

# New Hollywood Cinema: Historical Context and Legacy

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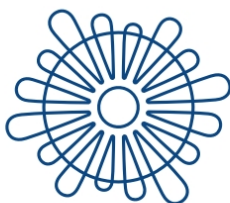
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**Nino Polančec**

**New Hollywood Cinema: Historical Context and  
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# **New Hollywood Cinema: Historical Context and Legacy**

Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2022.



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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Historical Context .....	3
2.1. Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948 .....	4
2.2. The Dismissal of the Hays Code.....	6
2.3. Social Changes in the 1960s – Countercultures and Sexual Revolution.....	10
2.4. The End of the New Hollywood Era.....	13
3. Main Characteristics of the Era.....	16
3.1. The Breaking of Studio Conventions and Challenging Traditional Filmmaking...	17
3.2. Moral Ambiguity Became the Norm.....	19
4. The Most Important Works and Legacy of New Hollywood Cinema .....	21
4.1. Early New Hollywood Films That Defined the Era.....	21
4.2. The 1970s and the Peak of the New Hollywood Era .....	25
4.3. New Hollywood's Legacy in Contemporary Cinema.....	30
5. Conclusion .....	33
6. Works Cited .....	35
7. New Hollywood Cinema: Historical Context and Legacy: <i>Summary and Key Words</i> .....	38
8. Era Novog Hollywooda: Povijesni kontekst i ostavština: <i>Sažetak i ključne riječi</i> .....	39

## 1. Introduction

The New Hollywood is a term that is used to describe the era in Hollywood history that lasted approximately from the second half of the 1960s to the early 1980s. Described by many as one of the most innovative and original periods in Hollywood history, the era produced some of the most significant, most famous, and most critically acclaimed works of modern Hollywood, such as *The Godfather* (1972), *The Godfather Part II* (1974), *Chinatown* (1974), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1974), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Jaws* (1975), *Annie Hall* (1977), *Carrie* (1976), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *The Graduate* (1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Nashville* (1975), *Rocky* (1976), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Alien* (1979), among many others.

This relatively short period established some of the most notable and most recognizable filmmakers of all time. To name a few, the filmmakers that rose to prominence during the New Hollywood era include Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Steven Spielberg, Brian de Palma, Woody Allen, David Lynch, George Lucas, Roman Polanski, and Robert Altman. This generation of filmmakers is broadly known as “the movie brats“ (Kokonis 191). These filmmakers were the first generation of mainstream Hollywood filmmakers that were formally educated in film schools, and whose knowledge of the cinema as an art form derived from watching and analyzing films of the filmmakers from the previous eras, as well as the films made by non-American filmmakers, such as European and Japanese films (McLean 5). It could be concluded that the generation of filmmakers that defined the New Hollywood era were people who were deeply interested in the art of filmmaking and who felt the need to express their individual styles and affinities throughout their movies.

Such way of free expression in the process of filmmaking was not present ever before, especially during the previous Classic Hollywood era, because of the pivotal role that the film

studios held in the process of filmmaking. During the second half of the 1960s, several major changes regarding the film studios' policies took place in Hollywood and that, consequently, liberated the process of mainstream filmmaking. As a result, the era saw an establishment of a specific climate in terms of major film studios' policies, which was characterized by diminished control of major film studios in the process of making films. Inevitably, in the late 1960s, the filmmakers were suddenly given the opportunity to make their films independently of the policies of the major film studios, which opened horizons for authorial involvement in the process of filmmaking and resulted in a more liberated approach to making films.

During the 1960s, the power of major film studios was declining because the audiences were becoming fed up with the monopoly that studios had over the kinds of films that were shown in theaters. Those studio-driven films of the 1960s were most commonly restricted to family-friendly musicals and historical epics, both of which guaranteed financial success at the box office, but at the same time lacked originality and innovation (McLean 4). As a result, the New Hollywood is also characterized as the first era in Hollywood history where the “auteur films” became widely popular and where the sole filmmakers became big stars, because of the pivotal role that they had in the process of making their movies (Biskind 19). After the first few films of the New Hollywood era saw the light of the day and earned great financial and critical acclaim, both the CEOs of major film studios and the filmmakers became aware that the new era of Hollywood had begun and that the taste of the audiences had irreversibly changed.

Therefore, the New Hollywood era films were defined by the vision and creativity of the filmmakers, as opposed to the major film studios' impact which had dominated during the Classic Hollywood era. This very frequently resulted in the provocative subject matter of the films, innovative use of narrative, stylistic changes, and innovative representations of gender and masculinity in the films. The first two films that hallmarked the beginning of a new era of filmmaking are two films released in 1967: *The Graduate* and *Bonnie and Clyde* (Symmons

29). Both films contained explicit content which had been unseen in the films of earlier eras — *The Graduate* contained premarital sexual activity and extramarital affair, while *Bonnie and Clyde* contained explicit violence, sex, and morally ambiguous protagonists. Furthermore, the polarity between good and evil also became more ambiguous in the narratives of the New Hollywood films (King 181). This resulted in the creation of, now widely popular and beloved, anti-heroes. Anti-heroes that were introduced in the New Hollywood era were characters whose dark backstories and questionable moral choices are not only represented as non-repugnant, but whose ambiguous morality is the thing that makes them more attractive and relatable to the audiences (Kirshner and Lewis 17). Some of the most memorable and widely beloved anti-heroes which were introduced in the New Hollywood era include Bonnie and Clyde from Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), Travis Bickle from Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), and Michael Corleone from Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972), among many others.

This paper is firstly going to explain the historical context in which the New Hollywood era had started, then it is going to analyze the main changes that the era brought to mainstream filmmaking, with a focus on narrative and stylistic changes. Subsequently, this paper is going to provide an analysis of the films that marked the beginning of the New Hollywood era in the late 1960s, as well as the analysis of films that represented the pinnacle of the era in the 1970s. Finally, this paper is going to provide an insight into the legacy that the New Hollywood era has irretrievably carved into contemporary Hollywood cinema and provide examples.

## 2. Historical Context

To begin with, in order to explain the changes that the New Hollywood era brought to the mainstream cinema of the time, it is important to provide the historical context of the period of the late 1960s. Two major events in American politics regarding the rights of major film studios were crucial for the development of a period as specific as New Hollywood. The first one was



the creation of the *Hollywood Antitrust Law* in 1948, and the second one is the dismissal of the *Hays Code* in 1968. Alongside these judicial changes that softened the restrictions that the filmmakers had faced, and that permitted filmmakers to have more artistic freedom, there were a number of artistic innovations that came from various foreign countries, such as the French New Wave and Italian Neorealism, which inspired New Hollywood filmmakers in their auteur-driven films. Alongside these changes in film studio policies, this chapter is also going to provide a brief historical overview in terms of political and social changes in American society, including the sexual revolution and hippie movement, both of which took place in the 1960s, and both of which had a significant impact on the development of New Hollywood movement.

### **2.1. Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948**

Classic Hollywood, or the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood, was the first period in Hollywood history in which the film system as we know it today was established. During the era of Classic Hollywood, major studios produced star-studded films in order to sell box office tickets. The star system, which is still present today and just as important, if not more so than it was during Classic Hollywood, guaranteed the financial success of movies (Kokonis 174). To illustrate the extent to which the studios depended on the star system during the classic years, the entire list of actors and actresses in which the studios invested can be mentioned. The main Hollywood stars of the Classic Hollywood era included Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando, Kim Novak, Rita Hayworth, James Stewart, Elizabeth Taylor, Humphrey Bogart, and Audrey Hepburn, among many others. These actors and actresses are now household names and major film studios depended on them in terms of the marketing and commercial success of the films as they represented the so-called poster boys and poster girls of the films.

