 427), by virtue of the rising power of talent agencies that packaged movie deals sealed by star power (a development



Figure 1.1 The enraged Martha (Elizabeth Taylor) and the heavy-drinking George (Richard Burton), in Mike Nichols's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966, producer Warner Bros. Entertainment), are not quite the perfect Production Code couple.

signaled by the 1962 takeover of Universal by Lew Wasserman's powerful talent agency MCA). Freed from long-term contracts and now often receiving a percentage of the profits, stars, by the early 1960s, had more power than ever before, but were also more vulnerable to the marketplace. No one experienced this more acutely than Taylor and Burton, who, after starring in *Cleopatra* (1963), *The Sandpiper* (1965), and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966), were arguably the biggest movie stars in the world, but who complained about a dearth of good parts after pricing themselves out of the market – which, however, in no way diminished their status as global celebrities.

Thus, the 1960s not only witnessed a generational changeover with regard to stars but also an ironic bifurcation of the very concept of movie stardom. On the one hand, the industry during this decade produced a sizable number of films that self-consciously thematized the commoditization of personality and presented stardom in a critical, even skeptical light – whether in dramas like *Two Weeks in Another Town* (1962) and *The Legend of Lyla Clare* (1968), in horror films like *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, or in musicals such as *Gypsy* (1962), *Inside Daisy Clover* (1965), *Star!*, and *Funny Girl* (1968). On the other hand, as Taylor and Burton demonstrate, the concept of movie stardom was eclipsed by another concept – global celebrity – for which starring in movies was no longer as central a requirement. While this shift may have placed traditional movie stardom at a remote distance for the performers who would rise to prominence in the years of the New Hollywood, it also arguably freed them up to express with greater conviction their interest in and commitment to acting as a craft. With the exception, of course, of Raquel Welch – a throwback to the Hollywood sexpot.

A New Immorality

In the course of the 1960s, studios became increasingly unwilling to compromise the integrity of controversial but promising properties of the kind Warner Bros. had on its hands with *Virginia Woolf*. Preparing for the film's release, the studio requested an exemption from the Production Code Administration,

offering to release it with announcements on theater lobby placards warning audiences that the film was not suitable for children and that anyone under 18 would not be admitted without parental accompaniment. The PCA agreed because it already was working on its own new classification system that *Virginia Woolf* could help catalyze (Leff & Simmons 1990, 258–265). *Virginia Woolf*'s chipping away at the Code more seriously extended the challenges that director Otto Preminger had earlier posed in releasing *The Moon Is Blue* (1953) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) without a seal of approval. In 1968, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) announced that motion pictures would now be reviewed by a new Code and Rating Administration (CRA) that would apply a set of audience-advisory ratings: G for films acceptable to all audiences, M for films appropriate for adults and mature youth, R for films with “theme, content and treatment, [that] should not be presented to persons under 16 unless accompanied by parent or adult guardian” (Maltby 2003, 599). The CRA also established an X rating for films that did not qualify for a Code seal of approval and to which no one under 18 would be permitted admission. In 1970, the R rating was broadened and the operative age for restriction was raised from 16 to 17. The new ratings guided parents about movie content but also served as a continued form of industry self-censorship and as a marketing device for distributors.

Films that contained nudity and explicit representations of violence – and an ever-growing body of films included both – were generally cut to the measure of an R rating. On the other hand, the X rating came to designate films produced in a realm beyond the boundaries of the MPAA in which the explicit representations of sex earned the title “hard core.” That realm had its own long history, as Eric Schaefer points out in this volume, one that ran parallel with and, at times, entered the margins of the mainstream. In the post-war period, the sex-exploitation film achieved both profits and wider popularity in the work of Russ Meyer, whose first film, *The Immoral Mr. Teas*, was produced in 1959 for \$24,000. Fifteen years later, his *Super Vixens*, made for a little less than \$220,000 grossed in excess of \$16 million (Donahue 1987, 243). Against the backdrop of the New Hollywood and its somber projections of diminished personal power, Meyer's films were

fantasies of abundance, a sexual world with few limits.

But Meyer's films were only the most conspicuous examples of a wave of relatively low-budget productions that would swell in the 1960s and climax in the 1970s. Built around various exploitation formulas, these films traded on Gothic horror, youth cycles about beach parties and motorcycle gangs, and soft-core voyeurism featuring stewardesses and cheerleaders. By 1970, close to 900 theaters exhibited some form of "sexploitation" cinema and a quarter of these were drive-ins (*Report* 1970, 97). Heir to the 1950s B-film, American International Pictures (AIP) was the most prolific producer of independent exploitation movies and its most influential figure was Roger Corman. Corman's forte was cheap thrills that sacrificed narrative complexity for action and a production mode that quickly moved projects from script to screen in order to cash in on movies addressing popular trends – whether in horror flicks such as *The Raven* (1963), an atmospheric Edgar Allan Poe adaptation, or films with a strong subcultural appeal, such as *The Wild Angels* (1966), a biker film precursor, of sorts, to the phenomenally successful *Easy Rider*, which was initially developed at AIP. With a keen eye on youth culture, music, and sex, another AIP product, *Wild in the Streets* (1968), about the rise and fall of a crypto-fascist rock singer-turned-president, worked as both a teen exploitation film and a political satire capitalizing on America's obsession with youth and middle-class perceptions and projections of countercultural hedonism.

