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Film Studies 590

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The Emerging New Hollywood and why Specific Filmmakers from the Golden Age of Hollywood could and could not make the Transition.

The sense of schizophrenia has never been so obvious within the world of American cinema than in the transitional period between the Golden Age of Hollywood and the emerging New Hollywood. After thirty-five years Hollywood had finally abandoned its censorship code and powerful studios were slowly falling into oblivion and into distribution and free-agency. Cultural shifts segregated American audiences, as legendary directors began to falter, classic stars began to fade and Hollywood producers began to panic. The public for a while was unfortunately subjected to bloated musicals, John Wayne war films and a future ruled by monstrous apes. Especially between the years of 1967-1972 the country began to feel such segregation and tension that many audiences felt as though choosing a movie was like rooting for a sports team or joining a political party: *The Sound of Music* or *The Wild Bunch*, *Cleopatra* or *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Longest Day* or *Five Easy Pieces*?

Very few legendary filmmakers from the Golden Age of Hollywood remained as successful when making the transition over into the New Hollywood. Many could state it was

either a sign of the directors old age and not getting with the times, others would argue it was the cultural shift of new and younger audiences who were looking for something different, while the rest would say it was because of the death of the Production Code and the emergence of the television. I wanted to try my best and delve into the reasons on why this happened because even though this sudden transition gave us one of the most innovative and socially conscious movements in Hollywood history, it at the same time had us forever lose the magical period of the Golden Age.

I believe the best way to explore this theoretical argument would be to focus on the 'auteur theory' and how it worked within the studios before and after the transition was made between the Golden Age and the New Hollywood. To do this I will examine two directors, one who has not been successful through this transition and one who has. The two directors' that I chose are Alfred Hitchcock and John Huston. But before I go into the personal auteur of each director's text it would probably be better to set the stage of what the industry was between the transition and of the historical, cultural and social importance of that period.

To try and make historical connections between Hollywood movies and the times in which they were released isn't so black and white or straightforward as they would seem to be, but between the transitional period of Hollywood it seems to be pretty obvious. Listing the many historical instances that occurred between this emotional and dramatic time-period between 1967-1972 could be a paper within itself: The civil rights movement, the race riots and 'black power'. The counter-culture, hippies, drug-taking or 'flower power'. Protests against the losing war in Vietnam and rise of feminism and demand for gay rights. The two Kennedy assassinations, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X's assassination. My Lai, Cambodia and the shooting of students at Kent State. Battles on the streets of Chicago. Nixon and the Watergate

scandal and the Charles Manson murders(Thompson, 383).These unforgettable moments in American history were an ongoing transition within themselves and so the transition within the cinema was ultimately expected and inevitable.

From counterculture to Watergate, the evens of the 1960s and early 1970s seemed to have a distinct influence on the films of the Hollywood Renaissance. It is never easy to make direct connections, however, or to establish precisely how the traces of historical events or social currents find their way onto the screen. (King 22)

1967-1974 was such a bleak period of great political violence and of drastic culture changes along with the public's heightened feelings of doubt and paranoia of their very own governments, that such events in our society were rapidly changing young people's perceptions on our country and our culture. Because of such drastic cultural changes in young audiences the 1950s and early 1960s became not only a transition in American commercial filmmaking, but a huge decline as well. In 1946 weekly cinema attendance in the United States was about 90 million. By 1950 it had plunged to 60 million and in 1960 the figure was 40 million. "The studios and their production system were surviving, thanks to network television, but the movies as distinct industrial art forms suffered through diminishing attendance, fewer productions, and falling profits" (Schatz 189).

The reasons for cinema attendance drastically plunging would be because much of the film going population was said to be between the ages of 16 and 25. It was stated that these new audiences were younger, better educated and more politically and socially sophisticated with the world of cinema than the general mass of viewers. "By 1970, in fact three quarters of all frequent moviegoers were between the ages of twelve and twenty-nine, and fully three-quarters of that

group had had some college education. MPAA figures indicate that regular viewers by the 1960s and 1970s were a different breed from the homogeneous family audience of the Old Hollywood era and present-day TV” (Schatz 190). This was the generation of the baby boomer which were born between World War II and Vietnam, and this was the audience that would determine the trend of movies, TV, pop music and consumer culture. “This generation had gleaned the grammar of screen narrative and learned film history from hours spent with television, and in their film going they sought increasingly esoteric or sophisticated fare: foreign films, classic Hollywood movies” (Thompson 384). In the beginning these changes were ignored by most of the major studios. Studios left those types of audiences for smaller studios like American International pictures where certain directors like Roger Corman produced several B horror movies, beach blanket movies and B motorcycle pictures.