Along with the star system, almost all of the features of filmmaking techniques and Hollywood marketing tactics that we know today were invented and introduced during the Golden Age. This worked like a fine-tuned machine in terms of financial investment and,

consequently, the financial gross of the films (Kokonis 175). However, the monopoly that a few major studios had over the entire Hollywood film production and distribution system was unfair, to say the least. During Classic Hollywood, the five major film studios rose to prominence and practically dictated the rules of all Hollywood film production. The “Big Five” consisted of Paramount, Universal, MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, and Warner Bros (De Vany and McMillan 138). The most problematic aspect of this monopoly was the fact that these studios owned their own movie theaters, and that theatres possessed the exclusive right to screen films made by the studio that owned the theater (Gil 108). The studio's motivation for this was, of course, economic growth. Owning cinemas that had exclusive rights to screen successful films and blockbusters meant that the audiences would only go to those theaters and that the ticket money would go directly to the studio which produced the film, without any intermediary between the studio and the movie theatres (De Vany and McMillan 132).

However, this production system was deeply problematic in terms of the diversity of film production, and as time went on, it became increasingly apparent that the major studios themselves monopolized the entire Hollywood production (King 228). This resulted in the intervention of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), an independent department of the government of the United States whose main mission is to enforce antitrust law and provide protection for the customers. The Federal Trade Commission filed a lawsuit against the big studios in 1928, and the main culprit was the biggest studio of the time - Paramount Pictures, and in 1930, the major studios were found guilty of monopolization (Afra 236). However, not long after this decision took place, the United States suffered from a colossal economic crisis, the so-called Great Depression in 1929. As a consequence, the decision to ban monopoly was reversed by a controversial deal with the administration of the president of the time, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Because of the great negative effect that the Great Depression had on the United States economy, the major studios were allowed to maintain their monopoly due to the great

contribution they made to the American economy - and because of this, after surviving the worst of the Great Depression, the major studios seemed more powerful than ever (Afra 241). Finally, in 1938, the presidential administration changed its attitude toward the studios and ordered the Department of Justice to prosecute the major studios.

The *US v. Paramount* case was delayed several times due to judicial complications and World War II, but at last, largely due to the influence of independent producers and the rise of the “Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers“, this case was brought upon the Supreme Court, where a famous 1948 decision led to the abolition of block booking and forced all studios to sell off their theater chains and franchises in order to abolish the monopoly (De Vany 65 ). This case was an essential part of the mission of the “Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers“ and had a profound effect on the history of Hollywood, as well as opening up space for new, independent filmmakers to begin producing their films in a new, less restrictive climate (Conant 81). This, in turn, led to the freedom given to filmmakers of the New Hollywood era (which took place roughly 20 years later) to produce films that were relatively free from the ideologies of the major film studios and that had the freedom to express things and narratives that would have been unimaginable to produce during the studio-driven Classic Hollywood era.

## **2.2. The Dismissal of the Hays Code**

Furthermore, another political and legal restraint in terms of the production of films in Hollywood was the “The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930“, or the so-called Hays Code. The Hays Code was a set of rules that enforced censorship on Hollywood films and was introduced as a response to the increase of public protest and complaints about the inappropriate content of Hollywood films (Black 170). The fact that Hollywood was largely popular and that it did not have any strict rules and limitations, as well as the scandals surrounding famous movie stars of the time, led to increased pressure made by the conservative citizens. The protest of the

public was so great that the Hollywood studios, in order to prevent the government from assembling further censorship boards, decided to willingly censor their films (Vaughn 13).

The historical context of the official introduction of the Hays Code looked something like this: At the time of the 1910s and 1920s, Hollywood began to be characterized as a fortress of filth by the Catholic church because of the alleged inappropriate content of the films that were being produced at the time. This was largely supported by the more conservative and religious American citizens who decided not to attend the “immoral“ movies at the movie theaters anymore (Black 167). This represented a big problem for the Hollywood studios in terms of the financial success of their films because of the fact that the Great Depression had already taken its toll on the gross of film studios. Because of this, Will Hays, who was the head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), decided to abide by the demands which were dictated by the Church and its supporters. In order to reconcile the tense relations between Hollywood studios and embittered conservative audiences, Hays ordered a Catholic priest, more precisely an Archbishop of Cincinnati, John T. McNicholas, to write a set of rules and regulations which would be implemented in all of the Hollywood productions in order to create a family-friendly atmosphere of the movies (Black 176). Consequently, a Production Code Administration (PCA) was formed and all of the Hollywood film studios were obligated to submit film scripts to the Production Code Administration before the production of any film could start. The studios agreed that production of any film could not begin before the script would be approved by the PCA, and the MPPDA was allowed to fine any violator with 25,000 dollars fine (Black 168). To illustrate the strictness of this code, it could be mentioned that after the introduction of the Hays Code, every film that was filmed before the introduction of the code and which did not follow the rules, was completely banned from distribution to the audiences.

After the introduction of the Hays Code, the majority of the film studios considered it to be more of a recommendation than a law, and the film studios chose to ignore the code, which resulted in an increased number of rejections from the Hays board (Vaughn 59). Then, the Catholic League of Decency blacklisted the movie theatres which were projecting “sinful” content and as a result, Catholic audiences boycotted the theatres and this resulted in the decline of the economic income of the theatres. The final result was that the film studios unanimously agreed to follow the strict rules implemented by the Hays Code (Black 171).

Some of the specific rules that the Hays Code enforced on film scripts included: The prohibition of profanity, such as vulgar expressions, and especially profanity involving the words connected with ridicule of the clergy, such as “God“, “Lord“, “Jesus“ and “Christ“ (Gil 99). Then, any form of the depiction of nudity was prohibited, both adult and child nudity. White slavery and drug trafficking were also strictly prohibited, but there was a set of adult themes and motives that were allowed but, in order to be approved by the Administration, they needed to be presented in “good taste“. Some of these adult themes that were to be presented carefully included: criminal behavior, implicit sexual relations, violence, the use of the flag, arson, theft (robbery), the act of committing murder by any means, smuggling, rape, or attempted rape, the consummation of drugs, first-night scenes, representation of law enforcement and excessive or lustful kissing. Another element that was prohibited in films by the Hays Code was the sympathy for criminals – an element that would be refuted in the first film of the New Hollywood era – *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) where the main characters are bank robbers, and with whom the audiences undoubtedly sympathized.

As the years went by, foreign films belonging to national cinemas of European countries, such as Sweden, Italy, and France started to include more and more provocative subject matter in their films, such as the exploration of human sexuality, depiction of nude female bodies, use of profanity and vulgarity, etc (Black 175). This resulted in the growing

resistance within the community of American filmmakers who felt that they should be permitted to express the changes in sexual freedom and freedom of speech in their films.

Consequently, throughout the 1960s, the Production Code had made several precedents regarding some of the foreign language films to be approved for viewing by American audiences, and by the late 1960s, as there was already an uncountable number of films that were “breaking“ the Hays Code (and which were approved by the Production Code as exceptions) the rigorous enforcement of the Code (which was in full swing throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and the 1950s) became very flexible and the hard-shell Production Code was completely abolished (Vaughn 45).