For the most part, films produced by AIP or its low-budget contemporaries flew under the critical radar. Hard core, on the other hand, did not. *Deep Throat* (1972), shot by Gerard Damiano in six days in January 1972 for under \$25,000, forced explicit cinema into the national consciousness, as Linda Williams explains in the hardcover/online edition. The film would rank eleventh in box office grosses for 1973. Damiano would follow up the next year with *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973) which would rank seventh. The exhibition of *Deep Throat* brought charges of obscenity and a very public 11-day trial resulting in a \$3 million judgment against its exhibitor. Yet, despite the judge's pronouncement that the film was "indisputably obscene by any measurement," *Deep Throat* played in 70 cities over an 18-month period (Turan & Zito 1974, 145). Ultimately, the XXX

cinema, as it came to be known, was more licentious than liberating. The formal economy of hard core, its close-ups of genitals in action and its claustrophobic living-room-as-studio interiors, for the most part drew much greater attention to the body than the body politic. In its above-ground popularity, *Deep Throat* represented a moment of middle-class transgression for a population negotiating a shift in social mores. While hard-core cinema would migrate rather quickly to home video, it would remain, after 1973, an extremely lucrative component of movie-making, one with its own star system and fan base.

The Avant-garde

While the institutional and formal conventions of commercial movie-making lend themselves to a more coherent chronicle, the array of forms, philosophies, and artists that compose the avant-garde resists any brief overview. Still, some of the most important contours can be articulated, but only after two essential questions are addressed. First, as several historians of the avant-garde have argued, experimental cinema is no less embedded in economic and social factors than the products of Hollywood. Nor does it exist in some parallel realm totally isolated from the commercial cinema. While artists like Stan Brakhage and Paul Sharits created films in a language radically different from the mainstream, others such as Kenneth Anger, Bruce Conner, and George Kuchar entered into a critical, sometimes comic, dialogue with popular culture and the Hollywood cinema. Second, the post-war avant-garde, like its ancestors of an earlier era, developed not as a random set of personal experiments but with the assistance of an institutional structure of theaters, magazines, and distributors.

The exhibition component of that structure was initially set in New York and San Francisco. In New York City, the most important site of exhibition would be Cinema 16, founded in 1947 by Amos Vogel, who operated it until its end in 1963 (James 1992, 6). In 1962, Jonas Mekas, émigré filmmaker and champion of what some were now calling the New American Cinema, established the Film-Makers' Cooperative, which would become a crucial source for the distribution of experimental films. Around the same time, filmmaker Bruce Baillie began a series of informal screenings of experimental

films at his home in Canyon, California, and Chick Strand founded *Canyon Cinemanews*, a journal in support of the emerging West Coast avant-garde scene. In 1967, a group of Bay Area filmmakers, including Bruce Conner, Larry Jordan, and Ben Nelson, founded Canyon Cinema, a filmmaker-run distribution company. This infrastructure for the circulation of experimental film was accompanied by an emerging critical discourse, most notably in the pages of *Film Culture*, a magazine founded in 1955. Here, filmmakers and scholars of the avant-garde published manifestos, critical dialogues, and trenchant reviews for an experimental film audience that had begun to spread beyond New York and San Francisco to the nation's museums and college campuses. This audience absorbed a body of work remarkable for its aesthetic diversity, with no single impulse that could claim priority.

While this aesthetic diversity had adhered to the avant-garde scene since the late 1940s, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, it had become part of a broader rejection of cultural and artistic hierarchies. This mentality reached critical mass with the “New Sensibility,” whose proponents commended the new avant-garde for leaving behind the seriousness of the 1950s with its distinctions between “high” and “low,” as it sought to blur the boundaries between art, science, and pop culture. In this new atmosphere a song by the Beatles was deemed as edifying and as worthy of discussion as a painting by Jasper Johns (Ross 1989, 141). No longer looking to Europe for models of legitimacy, the 1960s avant-garde was thoroughly American, reflecting youthful open-mindedness and self-assurance. As such, it also had a privileged place in the democratic vision of the Kennedy administration, which projected a vibrant, rejuvenated America. By establishing the arts at the center of American life, however, the White House embraced high art and the arts establishment, legitimizing the competitive Cold War posture of “America First” – whether in space or culture. Ironically, then, the White House's top-down arts initiatives were nothing if not European in their inflection and practice. Despite an apparent spirit of renewal, the concrete benefits of cultural institution building operated at a remove from such liminal artistic spheres as the downtown Greenwich Village art scene and the film avant-garde.

This scene became the creative center of much of what was touted as the new arts in the 1960s. As Sally

Banes has argued, its numerous overlapping, sometimes rivaling networks of artists were forming the multifaceted base of an alternative, newly bohemian culture (Banes 1993, 35). Wildly experimental and sexually libertarian, it enacted the radical notions of community that were merely talked about in other places, practicing the very democracy the established scene merely aspired to, and, with its championing of women's roles and the emphasis on play, bringing about the fusion of art and politics that in other spheres of American life would remain consigned to the realm of theory.