The reasons for this catastrophic decline in the number of people going to the cinema have been much debated over the years but television is often assumed to be the main culprit. Audiences were unable to be pulled away from their TV sets and back into the movie theater. A major factor for this was the cultural movement of population as a large number of Americans during the 50’s were moving out of the city and into the suburbs. This had a large impact on cinema attendance for many different reasons. Unfortunately in the 1950s the cinemas were not located in the new suburbs and so most people didn’t feel the need to want to drive into the city to see a picture. New homes in the suburbs also brought their own leisure attractions that the city didn’t offer. These included not only television, but activities such as gardening and backyard barbecues. Added to these developments was the baby boom generation which began a trend of couples having children which made less time for people to go out, head into the city and attend the cinema at night (King 25).

Unfortunately for the major studios, this new youth market was not understood enough and so they were focusing more towards the masses which is why throughout the early 1960s the studios produced more expensive pictures.

Twentieth Century Fox tended to take the biggest risks of the era, including the biggest risk of all with *Cleopatra*, which in 1963 cost a staggering forty-four million dollars. That film, which earned only twenty six million dollars in rentals, nearly drove Fox into bankruptcy; the studio's reported losses during 1962, when the film was in production, were approximately forty million dollars. (Schatz 190)

Ultimately after such massive losses the studios began to become aware of the younger, more liberal audiences by the late 1960s especially when a number of independent films became such financial successes. "Each of these movies transcended its relatively modest, second-class production status to become bonafide megahits, despite the fact that no one knew quite what to make of them" (Schatz 197).

The death of the Production Code was another extremely pivotal movement in the history of motion pictures as it became a clear sign on just how much the country had changed culturally and socially since the 30s, 40s and 50s. For nearly 40 years the Production Code was the set of moral censorship guidelines which governed most of the production for United States motion pictures. Created by Will H. Hays the Production Code which later became the MPAA (The Motion Picture Association of America) began strictly enforcing it in 1934 as it presented to the public what was acceptable and what was not acceptable. "The Will Hays office became to stem its code with the values and beliefs of the Catholic Church with a preamble acknowledging that motion pictures are important influences in the life of a nation and may be directly responsible

for spiritual or moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking” (Jewell 117). Hollywood followed the guidelines set about by the code well into the late 1950s, but fortunately the code was eventually abandoned due to the combined impact of television, the public and the Supreme Court (Jewell 123). When the Production Code finally came to an end in the 60’s, this began the first steps towards the transitional period into the emerging New Hollywood. Shortly after various independent studios began to emerge with new, young and innovative directors like John Cassavetes, Robert Altman and Martin Scorsese; directors who were enjoying this exciting new degree of freedom and flexibility. Also much of the growing youth market were getting bored with such optimistic Hollywood films which many looked at to be ‘old fashioned’ and wanted stories that were raw, gritty and reflected their own growing pessimism; a more accurate reflection of a bleaker time. Consequently, these young filmmakers knew this and the movie screens began to reflect some of the most innovative and iconoclastic works ever produced by a commercial industry including *The Graduate*, *Faces*, *The Producers*, *The Wild Bunch*, *If, They Shoot Horses Don’t They*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *M.A.S.H*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Easy Rider*, *Rosemary’s Baby* and last but not least Arthur Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde* (Schatz 197).

In retrospect, these and other films of the period have come to mark this transition as one of the most significant in American film history as film theorist David Cook suggests in *A History of Narrative Film*, “The years 1968 and 1969, perhaps the darkest in American history since the Civil War, witnessed some of the most original American film since the late forties” (Schatz 197). The revolutionary style of these films emerged the creation of the cool detachment of narcissistic characters who were selfish, obsessed with themselves and oblivious to society and of the outside world.