One of the first indicators of the fact that the censorship in Hollywood productions was becoming more and more outdated was the production of Mike Nichols' *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1966, the first film in Hollywood history that was marked with the “Suggested for Mature Audiences“ (SMA) label (Leff 43). The film is based on a Broadway play of the same name, and the main obstacle that the film adaptation of the theatre play faced was the profane language that had been used in dialogues between the main characters. As the production of the play was not under the scrutiny of the Production Code administration, it had been written in a much more free manner, without any censorship of the profanity and curse words – which gave the play its sincerity, as well as its grim and harrowing atmosphere (Leff 42). Considering the fact that the main theme of the play is marital strife, abiding by the Hays Code in film adaptation would make the film less sincere and make it lose its harsh tone, which could consequently take away the very thing that made the play attractive to audiences. As the key people of Warner Bros wanted to produce the film, an agreement was reached: for example, the word “screw“ was removed from the film, but the majority of other profanity was left intact, such as the phrase “hump the hostess“, which was also considered controversial at the time.

The film was approved by the administration of the Hays Code and it could be concluded that this marked the end of the era of strict censorship of Hollywood productions.

Consequently, after the critical and financial success of the film, The Motion Picture Association (MPAA) began developing a specific system of labeling films in 1966, and as a result, the MPAA rating system was introduced (LoBrutto 112). The system included four ratings: G for general audiences, M for mature content, R for restricted (under 17 not admitted without an adult), and X for sexually explicit content. This event marked a dismissal of the Hays Code and introduced the rating system that functions until today, with minor changes. For example, 1984 films *Gremlins* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* became the first films with a PG-13 rating – a rating that served as a middle tier between PG and R ratings, because the films included both horror elements and elements of childhood adventure films (Kendrick 3).

As the freedom of filmmaking grew drastically bigger after the abolishment of the restrictive Hays Code, this served as a great opportunity for Hollywood filmmakers to use all of the advantages of this newly acquired freedom in order to put new kinds of films on the silver screen. The Motion Picture Association (MPAA) started to give a freedom never seen before to the use of, until then unthinkable, forbidden elements in the films, such as the use of profanity, nudity, sexual intercourse, violence, rape, drug, and alcohol use. This resulted in a large amount of freedom in terms of the filmmaking processes that the filmmakers had been waiting for for a very long time.

### **2.3. Social Changes in the 1960s – Countercultures and Sexual Revolution**

Additionally, it can not be overlooked that all of these liberating changes that led to the New Hollywood movement emerged as a result of changing society of the United States in the 1960s. The most important events which provoked the changes in the mentality of the American people in the 1960s include the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and the assassination of his

brother Robert F. Kennedy in 1968 (which marked the end of the American Dream and American idealism), Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War (which resulted in a great resistance of the American youth), and consequently, the establishment of the significant counterculture of hippies (King 13-14). What these changes brought can be illustrated by the fact that in a single decade, approximately between the early 1960s to early 1970s, an entirely new system of values had been established in American society. Until the early 1960s, American society was living in a dream of “American exceptionalism“, believing that America is the promised land, far ahead of every other country around the world, and a country that provides endless freedom and infinite opportunities for succeeding in life (Kirshner 15). The fact is that the American economy did indeed blossom throughout the 1950s and it seemed as if American Dream was within reach for everyone.

At the beginning of the 1960s, it had suddenly become apparent that life in America was far more problematic than it had appeared earlier. Beginning with Kennedy's unsuccessful fight against communism through the invasion of Cuba in the Bay of Pigs in 1962 and mass protests against racial segregation by African Americans in 1963 (which marked the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement), the 1960s marked the beginning of the shattering of American Dream (Kirshner 22). As the racial problems became increasingly problematic, and the general public was exposed to more and more police brutality through television, it became apparent that American society was filled with problems. As one of the goals of the American Dream was to establish capitalism almost as a new religion and to destroy communism all around the globe, the defeat in Vietnam War, which took place from the 1960s to 1970s, presented a big loss for American capitalism. The final nail in the coffin of the American Dream was President Nixon's Watergate scandal in 1973, which caused Americans to completely lose trust in the authorities, and even their president (Wasson 249). Throughout that period, the American anti-political counterculture grew and the idealistic American Dream had transformed into general distrust



in government. It could be concluded that this series of events marked a shift from a utopian, capitalist society to an anti-establishment counterculture of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. That counterculture saw its peak at the Woodstock festival in 1969, where more than 400,000 hippies engaged in promoting peace and equality, experimenting with drugs, and exploring their sexuality.

Furthermore, when it comes to sexuality, the 1960s were a period of the sexual revolution in the United States. Those have been years where, on the wings of the civil rights movement, feminists started to demand further changes in gender policies and demanded further development of gender equality. This resulted in sexuality, as well as naked bodies, no longer being a taboo, and social norms changing in favor of the normalization of sexual relations in the public domain (Kirshner and Lewis 169). This also resulted in the normalization of erotic content in the public sphere, such as erotic magazines and erotic films, as well as the normalization of the depiction of human sexuality and naked bodies in film. It can be concluded that the 1960s were an era of drastic social changes in American society, which, in terms of film content, consequentially led to the introduction of human sexuality, nudity, the consumption of drugs, racial equality, homosexuality, and critical attitude against the government in film narratives.

Another element that cannot be overseen in the analysis of the socio-political context of the 1960s is the representation of violence on broadcast television. Up until the 1960s, explicit violence was prohibited in any type of film or television content. However, as the Vietnam War happened during the era of the popularization of television, viewers became bombarded with sights of explicit violence that were happening in Vietnam (Kirshner and Lewis 6). As the viewers were exposed to explicit, vivid, and utterly realistic depictions of violence that were taking place in Vietnam, it became obvious how the violence represented in films was understated and unrealistic. This led to audiences and filmmakers both feeling the need to see

realistic sights of violence in films, and this opened the door for downplaying the censorship on the portrayal of violence. As American society became used to seeing real violence on the news, the need for a more realistic portrayal of violence in films rose. As the first war that was broadcast through television, it could be concluded that the Vietnam War, and all of its atrocities, opened the door for more violence in films, as violence now became more of an everyday sight on the news.

When put in a historical and political context, it can be concluded that the New Hollywood Era had been placed in the time gap between 1966 and 1980, exactly the time period when The Motion Picture Association had the smallest impact and smallest interference on restraining and censoring Hollywood films. Also, it can be concluded that the New Hollywood Era was set in the exact period when the major Hollywood film studios had the smallest impact on the production of films. As a result, this short period in time resulted in the most liberating era for the process of filmmaking in which there were no big authorities and laws that would interfere with the authors' vision of films.

#### **2.4. The End of the New Hollywood Era**

When it comes to the end of the New Hollywood era in 1980, this could be attributed to two major events: the catastrophic box-office failure of Michael Cimino's *The Heaven's Gate* in 1980 and the huge success of George Lucas' *Star Wars* in 1977.