The “underground” component of American experimental film, which Jared Rapfogel discusses in Volume I, is remarkable both for its sexual diversity and its formal eclecticism. Its most penetrating works combine both personal and social address, oftentimes within the same film. In *Fireworks* (1947) and *Scorpio Rising* (1963), Kenneth Anger projected the complicated relationship among (homo)sexuality, subjectivity, and the artifacts of popular culture. Images of the naked body were projected by the underground well before it was permissible in above-ground culture. In 1963, underground performance artist and filmmaker Jack Smith created a scandal when his 16mm film *Flaming Creatures* was confiscated by the NYPD. The film depicted an orgiastic rooftop gathering of drag queens flaunting their genitals. Barbara Rubin's *Christmas on Earth* (1964) presented a New York apartment orgy through dual projections of overlapping images. What followed later in the decade were both serious meditations on sexuality, such as Carolee Schneemann's densely layered *Fuses* (1967), and playful, impoverished melodramas like *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966) and *The Devil's Cleavage* (1973) by George Kuchar. Collage aesthetics were likewise a staple of the underground, with its most important practitioner in Bruce Conner. Stitching together found footage from virtually every genre – Hollywood, educational films, ethnographic cinema, soft-core porn, newsreels – Conner created dynamic montages that followed the culture's own fixations on technologies of violence and the illicit image. Indeed, underground film got its name not only because it existed beyond or beneath the scrutiny of mainstream culture but also because it traded in many of its taboo subjects.

One significant cluster of avant-garde films, despite their profound differences, can be understood

through the principle of reinvention, that is, the shaping of cinema. For Stan Brakhage, the most prolific of experimental film artists, the project was nothing less than the reconstruction of vision, the creation of a new way of seeing not mediated by language but produced through the camera-eye. In the opening paragraph of his book, *Metaphors on Vision*, Brakhage poses a series of questions that became chapter and verse to students of the avant-garde: “How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of ‘Green’? How many rainbows can light create for the untutored eye?” (Brakhage 1976, 1). In literally hundreds of films free from the constraints of narrative and spoken language, Brakhage sought the cinematic revisualization and thus reconceptualization of nature, family, and myth.

Another cluster of films to gesture toward reinvention was the so-called structural film. In the work of Michael Snow, Ken Jacobs, Paul Sharits, Ernie Gehr, and Hollis Frampton, the cinema emerges cleansed of everything but its essential structures. P. Adams Sitney, the most influential commentator on the avant-garde during the 1960s and 1970s, identifies four primary characteristics of structural film – the fixed frame, the flicker effect, loop printing, and re-photography off the screen (Sitney 1979, 370). What places the accent on reconstruction is the tendency of some structural filmmakers to apply their experiments to pieces of early cinema – most notably Ken Jacobs’s 115 minute re-photography of *Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son* (1969), a 1905 Biograph short, and Ernie Gehr’s *Eureka* (1974), a radical expansion of another 1905 film shot from a trolley moving down Market Street in San Francisco. The vast majority of structural films, however, did not rework fragments of early cinema but rather pursued what the earliest filmmakers had pursued – an interest in the apparatus itself. Just as film pioneers had created a new spectator, so, too, did structural filmmakers invite, some would say provoke, even sophisticated viewers into new, occasionally uncomfortable positions. In *Wave-length* (1967), Michael Snow, for instance, presents a 45-minute gradual zoom, parsed out through multiple cuts, across a SoHo loft. In *nostalgia* (1971), Hollis Frampton deliberates on photography, memory, and loss. But unlike the elongated temporality in these films, Paul Sharits engineered a style of flicker and assault. His *T*O*U*C*H*I*N*G* (1969) and *Razor Blades* (1965–1968), the latter a dual projector film,

bounced bright colors and still images off the screen in violent bursts.

The films of Bruce Baillie weave together multiple strands of the avant-garde. In *All My Life* (1966) he contemplates the panning camera in a trip over flowers and bushes set to the voice of Ella Fitzgerald. Part structural film, part postcard from a beautiful summer day, *All My Life* underscores the home movie potential of experimental film. In *Castro Street* (1966), Baillie uses multiple exposures and smooth camera movement to create a colorfully fluid, at times ghostly mosaic of trains and industry along a rail line in California. And in *Mass for the Dakota Sioux* (1963–1964) and *Quixote* (1964–1968), Baillie created films that are part travel journal and part political treatise, merging collage, diary, and documentary in a single text.

When pop artist Andy Warhol turned to the cinema in 1963 he, too, sought a reinvention, but one in stark contrast to most other avant-garde filmmakers. Warhol’s re-creation was of the industrial cinema, now transported to his mid-town Manhattan Factory, complete with an alternate star system, screen tests (of which he made approximately 500) and a mode of collaborative production in which, after 1968, Warhol moved from director to brand name. His monumental films *Empire* (1964) and *Sleep* (1963) proffered a reinvention through distillation, reducing cinema to the fixed frame and the long take. In fact, if motion had been the first fascination for the Lumière brothers as the medium’s original attraction, Warhol chose to reshape film history with stasis – 321 minutes of John Giorno asleep or 485 minutes of the Empire State Building. Through a string of films that were teasingly erotic (*Blow Job*, 1964; *The Nude Restaurant*, 1967; *Lonesome Cowboys*, 1967; *Bike Boy*, 1967), if rarely graphic (*Couch*, 1965; *Blue Movie*, 1968), Warhol also gave new dimension to sexual representation, ironically referencing mainstream conventions and pushing them to new limits (see Grundmann 2003). Finally, Warhol, in the mid-to late 1960s, was at the center of a new development referred to as expanded cinema. Through his experiments with double-screen projection for *Inner and Outer Space* (1965) and *The Chelsea Girls* (1966), as well as his multi-media light and performance show, *The Exploding Plastic Inevitable (EPI)* (1967), Warhol expanded the notion of cinema to include various technologies (among them video recordings and TV monitors), multiple film projectors, light shows, and

live music performances by The Velvet Underground. Other artists, like filmmaker Stan Vanderbeek and abstract animators John and James Whitney, used fledgling computer technologies for their experiments with expanded cinema (Grundmann 2004, 48).