These anti-heroes in the cinema was a direct response to the anti-establishment of authority figures and of the rebellious youth in the late 1960's, which would start a trend that would be created and expanded upon again in again with new and fresh upcoming stars like Robert Deniro, Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman, Gene Hackman and Robert Duvall. One of the very first films that directly started that trend occurred earlier in Europe with Jean-Luc Godard's masterpiece *Breathless*, which is considered one of the first art films of the French New Wave movement. Coincidentally, the screenplay of *Bonnie and Clyde* was first approached by the two leading directors of the French New Wave which were Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, but they both turned it down.

One of the most significant threats to Hollywood during the transition was not only culturally, socially or historically but industrially. The enforced break-up of the vertically-integrated studio system changed everything as the dominance of the major studios was secured by their control of the entire film industry, including the distribution and exhibition as well as production. This system began to be put in place in the late 1910s and early 1920s and so by 1930s the industry was dominated by the 'big five' major studios: Warner Brothers, Loews Inc, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox and RKO and each had substantial holdings in all stages of the business (King 25). The major change with the industrial transition in the late 60's was that independent movie making ultimately became the norm as new, fresh and creative innovations began to emerge within the industrial context.

Films were no longer just the product of a few giant machines ruled by a small number of executives. The whole system was potentially more open. Until the late 1960's the studios remained in the grip of an aging generation, including legendary names such as Jack Warner at Warner Brothers and Darryl F. Zanuck at Twentieth Century Fox, figures

who appeared increasingly out of touch with the large baby-boom generation coming of age during the decade. (King 29)

David Cook summed up all these cultural, historical, social and industrial changes of Hollywood's decline by suggesting that "American industry's obstinate refusal to face a single fact: that the composition of the weekly American film audience was changing as rapidly as the culture itself" (Schatz 189).

If the transitions within our country changed so drastically throughout the 50's and 60's, how could filmmakers stay ahead of this trend without falling behind? Unfortunately most of the legendary filmmakers during the Golden Age of Hollywood did not make the transition successfully to the emerging New Hollywood. John Ford who is known by many (including Ingmar Bergman and Orson Welles) as one of the greatest of all directors had a career that spanned more than 50 years. Ford was known to be a pioneer of location shooting and of long shots of characters against a vast and harsh terrain. Ford beginning in the early silent era directed more than 140 films as a hand full of his films, most famously his westerns, are regarded as some of the most important and influential films of all time. And yet after making such successes with *Stagecoach* (1939), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *The Searchers* (1956) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), his films in the mid-60's seemed to be less cinematically important and began to suffer greatly with younger audiences. *Donovan's Reef* (1963), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) and *7 Women* (1970) are barely even mentioned when critics talk about John Ford's most important films.

The same goes for Howard Hawks, another one of the great American directors of the Golden Age. Interestingly enough his films ranged throughout several different genres like

gangster: *Scarface* (1932) comedy: *His Girl Friday* (1940), horror: *The Thing from Another World* (1951) noir: *The Big Sleep* (1946) musicals: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) Western: *Rio Bravo* (1959) and war: *Sergeant York* (1941). And yet even with his undeniable talent which was able to span across various different genres most of Hawks films in the 60's like *Hatari* (1962), *El Dorado* (1966) and *Rio Lobo* (1970) aren't even close to being as memorable as his earlier work.

The one legendary director that many critics and film scholar's acknowledge completely falling from grace during the 1960's is the great director Billy Wilder. Wilder's career spanned more than 50 years and 60 films as he is regarded to be one of the most brilliant and versatile filmmakers of Hollywood's Golden Age. Wilder began as a screenwriter in the late 1920s in Berlin and after the rise of the Nazi Party Wilder left to America, where he made his directorial debut with his noir masterpiece *Double Indemnity* (1944). Wilder continued to establish his directorial reputation with some of the greatest films of the 1940's and 1950's including *The Lost Weekend* (1945), *Sunset Blvd* (1950), *Some Like it Hot* (1959) and *The Apartment* (1960). And yet even Wilder seemed to not be able to make the transition from the late 1960's as his last few films like *Irma la Douce* (1963), *Kiss Me Stupid* (1966) and his last film *Buddy, Buddy* (1981) either were financial flops or very poorly received.

