Late Hollywood classics as a tool for understanding American society in the 50s

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Abstract

Contrary to what happened in Europe, the war was a period of great economic prosperity for Americans. As reflected in movies, the changes increased considerably in the 50s, with some external factors –the Cold War, the Korean conflict and the weapon race with the USSR–; and internal ones –social movements, young delinquency, consumerism, so far–, which helped develop the beliefs and behaviors of the population.

Key words: *Cold War, anti-communism, capitalism, American way of life, cinema, new genres.*

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Introduction

This paper aims to reflect on the historic and discursive perspective of the US in the 50s, during the postwar and Cold War years, through the approach of movies that have generated debates about historical events of transcendence or have influenced the society of the time in some way. We are going to take four relevant movies as a reference to illustrate how they mirror society and context during the period they were filmed since movies serve as a reflection and example of the existing reality.

In order to show that movies are an echo of the people and their thoughts and prove our main hypothesis, I thought it was appropriate to deal with this era of Hollywood –the 50s– because it is according to Roman Gubern (236) "the end of the classic cinema". As we will see later, the themes, characters and genres in this decade will change. This *new Hollywood* can be found over a long period, from the early years after WWII to the decade of the 60s. In fact, some of the movies chosen to analyze may not be precisely within the range of the decade, but still, they are a reflection of the earlier years. Therefore, we can say that we intend to analyze the movies made in the *long* 50s, which extends to more than a decade, 1945-1963 in our case.

First of all, I will start by explaining why I choose cinema as a fundamental object and source of research for explaining the history of the 50s. For that, I will quote José María Caparrós who explains in the introduction of his book the relationship between cinema and history. He quotes the historian José Florit and says that this relationship is presented in a double aspect: since cinema is a cultural manifestation and a reflection of all the aspects of human existence it is part of history, but also it is a tool to make history, to influence mentalities, political choices, desires and behaviors of the masses (qtd. in 14-15). Therefore, the hypothesis of this work focuses on demonstrating how movies in both directions influence people's points of view and reflect their lives, whether it is a recent modern movie of the 21st century or a movie from the early era of the 20s with black and white silent movies.

Millions of veterans returned from WWII (1939-1945) in need of a job, since a brief economic downturn marked the end of the decade all over the world. Meanwhile, inside

the United States things were completely different; Americans started families and moved to new suburbs, teenagers became an identifiable group, with their own fashions, music and interests. However, fear of communism led to US involvement in the Korean War (1950-1953) and other international and local affairs, all due to the tension with the Soviet Union known as the Cold War which would mark the historical context of our work.

Probably in no other decade since the introduction of sound films, has the form of movie storytelling changed the cinema so radically. Old genres such as the western are heading towards their end; others, like science-fiction movies, experience an intense awakening. Cinema is becoming more personal, more committed and for the first time in its history, it has to fight for its viewers. With the TV, the seventh art gives in its role as the main medium of communication, a role it has, until this day, not yet regained (Müller 259).

In this work, we will go through several aspects of the decade and we will talk about the new genres that happened to appear in movies and prove that these were due to the events that were taking place at that time. Finally, in the analysis of four highly influential movies, we will see the previously outlined theory portrayed on the basis of these pictures. In our final conclusion, we will go through the details mentioned above through a new perspective and we will also verify whether our general hypothesis has been confirmed.

This work will follow the structure and ideas of one of the most prestigious books written about the history of motion pictures, called *Historia del cine* by Román Gubern (1986). We have also based this work on some other cinema history books such as *100 películas sobre historia contemporanea* and *Hollywood 50s*, by Adrian Turner. The main source for our historical context will be *The Cold War: a Very Short Introduction*, by Robert McMahon and *McCarthyism: The Red Scare*, by Brian Fitzgerald. Finally, the sources for the culture and society parts include: *The 50s: from the Korean War to Elvis,* by Stephen Feinstein and *The Fifties in America*, by John C. Super, among others.

Historical context

This paper does not intend to speak the last word on the Cold War or to be any sort of in-depth history work of the complex and multifaceted conflicts that were happening during the 50s in the US. Instead, my purpose has been to provide an interpretation of the situation by focusing only on the events of greatest relevance to the era and to the movies that we will discuss below.

1. The Cold War

1. 1. The origins of the Cold War and the Korean War

As WWII approached its final phase, it was clear that the US and the USSR had the best diplomatic, economic and military tools in their hands. After the war, the administrations of Harry S. Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt insisted on maintaining naval and air forces superior to those of any other nation, as well as a strong military presence in the Pacific and a monopoly on the atomic bomb (McMahon 18-22). Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, Stalin broke the agreement he had made in Yalta in 1945, of holding free elections and installed communist governments in Poland and other Soviet-occupied countries of Eastern Europe (Lindop 6-7).

As it is brilliantly portrayed in the movie *One, Two, Three* the ideology of Marxism-Leninism that underpinned the Soviet state was at odds with the American capitalist ideology and its idea of creating a prosperous new world from the ashes. Both the Soviets and the Americans saw themselves as driven by noble motives which aimed to lead humanity into a new era of peace, justice and order (McMahon 32-33).

What worried the Americans most was that the severe economic and social upheavals caused by the war could make communism an attractive alternative for many people and countries. To confront this threat of expansion, they implemented a strategy to contain the expansion of the USSR and communism, called the containment policy. The first real test of containment came in Greece and Turkey in 1947, where Stalin attempted to extend its rule. Hence, the so-called Truman Doctrine was born and President Harry

Truman sent $ 400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey. A policy that was both *anti-Soviet* and *anti-communist*; so, basically the Doctrine meant the declaration of the Cold War. The containment policy and the Truman Doctrine also laid the foundations for a military build-up, an arms race, which would become a key feature of the Cold War (McMahon 50-53).

Three months later, the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, publicly announced the second phase of his diplomatic offensive, the Marshall Plan. First, they spent $ 13 billion on re-building Western Europe with grants and credits so that Europeans would spend them on American consumption goods and housing which, they hoped, "would prevent the spread of communism in those areas" (Fitzgerald 30-32). Stalin thought Americans rebuilding efforts in Europe were a way of expanding its markets, so he feared the US wanted to use its money and power to dominate the continent and eventually destroy the Soviet system; therefore, he banned Eastern countries from participating in it. The US depended on European economic recovery and needed a strong and economically revitalized Germany. In 1948, after failing to reach an agreement, Germany was divided into East and West. This became a serious postwar problem when Germany's largest city, Berlin, was divided into two sections. This meant that independent West Berlin was dependent on shipments of goods from West Germany through communist East Germany. In 1948 Stalin cut off the roads to West Berlin to what Truman responded with a 24-hour airlift that supplied food and fuel to the residents for 11 months that eventually led to Stalin lifting the blockade in 1949. It is important to mention for the analysis of the movie *One, Two, Three* that in 1961 the Soviets tried again and this time they were much more successful in building a wall around West Berlin (McMahon 54-58).