Independent Fiction and Nonfiction Film

In 1969, Hollywood released *Midnight Cowboy*, a film about a male prostitute walking the streets of Manhattan in rodeo attire. Based on a 1965 novel, its style heavily courted resemblance to Warhol's 1967 cycle of sexploitation films, with a key scene in a Factory-type setting. Warhol, who had pioneered the depiction of male prostitution with his 1965 underground film *My Hustler* (rereleased in an extended version as part of the 1967 cycle), realized he and his Factory had been cannibalized by Hollywood. Instead of accepting a courtesy offer to appear in *Midnight Cowboy*, Warhol followed the advice of his assistant, Paul Morrissey, that the Factory should issue its own narrative feature about a male hustler. The result was *Flesh* (1969), whose genesis, historically speaking, is a textbook case of independent cinema forming the dialectical synthesis of Hollywood and the avant-garde. Like *My Hustler* but in contrast to *Midnight Cowboy*, *Flesh* takes place outside the system of mainstream morality; like *Midnight Cowboy* but unlike *My Hustler*, *Flesh* is fully scripted and was conceived for theatrical distribution and exhibition. It not only marked Warhol's transition to producer, but it also launched the filmmaking career of Morrissey, who became a respectable director in his own right on the flourishing independent scene – shaped mainly, but not exclusively, by white male artists like Woody Allen, John Sayles, and, of course, John Cassavetes.

Cassavetes, for many years, was the most prominent filmmaker to chart a path for narrative cinema outside of Hollywood. From his late 1950s interracial debut feature, *Shadows* (1959), to his 1970s dramas about the complexity of interpersonal relationships, Cassavetes consistently countered Hollywood's standardized approaches to scripted narrative with his own brand of cinema, the most prominent features of which were intimate camera work and improvised acting. Films such as *Faces* (1968), *A*

Woman Under the Influence (1974), and *Opening Night* (1977) teased out performances of historic status from Cassavetes's wife and lead actor, Gena Rowlands. But to grant Cassavetes pioneer status is to ignore that the very concept of independent film significantly predates him, going back to the birth of the Hollywood industry, which itself had been founded as a confederacy of former outsiders, and against which the early indies would come to define themselves. Whether defined institutionally or in artistic-aesthetic terms, a history of independent film must begin, at the very latest, with such historic figures as Oscar Micheaux and other makers of so called "race films" in the 1910s and 1920s, as Paula Massood outlines in Volume I of this series, and must continue with a consideration of the New York Shtetl films of the 1930s, before arriving at such landmark films as *Salt of the Earth* (1950), whose independent status is defined not merely by creative sensibility, but also, and most centrally, in starkly political terms. Cassavetes's indie status is further qualified by the fact that he kept one foot firmly planted in the industry as an actor for television and for Hollywood movies, not unlike independent filmmakers Jim McBride (*David Holzman's Diary*, 1968) and Milton Moses Ginsberg (*Coming Apart*, 1969) who had tenuous ties with the industry. By contrast, many of their contemporaries, including black independent filmmaker William Greaves (*Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*, 1967) and experimental filmmaker Shirley Clarke (*The Cool World*, 1963) had no connections to the industry.

Clarke, to whom we shall return shortly, is instructive also for the ways in which her work and 1960s independent cinema in general blurred the line between narrative and documentary. The most important new step for documentary filmmakers came in the form of the direct cinema movement, a style that eschewed the voiceover narration and explicitly didactic form that had dominated much of non-fiction film during the Depression and war years. New lightweight cameras and portable synchronous sound equipment afforded filmmakers unprecedented mobility and intimacy in their desire to peel away all signs of constructedness and manipulation.

As Charles Warren details in his comprehensive discussion of direct cinema in this volume, many pioneers of direct cinema got their start with Robert Drew and Associates, initial forays facilitated by ABC News as the network sought to fulfill the Federal

Communication Commission's mandate for public affairs programming (Barsam 2001, 212). In the work of D. A. Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, Albert and David Maysles, Joyce Chopra, and Charlotte Zwerin direct cinema documented contemporary political and cultural life, less by analyzing social structures than by profiling significant personalities. In *Primary* (Drew, 1960), *Don't Look Back* (Pennebaker, 1967), and *Meet Marlon Brando* (Maysles, 1965), the direct cinema approach relied on the charisma of its subjects (JFK and Hubert Humphrey, Bob Dylan, and Brando, respectively) as it gained access not found in television news, while *Happy Mother's Day* (Chopra and Leacock, 1963) and *Salesman* (Maysles and Zwerin, 1969) probed the American scene divorced from the glow of celebrity. Also pursuing this latter course was Frederick Wiseman, whose work consistently documented American institutions, carrying broad implications for the culture as a whole. In *High School* (1968), for example, the seemingly successful North East High School in Philadelphia is represented as a semi-authoritarian environment where students are trained in rigid gender roles and rule-following. A school administrator, in the closing scene, reads a letter from a former student now in Vietnam, deeming their education of the boy a success when he describes himself as "just a body doing a job."