One of the two directors that I want to closely examine during this transitional period of Hollywood is of the legendary Alfred Hitchcock. Alfred Hitchcock like all the other Golden Age directors listed above was another filmmaker who didn't seem to successfully make the transition into the New Hollywood. The reason why I specifically chose to focus on Hitchcock and not necessarily others during that period like Billy Wilder, Nicholas Ray or Orson Welles is because Hitchcock seemed to be successful not just as a personal auteur but also commercially;

which was something extremely rare. But first, to explore the auteur of an artist it is important to understand what exactly the auteur is and where it came about.

Film historians have believed that the director of a film has always been looked at as the artist that is greatly responsible for a film's style, form, and personal themes. This idea went back from the early days of the silent era, but the director was never really examined and critiqued as an individual artist until the days of the postwar European films. Many directors, producers and screenwriters quarreled over the artistic merit of a movie on who could be properly considered the auteur, or author of the film (Thompson, 381). But two critics who wrote for the *Revue du cinema* claimed that the director was the painter behind the paintbrush and helped to support these claims by backing up such American directors like Orson Welles, Nicholas Ray and John Ford throughout the Golden Age.

An important essay written by Alexandre Astruc stated that over the years the cinema had achieved a form of sophistication and maturity and started to attract serious artists who looked at film as a serious form of art in which directors were able to express their thoughts and emotions within the context of the camera lens in which was entitled *camera-stylo* (the camera pen). Finally in 1960 American film critic Andrew Sarris developed the word 'Auteur Theory' which was a way to understand film auteurs and their artistic works from such artists as [Federico Fellini](#), [Luis Bunuel](#), [Akira Kurosawa](#), [Michelangelo Antonioni](#) and Alfred Hitchcock. The auteur theory was finally officially developed by the loosely knit group of French critics who wrote for *Cahiers du Cinema*, as it became the leading film magazine in the world. "It sprang from the conviction that the cinema was worth studying in depth, that masterpieces were made not only by a small upper crust of directors, but by a whole range of authors, whose work had previously been dismissed and consigned to oblivion" (Cohen 455).

Each artist mentioned above had their own 'auteur theory' within the films they've created, and these themes and styles became known as signatures as to whom the artist was and what their films stood for. For example, when it came to Federico Fellini, most of his work seemed to revolve around the grotesque of the circus and of his self-doubts as an artist. Luis Bunuel shamelessly enjoyed pointing out the pessimistic and surrealistic absurdities in the most serious of subject matters. Akira Kurosawa created dramas while drawing much of its stories from the genres of the American western. Michelangelo Antonioni explored the emotional alienation between a man and in woman in within the contemporary world of modernization. And during the Golden Age of Hollywood Alfred Hitchcock brilliantly presented his own personal auteur of murder and obsession, which he expressed as best he could through a controlled and strict system within the American film industry. First let me explore the texts of Alfred Hitchcock and the similar themes, genres, styles and mise-en scene that he constantly presented throughout his moviecareer during the 40's, 50's and 60's.

Alfred Hitchcock was an English film director and producer who became known as one of the most important pioneers in the film industry being most famous within the suspense and psychological thriller genres. He became known extremely early in his hometown in Europe becoming very successful in silent and early talkies. Even before making his drastic move to Hollywood in 1939 and becoming a US citizen in 1955 he was already looked at by many in his hometown as England's greatest director (Spoto 11). When arriving to the United States he joined with American producer David O. Selznick and made his first financial success with *Rebecca*(1940), which took away the Academy Award for best picture.

As great of an achievement as *Rebecca* was Hitchcock never viewed *Rebecca* as his own personal creation probably because most of the creative decisions during filmmaking was

controlled by Selznick and of the studio (Schatz 382). After the success of *Rebecca* Hitchcock during the 40's and 50's began to break away from Selznick's control and was given the freedom and reign to finally make films the way he wanted to. His later successes in the 40's, 50's and 60's ranged from such classics as *Rear Window* (1954), *Shadow of a Doubt*, (1943) *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959) *Psycho* (1960), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *Notorious* (1946) and *The Birds* (1963).