Meanwhile, Asia was the second most important setting of the Cold War. After WWII, Korea was freed from Japanese control. By 1948 the country was divided in half at the 38th Parallel; communist North Korea was occupied by the Soviets led by Kim II Sung while the capitalist South was occupied by American forces with Syngman Rheea. After winning a long, bloody civil war in 1949 communist leader Mao Tse-tung formed the People's Republic of China. "This news only added to the Red Scare in the US. Now, two of the biggest countries in the world –China and the Soviet Union– had communist governments" (Fitzgerald 46).

The Korean War was the first actual shooting war that Americans participated in after WWII and it was also the only time that US troops directly engaged with communist China. Although he never called the Korean conflict a "war" maintaining that it was a UN "police action", Truman went to the United Nations Security Council for authorization to send American forces to defend South Korea. General MacArthur, as the highest-ranking general in the region and a hero in the pacific during WWII, was in charge of this international police force of 16 nations. In mid-September, MacArthur turned the tide with a stunning victory at the Battle of Inchan pushing the North Koreans out of the South (McMahon 82-89).

Months later, China entered the war and pushed the US forces into retreat. In face of new events, MacArthur demanded Truman's authority to use the atom bomb in China, but the president refused which caused a public rivalry between the two. Truman fired MacArthur and became a beleaguered president. Also, Americans were growing tired of a war that they were not winning, something that helped tip 1953 elections in favor of Eisenhower, who promised to end the war in Korea. Half a year later, with Soviet leader Stalin dead and enemy forces in Korea depleted, the new president forced an armistice and brought soldiers home. A demilitarized zone was set up, which remains to this day.

Though Eisenhower had held off a threat of communist overseas, fear of the Reds inside the United States was growing (Lindop 15-18).

1. 2. The atomic bomb and the Rosenberg case

American planes dropped atomic bombs on Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, killing 115,000 people instantly and leaving tens of thousands more on the edge of death from radiation (Fitzgerald 91). Therefore, the entire nation was shocked when the Soviets successfully tested their first nuclear bomb in 1949, since Americans thought they were the only ones with such nuclear power. The country faced a new threat and the government was beginning to suspect that the Russians used spies to steal nuclear secrets (Lindop 19). It was during this sphere that we see some of the most beloved movies of the spy genre like *Pickup on South Street* (1953) or *North By Northwest* (1959).

These suspicions turned out to be true. In 1950, Klaus Fuchs confessed having spied for the Soviets while working on the Manhattan Project, the top-secret US program to develop the atomic bomb during WWII. Fuchs' arrest and confession uncovered a spy ring that had passed atomic secrets to the Soviets. The investigation linked Fuchs to a man named Julius Rosenberg and his wife, Ethel. The Rosenbergs were arrested shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War accused of spying. After several appeals, the Rosenbergs were executed in June 1953 (Fitzgerald 52-54). Some insisted that the couple were innocent, but most Americans feared the communist threat's rise. Recent evidence shows that Julius Rosenberg was indeed guilty of espionage, but his wife was not, though she knew of her husband's activities (Feinstein 36).

In 1953, a unique event staged by the US government took place in Las Vegas. An A-bomb was going to be tested for the first time on live TV to record its effects on an average American home. Millions of viewers witnessed the terrifying power of an atomic bomb. Both the US and the USSR were testing hydrogen bombs at the time and it seemed that the Soviets had caught up technologically. Americans everywhere wanted to know how to survive this terrifying attack, students had drills every day, public shelters were identified in every city and some families even built them in their backyards (Lindop 54). During this period, a wave of B-movies inside the science-fiction genre took place[1], with themes such as monsters (*Them*!, 1954), atomic mutations (*The Amazing Colossal Man,* 1957) and extraterrestrial visitors.

With an eye on the future, in the early 1960s, both US and Soviet leaders recognized the need to avoid a confrontation and began to take significant steps in that direction. Eventually, nuclear weapons became a deterrent rather than a weapon of war. The threat of mutually assured destruction (MAD) assumed that they had the power to destroy the other; therefore, they would not fire its atomic bombs since if one attempted a first strike the other side would automatically do the same (McMahon 145-146). Due to this, in the year 1964 and based on this concept the movie *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* was made, which criticized the situation and showed how illogical using those weapons was.

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[1] We will talk more in-depth about in the section Motion Pictures in the 50s.

2. Communist threat inside the US

Researchers Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert locate the Cold War's greatest impact within the socio-psychological field, saying that "it persuaded millions of Americans to interpret their world in terms of insidious enemies at home and abroad" (McMahon 176).

2. 1. The HUAC and the "Hollywood Ten"

Long before McCarthy's name became linked with anti-communist hysteria, they had already broken Hollywood. Intellectuals and people in the arts were already attracted to communism from the days of the Great Depression and many had joined the Party or groups later condemned as front organizations (Dunar 38).

In September 1947, Washington's most prominent Red hunters sat on the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to eradicate all *subversive infiltration* within the movie industry (Gubern 56). After long hearings trying to define communist propaganda, it was finally accepted that movies criticizing rich people or members of Congress, or showing a demobilized soldier disillusioned with his war experience, should be considered communist (Gubern 57).

The committee summoned forty-one prominent members of the movie industry, calling, eventually, ten of them to testify, soon be known as the "Hollywood Ten". The Ten, including Dalton Trumbo screenwriter of *Spartacus* (1960), refused to answer questions, invoking the freedom of speech provision of the First Amendment, but the tactic failed. All served from six months to a year in prison. Many prominent names in Hollywood, directors John Huston and William Wyler and actors Humphrey Bogart, Gene Kelly and Lauren Becall, came to their defense (Dunar 39).

The HUAC called new witnesses in 1951. This time, those called to testify could escape censure by naming names. In that period of panic and hysteria, the insidious process destroyed Hollywood's creative energy, as friends turned on friends (Dunar 40). At the end of the hearings, the Commission was able to draw up a *blacklist*. The members of the Association of Motion Picture Producers, which included the leading studio heads, met in secret assembly at the Waldorf Astoria and undertook not to give work to the Ten or any person even suspected of having communist associations in a publication that became known as the Waldorf Declaration. It was in this moral climate that

personalities such as Charles Chaplin, Orson Welles, Jules Dassin and Joseph Losey went into exile in Europe (Gubern 59). The blacklisting lasted until 1960 with *Spartacus* crediting one of the Ten for writing the movie (Douglas 6).