Shirley Clark became involved in heated debates with her direct cinema colleagues, with whom she had formed a post-production facility, Filmmakers Inc. (Rabinovitz 1991, 110). Clarke accused her colleagues of creating the *appearance* of reality through "invisible" editing, especially in scenes involving "crisis moment" situations. These documentaries thus created fictional narrative constructs of psychological revelation, according to Clarke, in the guise of unmediated renderings of objective truth (Rabinovitz 1991, 113). Clarke believed that the presence of the camera should be openly acknowledged through interactions between subjects and the filmmaker – as in the work of French *cinéma vérité* filmmaker Jean Rouch. While Clarke's first feature film, *The Connection* (1962), is a fiction film (about documentary filmmakers filming a group of drug addicts waiting for their heroin delivery), her best-known film, which links her interest in experimental documentary with her interest in race, is *Portrait of Jason* (1967), a classic of direct cinema featuring an extended interview

with a black gay man who recounts his experiences working as a servant for wealthy whites.

In the late 1960s when "official" discourse from establishment figures was perceived as misleading or downright dishonest, direct cinema was part of a larger gesture toward authenticity and honesty also found in some nonfiction literature at the time. A documentary political critique more commensurate with, indeed organic to, the counterculture began in December 1967 with the formation of New York Newsreel, a radical filmmaking collective. In a short time, branches of Newsreel opened in Boston, Chicago, Ann Arbor, and San Francisco. Unlike observational direct cinema, Newsreel was avowedly activist, an outgrowth of the New Left, seeking not just to educate but to mobilize viewers around issues of social justice and anti-war protest. Developing guerrilla filmmaking tactics that eschewed critical distance for direct contact and participation with those involved in revolutionary protest, Newsreel debuted with two important 1968 films – *Columbia Revolt* and *Black Panther* (Renov 1987, 23). Like the movement of which it was a part, Newsreel would, in the early 1970s, suffer from factionalism centered on issues of power and representation. As women and people of color demanded greater access to equipment and attention to their concerns, the focus of the various collectives shifted. In San Francisco, this was accelerated by the production of *The Woman's Film* (Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, and Ellen Sorren) in 1971, and in 1975, the chapter was officially renamed California Newsreel. In 1973, in recognition of the growing centrality of African-American, Latino/a and Asian members, New York Newsreel was renamed Third World Newsreel.

The New Hollywood

As the 1960s drew to a close, Hollywood still seemed loathe to acknowledge a fact of social reality that was openly reflected in all types of American films made outside the industry – that the American film audience could no longer be understood or addressed as a unified population. As the national consensus was torn apart by the struggle over civil rights, the woman's movement, and protest of the war in southeast Asia, the film industry registered the turmoil in highly

mediated and indirect ways. Indeed, with exceptions as antithetical as *The Green Berets* (1968) and *Medium Cool* (1969), the commercial cinema largely failed to represent those struggles at the heart of political contestation. In some cases it represented anti-war sentiments in films about other wars – *Catch-22* (1970), set during World War II, *M*A*S*H* (1970), set during the Korean War, and even *Little Big Man* (1970), set during the period leading up to and climaxing in the Battle of Little Big Horn. Frequently, however, the industry's politics were articulated through a revisionist approach to the genres – like the detective film, the Western, and the gangster film – that had lent ideological support to the hegemonic forces in American society.

This translated into what Thomas Elsaesser (1975) termed, “a cinema of pathos,” one in which heroes could no longer tame the West, heal the sick, or police the streets. Historian Godfrey Hodgson has suggested that, during this period, Americans

learned that there was moral ambiguity where they had once thought that the issues of right and wrong were clearest; that their own motives were not above suspicion; and that there seemed little that political action could achieve, however idealistic its intentions, without evoking unforeseen or unwanted action. (Hodgson 1978, 484)

Hodgson's diagnosis is aimed at the late 1960s, of course, but it could also read as an apt description of earlier films noir. Indeed, Hollywood had always made films that registered the nation's anxieties. But now the balance was shifting. Without the old studio system, fewer films were projecting an affirmative attitude. The industry's most respected directors and a generation of stars who had matured outside the studio system gave their energies to films that echoed Hodgson's characterization of America at this time. A loss of certainty and doubts about personal and institutional agency were inscribed across many of their films. In *Midnight Cowboy*, *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1969), *The Hospital* (1971), *The Conversation* (1974), *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *Across 110th Street* (1972), and *The Last Picture Show* (1971), to name just a few, protagonists are overwhelmed by economic forces, personal demons, and failed institutions. Perhaps no single line of dialogue

better encapsulates the idea that place overwhelms purpose than the last defeatist line of Polanski's 1974 neo-noir masterpiece: “Come on Jake, it's Chinatown.” The heroes of such films, Elsaesser concluded, underscore an “almost physical sense of inconsequential action, of pointlessness and uselessness, a radical skepticism, in short, about the American virtues of ambition, vision, drive” (Elsaesser 1975, 15). For many of these films, narrative closure came in the form of either flight – *The Graduate*, *Serpico* (1973), *Klute* (1971), *Catch-22* (1970), *Five Easy Pieces*, *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971) – or death – *Easy Rider*, *Cool Hand Luke* (1966), *Electra Glide in Blue* (1973), *The Parallax View* (1974), *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*.