During a career which spanned more than half a century, Hitchcock created for himself a distinctive and recognizable style that has influenced many future filmmakers. First, he pioneered the use of a camera which would move in a way that would mimic a person's gaze, which would resemble a disturbing form of voyeurism. He framed and distorted specific shots to heighten anxiety, fear, or empathy with its audience, and he would lightly add a touch of dark humor within the context of the story(Spoto 237). The themes he used throughout his stories have also become a form of auteur. For instance, most of his stories feature innocent fugitives who are on the run from the law. Many of his stories also have twist endings, beautiful mysterious blonds and several repeated themes of violence, murder and obsession with slight sexual overtones. Hitchcock created the famous term 'MacGuffin' which would serve as the film's main plot driven theme but wouldn't necessarily have anything to do with what happens to the characters or the outcomes within the stories (Spoto 162).

Unfortunately after *The Birds* (1963), Hitchcock's filmography began to suffer. Hitchcock's health was slowly failing throughout the last two decades of his career and such releases of films like *Torn Curtain* (1966) and *Topaz* (1969) were not received well. He claimed to his biographer Stephen Rebello that Universal studios forced *Torn Curtain* and *Topaz*(1969) on him and there was also the bitter end of Hitchcock's twelve-year collaboration with composer

Bernard Herrmann all because Hitchcock was unsatisfied with his score for *Topaz* (51 Freeman). The only film in the late 60's which seemed to have a positive response from critics and scholars was the film *Frenzy* (1972) which was his first film in almost thirty years that Hitchcock filmed in his hometown of England. And yet even *Frenzy* was a film that I felt was greatly inferior to Hitchcock's earlier masterpieces from the Golden Age of the 40s, 50's and 50's; and it seemed to be missing that special something that made those so great.

First let me explore what went wrong with *Torn Curtain* which was released in 1966. I found the film to have some intellectual substance but little emotional power which in the end fell completely flat. The themes used in *Torn Curtain* were similar to all Hitchcock's earlier more effective films. For instance the specifications of the fighter planes of *The 39 Steps*, the espionage activity in *Notorious*, the political treaty in *Foreign Correspondent*, and the suspenseful adventure sequences in *North by Northwest* all immediately came to mind. And yet many of these ideas which worked brilliantly in his earlier films didn't seem to give any emotional pay-off in *Torn Curtain*. Also, what made the film not flow naturally was the acting by the great Paul Newman and of his use of his 'method acting' which sounded completely out of place for a highly structured and controlled Hitchcock film. Method acting began to become the norm in the world of the cinema ever since Marlon Brando, James Dean and Montgomery Clift popularized it during the 50's and 60's.

Method acting was another important transition that made its way into the New Hollywood and ultimately the classical acting which was known by such screen legends as Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles slowly began to diminish in the 60's and become not existent in the 70's. Being brought up in the classical era Hitchcock was known to have hated working with method actors. Interestingly enough Hitchcock once stated in an interview how frustrating it

was working with method actor Montgomery Clift for the film *I Confess* (1953). Hitchcock was famous for creating detailed storyboards for each scene and he could not understand Clift's Method acting technique when the actor would continuously blow take after take for failing to follow Hitchcock's instructions (Freeman88). This could have been one of the main reasons why *I Confess* (1953) didn't become such a successful picture and the same could be said for *Torn Curtain*.

The other film I would like to explore is Hitchcock's *Topaz* (1969) as critics seemed to resent the film much more than *Torn Curtain* the following year. *Topaz* is a demanding and complex film but the story also seemed to be incredibly muddled and at times quite a mess. While the film was in production Hitchcock threw out the original screenplay and each scene was written a few days ahead of every shot (Spoto 423). Maybe this was the immediate problem with the film since Hitchcock is known to do each film with advance shooting and when the script is already finished. The film felt very radical and experimental with the use of its elaborate color schemes which in fact was an element of the film I quite liked and give it credit for. But the film as a whole just felt stagy and unforgettable with an all-around disappointed ending which was technically an alternative second ending since the original ending was scrapped after being panned by audiences.

Now let me be fair and explore the film *Frenzy* (1972) which is the one film that some scholars believe could be considered a classic next to his earlier 60's films *Psycho* and *The Birds*. *Frenzy* is the first film in which Hitchcock used the newly freedoms of nudity and on-screen violence, all thanks to the absence of the production code. But nudity and on-screen violence isn't what made Hitchcock's films so effective and frightening. Immediately I found *Frenzy* quite awkward and off-putting when watching a women being murdered in the nude.