In order to explain this turn of events, it is important to note that the initial successes of the New Hollywood filmmakers encouraged the major film studios to entrust young and ambitious filmmakers of the era with a great amount of freedom and control in terms of all of the aspects of filmmaking, eventually even with the disposal of the budget (Kirshner 32). In the mid-1970s, original auteur films such as *Dog Day Afternoon* (1974), *Chinatown* (1974), and *Taxi Driver* (1976), among many others, gained enormous critical and commercial success due to their originality and profound ambition for breaking classical narrative forms and taboos. As time

went by, the success of the films of the New Hollywood era encouraged young filmmakers to become more and more prone to taking risks. These authorial ventures of New Hollywood filmmakers often faced problems during the production and faced financial difficulties during the shootings, but managed to justify that by making artistically, critically, and financially successful films (King 92). Examples of those kinds of troubled, but eventually successful productions include Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978) (Webb 147). By the late 1970s, these ambitious filmmakers shifted from making films with a humble budget to more grandiose and expensive films, because of the freedom and financial support that the major studios entrusted them with. Francis Ford Copolla's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) was the film that gained enormous negative attention during its production because of the many problems that the film crew experienced, but Copolla justified it at the end after the film received numerous awards, and was a critical and financial success. On the other hand, the previously mentioned filmmaker Michael Cimino, who rose to fame after his critically acclaimed and commercially successful film *The Deer Hunter* (1978), was the one that made studios rethink the auteurial role in the process of filmmaking after his film *The Heaven's Gate* suffered a colossal financial failure in 1980 (Biskind 459). Michael Cimino's notorious failure *The Heaven's Gate* became the incarnation of the mentality of overreaching and spoiled filmmakers who were abusing their privileges. After the film suffered an enormous financial loss and was a failure among critics and the audience, United Artists (the studio behind *The Heaven's Gate* and once an incarnation of the New Hollywood movement) had gone bankrupt and had been sold to Metro Goldwyn Meyer. This had a tremendous negative effect on the perception of auteur filmmakers and made film studios second guess before allowing any of the auteur filmmakers to make big-budget films. It could be concluded that the sequence of very risky productions that took place in the late 1970s escalated with the failure of *The Heaven's Gate* and that this event marked a moment when film studios realized that it was time for them

to, once again, take the complete control away from filmmakers and to make further films under the control of their policies. This would, for the first time since the Classic Hollywood era, bring the pivotal role in making films back to film studio's executives.

On the other hand, George Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977), which was made on a modest budget became an enormous box-office success in 1977. As the previously mentioned problematic productions of films from the late 1970s marked the end of the New Hollywood era, major Hollywood film studios saw that the time has come for studios to take a pivotal role in the processes of filmmaking in order to produce financially successful films. This resulted in studios, once again, turning to family-friendly films, franchises, blockbusters, and films that could produce lines of merchandise – all of which trace back to the enormous financial success of *Star Wars* (1977) (LoBrutto 191).

While contemporary film critics attribute the term “blockbuster“ to Steven Spielberg's 1975 thriller *Jaws*, as the first film that earned more than 100 million dollars at the box office, *Star Wars* served as the archetype for a family-friendly blockbuster that also had the potential for selling merchandise and to earn a colossal amount of money (Silver 259). It is somewhat ironic that one of the representatives of the New Hollywood movement, George Lucas, who directed the critically acclaimed New Hollywood auteur film *American Graffiti* (1973) is the one who is responsible for the re-establishment of the Hollywood studio system, whose primary goal was the financial success (LoBrutto 191).

To conclude, the year 1980 marked a beginning of an era when film studios, once again, took control over the films that were being made, and it marked the beginning of the so-called Blockbuster era where the artistic vision of filmmakers needed to be subordinated to studios' policies in order to receive financial support and, in the end, to see the light of the day. Two of the representatives of the New Hollywood movement, Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola, both stated that the failure of *The Heaven's Gate* did indeed mark the end of the era;

with Scorsese saying: “*Heaven’s Gate* undercut all of us. I knew at the time it was the end of something, that something had died”, and Coppola stating: “There was a kind of coupe d’etat that happened after *Heaven’s Gate*, started by Paramount. It was a time when the studios were outraged that the cost of movies was going up so rapidly, that directors were making such incredible amounts of money, and had all the control. So they took the control back” (qtd. in Biskind 495). Finally, to illustrate what the New Hollywood era represented to both the filmmakers and the audiences of the time, a statement by Robert Altman regarding the end of the era is worth mentioning: “At the beginning of the 1970s, suddenly there was a moment when it seemed as if the pictures you wanted to make, they wanted to make. And now, the pictures that they have to make to keep their machine running are not the kind of pictures I want to make. And the pictures I want to make they don’t want to make because they don’t know how to distribute them” (qtd. in Biskind 495).

### **3. Main Characteristics of the Era**

As it was mentioned earlier in this paper, the New Hollywood Era brought some of the biggest innovations in filmmaking, as well as deviations in filmmaking in comparison to its predeceasing era, Classical Hollywood. It was the first era where violence and sex became allowed in movies. As the censorship was decreasing and the amount of freedom that filmmakers had in the process of making movies grew, it soon became clear that all of the things that were banned for decades resulted in a growing interest in audiences to see more mature content that was not necessarily family-friendly. This chapter is going to provide an overview of the most important characteristics of the New Hollywood era.

### **3.1. The Breaking of Studio Conventions and Challenging Traditional Filmmaking**

If we analyze the films of Classical Hollywood, it could be concluded that the filmmaker was a person who worked under the surveillance of major film studio executives and whose primary role was to create an entertaining film that is going to attract audiences. Apart from film noir, which differed in terms of dark themes and atmospheres and which could be seen as an antithesis of Classic Hollywood, it could be concluded that the majority of Classic Hollywood films had the priority to be entertaining and family-friendly. Examples of this can be found if we look at the highest-grossing films of the Classic era or the films that won the most Academy Awards. However, the changes in filmmaking that led to the establishment of New Hollywood led to the changed role of the filmmaker. As the filmmakers were no longer forced to work in such surveillanced conditions, it gave them a big amount of freedom in the process of filmmaking. Because of the diminished control of the studios, the filmmakers became more of storytellers, rather than people whose job was to adjust the film to fit the mass audiences and to fit film studios' policies (Thompson 339). This newly gained freedom, of course, opened the door for much greater representation of artistic vision as it was no longer limited by studios' norms and regulations. Rather than fitting into a pre-existing mold on how to make films, New Hollywood filmmakers had the opportunity to make films that were influenced by a much broader set of influences from across the globe, such as Italian Neorealism and the French New Wave (Thompson 340). One of the main characteristics that was introduced from Italian Neorealism was the departure from the classical linear plots in favor of more unconfined plot structures. These unconfined plot structures did not necessarily entail linear plots and they allowed the filmmakers to create much more open-ended plots that were open to the interpretation of the audiences. Furthermore, Italian Neorealism introduced the documentary visual filmmaking style and it opened an opportunity to film at real outdoor locations, in comparison to the, almost mandatory use of artificially built studio sites that were

in use during Classic Hollywood (LoBrutto 208). This provided the audiences with a feeling of a more genuine atmosphere of the films and it made films more authentic. Additionally, Italian Neorealism provided freedom in the writing of film dialogues, as it differed from Classical Hollywood dialogues, which resembled more that of literary writing than natural, conversational dialogue (Biskind 285). It could be said that the influences of Italian Neorealism provided New Hollywood filmmakers with a style that was more appropriate for a sincere atmosphere of films than that of Classical Hollywood - which resembled more to that of theatre plays.

When it comes to the sole plots and narratives of the New Hollywood films, the French New Wave provided the greatest inspiration and innovation to filmmakers. Unlike Italian Neorealism, which is mainly characterized by innovative storytelling and atmospheric innovations, French New Wave provided more of a thematic innovation to the New Hollywood. The main characteristics of the French New Wave were the abolishment of classical filmmaking devices in favor of experimental and avant-garde devices (which is similar to Italian Neorealism innovativeness), and more importantly, the introduction of existential themes, whose purpose was to depict the chaos that was present in the societies of the time (Thompson 340). French New Wave has its origins in the 1950s, and it not only represented the reinvention of filmmaking in the European cinema of the time, but it also resonated among audiences who attended art-house film projections in the United States (King 4-5). The themes of the French New Wave were the product of filmmakers' own preoccupations, rather than products of a studio-driven system (Glenn 23). Films of the most prominent French New Wave filmmakers, such as Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut expressed more personal and more realistic themes, such as the critique of establishment and more intensely personal themes (Kirshner and Lewis 20). In comparison to Classic Hollywood, which was in the process of disintegration, those kinds of films were considered revolutionary for American audiences and filmmakers.