As Derek Nystrom's essay in this volume details, the New Hollywood was a complex phenomenon in terms of both the industrial practices and talents it deployed and the contents and styles it generated. It was the product not just of auteurs groomed by television (Altman, Penn, Lumet), but of an even younger generation of filmmakers, the so-called “movie-brats” – Francis Coppola, Peter Bogdanovich, Brian De Palma, Martin Scorsese, many of them film school-trained and a full generation outside of the studio system. But the New Hollywood, despite its modest experiments and sobering vision, cannot be separated from the industry's shifting economic fortunes, rotating set of studio bosses, and the profound recession that hit the movie business from 1969 to 1971. Industry losses have been estimated at \$200 million for 1969 alone (Maltby 2003, 175). A series of box-office failures for high-budget films imperilled several companies, while industry-wide overproduction far exceeded audience demand. During these nadir years, studio bosses desperate for solutions took chances by hiring off-beat talent or working out deals with small, artisanal production companies structured around a writer-director-producer (Elsaesser 2004, 53). Some of the films that were products of this collaboration failed to resonate at the box office because their topics and treatments lacked mainstream appeal or because they never achieved proper distribution. Yet the cinema that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s showed an unprecedented degree of social seriousness and aesthetic experimentation, leading some to claim that this was the only period in which American films approached art cinema status. While some filmmakers

like Jonathan Demme, Mike Nichols, and obviously Scorsese, De Palma, Spielberg, and Lucas, were able to extend their careers into the period of industry recon- solidation of the second New Hollywood (or New Hollywood II, as Nystrom refers to it), others, such as Hal Ashby, Bob Rafelson, Jerry Schatzberg, and Monte Hellman were unable to do so. It is their fates rather than those of the former group that have con- firmed for many critics and historians that the New Hollywood – and, by extension, American film of the 1970s – constituted the last great American pic- ture show.²

This generally accepted understanding of the New Hollywood benefits, however, from a fuller account of the contemporaneous complexities of the indus- try, revealing that such assumptions are incomplete on several fronts. Most strikingly, they ignore the experimentation that took place and became “nec- essary for the ‘system’ to first adjust and then renew itself” (Elsaesser 2004, 44). One case in point is a film like *Easy Rider*, which lastingly demonstrates the dou- ble imperative for any entertainment effort to pro- vide youth appeal through incorporating soundtrack as an integral marketing tool. A second case in point is the work of director-producer Roger Corman, who, while never aspiring to create art, keenly understood the continuum of art and commerce in the 1960s and 1970s. His low-budget production units, sometimes regarded, by Thomas Elsaesser, for instance, as indi- rect research and development units for the studio system, nevertheless continued testing the margins of permissible onscreen content and provided hands-on apprenticeships to future auteurs. Corman also acted as a distributor of European art films, helping redefine the status of the cult exhibition circuit as both a stage for and mirror of rebellious and transgressive sensi- bilities (Elsaesser 2004, 51–54). A third case is exem- plified by an actor like Jack Nicholson, whose career straddled several periods and cultural frames of refer- ence. Nicholson got his start in Corman’s 1960s B- movies and played roles in key films associated with the New Hollywood (*Easy Rider*, *Five Easy Pieces*, *Chinatown*) and international art cinema (*The Passen- ger*, 1975), before finally taking his place in the pan- theon of Hollywood superstars. Key to this transi- tion, which exemplifies the shift from the New Hol- lywood to the New New Hollywood, was *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1974), a critically acclaimed mental asylum drama in which Nicholson plays a

wrongfully committed patient who rouses his fellow inmates to revolt against the cold, uncaring institution. Nicholson’s bad boy rebellion is fueled by the energy of the film’s source novel, written by Ken Kesey, one of the counterculture’s literary icons. At close inspec- tion, however, the film simply adheres to the conven- tional underdog formula. While the film is directed by edgy Czech New Wave director Miloš Forman, its young co-producer, Michael Douglas, was an up- and-coming TV star who became an icon of 1980s Reaganite cinema.

Another aspect ignored by the swan-song narrative of 1970s American cinema is that the films it pro- duced certainly revised but never erased the tradition of genre filmmaking. As Thomas Elsaesser argues in this volume, no director is more exemplary of this dynamic than Robert Altman who, in his most fruit- ful years (1969–1975), produced a series of films that, while rarely commercial hits, became textbook studies of genre revisionism. *M*A*S*H* (1970) subverted the war film and had enough mainstream appeal to war- rant retooling as a long-running TV satiric sit-com; *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and *The Long Goodbye* (1973) subverted the Western and film noir respectively. While neither one was commercially successful, both were slightly more extreme (and mildly ironic ver- sions) of mainstream fare of the period. *McCabe* ironically anticipated Redford’s star vehicle *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) and *Goodbye*, in retrospect, might fruit- fully be compared with popular TV policier, *Columbo* (first broadcast in 1971 and starring Peter Falk).