2. 2. McCarthyism and the "witch hunt"

The United States was already in a period of intense anti-communism that came to be called the Red Scare. This hysteria made it easy for the public to believe McCarthy's charges (Fitzgerald 13). Senator Joseph McCarthy first drew national attention, in February 1950, with his historic speech in Wheeling West Virginia, where he claimed he had a list of 205 names of people who worked in the State Department, considered to be "bad risks". McCarthy based his assertions on a letter written more than three years earlier as he had no real list (Lindop 25).

Later, when asked to show his list he said he could not find it. He gave another speech before the senate and by then, he claimed he had 57 names. His critics were tired since, in less than two weeks, McCarthy had changed his accusations several times. McCarthy created the biggest stir when he promised to uncover "the top Russian espionage agent". Thus, began what his opponents called the *witch hunt* (Gubern 54-55).

The hearings continued, until in June 1950, the Tydings Committee issued a report criticizing McCarthy and his tactics. However, national polls showed that most Americans still supported his cause by sending money to help his search or even information about suspects (Fitzgerald 49).

McCarthy's anti-communist crusade continued growing. In June 1951, he even aimed at George Marshall. Among those infuriated by this attack on the beloved Marshall's character was Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republican candidate running for president.

Finally, in the fall of 1953, McCarthy crossed the line and took on a respected institution, the US army. He alleged they infiltrated communists and that senior officers were turning a blind eye. The lawyer of the army was attorney Joseph Welch, who successfully refuted all of his accusations. The hearings, which were televised live, finally gave Americans a chance to see the senator's methods and listen to Welch burst out against him saying: "Have you left no sense of decency?" (Feinstein 34). Welch demanded that McCarthy released its secret list of "army subversives". McCarthy's

gamble on taking on the army went wrong, his charges did not stick and many on his party turned against him (Super 65).

McCarthy's reputation was ruined. The international dissatisfaction with the Rosenberg case and the legal victory of a lawsuit brought by radio journalist John Henry Faulk against the practice of blacklisting did not help either. Later in 1954 McCarthy received a vote of no confidence from the senators themselves, a symbolic act that brought him close to ostracism. His career experienced a rapid decline and although he remained a senator until his untimely death from hepatitis in 1957, he never again exerted comparable influence (Müller 262). McCarthy in many ways was destroyed by the power of television, a power that in the 50s will only continue to grow.

Cultural Revolution and American society

1. Free time and consumerism

With the money Americans had saved during war, returning veterans invested in housing, automobiles, clothing, furniture and other household goods to provide for their wives and children, who were increasingly being born so much that demographers began speaking of a "baby boom" (Dunar 167). In 1940 the United States had over 123 million inhabitants; in 1951, 151 million; and in 1960, 179 million. The population not only grew but also moved from the North to the West. Even if it was a time of great prosperity, it was also a period of contrast and change. In light of automobile congestion, parking problems, lack of schools, housing and babysitting costs, pollution, drugs and violence, middle-class Americans left the inner cities and headed to the ideal of the suburbs, the residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of the cities (Martel & Fontseré 50-52; Caparrós 510).

Americans watched on TV as their favorite stars lived a fictitious, easy and idealized life in the suburbs (Feinstein 59). As is still the case, television played a key role in this standardization of society and in establishing consumption as a way of life. Ads provided a visual reference for what they could and should buy. TV shows such as

Leave It to Beaver (1957) and *Father Knows Best* (1954) forced society into capitalism, consumerism and materialism, seducing the viewers with samples of how beautiful their life could be.

In contrast to the years of economic hardship during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the strict rationing of goods during the years of WWII, the 50s were a time of consumerism among the growing middle-class. This decade was the actual definition of the American way of life. For the first time, people had money to buy a nice house and a big car or two, a television set, large-capacity washing machines, gigantic refrigerators, strollers for twins, impeccably mowed green gardens and integrated kitchens. Undoubtedly one of the defining characteristics of this period that helped maintain the rate of consumption was the expansion of credit. To make it easier for American consumers to spend their money, some businesses began offering credit cards (Martel & Fontseré 50-52; Super 55).

In the early 50s people drove everywhere and traffic congestion was starting to be a problem. So 42,500 miles of divided highways were built, in order to link every major city in the country (Feinstein 9) so that people could drive to the city to work and back home at night. In their leisure time, they went to the malls and the multiplex cinemas there, to fast-food stands, to visit friends and family, often they would go to drive-in movies, which grew considerably. In 1945, there were fewer than 100 drive-ins, but ten years later, there were already 4,000. As for shopping malls, there were eight in 1945 and 3,000 in 1958. The drive-in was a young and seasonal phenomenon which played a very important role in the first sexual experiences of American teenagers (Martel & Fontseré 43-52).

2. Social Revolution

2. 1. Breaking taboo themes

Movies of the 1930s and 1940s barely dealt with social issues and sexuality due to restrictions imposed by the Production Code Administration (PCA). For instance, "two people, even if married, could not be shown in the same bed and miscegenation or drug trafficking among others were also off-limits" (Super 346).

However, as the audiences of the 50s expected more authentic movies that represented their lives in a realistic way and the studios wanted to give them an insight into life, the decade saw movies dealing with drug addiction, as *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) and *A Hatful of Rain* (1957); social class issues *12 Angry Men* (1957); racial issues[2] in *The Defiant Ones* (1958) and *Imitation of Life* (1959), so forth. Besides, we must not forget about juvenile delinquency, a serious social issue in the fifties, which was explored in the context of an inner-city high school in the movie *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). The industry pushed those limits even further with the epics *From Here to Eternity* (1953) a story of marital infidelity and *Compulsion* (1959), whose theme was homosexuality (Dunar 252-255). However, we must not forget that in the 50s "dealing with social issues, created the risk of being labeled sympathetic to communism" (Super 178).

2. 2. Sexual revolution and women

Until the 50s, women were often portrayed in magazines and advertisements as housewives whose main duty was satisfying their husbands and children. However, women, due to the absence of men in WWII, had conquered new roles, taken their own initiatives and assumed responsibilities. Immediately after, they were forced to return to their former roles, appearing either as domestic servants or mistresses and objects of pleasure (Feinstein 11; Müller 261); and the few businesswomen would give up their career for true love. In the movies of the 50s women's roles were illustrated by titles such as *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953) (Super 349).