It could be concluded that the main influence that Italian Neorealism and French New Wave provided to New Hollywood filmmakers is the much more naturalistic and realistic approach to the process of filmmaking. Many of the most important films of the New Hollywood era were rich in such super-realistic depictions of characters and their surroundings. Maybe the best example of the influence of Italian Neorealism and French New Wave on New Hollywood filmmaking is Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. The film is set in naturalistically depicted poor neighborhoods of New York City, where the film follows the main protagonist, an insomniac disgusted and embittered with what New York City had turned into. The grim atmosphere and the presence of pimps, underage prostitutes, drugs, and weapons greatly differ from the much more flaunting representation of New York City that the audiences had seen in many Classical Hollywood films. Overall, the representation of human suffering and moral ambiguity can be seen throughout a number of New Hollywood films, such as *Midnight Cowboy*, *Chinatown*, and *Rosemary's Baby*, among many others.

### **3.2. Moral Ambiguity Became the Norm**

Due to years-long censorship and the imposition of morally clean films in Classical Hollywood, moral ambiguity and breaking of the rules became very attractive to the filmmakers of New Hollywood. That was practically an unexplored territory both for the filmmakers and the audiences at the beginning of an era. The reason why the films of early New Hollywood became so controversial and popular was the fact that they represented characters and topics which were not allowed to be covered in the earlier years. The controversy of the X-rated *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) emerged because of the fact that the main protagonist was a gigolo. Furthermore, the attractiveness of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) was that the main protagonists were criminals, robbers, and murderers, and the attractiveness of *The Godfather* (1972) revolves around the fact that it is a film about an Italian mafia family. *Chinatown* (1974), the first neo-noir film, contains all of the characteristics of a noir film, except that it goes a few steps further



into the provocative subject matter, and contains graphic violence, sex, and an incestuous plot twist at the end. All of these examples reaffirm the fact that the role of the New Hollywood filmmakers was to push the boundaries of the topics with which films could deal with at the time. The dismissal of censorship provided brand new horizons which could be explored and which were depicted in New Hollywood films.

As a result of foreign influences, mainly from French and Italian cinema, and as a result of newly acquired freedom in terms of basically no censorship, moral ambiguity not only represented a deviation from the previous Hollywood era, but it also laid the groundwork for the establishment of the so-called “adult cinema“ (LoBrutto 39). With the introduction of the MPAA rating system, films of New Hollywood were the first ones in Hollywood history that had the freedom to deal with topics that were intended specifically for mature audiences (Harris 240). For example, the division, or the polarity, between good and evil served as the main plot mechanism in most Classic Hollywood films. However, as super-realism became the norm during the New Hollywood years, it became very clear that morally ambiguous characters have much more of a mature quality than the black-and-white division of characters on good and bad. The characters of New Hollywood cinema were much more realistic figures who were dealing with morally complex decisions that life has brought upon them. In other words, the protagonists of New Hollywood narratives did not necessarily make choices between good and evil – their actions resembled that of everyday people who have to make decisions between options that are brought upon them by circumstances. This very commonly resulted in characters making their decisions and acting in a „grey area“, an area which is much more prone to interpretations and which results in morally ambiguous decisions. Exactly because of this, the plots of New Hollywood films very often provided endings that were open for interpretation (Kirshner and Lewis 21). Similarly to the endings of film noir, New Hollywood films very often left the audiences with a bad taste in their mouth, whether because of the absence of the

archetypal happy ending or because the characters simply did not get any resolution at the end. This moral ambiguity and the grey area in which the characters were found served as a mechanism for creating films that left a more mature impression, as well as a realistic note. The return of the good and evil polarity can be spotted in *Star Wars* (1977), the film that marked the beginning of the Blockbuster era of films, and which resonated with wider audiences, as the audiences can feel catharsis at the end, whereas in films of New Hollywood the whole point was to leave the audiences without one.

#### **4. The Most Important Works and Legacy of New Hollywood Cinema**

After explaining the historical context and the main characteristics and innovations that New Hollywood brought to mainstream cinema, this chapter is going to provide an analysis of some of the most revolutionary films of the era. Furthermore, this chapter is going to provide examples of films that single-handedly reinvented some of the pre-existing film genres, such as horror, neo-noir detective thriller, and gangster film. Finally, it is going to provide examples from more contemporary cinema where those influences can be found.

##### **4.1. Early New Hollywood Films That Defined the Era**

During the few years prior to the release of the first true New Hollywood film, *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967, the anxiety among filmmakers in Hollywood grew stronger. The reason for this was the fact that any filmmaker that felt the need to address mature topics, such as those regarding serious existential issues, exploring human sexuality, or the nature of violence, was immediately put at the mercy of the Production Code board – a board against which they had no odds, and which, without exception, battled against every film element that would bring moral purity in question (Harris 15). This resulted in the Production Code depriving the film of the main elements that would characterize it as adult and mature.

The production of *Bonnie and Clyde*, whose release marked the beginning of a new movement in Hollywood history, started with its producers having a vision of bringing the innovative French New Wave to Hollywood by making a film about gangsters, but in such a way that it would include all the elements that the Classic Hollywood gangster films excluded – explicit violence and sympathy for the criminals (Kirshner 32). The producers were inspired by French New Wave so much that they wanted François Truffaut, one of the leaders of the French New Wave, to direct the film. At last, the producers found their director, Arthur Penn, and decided that they would not make a historical film that followed the misadventures of the criminal couple, but simply a film that would defy critics' and audience's expectations of what a gangster movie should look like – the main narrative of the film resulted in the combination of crime, robbery, and bloodshed, while also dealing with love, passion, and comedy – which were all integral parts of Bonnie's and Clyde's life (Harris 16).

After having to persuade numerous directors, actors, and film studios, the idea of the film, which was coined in 1962, became realized in 1967, after the involvement of Warren Beatty in the production. Beatty's popularity as a young film star finally brought the film to production and led to its release (Harris 15). After the release of the film, the critics and the newspapers unanimously marked it as the film which finally led to the beginning of the New Hollywood era, an era on which many young filmmakers had been waiting to begin since the early 1960s (King 12). The film follows a young couple, Bonnie and Clyde, through their series of robberies and murders in Texas in the 1930s and it depicts the passion between the main (anti)heroes, explicit violence, and moral ambiguity. It could be concluded that the long-awaited turn of events in Hollywood finally occurred and that the release of *Bonnie and Clyde* marked the breaking of shackles from the Production Code.

In the same year, *The Graduate* saw the light of the day. Based on the book of the same name, which did not get any special attention upon its release a few years earlier, it presented a

different view of the American youth. The main protagonist, Ben Braddock, is a young, 21-year-old man, who returned to his hometown in Los Angeles after graduating from a prestigious college on the East Coast. Instead of having a well-elaborated plan on what to do after college, as one would expect, he feels suffocated by his family members always asking what he will do next, as his opportunities are basically endless. This alone represents the countercultural attitude of the American youth of the time – until the economic explosion in the 1950s, the most prestigious universities were only accessible to the members of high social classes (Godfrey 190). However, the economic growth in the United States resulted in the expansion of the middle class, a class to which Braddock belongs to. These endless opportunities fill Braddock with anxiety and confusion, instead of euphoria and ambition, which would be expected. This resonated with the American youth of the time on a large scale. This is only the backstory of the main protagonist of the film, and yet it proposes a unique and provocative matter for the time of its release in 1967.