First off, I could be biased since I'm not very fond of slasher films which are usually the type of genre that enjoys to exploit a women sexually before violently killing her in explicit detail.

Secondly, I don't think nudity and on-screen violence was even necessary to have for the film because the story could have been equally as fascinating without those aspects.

But I also think *Frenzy* felt off-putting because everything else about the film whether it was the cinematography, the acting and the screen-play was put together and structured in such a meticulous and stagey way, and so it felt like an old-fashioned Hitchcockian film which at times oddly resorted to exploitative nudity and pointless on-screen violence. Meshing two completely different types of styles and movements together, the old (studio system) and the new (B-horror exploitation) felt quite at odds with one another and I was immediately turned off. Imagine Hitchcock's *The Lodger* (1927) and Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972) as one film. Hitchcock is known to subtly include sexually perverse obsessions within the context of his films but what made his movies so powerfully effective and timeless was that he simply alluded to such disturbing themes without feeling the need to present them in such a distasteful and low-brow way.

Film director John Huston is the second American film director I want to focus on during the transition. Unlike such American director's Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, John Ford, Michael Curtiz, Robert Wise, Billy Wilder and Frank Capra; Huston remained not only successful with the pictures he was directing during the emerging New Hollywood; but he also remained relevant with the changing times and historical culture changes. Before Huston became an acclaimed director he was already an acclaimed screenwriter in Hollywood writing several award winning stories, most famously *High Sierra*(1941) which was the film that became the

breakthrough role in legendary actor Humphrey Bogart's career, transforming him from supporting player to leading man (Hammen 36).

When Huston finally began to direct his films they immediately were acclaimed by critics and audiences and many are now considered classics. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) was his directorial debut, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), *Key Largo* (1948), *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) and *The African Queen* (1950). Huston seemed to struggle slightly in the late 50's and 60's but ultimately remained a successful director with the acclaimed boxing film *Fat City* (1972) the historical epic *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975) and his final swan song *The Dead* (1987) which he directed while he was sick and on his death bed.

Huston was known to have already been an artist as he studied as a fine painter in Paris in the early years of his life. He explored the visual aspects of his films by sketching each scene on paper beforehand, then carefully framing his characters during the shooting. While most directors relied on post-production editing to shape their final work, Huston instead created his films while they were being shot, making them both more economical and cerebral, with little editing needed (Hammen 19). Most of Huston's films were adaptations of popular novels, often depicting despicable anti-heroes, while many of his films involved themes such as crime, religion, greed, truth, freedom, redemption and war (Hammen 21).

His first successful film since the Hollywood transition was the gritty boxing drama *Fat City* (1972). It was twenty-six years later after directing his first film *The Maltese Falcon* and after several considerable ups and downs. Huston was near the end of his third decade in a new creative world of movie making as many things have changed for this director who many believe started the world of American film-noir with such crime classics as *Maltese Falcon*, *Asphalt*

Jungle and *Key Largo*. The production code was over and so was the huge factory like studio system that controlled it and so Huston was no longer a salaried employee of Warner Brothers but a free agent who signed on to one project at a time (Hammen 31). John Huston takes this new freedom of the industry to his advantage and treats the story of *Fat City* with a genuine unsentimental honesty making it one of his best films since the Golden Age of Hollywood.

The story explores a boxer past his prime, who goes to a Stockton, California gym to get back into shape and spars with an eighteen-year-old he meets there. Seeing potential in the youngster, and being newly inspired he decides to get back into boxing himself. Huston brilliantly translates the Leonard Gardner's novel which the film is based on perfectly contrasting the hopelessness of their lives with the persistence of their optimism. Even though Huston's film owes a great deal to novel, the reason why it works is because of Huston's fascinations with underdogs and losers. All throughout his film career Huston seemed to focus on unlikable characters who hardly ever set out to achieve what they're aiming for.

For instance Sam Spade, in *The Maltese Falcon* ends up losing the partner he hated and the one woman he never loved. Everyone in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* seems to only look out for just themselves while in the end losing everything because of the seduction of greed. And even though *The African Queen* ends on a happy note (which I don't think fits well with the story) the characters of Bogart and Hepburn fall short in carrying out their plans. Underdogs and despicable characters are a constant theme we see run in Huston's work, and never has he explored it as well as he does with *Fat City*. Another reason for this could be because Huston knows the story: he himself was a professional boxer himself for a while, and not a very good one (Hammen 113).