In real life, nevertheless, more women had jobs outside home and the fashions started to emphasize women's femininity and sexuality. Therefore, movies were forced to change their roles and follow what the audience was asking for, a reflection of their actual lives (Feinstein 13). As we will see later in the movie analysis of *On the Town* (1949), many movies started to add free, empowered women to their main roles.

The person who best symbolized Americans' fantasies about sexuality in the 50s was most likely Marilyn Monroe (Feinstein 22), who was the biggest female movie star of the decade, creating an overt sexuality never seen before (Super 349).

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[2] African-American Civil Rights movement seeking justice was very important during the 50s. However, we will not expand on it in this work, but I believe it is crucial to mention that racial issues were also very present in movies.

Marilyn Monroe would become the first true anti-vamp in the history of cinema. "With her attractive figure, appealing face, voice and walk that exuded sex, she had multiple roles that typecast her as the dumb blond whose innocent remarks were loaded with innuendo. Her tight-fitting clothes and sultry voice completed the image" (Dunar 252). When a journalist asked her what she wore to bed, she answered without hesitation: "Chanel No. 5". As we can see, times had certainly changed. After the Kinsey reports – two scholarly books on the human sexual behavior of American society– women lost the last veils of mystery that their fathers still respected (Gubern 111).

2. 3. Young rebels

One of the decade's most controversial topics that were eagerly embraced by the movie industry was juvenile delinquency. The new Hollywood had as its main stars misunderstood, unsociable and angry young men such as John Garfield, Marlon Brando, James Dean and Anthony Perkins (Gubern 110).

After the great success of movies such as *The Wild One* (1953), starring Marlon Brando, it became *cool* to wear black leather jackets and act tough. Teens that did so became known as *greasers*. Some joined youth gangs, which were often seen as a threat to conservative adults.

In mid-50's, *Rebel Without a Cause* became a huge hit with American teenagers[3]. They identified with the movie's young star, James Dean, portraying Jim Stark, who blamed his parents for his state of confusion and anguish. Many teenagers in the suburbs grew up bored by the dullness of their environment and did not understand the norms and expectations adults imposed on them (Feinstein 17). *Rebel without a cause* added fuel to the fire instead of clarifying the causes of the phenomenon and moved the misfit American youth, who wore blue jeans as a uniform and saw in him a mirror and a portrait in which to project themselves. Dean was a symbol for all young American rebels and his generation (Gubern 111).

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[3] We will analyze in more depth this movie in the Movie analysis section.

Motion Pictures in the 50s

1. Cinema during the Postwar and Cold War

During the Cold War national security agencies pushed Hollywood to produce anti-communist **Red Scare movies**, like *The Red Menace* (1949) and *I Married a Communist* (1949), something that became more and more typical with *The Red Danube* (1950), *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), so far (Lindop 23). But these types of movies were not the most prominent in this political confrontation. After seeing the effects of the atomic bombs, **science-fiction** began to claim its rights, opening the series *Destination moon* (1950) by Irving Pichel (Gubern 69). Soon, fears of the consequences of the atomic age appeared in several movies: radiation from A-bomb testing creating predatory giant ants in *Them!* (1954); and a plutonium explosion causing an army colonel to grow ten feet a day in *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957). These movies are a good example of how society began to worry about a situation that has not ceased to cause concern ever since. In general, this indicated a society fearful of uncontrollable forces that might disrupt and possibly destroy their cherished American way of life. These forces might come in the form of communists or the technology that was advancing too quickly (Super 348).

The **Film noir** genre from the 40s, portrayed in pessimistic and moody crime dramas that started with *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and flourished during the 1940s, was coming to an end. Moreover, the counterpoint to the romantic anti-hero the *femme fatale*, with their dazzling eroticism and attractiveness, gradually lost her relevance after the war. As already mentioned, in movies, women were once again confined to the domestic sphere and they regained their traditional roles, which in crime movies meant being the victim or the sex bomb (Müller 173-174). Although two of the greatest movies of the genre were made during the 50s –Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958)– (Super 349), people now preferred suspense and espionage movies, pioneered by an English director Alfred Hitchcock, that completely transformed the way of viewing and understanding suspense, with movies such as *North by Northwest* (1959).

The **spy movies**, very fashionable in the 50s, became a whole subgenre. Here, we find the typical Soviet who wants to infiltrate the US to destroy American society. This is where the James Bond saga is based as in most of the movies; the "bad guy" is a Soviet or an Oriental character against the mythical Agent 007.

Finally, McCarthy, Korea, the A-Bomb and the Cold War seem to have cast a spell on Hollywood's best directors. In this period we find unforgettable pieces such as John Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), a **satirical comedy** about the brainwashing of Korean War veterans into assassins (Turner 87); *One, Two, Three* (1961), a satire which we will analyze later; or *Dr. Strangelove or how I learn to stop worrying and love* (1964), one of the most important and intelligent filmic denunciation of the nuclear threat ever made and the permissiveness of political criminals of the time (Gubern 114).

2. Entertainment movies to distract the audience

Cinema, on the other extreme, came in the form of musicals, comedies, westerns and blockbusters. Basically what people consumed the most was entertainment cinema.

The golden age of the **musicals** had begun; the public adored them, partly due to the great need for distraction and escape. People wanted to forget the cruelty of the war and take refuge in the prosperous and wonderful world that they were promised with the American way of life, in which there were love intrigues and where it seemed there was no kind of problem that couldn't be solved by tap-dancing or by beautiful and elaborate ballroom dancing The era also witnessed the rise of the so-called adult **western**. Instead of the simple good guy against the bad guy plots, many westerns during the 50s developed more complex characters (Super 349). During these years, anti-racist themes prevailed with well-known movies such as *Broken Arrow* (1950) and *Fort Apache* (1954), all of a sudden; Native Americans were treated with more respect than in earlier years (Müller 265). *High Noon* (1952) and *Rio Bravo* (1959) are some of the best westerns in the history of cinema, certainly the most complex and contradictory since they went beyond the usual Indian killings and gunfights. This genre was not an exception to the HUAC's censures and sentences (Turner 70).

With the advent of television, people no longer went to the theatres. Therefore, Hollywood's response to declining attendance was to produce big-budget movies, soon known as "**blockbusters**" (Dunar 251). Since in this pre-cable era the public at home only saw images in black and white and often on small screens with poor reception, the major studios decided to take advantage of the visual appeal of theaters and make images bigger, more colorful and the productions more opulent.

