

Types of Fictional Films

a wild ride--calculated in advance, but unknown to the spectator. We are taken through a dark passage, alert and anxious, yet confident we shall return satisfied and unharmed.

The Classical Hollywood Cinema, Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960

Bordwell, Steiger, Thompson

- present external world--seen largely from outside the action--with some pov shots, memories, fantasies, dreams or other mental states
- focuses on one character, or a few distinct individuals
- the main characters have a goal or a few goals

- In trying to attain goals the main character/characters must confront a series of problems
- The film has closure--a sense of resolution or completion at the end of a narrative and often the main characters succeed at obtaining their goals
- the emphasis is on clear causes and effects of actions--what events happen and why they happen are clear and unambiguous
- The film uses unobtrusive filmmaking techniques

Convention: In films and other texts, a subject or technique that makers of texts and audiences have grown to accept as natural or typical in certain contexts

The conventions of classical Hollywood films are found even in foreign films as well as in animated features.

Genre: recognizes that audiences watch any one film within the contexts of other films--make films comprehensible and more or less familiar. (Turner)

- commonly recognized groups of fictional films---Western, Romantic Comedy, Science Fiction, (Any more?)

Westerns

- Many share the same basic conflict-- (civilization vs. wild)
- shared settings: sparsely settled regions-- often frontiers--west of the Mississippi River)
- shots linger on the vastness, openness, beauty, and menace of the open plain



Filming Location of the Searchers



The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, John Ford 1962
John Wayne explains to Jimmy Stewart the
importance of a gun.

- Some have stereotyped Native Americans-- recent films have not like: *Dances with Wolves*, *Smoke Signals* & *Little Big Man*
- Revisionist Westerns: *The Searchers*, *The Wild Bunch*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (expand on a theme and sometimes have “bad” characters central to the movie. Later films: *The Balad of Little Joe* (feminist) *Posse* (African Americans)

Film Noir

- Flourished from 1941-58 *Maltese Falcon*-*Touch of Evil*
- generally focuses on urban crime and corruption
- Abrogation of the American Dream's most basic promises: hope, prosperity, and safety from persecution

Film Noir--Cinema Noir: Black or
Dark Cinema

Dark, Shadowy, Low Key Lighting



Courtesy of October Films





Noir Style: The Big Combo, John Alton Cinematographer

nocturnal world, desperate characters, illuminating scenes with single lamps, slanted, fragmented beams of light, separated by intense darkness in which the source of all fear could fester and thrive--

Todd McCarthy
Painting with Light

- Main characters seem doomed to fail (fatalistic)
- Flashbacks (Double Indemnity, Sunset Blvd.)

Femme Fatale

- attractive, young, worldly, verbally adroit
- Post-war Distrust of women after they had self sufficiency







LA Confidential, Curtis Hanson, 1997

Musicals

- Cross Cut between action and what characters are dreaming
- The Straight Musical: The musical performance just comes write out of the story

Italian Neo-Realist Cinema

- Luchino Visconti
- Roberto Rossellini
- Vittorio De Sica

- film art of authenticity
- reality could be conveyed through created situations
- synthesis of documentary and studio techniques

- non-professional actors
- authentic settings
- naturalistic lighting
- simple direction
- natural dialogue

- unobtrusive filmmaking techniques: few close-ups, wipes, little or no added lighting

- The **auteur theory** holds that a [film](#), or an entire body of work, by a [director](#) (or, less commonly, a [producer](#)) reflects the personal vision and preoccupations of that director, as if she or he were the work's primary "author" ([auteur](#)).

French New Wave Cinema

- Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard etc.
- Cahiers du Cinema
- directors should have control over all stages of productions and post

Like Cinema Verite

- Faster film stock
- set in present or recent past
- shot on location w/ hand held cameras
- surprising or whimsical moments

- jump cuts
- long tracking shots that take the viewer out of the narrative

European Independent Films

- Truffaut, Godard, Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni, Bunuel
- memories, fantasies, dreams, rendered much more and with less transition
- Films tend to focus on one or a few main characters
- main characters' goals are unclear or shifting at times
- main characters confront problems and antagonists, but there isn't as much clarity in terms of good and evil

- lack closure or have unresolved plotlines--protagonists don't always succeed at reaching their goals--endings more true to life
- emphasis not on clear cause and effects of actions-ambiguity,
- episodic scenes could be shifted without changing
- self reflexive

American Indie

- low budget funding from non-traditional sources
- personal
- less formulaic
- more controversial
- endings open/not nec. happy
- AIVF, IFP, Sundance

Dogme 95 (Vow of Chastity)

- Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg
- anyone is welcome to produce a film in this way
- simpler aesthetic (no aesthetic at all)
- elimination of distracting filmic devices
- for the first time anyone can make movies-- so there needs to be a discipline of sorts

- less important to follow them specifically
- think about when the rules should be followed
- established an aesthetic--or anti-aesthetic