His other successful film was *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975) which tells the story of two non-commissioned officers of the Indian Army who set off from the late 19th century British India in search of adventure and ultimately end up as kings of Kafiristan. This film is a classic swashbuckler which can be compared to such adventure epics like *Gunga Din*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and even Huston's own classic western *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. At a time when historical epics were all trying to be solemn, dark and serious, Huston made a fun and exhilarated adventure that was equally exciting, comedic and thrilling. Originally Huston was going to cast Humphrey Bogart, but when Bogart died the project was shelved until 1975 (Hammen 123). Maybe that was for the best since acting legends Michael Caine and Sean Connery were completely perfect in the roles of the two British officers.

Unlike most filmmaker's Huston was able to make successful films right up to the time of his death. *The Dead* (1987) was adapted by James Joyce's legendary short story and starred Huston's daughter Anjelica Huston in the leading role. The story takes place in Dublin in 1904 at a holiday party given by two elderly sisters and their niece, who have spent their lives performing or teaching music. When Huston decided to take on the project many believed James Joyce's short story could be unfilmable. But Huston being the cinematic master that he was proved them wrong and filmed the short story at the age of 81, all the while weak from emphysema and heart disease (Kael 403). The film was released posthumously and according to legendary film critic Pauline Kael:

Huston directed the movie, at eighty, from a wheelchair, jumping up to look through the camera, with oxygen tubes trailing from his nose to a portable generator; most of the time, he had to watch the actors on a video monitor outside the set and use a microphone to speak to the crew. Yet he went into dramatic areas that he'd never gone into before -

funny, warm family scenes that might be thought completely out of his range. Huston never before blended his actors so intuitively, so musically. (Kael 402)

So what exactly did John Huston do differently than Alfred Hitchcock to successfully make the transition from the Golden Age of Hollywood to the emerging New Hollywood? Unlike Hitchcock who didn't stray too far from the thriller genre, Huston seemed to be more comfortable in stepping outside his usual comfort zone and explore several different genres. For instance, Boxing: *Fat City*, Adventure: *Man Who Would Be King*, Religion: *Wise Blood*, Alcoholism: *Under the Volcano* and a Literary Short Story: *The Dead*. Even though Huston stuck with despicable unlikable characters which were rooted in his early films of noir, he also seemed to branch off during the late 60's and conform to the themes, styles and aesthetics of the New Hollywood movement.

Looking at his boxing film *Fat City* once again I noticed how the mise en scene of the film greatly reminded me of the gritty independent films of Cassavettes and Scorsese with a slight nod to Italian Neorealism and Kitchen Sink realism. The method acting style by Stacy Keach and Jeff Bridges seemed to fit perfectly with the aesthetics that Huston was projecting for the New Hollywood, while the acting in many of Hitchcock's 60's films still felt extremely theatrical, over the top and slightly stagey. Unlike Huston Hitchcock didn't stray too far away from his usual style and themes from the Golden Age and when he would do so with on-screen violence and nudity, it never felt like a natural and organic transition.

I find it greatly ironic that Hitchcock couldn't make the transition into the emerging New Hollywood since this was the period in which filmmaker's could finally have the complete freedom they needed to fully express their auteur styles and themes. When the Hollywood studio

systems had complete control and power over filmmakers during the Golden Age of Hollywood they were able to restrict directors on what they could and could not to. This was frustrating for many filmmakers but there were only a handful of artists who ultimately won complete control and freedom within the industry; most famously Charles Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock. And so it would have been expected that once the walls of the studios finally came down Hitchcock would continue to prosper all the while taking advantage of his new found artistic freedoms. This for some reason or another didn't seem to be the case as Hitchcock instead struggled with the industries drastic changes and whether the cultural, social, historical or business changes contributed to any of that, we won't ever be so sure.

And yet maybe the blame shouldn't be fully directed at the filmmaker but at the industry as a whole. Professor Thomas Schatz suggests that the studio system before the 60's was a perfect balance of creative practices and restraints to tell some of the greatest stories in American cinema.