In 1945, only 8% of Hollywood movies were shot in color, but the percentage rose by 1955 to more than 50%. In 1953, for the first time, we see a previously unimaginable width on screen. Henry Koster's biblical epic movie *The Robe* (1953) ushered the CinemaScope. Widescreen movies, such as *The Ten Commandments* (1956) by Cecil B. DeMille and William Wyler's *Ben-Hur* (1959) would break with the usual movie framing (Müller 259). More and more movies during the 50s were spectacles, with the Red Sea being divided by Charlton Heston's character Moses in *The Ten Commandments,* or with the title character in William Wyler's *Ben-Hur*, racing Messala in a spectacular chariot race (Super 344-345).

At the beginning of the work, we mentioned that this period is considered by many the last period of classic cinema. The blockbusters, in particular, the movie *Cleopatra* (1963) almost bankrupted 20th Century Fox and created depressions in all Hollywood boards. Cleopatra was both an end and a new beginning. From then on, Hollywood would never be the same again. It was the end of an era. The end of classic cinema (Turner 119).

Movie analysis

In this section we are going to analyze some of the movies that we have been highlighting throughout the research: *On the Town, Rebel Without a Cause, Spartacus and One, Two, Three*. The aim is that these four movies, as a direct source, serve both as a complement and a further understanding of some of the main sections we have discussed throughout the work and it will be a deeper understanding and baseline for the

parts of historical context, McCarthyism, Cultural Revolution and American society, in general.

On the Town, was the first musical that opened a new genre that seemed to be lost. In his book, Adrian Turner (95) notes that *On the Town* was a major event, which "even if it is not considered a masterpiece, it was the first truly musical whose plot unfolded with songs and dances and was not temporarily conditioned by them". The following musicals that were so popular at the time were highly influenced by this movie. *Rebel Without a Cause*, however, as José María Caparrós (520) stated in his book, is a powerful testimony to an entire period of postwar America and a cultural symbol. Later, José mentions Edmond Orts who affirmed that it is a movie powerfully rooted in its time, a work that faithfully reflects both the mentality of its time and the symptoms of change that were already apparent in society (qtd. in Caparrós 517). Thirdly, as Kirk Douglas himself explains in his title *"I Am Spartacus!: Making a Movie Breaking the Blacklist"*, the movie *Spartacus* is directly linked with the end of blacklisting in Hollywood and it is a great example of the many blockbusters that appeared at the time. And, finally, *One, Two, Three* despite its failure at the time, it is one of the most representative satires of the historical context of the period. According to José María Caparrós (548): this movie is one of the sharpest satires about the Cold War, performed with incredible wit and sarcasm created by the comedy veteran Billy Wilder.

At the time of the analysis and in accordance with the development of the work, we have focused on the elements and footage of each movie that serve to argue the influence of the Cold War and the context and society during the 50s; and thus, the more purely cinematographic and formal elements of the movie's structure have completely been ignored.

This way, the structure we will follow will be a brief synopsis of the plot at the beginning followed by a thorough critical evaluation relying on the information we already know. The more technical details of the movies –which will include: year of release, format, duration, director, producers and distribution, screenwriter, main actors, music and photography– will be included in the tables.

1. On The Town

1949 US | COLOR | 98 MIN | Technicolor

Distributed by METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER	
Director	Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen
Production	Arthur Freed and Roger Edens
Screenwriting	Adolph Green and Betty Comden
Cast	Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Jules Munshin, Betty Garrett, Ann Miller, Vera-Ellen
Music	Leonard Bernstein (original), Lennie Hayton (music director), Conrad Salinger (orchestration)
Cinematography	Harold Rosson

Table 1: Made by the author. Technical details *On the Town* (1949) Source: Filmaffinity

Synopsis: The action takes place in NYC over 24 hours (from 6 am to 6 am) one day in the spring of 1949. It tells the story of three Marines, Gabey, Chip and Ozzie, natives of

a small town in the countryside, who do not know NY and want to discover it and intensely experience it during their short stay. They meet Ivy Smith, a beauty pageant winner and ballet student; Brunhilde Esterhazy, a self-assured cab driver; and Claire Huddesen, an anthropology and paleontology student. There in NY, the three couples are eager to live and have fun (Schneider 248).

Critical evaluation: "When in 1949, Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra & Jules Munshin landed with excitement for a day's leave in New York, it's hard to say whether

Image 1: *On the Town* (1949) poster Source:
https://www.filmaffinity.com/es/movie935992.html

they were launching in a new era in the musical or completing a cycle" (Turner 95). The musical comedies underwent an energetic renewal from the moment they lost all sense of inferiority, got rid of the classic theatrical pretexts and introduced the musical sequences with complete freedom as a logical continuation of the action. This liberation occurs for the first time, with the effective help of Technicolor as well as other digital advances. The Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly duo are also responsible for the musical *Singin' in the Rain* in 1952, a movie which was one of the top movies of the genre, with a delightful evocation of the difficult years of the birth of sound movies. These two men are the key to postwar musical comedy (Gubern 69). Therefore, *On the Town* undoubtedly gave considerably more power, independence and initiative to Gene Kelly and his co-director Stanley Donen, enabling them to make even better work in the 50s (Turner 95-96).

It is the first musical with music and dance scenes shot on location and although most of the numbers are filmed in the studio, the rest of the footage is shot in the city and on the sets of MGM Studios. The city is presented as a living monumental complex, where music, dance, progress, science, education, joy… flourish with splendor. The nocturnal visit shows crowded party halls, fun atmospheres with music and dance and the presence of the majority of young people who impose their joy and their desire to live. The movie composes a joyful and optimistic song of the exaltation of youth, working and simple people, friendship, cosmopolitanism, multiracial coexistence, eroticism, freedom and love (Schneider 248).

On the Town (1949) clearly demonstrates that the genre underwent a great development during the 1940s. However, the musical did not lose one of its main characteristics, simplification, which probably explains its popularity during the war (Müller 170-171).

Under the appearance of a simple and innocent plot, the movie bets on the new culture and new values that emerge in the years of WWII and that is in the process of generalization and consolidation. It shows with complacency the figure of working women −with initiatives, independence, free of old prejudices− who coexist with boys on equal terms, play sports and are capable of taking the initiative.

The girl is the one who chooses the boy and is not ashamed to invite a boy back to her house to make love. We can see in this movie how the women's role changed in this era and even though women's roles went to the old one in most movies, it is this kind of movie that reflects the actual situation that was going on in real life. Besides, we can also see a suggested eroticism in several explicit references about the Australopithecus as the "erect man" as well as the subtle words in Hilde's "He wanted to see sights and I have shown them all to him" (Schneider 248).

We can say that entertainment movies such as light comedies or musicals were a way of distraction and escape as in the 40s, 60% of the NY population went to the movies about once a week. After WWII, as things started to look up for the economy and "American moviegoers flocked to theaters in record numbers, enjoying the new freedom of not worrying about war, its accompanying deprivations and the benefits of the booming postwar economy" (Super 344).