The main plot begins to entangle when a family friend, Mrs. Robinson, a married woman who is old enough to be Ben's mother, assertively seduces Ben into a sexual affair. The following events, which include them sneaking into a hotel to have sexual relations, and Ben getting to know Mrs. Robinson's husband and daughter, cover many provocative topics which were not present in Hollywood cinema ever before. The ideas of premarital sex, extramarital affair, and a woman being a dominant sexual figure in a relationship (instead of a man) all greatly resonated with the audiences and served as very provocative, taboo-breaking motives in Hollywood cinema. It could be concluded that if we put the provocative motives from *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* together, these two films single-handedly broke the conventions and restraints of what could be shown in a mainstream Hollywood film at the time. Exactly this is the reason why these two films marked a milestone, or the time stamp when the old Hollywood came to an end, and when the New Hollywood era began.

Furthermore, the 1969 film *Easy Rider* serves as the best example of the counterculture and social division in the late 1960s United States. The film was created during the era when the clash between the old and new values was in full swing, and when alienation and the sense of being lost were omnipresent in American society. Main factors that caused such a social situation were the Vietnam War, a war that was led by a conservative government that was trying to hold on to the vision of the American Dream and American Exceptionalism at all costs; and the Civil Rights Movement, a series of events where black Americans peacefully protested against racial segregation and racism, and whose goal was that Afro Americans gain the same rights and life opportunities that the white Americans have. Civil Right Movement resulted in numerous cases of police brutality against protesters, and television broadcasts of such violent events deepened the hostility between conservative and liberal citizens all across the United States. This conflicting situation led to the creation of the counterculture of hippies - the people whose mentality was directed towards peace, social equality, liberation from the oppressive government, and whose symbols included living in communes, experimenting with drugs, listening to rock 'n' roll, defying social expectations and rejecting the imposed ideal of achieving the American Dream. *Easy Rider* (1969) can be viewed both as a celebration of freeing oneself from social constraints, as well as a symbol of the impossibility of individuals to achieve freedom in a society that is confined by prejudice and bigotry against everyone that tries to live without following the imposed rules. *Easy Rider* follows two friends, Billy and Wyatt, whose names are derived from classical Western figures Billy The Kid and Wyatt Earp, who embark on a journey from West to East Coast after a successful drug deal in Mexico, and who find themselves in various situations – from drug experimentation and going to a brothel, to meeting numerous people filled with prejudice and hate towards them (as they are hippies).

One of the most powerful symbols in the film is the disintegration of the genre of Western. In classical, famous Westerns, the polarity between the good and the evil is clear: the

city represents the civilization, thus representing the good, while the wilderness represents the evil and the threat to the civilization. The plot of the classical Western usually revolves around the fact that the protagonist must conquer the wilderness (and everything that it contains) in order to impose stability and to bring the balance between good and evil back, in which he undoubtedly succeeds. Another important element of Western is the frontier – a symbolic border between civilization and the wilderness. It can be said that in *Easy Rider*, the two polar opposites - the civilization and the wilderness (in this case the city and the countryside), are taking exact opposite roles. For the protagonists, the city represents oppression and chaos, while the wilderness is idyllic and provides them with security and much-wanted freedom. The main social critique of the film is the disintegration of American society, the feeling of being lost, and the futile pursuit for freedom, which is best illustrated by Jack Nicholson's character's line: “You know, this used to be a helluva good country. I can't understand what's gone wrong with it. (...) They'll talk to ya and talk to ya and talk to ya about individual freedom. But they see a free individual, it's gonna scare 'em.” (“Easy Rider” 01:09:50-01:11:09).

#### **4.2. The 1970s and the Peak of the New Hollywood Era**

In literature, New Hollywood cinema is often referred to as “the 1970s cinema“. The reason behind this is the fact that New Hollywood did indeed see its peak in the 1970s and the most memorable and critically acclaimed films arrived throughout this decade. With numerous films in the competition, this part of the paper is going to analyze two of the most significant films of the 1970s New Hollywood according to their historic and artistic importance, as well as the innovation that they brought to mainstream cinema. The two films are *The Godfather* (1972) and *Taxi Driver* (1976).

Now regarded as one of the greatest achievements in Hollywood history, *The Godfather* was directed by Francis Ford Coppola and it is based on the novel of the same name written by Mario Puzo. The story follows Michael Corleone, a World War II veteran who, upon returning

to his family home in New York City, finds himself at crossroads – although he is a model citizen and the audiences meet him as a traditional Classic Hollywood hero, in the same time he is a son of aging Mafia family patriarch Vito Corleone. As his father is becoming too old and fragile to continue to handle his role as one of the main Mafia bosses in New York City, Michael is required to take over his father's role as family patriarch and continue his father's business. Although Michael has two brothers (who are very much more eager to fill their father's shoes), he is the only one competent enough to be the true heir to his father's throne. The plot of the film, on the first look, is the process of transformation of Michael Corleone from hero to villain. However, if we analyze the film, it becomes apparent that the story concerns much deeper issues – Michael is morally crucified between his reluctance over taking over the criminal Mafia world and his obligation to fulfill the expectations of taking care of his family. This is where the moral ambiguity of New Hollywood narratives becomes relevant – Michael is put into a moral dilemma in which he must decide whether he is going to accept modernity or go along with his family's tradition. Michael, basically forced to take on the role of patriarch after the attempted assassination of his father by rival Mafia bosses, tries to cope with his new role, and discovers that, although lacking his father's charismatic skills, he is very capable of filling out the role of Mafia family boss.

What makes this film so groundbreaking and innovative is the fact that it single-handedly reinvented the genre of gangster films. Until the 1970s and the New Hollywood era, gangster films were very predictable – under the Production Code's censorship of moral ambiguity, gangsters were undoubtedly represented as violent and repugnant villains who would, by the end of the film, receive punishment for their criminal behavior (they would be either killed or put in prison). During Classic Hollywood, criminals were represented in such a way that they discouraged audiences from feeling any sympathy for them. In *The Godfather*, the anti-hero Michael not only provokes the audiences to feel sympathy with him, but also to

identify with him because it urges the audiences to ask themselves: “What would I do in Michael's situation? After all, it is his family.” Additionally, the film is completely placed in the world of the Corleone family, so the viewers do not even get the opportunity to view them as evil criminals, as any other perspective is not available to viewers (for example, the film does not contain a perspective of ordinary, law-abiding citizens or the perspective of law enforcement). Because of this, the entire narrative is placed in a morally gray area in which the characters can only choose slightly more or less morally wrong decisions; because in the end, every decision that they make is made in the context of Mafia family and, therefore, it is impossible for it to be morally right.

The film also deals with the subject of the American Dream in an innovative and controversial way. As the film revolves around a family of Sicilian immigrants who came to the United States in order to fulfill their American Dream, it becomes apparent very early that achieving that is not possible by living a law-abiding life because there will always be someone who has better connections and who will oppress ordinary, law-abiding citizens. As it is more thoroughly explained in *The Godfather Part II* (1974), Vito's ambition to achieve his American Dream legally is shattered by the oppression of local criminal bosses, so he is forced to turn to a criminal lifestyle in order to take care of his family. The opening scene of *The Godfather* illustrates the problematic aspects of achieving the American Dream by abiding the law: Vito Corleone's acquaintance, an undertaker named Bonasera comes to Vito, asking if Vito can „take care“ of two men who had raped and beaten his daughter, as American justice system failed to put the two men behind bars. This situation illustrates the shattered illusion of the American Dream that was present in the years prior to New Hollywood. Consistent with the narratives of New Hollywood cinema, the ending of the film also fails to carry out moral justice and punish criminals for their deeds. At the end of *The Godfather*, Michael is seen as a champion after ordering successful assassinations of all of the rival Mafia family bosses. This, along with the



christening of his sister's child, turns Michael into the ultimate godfather of the family and his father's successor. By doing so, this also eliminates the last fraction of innocence, morality, and purity from Michael as he finishes his transformation into a lord of the criminal world.