It's taken us a quarter-century to appreciate that insight, to consider the 'classical Hollywood' as precisely that: a period when various social, industrial, technological, economic, and aesthetic forces struck a delicate balance. That balance was conflicted and ever shifting but stable enough through four decades to provide a consistent system of production and consumption, a set of formalized creative practices and constraints, and thus a body of work with a uniform style-a standard way of telling stories, from camera work and cutting to plot structure and thematics. (526)

Even though many film historians state that the emerging New Hollywood and the deterioration of the production code was finally the moment when filmmaker's could have the

complete freedom and full control over their projects to present their auteur without the restraints of the studio system, Professor Thomas Schatz seemed to believe that was not the case, even using Hitchcock as one of his main examples for his argument in his book *The Genius of the System*. Even many of the French critics from *Cahiers du cinema* and theorist Andrew Sarris had all proclaimed that Old Hollywood was a director's cinema. For instance Andrew Sarris in *American Cinema: Directors and Directions* reduced American film history to simply a few dozen director's which included Hitchcock, Welles and Ford; directors who became the sole purveyor of Film Art (Schatz 524).

After digging through several tons of archival materials from various studios and production companies, I have developed a strong conviction that these producers and studio executives have been the most misunderstood and undervalued figures in American film history. (Schatz 492)

I can completely agree with Schatz's theory because I believe as refreshing as the New Hollywood era was at the time it emerged, the type of acting, writing, directing and stories during the Golden Age of Hollywood had a timeless and unsurpassable brilliance, a brilliance which could never again be revitalized or recreated again. Maybe it wasn't necessarily the drastic historical, cultural, social or industrial changes that occurred within the late 60's to early 70's that made the transition unsuccessful for most of the greats like Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Howard Hawks and Billy Wilder. Instead maybe it was because the classic studio era gave Hitchcock and others the perfect amount of structure, restraint, and push-back which was needed for those artists to perfect what they wanted to capture on the screen.

Since the beginning of history it has always seemed to be that the greatest artists worked to their highest potential when they felt the threat of a strict opposing force of hierarchy within authority and power. Sometimes under such circumstances this could be the best approach for an artist to emerge much more creative and imaginative to be able to work around such restrictions and still be able to tell the story they want to. “The quality and artistry of all these films were the product not simply of individual human expression, but of a melding of institutional forces” (Schatz 456). For instance, most of the funniest screw-ball comedies that emerged throughout the 40’s and 50’s simply became all the more funnier because comedic directors like Ernest Lubitsch and Preston Sturges had to creatively work around the strict regulations of the studios and the Production Code while still trying to present controversial and sexual taboos without ever obviously stating them.

French critic Andre Bazin admired the ways of classical Hollywood as well and stated: “The American cinema is classical art, so why not then admire in it what is most admirable, not only the talent of this or that filmmaker, but the genius of the system” (Cohen 526). After going through all the notes and research that I came up with for this paper I finally came to the conclusion that there couldn’t be one specific reason why a director like John Huston could make the transition and others like Alfred Hitchcock could not. It seemed to be a little of everything. It wasn’t just the directors old age or of them not getting with the times. It wasn’t just the cultural shift of new and younger audiences who were looking for something different. It wasn’t just the death of the long-standing Production Code and the emergence of the television or the suburbs. It was a little bit of everything that ranged from the historical, cultural, social and industrial factors that I explored extensively earlier in this paper.

I came to the conclusion that legendary directors like Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Howard Hawks, Billy Wilder and many others throughout the Golden Age of Hollywood were so used to the structured walls of the studio system that when the walls finally came down, it was extremely difficult for many of them to break free from such strict institutions and conform to the new film industry.

The New Hollywood and commercial television indicate all too clearly what happens when that balance is lost, reminding us what a productive, efficient, and creative system was lost back in the 1950's. There was a special genius to the studio system, and perhaps when we understand that we will learn, at long last, what Hollywood had been. (Schatz 527)

All that we have gained throughout the emerging New Hollywood, we at the same time lost when the Golden Age slowly faded into oblivion. And yet these sudden transitions within the world of cinema will continue to occur and we as an audience will continue to watch many great artists either do their best to keep up with the changing industry, while many others will respectively step down and fade into cinema history.

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