Yet, as we have mentioned above, this burst of prosperity did not last long for Hollywood as everyone started having televisions at home, so movies had to step their game up. Hollywood had every reason to be seriously concerned. The 4.68 billion viewers in 1947 had dropped to 2.47 billion in 1956, despite the country's population growth. This voluminous deficit of customers had been absorbed by other forms of recreation: motoring, camping, discos and, above all, by the small picture of the television set (Gubern 105). However, one genre that managed not only to stand out but to rise again was the musical.

In the 50s, the musicals flourished to such an extent that there were production companies such as The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer dedicated exclusively to its creation which tried to employ all those who could sing for the movies that audiences demanded. Some of the best musicals in the history of cinema were produced during these years, among which we can highlight: *An American in Paris* (1951), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)*, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *The Band Wagon* (1953) or *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955).

2. Rebel Without a Cause

1955 US | COLOR | 111 MIN | CinemaScope 35 mm

Distributed by WARNER BROS	
Director	Nicholas Ray
Production	David Weisbart
Screenwriting	Nicholas Ray, Irving Shulman, Stewart Stern
Cast	James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Jim Backus, Ann Doran, Corey Allen, Edward Platt, Dennis Hooper
Music	Leonard Rosenman
Cinematography	Ernest Haller

Table 2: Made by the author. Technical details *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) Source: Filmaffinity

Synopsis: It is the story of three teenagers who do not know how to face life and cannot find support from their parents. Neither the children want to be like their parents nor the parents can find their lives the meaning they do not have by wanting to turn their children into their doubles. The violence does not do anything other than provide a temporary release from an overload of anguish (Caparrós 516-17).

Critical evaluation: A movie like *Rebel Without a Cause* cannot be fully understood without taking into account certain important factors of the decade, such as the rise of rock
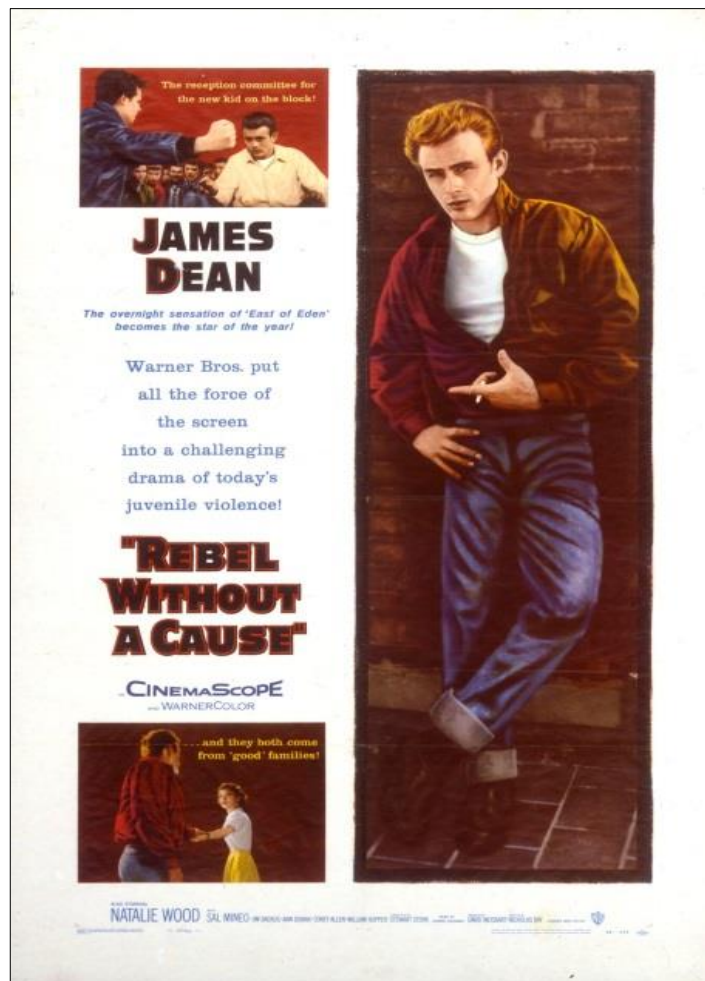

Image 2: *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) poster Source: https://www.oscars.org/search/site/rebel%20without%20a%20cause/?fid=17786x

music and the new young movements closely linked to the emergence of a generational conflict both revealing and decisive, which, after all, was the main issue around which the drama in the movie revolves (Caparrós 517-18)

Albert Johnson would use these words to evaluate both the social and historical context in which the movie was made, as well as the significance of Ray's movie and that of its mythical protagonist, Dean. By the mid-50s, attention had turned to the growing number of American *teenagers* who made up the top-box office audience in movie theaters. The young audience was looking for new heroes and new sources of identification on the screen. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, movies like Richard Brooks' *Blackboard Jungle,* or Elia Kazan's *East of Eden* were enormously successful because of these antiheroes. Young audiences identified with William Holden's character's dilemma in *East of Eden*, because of how the natural and extraordinarily gifted James Dean managed to express all the shyness and anxieties, neurotic sublimations, repressed violence and emotional instability of the youth of the fifties.

We come a long way from the bearded and seductive gumshoes of the past to this restless James Dean in constant rebellion against an absurd world, which would take revenge on him by taking his life at the age of twenty-four, in a car accident with his Porsche 550 Spyder –a symbol of the fury of life at the time– on 1955. His creation of Jim Stark in *Rebel Without a Cause* moved the nonconformist American youth, who wore blue jeans as a uniform, seeing in him a mirror and a portrait in which to project themselves. Dean was the symbol of his generation and a standard for all you American rebels, "with a cause" despite the misleading title (Gubern 110-111).

Rebel Without a Cause is the synthesis of James Dean's short career (Müller 334). His filmography included three movies: *East of Eden* (1955), *Giant* (1956) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and all of these movies were a cry against authority and parental influence. In *Rebel Without a Cause*, he plays an obsessed teenager, the son of a couple who fears the bad publicity his escapades may bring. His only two friends are products of broken homes and quarrels and the movie moves inexorably toward tragedy (Turner 32).

Naturally, a society based on consumption generates frustration and therefore tension. This resulted in a sharp increase in delinquency in the big cities, led by young people

from marginal groups or belonging to that new generation that had found it all done and could not find its place in the society created by their parents.