Furthermore, a film that can also be seen as a pinnacle of New Hollywood cinema, and the film that encapsulates the spirit of New Hollywood the most, is Martin Scorsese's psychological thriller *Taxi Driver* (1976). The film begins when Travis Bickle, a Vietnam War veteran who suffers from insomnia, starts to work night shifts as a taxi driver in 1970s New York City. This newly gained job provides Travis with a first-hand view of the urban chaos that fills the streets of New York City. Instead of having a firm, three-act plot, the film provides audiences with an insight into one period of Travis Bickle's life – a period between the moment he starts working as a taxi driver and the moment when he completely loses his sense of reality and turns to brutal violence. Through a series of events, the audiences are introduced to the world that surrounds the main protagonist and are also witnesses to Travis' deteriorating mental health. These events include a racist man (played by Martin Scorsese himself) demanding that Travis drives him to the apartment of her wife's black lover and states that he is going up there to kill them both; meeting a pimp who employs underage prostitutes; Travis asking a love interest on a date with him and then, after she agrees to it, taking her to X-rated cinema because he is completely oblivious of social norms and practices; the attempted and failed assassination of a potential presidential candidate; and finally, the bloodshed that occurs when Travis decides to take justice into his hands and to kill the pimp and everyone who is involved in the prostitution of the underage girl. This unconfined plot of the film has its roots in Italian Neorealism. Instead of telling the story in a confined structure, Scorsese was influenced by Italian Neorealism in order to create a non-linear plot structure that resembles documentary-style filmmaking. Additionally, the naturalistic atmosphere is also accomplished by filming on real locations, most of them being the streets of New York City at night.

When it comes to the narrative of the film, it is filled with influences from French New Wave. They can be spotted in the omnipresence of existential themes which provide the audiences with an intense sense of anxiety throughout the entire film, and in Travis' disgust towards people who surround him. The physical surroundings of the main protagonist are no different – we can see chaos, immorality, and human suffering on every corner of the streets of New York. This resonance between Travis' mental state and the urban chaos that surrounds him can be attributed to the expressionistic approach which was characteristic of films of the French New Wave. As the events that surround Travis become more and more bitter and grim, his mental state becomes increasingly fragile and unpredictable. This is why the film is frequently characterized as the best representation of expressionist filmmaking in Hollywood, as the surroundings of the main character resonate with his emotional state. A similar expressionist relation between the protagonist's emotional state and his urban surrounding can be found in the early New Hollywood film, *Midnight Cowboy* (1969).

Furthermore, the super-realistic setting of *Taxi Driver* greatly differs from representations of the urban surroundings from the Classic Hollywood era. Instead of focusing on the beauty of living in the big city, the film shows the audience the exact opposite – in virtually every scene that takes place on the streets of New York City, Travis is surrounded by immorality and violence. Finally, the bitter ending of *Taxi Driver* perfectly rounds up its noir atmosphere and it is consistent with ambiguous endings of New Hollywood films. After the rampage killing of the pimp and everyone who got in the way, Travis tries to commit suicide but fails to do so because he runs out of bullets. The film ends with Travis receiving a thank-you letter from the underage prostitute's parents, and with Travis being described as a hero in the newspapers. The ending is highly ambiguous (and therefore consistent with the endings of New Hollywood films) and it leaves audiences to question what is going to happen with Travis next. It is basically impossible to say with certainty if justice has been served in the end (through the

murdering of the pimp), or if the criminal, which Travis undoubtedly is, is falsely considered a hero by the general public.

#### 4.3. New Hollywood's Legacy in Contemporary Cinema

Finally, as New Hollywood is considered one of the most groundbreaking and innovative periods in Hollywood history, its influence on Hollywood cinema cannot be overseen as it left an indelible mark on almost everything that has been filmed afterward. Due to the abolishment of the Hays Code in 1968, the era brought complete reinvention to some of the pre-existing film genres.

When it comes to film genres, it could be said that the most drastic reinvention during the New Hollywood was that of the horror genre. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the first productions of horror films made by major film studios. Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) marked a revolution in psychological horror films, with its highly disturbing elements of satanic cults and a woman giving birth to Satan. Furthermore, a few years later, Warner Bros released *The Exorcist* (1973), arguably the most controversial film of the era. The film revolves around a girl who is possessed by the devil - which was controversial on its own. Additionally, the film included the elements of desecration of Catholic symbols, an underage girl masturbating with a cross, levitating and turning her head 360 degrees, and vomiting green substance in a priest's face. Its controversial theme was so exotic and attractive to audiences that it became an unprecedented financial success, while at the same time it caused numerous people to vomit and lose consciousness during its premiere in theaters (LoBrutto 65). Additionally, the 1970s saw the emergence of low-budget slasher horror films, such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and *Halloween* (1978), which are now widely regarded as classics. The introduction of horror films to broad audiences in the 1970s resulted in the affirmation of the genre as mainstream and resulted in the production of numerous original and successful horror films since. One of the examples is *Get Out* (2017), a psychological horror film that, much like the

controversial *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and its provocative theme of satanism and women's rights, provides an insight into racial relations and implicit racism that is present in contemporary America. Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) was the first science-fiction horror film whose legacy can be found in all of the science-fiction horrors since, such as *The Thing* (1982), *Predator* (1987), and more recently, *A Quiet Place* (2018) and *The Mist* (2007). Low-budgeted slasher films of the 1970s also inspired numerous films of the later periods, with the most notable being *The Scream* (1996), a slasher horror film that single-handedly reinvented and repopularized the slasher genre in contemporary cinema.

When it comes to the gangster film genre, it was completely reinvented during the New Hollywood era. Starting with *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), as the first gangster film that depicted explicit violence and that contained moral ambiguity, the gangster film genre reached its peak with *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather Part II* (1974), which turned the gangster genre into legitimate, high art. Its legacy continued through numerous films since, with the most memorable being Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990), Brian de Palma's *Scarface* (1983), and the legendary TV series *The Sopranos* (1999-2007).

The detective, neo-noir film genre was introduced in Roman Polanski's New Hollywood masterpiece *Chinatown* (1974), which is now widely regarded as the first neo-noir film. The term neo-noir derives from the film noir movement, which had been popular among audiences during the 1940s and 1950s, and which was under the scrutiny of the Production Code until the late 1960s. *Chinatown* (1974), as it was produced during the period of almost no censorship, was widely regarded as reinvented noir film (thus neo-noir), as it shared the same narrative and stylistic characteristics as film noir, with the addition of, previously banned, explicit violence and sex. The detective neo-noir genre was not fully repopularized in mainstream cinema until the early 1990s when Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) saw the light of the day and gained enormous critical acclaim and popularity among the audiences. This marked a

great popularization of the neo-noir detective genre in the 1990s and decades that followed. This resulted in highly successful neo-noir detective films, such as *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Se7en* (1995), *L.A. Confidential* (1997), *Mystic River* (2003), *Shutter Island* (2010), *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), among many others.