It is in this context that 1970s genres must be placed, and none more so than the Western. No genre, arguably, has more concertedly communicated national historical myths. Between 1960 and 1975, the Western was subjected to a penetrating revision. As Teresa Podlesney points out in this volume, the dismantling of the genre was, in part, rendered by comedies (*Cat Ballou*, 1965; *Paint Your Wagon*, 1969) functioning, in her words, as “protracted rituals of debasement,” as if the humorous drunken fights that punctuated John Ford’s earlier films “have metasta- sized, threatening the maturity and integrity of the host genre.” Dramatic Westerns also rethought the glory of their heroes. If *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) already portrayed the gunman as lonely wanderer rather than ennobled loner, it still sought to recu- perate a matinee vision of heroism. By contrast, in *Ride the High Country* (1962), *The Ballad of Cable*

Hogue (1970), and *The Wild Bunch* (1969), Sam Peckinpah depicted aging Westerners – men whose days, to quote Pike Bishop (William Holden) in *The Wild Bunch*, “are closing fast.” In the Western, space had been equated with opportunity, a distinct visualization of progress. But in the Westerns of the New Hollywood, the desert setting creates a *mise-en-scène* of physical limits, an environment as brutal as it is beautiful and an apt background for characters close to the end. More than any other director perhaps, Peckinpah redefined cinematic violence, especially for the Western, discarding it as a tool for justice in order to record, in choreographies of blood, its sheer powers of devastation.

Ethnic Heroes and Independent Women

The Hollywood renaissance was also defined by the reemergence of two figures – the ethnic hero and the independent woman. Given its fascination with urban life, Hollywood had a long history of portraying ethnic Americans – James Cagney’s Irish Americans and Edward G. Robinson’s Italian Americans both at the heart of the gangster film. In the 1960s, when many productions fled studio artifice and set stories on location in the city, their casts often featured actors who looked more at home in the streets than on a horse. Indeed, the cover of the July 11, 1969 issue of *LIFE* magazine presented a split image featuring drawings of aging Western star John Wayne and a youthful Dustin Hoffman, with the headline: “Dusty and the Duke: A Choice of Heroes.” *Midnight Cowboy* had been released that season, and, as Art Simon points out in this volume, Dustin Hoffman’s Ratso Rizzo embodied the American dream in reverse, living in a New York that was, contrary to legend, anything but hospitable to the sons of immigrants. Al Pacino joined Hoffman as the most important of the new ethnic stars. In *Serpico* (1973) and *Dog Day Afternoon*, he would play volatile men caught in desperate and threatening circumstances.

But *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather Part II* (1974) projected the most daring image of ethnic America, bringing together three of its most charismatic actors, Brando, Pacino, and Robert De Niro. Indeed, it is *Part II* that roots the Corleone family in American history, juxtaposing Coppola’s stunning

re-creation of immigrant life – from Ellis Island to Little Italy – with family life under Michael Corleone thousands of miles from New York, now fenced within the family compound in Lake Tahoe. Both films set their sights on the myth of the self-made immigrant, situating him within an urban America defined by violence, corruption, and fear instead of honest hard labor. Indeed, for Michael Corleone, murder and the consolidation of power are the distinguishing aspects of his first-generation citizenship. Textbook lessons are not his version of America. “If history has taught us anything,” he tells Tom Hagen (Robert Duvall), “it’s that you can kill anyone.”

The ethnic persona, however, was not reserved strictly for drama. American film comedy returned to its early sound era roots with the work of Woody Allen, the most important comic auteur since Chaplin. *Take the Money and Run*, released in 1969, marked Allen’s directorial debut, inaugurating one of the most accomplished careers in American cinema. Indeed, as a playwright, literary humorist, screenwriter, stand-up comic, actor, and director, Allen stands at the top of the American comic tradition. His early films – *Bananas* (1971), *Sleeper* (1973), *Love and Death* (1975), and the script for *Play It Again, Sam* (1972, directed by Herbert Ross) – continued a legacy of comic outsiders – part coward, part neurotic, part romantic hero – extending back to Eddie Cantor, Groucho Marx, Bob Hope, and Jack Benny. Allen locates his schlemiel persona in a Latin American revolution in *Bananas*, in the distant future in *Sleeper*, and in Czarist Russia in *Love and Death*.

But Allen’s comic films reached far beyond this persona with which he became identified. To a remarkable degree, his films, extending into the 1980s, engaged the notion of a media-made identity, the enfolded relationship of culture and self. *Take the Money and Run* and *Zelig* (1983) mine the conventions of documentary, the latter in particular making the case for a seamless interweaving of psychology and cinematic tropes. Whether it is the televised broadcast of a revolution in *Bananas*, the thorough identification with Humphrey Bogart in *Play It Again, Sam*, the slippage between film, dream, and memoir in *Stardust Memories* (1980), the interaction of screen life and real life in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), or the power of radio in *Radio Days* (1987), Allen has returned again and again to the shaping forces of mass (and often literary) culture on contemporary identity, while also



Figure 1.2 In Herbert Ross's *Play It Again, Sam* (1972, producer Arthur P. Jacobs and writer Woody Allen) film critic Allan (Woody Allen) falls in love with Linda (Diane Keaton), his best friend's wife, and uses Humphrey Bogart's cinematic persona as a role model for romance and self-sacrifice.

romanticizing and earning mainstream acceptance for the neurotic psyche that worked to survive modern urban life.