The interest *Rebel Without a Cause* has for this research lies in the fact that it was one of the best-performing American movies at the box-office in West Germany at the time. It was, therefore, a very useful contribution to the State Department's objectives as far as the propaganda of the American way of life was concerned. These movies showed parts of American life that were worth spreading, such as material wealth and the creation of globally popular icons. Youngsters are fashionable and Jim's parents are dressed elegantly. Already this gives us some idea that they are financially well off and even more so when Mr. Stark says to his son: "Haven't I always bought you what you wanted? A bicycle, a car…" They are people who can now buy their children, the baby-boomers, almost all the whims they would like and, what is most shocking; these are not high society families, but upper-middle class. They are the generation that has lived through the economic take-off of the US after WWII and that is living the American way of life they wanted to show in Europe.

3. Spartacus

1960 US | COLOR | 196 MIN | Technicolor filmed in Super Technirama 77mm

Distributed by UNIVERSAL PICTURES	
Director	Stanley Kubrick
Production	Kirk Douglas and Edward Lewis
Screenwriting	Dalton Trumbo (based on the novel by Howard Fast)
Cast	Kirk Douglas, Laurence Oliver, Tony Curtis, Jean Simmons, Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov, John Gavin, John Ireland, John Dall, Charles Mcgraw
Music	Alex North
Cinematography	Russell Metty

Table 3: Made by the author. Technical details *Spartacus* (1960) Source: filmaffinity

Synopsis: Spartacus, a Thracian slave, who was sold as a gladiator to Lentulus Batiatus, led a revolt at a gladiatorial school. In Italy, he promoted and led the slave rebellion against the Roman Republic. As they traveled through the country, countless slaves

joined the rebellion. Spartacus will try to reach southern Italy with his army to set the course for their homes.

Critical evaluation: Within this group of showcase or blockbuster movies we find *Spartacus* whose final investment at the time was more than $ 12 million and everything hung in balance.

Kubrick took advantage of these spectacular blockbuster movies that were becoming so popular and made *Spartacus* in 1960. With this movie, he demonstrated that historical blockbusters could also be a means for implementing social ideas (Gubern 114). The movie was based on Howard Fast's communist-tinged novel, which directly spoke about rebellion and class struggle. Although all of this is much diluted in the movie, there is a progressive underlying that remains, stressed by the fact that the script was written by Dalton Trumbo. Apart from the idea of classism, several scenes created controversy and which they tried to

Image 3: *Spartacus* (1960) poster Source: https://www.filmaffinity.com/es/movie336548.html

censor. Among others, the homosexual scene featuring Crassus (Laurence Oliver) trying to seduce the slave who is at "his private service", played by Tony Curtis (Douglas 128).

In the early 50s, Howard Fast, who was one of the most successful authors of historical novels in the US and an outspoken communist, received a subpoena to come to Washington D.C. to testify before the HUAC. The subject matter was the support Fast had presented years earlier to a Spanish anti-Francoist group, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. Wood and HUAC wanted to know the names of all supporters.

Fast refused to reveal them. Among those he protected was Eleanor Roosevelt. Just as the screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, Fast was reprimanded for contempt of Congress and sent to prison. Fast later wrote in his memoir, *Being Red*, that it was in prison when he began to think about the slave Spartacus, but it wasn't until he was released from prison in 1950 that he started writing it. Howard Fast finished the novel in June 1951. Selling it was an arduous task, due to his political affiliations, as he was rejected by all the publishers, but he ended up self-publishing it (Douglas 28-36).

Now, going back to the movie, *Spartacus* was the personal ambition of actor Kirk Douglas, who had just opened a production company. From the beginning, it was clear to Douglas that he wanted Dalton Trumbo to be the screenwriter of his movie. However, Trumbo had been sympathetic to communist ideology at the time of the Red Scare a few years before. Because of Trumbo's fencing with HUAC, he was blacklisted in the movie industry and was reduced to grinding out screenplays under various aliases, including such pseudonyms as "Les Crutchfield" and "Sally Stubblefield" (Kubrick et al. 185-186). Because of the tension going on Douglas made Trumbo work under the pseudonym "Sam Jackson", at first. This was not unusual, as we have already mentioned, many blacklisted screenwriters were working at that dreadful time, but they couldn't tell anyone. They also had to accept a salary that was a tiny part of what they used to earn using their real names.

Ultraconservative organizations, such as the American Legion, a US Veterans Association, threatened to boycott any movie that included any leftist elements or that featured any suspected communists. It became widely known in Hollywood that Trumbo had written *Spartacus*. A gossip columnist, Walter Winchell, ran an item in March 1959 outing him as the screenwriter. That perhaps paved the way for what Douglas did next. Douglas said he told Trumbo that once the movie was finished, not only was he going to tell them that he had written it, but they were going to put his name on it. In August 1960, the studio Universal-International announced that the writer would receive full-screen credit.

Truth is, the commercial success of both *Exodus* (1960) and *Spartacus* (1960) –both officially written by Dalton Trumbo–, despite the boycott of ultraconservative organizations, was a sign that the times of anti-communist hysteria were over and that society had changed. To endorse this, *Spartacus* was chosen by President Kennedy to make his first public movie appearance after his election, showing the new political attitude going on in the White House.

4. One, Two, Three

1961 US | BLACK AND WHITE | 108 MIN

Distributed by United Artists	
Director	Billy Wilder
Production	Mirisch Company, Pyramid Productions, A. G.
Screenwriting	Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond
Cast	James Cagney, Horst Bucholz, Pamela Tiffin, Arlene Francis, Lilo Pulver, Hanns Lothar, Howard St. John
Music	André Previn
Cinematography	Daniel Mandell

Table 4: Made by the author. Technical details *One, Two, Three* (1961) Source: Filmaffinity

Synopsis: Berlin, 1961. In the middle of the Cold War, Coca-Cola's representative in the FRG, MacNamara is thinking of introducing this beverage in East Germany, as he wants to strengthen his position within the Company and be transferred to London. A series of family and diplomatic entanglements create serious political and commercial compromises between the two powers. A conflict from which MacNamara himself and Otto –who would, against his will, be appointed top manager of the Company in Europe– will emerge triumphantly (Caparrós 547-8).

Critical evaluation: Regardless of the *television generation*, the ups and downs of the Cold War would continue to condition and influence movies during the Kennedy era (1961-1963). A clear

Image 4: *One, Two, Three* (1961) poster Source: https://www.movieaffinity.com/es/movie459265.html

example of this can be found in 1961, when Billy Wilder shot the movie *One, Two, Three*.