The year 2019 alone saw the release of two films that can be seen as love letters to the New Hollywood era. The first one is Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time... In Hollywood* (2019), a film whose plot is placed in Hollywood in 1969, a year when great changes took place in Hollywood. The film follows a Classic Hollywood actor who struggles to find his place in the sun as the New Hollywood era has begun and as he is no longer attractive to the New Wave of filmmakers that had taken the pivotal role in mainstream filmmaking. The film also follows the true story of Sharon Tate, the wife of the New Hollywood filmmaker Roman Polanski, who was murdered the same year by the members of Charles Manson's satanic cult (but similarly to *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), Tarantino changes the historic events so that they end in a more favorable way). The other film is *Joker* (2019). Although the main antihero, Joker, is part of Batman's cinematic universe, and one would expect that the plot would be filled with action and adventure, the filmmaker Todd Phillips took a completely different approach and created an expressionistic psychological thriller that explores the main protagonist's, Arthur Fleck's, descent into madness and his transformation into a villain named Joker. Not only is it not a classic superhero film, but it very much resembles the expressionistic, dark atmosphere of Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976). Arthur, who is already suffering from serious mental issues, becomes left on his own as the public healthcare system betrays him by closing the mental clinic which provides him with his much-needed pills. Additionally, he is beaten up by random people, his mother dies, and is eventually fired from his job as a clown because he started to carry a gun with him to work (in order to protect himself from future attacks). All of this serves as a breaking point for Arthur, who becomes increasingly violent and nihilistic. The atmosphere

of the film is very much like that of dark and existential New Hollywood psychological thrillers, deriving its inspiration the most from Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *The King of Comedy* (1982), psychological thrillers that follow the main protagonist's descent into madness and violence.

## 5. Conclusion

The New Hollywood era, which lasted from 1967 to 1980, is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and ground-breaking periods in Hollywood history. As the ambitions of filmmakers grew toward dealing with more mature topics during the 1960s, the weakening of the strict Production Code during the second half of the 1960s opened the doors for more provocative themes to be covered in Hollywood films. Additionally, the influences from European film movements of the 1950s and 1960s, such as more unconfined French New Wave and Italian Neorealism, also inspired Hollywood filmmakers to change the way in which films were made and broadened the specter of themes that could be covered in mainstream cinema. The sociopolitical situation of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, which was characterized by anti-establishment attitudes, rock 'n' roll and hippie culture, and by the death of the American Dream, also had an important influence on the climate among filmmakers, provoking them to express their rebellious attitudes throughout their films. When all of these factors combined, the New Hollywood era resulted in productions of films that expressed filmmakers' individual preferences and which were auteur-driven, unlike Classic Hollywood productions, which were driven by studios' policies.

Numerous stylistic and narrative changes took place during the era, such as the use of real locations instead of movie sets, the use of expressionistic methods in order to express the anxiety that was present in the American society of the time, and most importantly, the moral ambiguity of characters practically became the norm of New Hollywood filmmaking. This moral ambiguity provided the biggest diversion from the previous era, Classic Hollywood, as

it was basically an unexplored territory because of the Production Code rules that banned it. Consequently, New Hollywood popularized dark and existential themes and brought some of the most popular anti-heroes in Hollywood history, such as Michael Corleone from *The Godfather* (1972), Travis Bickle from *Taxi Driver* (1976), and Bonnie and Clyde from *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). The era also brought a renaissance to several film genres which were unable to evolve during the earlier period when films were under the scrutiny of the Hays Code, and New Hollywood saw a rise of the horror genre, detective neo-noir genre, and gangster film genre.

As the 1970s went by and the successes lined up, the filmmakers of New Hollywood turned from low-budgeted films to increasingly ambitious and expensive film productions. After problematic productions of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), which were eventually successful, major film studios' executives became aware that the time has come for them to take the power back from filmmakers. Finally, the enormous financial and critical failure of Michael Cimino's historical epic *The Heaven's Gate* (1980) marked the end of the era, and the pivotal role in filmmaking was once again taken away from ambitious filmmakers. George Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977) and its hugely successful sequels only affirmed the fact that financial success was the most important aspect of the Hollywood industry, and this marked the beginning of the Blockbuster era, which is present until today. However, the impact that the New Hollywood era had on mainstream cinema is of great historical importance, and its legacy can be frequently found in the works of contemporary Hollywood cinema.

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#### Films:

*Bonnie and Clyde*. Directed by Arthur Penn, Warner Bros., 1967.

*Easy Rider*. Directed by Dennis Hopper, Columbia Pictures, 1969.

*The Godfather*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, Paramount Pictures, 1972.

*The Graduate*. Directed by Mike Nichols, Embassy Pictures and United Artists, 1967.

*Taxi Driver*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, Columbia Pictures, 1976.

## 7. New Hollywood Cinema: Historical Context and Legacy: *Summary and Key Words*

New Hollywood era was a period in Hollywood history that lasted approximately from 1967 to 1980. The era began as filmmakers' reaction to significant changes in Hollywood production policies (Hollywood Antitrust Law in 1948 and the dismissal of The Production Code in 1968), which resulted in diminished power of film studios and loosening of restrictions on what could be shown in film. Because of this changed climate, the filmmakers were, for the first time in Hollywood history, permitted to make mainstream films that broke the rules of censorship that were present in the previous, Classic Hollywood era. This resulted in films rich with innovative elements, such as the depiction of explicit violence and nudity, moral ambiguity, anti-establishment statements, and exploration of human sexuality. The era produced some of the most important films in Hollywood history, such as *The Godfather* (1972), *Taxi Driver* (1976), and *Chinatown* (1974), among many others. New Hollywood saw its end when major film studios once again took the pivotal role in the process of filmmaking, and this marked the beginning of the Blockbuster era, which is in full swing until today. However, relatively short New Hollywood era left an indelible mark in Hollywood history and its legacy can be spotted in numerous contemporary films.

Key words: film studies, New Hollywood, historical context, legacy, moral ambiguity, Hollywood Antitrust Case, Hays Code, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Graduate* (1967), *Easy Rider* (1969), *The Godfather* (1972), *Taxi Driver* (1976)

## 8. Era Novog Hollywooda: Povijesni kontekst i ostavština: *Sažetak i ključne riječi*

Era Novog Hollywooda bilo je razdoblje u povijesti Hollywooda koje je trajalo od 1967. do 1980. godine. Započela je kao reakcija filmaša na značajne promjene u politikama velikih hollywoodskih studija (Hollywoodskog antimonopolskog zakona iz 1948. i odbacivanja Produkcijskog kodeksa 1968.), što je rezultiralo smanjenjem moći filmskih studija i popuštanjem zabrana koje su određivale što se smije prikazati u filmu. Zbog novonastale situacije, filmašima je prvi put u povijesti Hollywooda bilo dopušteno snimati mainstream filmove koji su kršili pravila cenzure koja su bila prisutna u prethodnom, dobu Klasičnog hollywoodskog filma. Rezultat toga bili su filmovi bogati dotad neviđenim elementima poput eksplicitnog nasilja i golotinje, moralne dvosmislenosti, anti-političkih stavova i istraživanja ljudske seksualnosti. Tijekom ere Novog Hollywooda stvoreni su neki od najznačajnijih filmova u povijesti, kao što su *Kum* (1972), *Taksist* (1976), *Kineska četvrt* (1974) i brojni drugi. Novi Hollywood doživio je svoj kraj kada su veliki filmski studiji ponovno preuzeli ključnu ulogu u procesu snimanja filmova, a to je označilo početak „Ere blockbustera“, koja traje još i danas. Međutim, relativno kratka era Novog Hollywooda ostavila je neizbrisiv trag u povijesti Hollywooda i njegova se ostavština može vidjeti u brojnim suvremenim filmovima.

Ključne riječi: filmologija, Novi Hollywood, povijesni kontekst, ostavština, moralna dvosmislenost, Hollywoodski zakon protiv monopola, Produkcijski kodeks, *Bonnie i Clyde* (1967.), *Diplomac* (1967.), *Goli u sedlu* (1969.), *Kum* (1972.), *Taksist* (1976.)