Survival instincts were also essential to another important cinematic persona of the period – the independent woman. Like the ethnic male hero, she had her ancestry in an earlier Hollywood tradition established by Mae West, Barbara Stanwyck, Katharine Hepburn, and Bette Davis. But informed by second-wave feminism, she was less likely to bend to social mandates about romantic coupling, and she often maintained a cynical awareness of her place within a male-dominated world. Julie Christie, Faye Dunaway, and Jane Fonda created women who consistently possessed a broader vision than their male counterparts. In *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* Christie understands far better than her befuddled lover the momentum of history and the encroaching corporatization of the West. In *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) Dunaway also sees beyond the narrow perspective of her partner, eulogizing and mythologizing the couple through her poem that is published in a local newspaper. In *Network* (1976) Dunaway's Diana Christensen wields

power in a male-dominated industry, understanding – indeed manufacturing – the phenomenon of TV personality Howard Beal. And in *Chinatown* it is Dunaway's character, Evelyn Mulwray, alone, who knows the full truth about the depth of institutional corruption – and that knowledge destroys her.

But it is perhaps Jane Fonda who best embodied the feminist impulse of the period as mediated by Hollywood. Her performance as Anna Reeves, in love with two men, in Arthur Penn's *The Chase* (1966), attested to her capacity to play tough independence. And at the end of the decade, Fonda pulled off one of the most remarkable shifts of on-screen persona in American film history as she moved from the futuristic sex kitten of *Barbarella* in 1968 to the hardened, suicidal Gloria in Sydney Pollack's *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* one year later. The hint of complaint that always seemed to inform Fonda's voice was given full expression in Gloria. At the heart of Fonda's performance is her seamless movement between angry resistance and cynical submission. In her brutal honesty about the realities of Depression life, she discards social niceties. Closed off from affection, she sees the pain

more acutely than her naïve dance partner Robert (Michael Sarrazin). And in a single line that sums up her attitude toward life and the deep skepticism of the New Hollywood, Gloria dismisses all illusions and tells Robert: “Maybe it’s just the whole damn world is like Central Casting, they got it all rigged before you show up.” Fonda’s version of the world-weary independent woman, and the threat she posed, was granted institutional recognition when she was awarded the best actress Oscar for her next role in *Klute* (1971).

While Sidney Poitier had carried the burden of representing the black experience in dramatic films of the 1960s, the early 1970s saw a limited expansion of roles for black performers in vehicles that sharply departed from the stoic determinism of Poitier’s characters but that also stood in marked contrast to the pathos of failure that dominated white stories authored by Hollywood. Indeed, the Blaxploitation film – the one genre that consistently offered roles to multiple black actors (Richard Roundtree, Jim Brown, Fred Williamson, Ron O’Neal) – emphasized precisely the black man’s hyper-agency. As Ed Guerrero discusses in the hardcover/online edition, however, these films rarely attached that agency to the wider political struggle of the era, choosing, instead, to position their heroes on the fringes of the movement. Blaxploitation’s brief heyday ended in the mid-1970s with the emergence of new black stars like Richard Pryor, who were paired with white male leads like Gene Wilder in action-comedy hybrids with cross-over appeal – *Silver Streak* (1976) is one such example.

The anarchic hypermasculinity of Blaxploitation and the alienated meanderings of the New Hollywood are now widely regarded as two alternate expressions of a dominant industry. While languishing, this industry was still very much in place during the early 1970s. To represent these trends as insider/outsider narratives bears certain risks for film historians who choose this course. It bestows on these movements the kind of coherence that they may, in fact, never have possessed as historical occurrences. It also threatens to eclipse other phenomena of a time that we have barely begun to fathom, perhaps because they appear to us in fragments that are inconspicuously scattered in the shade of more palatable eulogies of a bygone America. Among these phenomena we may include the careers of certain filmmakers as well as the

stories, histories, and topographies of particular films. Consider the fragile careers of early 1970s women filmmakers like Barbara Loden, whose single film-making effort *Wanda* (1970) is a textbook study of the odds that female directors faced even during a period of purported permeability of industry structures, or, for that matter, Elaine May, to whom Hollywood was much less forgiving than it was of her male contemporaries. Consider also that in the years between Sidney Poitier and Blaxploitation, the films of Gordon Parks and Ossie Davis, which were based on urban black literature, appeared. Consider the Gothic themes and settings littering the margins of American mainstream film that often used Southern stories (*The Beguiled*, 1976) and scenarios of rural poverty (*Deliverance*, 1972; *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*). The rich commentary of these films on class represented a traumatized America already stuck in an amoral swamp, rather than carefully styled acts of moral indignation (*Five Easy Pieces*, 1970; *Network*) or bitter swansongs of craggy masculinity set in the American Southwest (*The Wild Bunch*, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, 1973). Students of film history cannot afford to neglect these phenomena and are tasked with restoring them to their rightful place in the larger narrative.

Notes

1. Parts of this discussion of the New Hollywood are adapted from a previously published essay: Art Simon. (2000). “La Struttura narrativa del cinema americano, 1960–1980 [The Structure of American Narrative Cinema, 1960–1980].” In Gian Piero Brunetta (ed.), *Storia del cinema mondiale gli Stati Uniti II* (pp. 1635–1684). Turin: Giulio Einaudi.
2. Indeed, this moniker is the title of a valuable collection of essays (Elsaesser, Horwath, & King 2004) that deals with the period in detail. See especially Thomas Elsaesser’s introduction, “American Auteur Cinema: The Last – or First – Great Picture Show,” for a detailed film-historical deliberation of the many intersecting dynamics of this period.

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