The director took the plot of a 1928 play about "politics, love and business" and transformed it into a corrosive political satire about the Cold War. In the first 20 minutes of the movie, Wilder has already laughed at all aspects of the Cold War and international relations between the two blocs. The movie begins with a view of both zones; in the East, a parade takes place –first cliché that in the East they spend their time parading– and we can see the word "Yankee go Home" written on some balloons; in the West, some Coca-Cola trucks cross the shot. MacNamara (James Cagney) aims to sell Coca-Cola first in the German Democratic Republic and then in the Soviet Union. "Napoleon failed, Hitler failed, but Coca-Cola to the Russian Bear won".

Early in the story, everything gets complicated when the giddy daughter of the top Coca-Cola boss falls in love with a communist from East Berlin. We can see that she does not have any problem with his staunch anti-American viewpoint when she says "That ain't anti-American, it's anti-Yankee. And where I come from, everybody's against the Yankees". As we later discover she gets pregnant, so, the father, Otto, has to quickly be re-educated for capitalism. During that Billy Wilder has a pretty good laugh at rock's expense when the Commie sympathizer, Otto, will learn about the brutal methods of the police of the German Democratic Republic. He is tortured into submission by repeated play of *Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini* and finally, he cracks and signs a confession that he is an American spy. Wilder thus makes a satire in which no one is left unscathed, ridiculing both the communist regime and Western capitalism. This criticism was made possible by the change in American society and reflected in the Kennedy Administration. Such ridicule of US policy in Europe years earlier would have been labeled unpatriotic at best.

For instance, we can get an idea in the following scenes of the message the director wanted to send. When Otto asks, "Is everyone corrupt?" to which a Soviet Commissar responds "I don't know… I don't know everyone." On this occasion, the humor is not a simple display of wit, but a highly intelligent way of dealing with the political situation in the world. Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond are implacable with Germany's Nazi past and with Soviet totalitarianism, but without concealing the majesty and petulance of American culture. And finally, Billy Wilder praises American democracy but ridicules cardboard patriotism. In MacNamara's office, there is a cuckoo clock with

Uncle Sam waving the flag every time the clock chimes. It is a gift from his employees that perfectly expresses the frivolity of a complacent and self-satisfied society (Narbona).

Nevertheless, in real life, international politics were going to take a turn that would do the movie a great disservice. The crew was in the middle of the shooting in Berlin when the wall was built on August 13th. Apart from being a financial loss, having to move the shoot to Munich and build a replica of the Brandenburg Gate for the missing scenes, it was a death blow to the movie from which it never recovered. During the filming, it went from farce to tragedy. Suddenly, everything that was amusing and exaggeratedly funny produced the effect of a cynical smile. When the movie premiered in Berlin in December 1961, the *Berliner Zeitung* wrote bitterly: "What we find heartbreaking, Billy Wilder finds funny".

Edmond Orts, once wrote that the causticity that presides over Billy Wilder's movie *One, Two, Three*, comes from the intention of caricaturing the forms that both Americans and Russians established in the first hour of the closing of the Berlin Wall. Billy Wilder opted for political satire, which was probably his funniest and most spectacular composition, as the most important channel for challenging the general sense of the movie. The movie glimpses, in its context, a determined critique of the systems that presided over the two greatest forces in the world (qtd. in Caparrós 549).

Conclusion

In the following pages, we will point out the main conclusions we have obtained through the findings of both the more theoretical and analytical parts of our study as well as explain whether our main hypothesis has been proved or not and why.

Going back to our main objective of this research, in the Introduction section, a hypothesis was put forward: *Are movies a reflection of the history and do they have an influence on society?*

We have clearly seen in the analysis of our four movies that cinema has never been on the margins of the representation of politics, whether to support it, censure it, criticize it, become a mere historical testimony, or even to use it as a tool to distract the audience or a tool of propaganda to support new attitudes, like *Spartacus*, a movie even the President publicly attended to watch or *Rebel Without a Cause*, a reflection of the opinion Americans had of themselves and the life they wanted to show the world.

Movies are always a source of information about the moment it was made and it has unreplaceable elements of the society's opinions in which each movie was born and consumed. For instance, we can know a lot about the way people think by looking at the dominant public opinion and the success or failure of a movie. As seen in the analysis of *One, Two, Three,* a movie that was heavily criticized even though it did not position itself on either side of the Cold War. Not only do they reflect reality, but they are also a tool for social transformation, changing the fashion, music, trends and attitudes toward certain topics of entire generations as in *Rebel Without a Cause* or *On the Town*.

The Cold War had serious repercussions on the movie industry, affecting the themes and genres of the movie business. The bipolar battle all around the world between the freedom of the West and the *communist tyranny* of the Soviet East, the overtly Korean War, the covert development of the hydrogen bomb through various spy agencies and the McCarthy purges, created a trend of political suspicion and uncertainty that allowed for numerous dramas, thrillers, science-fiction movies and even spy movies to be made.

Hopefully, after the oppressive political climate and censorship the situation eased off and the mid-50s and early 60s were noted for having new social themes never seen

before on the big screen; amongst which we can find allusions to homosexuality in *Spartacus* and empowered women roles in *On the Town*. Confirming José Florit's point of view, his colleague Pierre Sorlin affirms that sometimes, movies tell us more about society than about the historical event they are trying to evoke (qtd. in Caparrós 15). During this decade the public and society –especially the young market– demanded new themes; sexuality, race, adolescence, urban violence and drug addiction were among the many themes that were touched upon. However, the impact of 50s cinema went beyond technological innovation and socioeconomic issues; the stars, moviemakers and the artistic and entertainment values of cinema itself were major draws during this era. Brando in *The Wild One* and Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* changed the way audiences saw movie stars. They were celebrities with the same weaknesses and anxieties as them (Super 351).

When we set out to analyze the four movies, we started with the following objective: to verify how the socio-political context influences, either directly or indirectly, the behavior in society at a specific historical moment and whether this was reflected in the movies. In conclusion, the analysis has led us to the following conclusions:

People not only use movies to react to what is going on in their environment by, for example, criticizing it with satirical movies –as in *One, Two, Three*–; or using it as a propaganda tool for the American way of life and for the ongoing psychological warfare against the Soviet Union and communism; or sending subtle progressive messages –as in *On the Town*–; but they also sometimes serve the purpose of changing certain historical events –in *Spartacus* for instance, which managed to put an end to blacklisting–. And what a better example of the modern and young society of the 50s than *Rebel Without a Cause*, a movie which contributed to the creation of the behavior of the new baby boom generation.

I will finish my conclusion by quoting the words of Roman Gubern, which, in my opinion, sum up the whole point I wanted to make:

> The cinema has become the main (…) spiritual nourishment for vast sectors of
> humanity, with the overwhelming social responsibility that this entails (…) shaping
> in one way or another the ways of thinking, habits and beliefs of millions of people.
> (Gubern 97).

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