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Culture and Society in Early American Cinema

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma "Culture and Society in Early American Cinema" vypracoval samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedl jsem v ní předepsaným způsobem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne ……………………   Podpis ……………………

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1 Introduction

Cinematography and film maintains a strong position in one's life as within human culture itself in the current world we live in. Many have found a versatile and powerful tool in film how to use it to their advantage in different areas such as culture, education or even propaganda. However, cinematography has not always been regarded as such and it had to overcome many obstacles before it became precious to society. As it goes for every piece of cultural goods, there is a different view on its nature and thus we can expect various forms of acceptance and furthermore even comprehension. Films became reflections of current and past state of society. They try to tell stories which come from society itself in a manner no other medium can. Ever since its origination, cinematography and film were slowly evolving and same went for the society and culture surrounding it. These terms became inseparable and influenced each other throughout the history. On that account, I find it rather interesting to go through the development of early era of cinematography and the role of society that played in it.

The main aim of this thesis is to state the information about historical beginnings of cinematography with the focus on American environment and reflect the view of American society regarding this medium. The thesis consists of two elements. Firstly, it presents to its reader the cultural and sociological development of the society and with the segregation on the social statuses, classes and roles of an individual in society and how the different classes of society perceived the rising cinematography. Secondly it tries to list the pinnacles of development of early cinematography in the context of film regarded as cultural goods mainly used by the members of lowbrow or highbrow culture which provides with sufficient contrasting material to research.

First part comprises mostly the problematic from various fields of science such as culture, sociology, psychology and cinematography. Each paragraph is dedicated to each of those terms while assembling them into bigger picture. Starting with defining simple cultural terms and moving on to the theories of famous sociologists and anthropologists who described those behavioral patterns in social sciences and implied the facts what drives the individual when it comes to choosing a certain type of cultural goods. They agreed on that it is combination of several factors including one's standing in the society, their background and surrounding, their preferences and

individual tastes as well as the nature of cultural goods itself in the context of current events and era.

Second part of the thesis focuses on different aspect and it is the cinematography and films itself. Not only does it include historical context but it also describes the technological predisposition that were needed to be met in the development of the film. Its goal is to picture the film as a newly emerging form of a medium which had to overcome several obstacles before it became a common part of one's life. From a historical point of view, main focus is set on the rise of American cinema from the very first steps of cinematography up to the golden pinnacle of silent era. Historical section is divided into three most important stages spanning from the end of the 19th century to the end of third decade of the 20th century including pre-Hollywood era, Classical Hollywood and finally the final era of the silent film.

In the third and last part of the thesis the aim is set to connect sociological and cinematographic aspects together with the focus on distinguishing whether the film is regarded as a form of art and as well as who was the target audience in the sense of social standing in the society. Social impact of the film and cinematography as a whole is described from the American point of view from the beginning to the present day with pointing out most important events in each decade that changed the perception of cinematography. Lastly, influence of the film on the society is described on one particular film – *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Illustrating that controversial thematic with the current events can have extensive social impact and the disturbances created by showing to the broad audience.

There is also one important thing note that is needed to be taken into consideration. Cinematography has various forms and the main task of this thesis is not to include all of them but to point out the relevant which had direct impact on the society with the focus on viewers and the cinematographic environment rather than films which created in the described eras.

Ultimately, main goal of this bachelor thesis is to find answer to the question whether there is any tangible difference between elite and mass cinematography and its viewers and if so, which one?

2 Cultural and Sociological Views and Theories

In this very first chapter the focus will be put on listing cultural division of important sociological approaches which are used throughout the thesis. For clearer understanding of the matter, there is a need to create a background of sociological side of the thesis before moving on to the cinematography matter and linking those topics together. We need to clarify basic terms which interrelate to the topic, namely we are going to talk about culture, social role, class and status.

2.1 Culture

The term of culture hides various meanings which can be interpreted in many ways. For some it might connote the process of cultivation of economic plants in agriculture. However, for most population culture means the civilization as a whole and the world they live in. The most catching and also basic definition would be that the culture is something which does not come from the nature by itself but something which was created by the effort of man and society,[1] while most of the cultural components are passed on from one generation to another through the act of socialization. It is not something he is born with however something he acquires through the process of learning as a relatively integrated whole of behavior, actions and the products of distinct group of people.[2]

With a basic division, culture can be divided to a material or a spiritual culture. As mentioned above, the material culture comprises primarily of solid articles of daily use, such as something trivial as cutlery or to more sophisticated articles like aerospace shuttles used for space travelling or generally all articles to satisfy one's needs. On the other hand articles such as ideas, customs, opinions or even moral standards in society, different religions and even principal institutions like family or matrimony, all fall into the category of spiritual culture. The products of human creative mind also fall into category of spiritual culture such as different forms of art which can include music, architecture, film and many others.[3]

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[1] Petrusek, Miloslav. *Sociologie*. (Praha: SPN, 1994), 32.
[2] Ibid., 33.
[3] Barker, Chris. *Slovník kulturálních studií.* (Praha: Portal, 2006), 95 – 97.

In basic sense the culture can be perceived as production or reception of human endeavor in form of aesthetic articles. This type of culture can be absorbed in form of services such as museums, theatres or cinemas provided to society.

For the purpose of this thesis the term of culture will be mainly perceived in the different form of arts with emphasis on the cinematographic side of culture.

2.2   Social Status, Social Role, Social Class

In anthropology, social status can be defined as distinct position of an individual in a social hierarchy. There are two ways how the possession of status is perceived. It is either assigned at birth without accordance to any innate abilities or it is achieved through competition and individual effort. The traits of a status acquired at birth are based on sex, race or age, while the traits of achieved status are on the other hand mostly based on education, personal achievements or marital status. According to this it is safe to say that we can expect different sets of behavioral patterns of each individual depending on his status.

Social status goes in close correspondence with the social role. While the status can be comprehended as a set of rights and responsibilities of an individual in a social hierarchy, the social role generally means adequate behavior in specific situations expected from an individual in society who holds a specific position e.g. profession of a lawyer or a simple standing in an institution like family on a position of father.[4] These expectations have been created and defined by different societies, which indicates that distinct societies have different social roles.

These simple facts lead to a realization that wide scale of inequalities is deeply rooted in societies, depending on achieved education or the amount of property an individual possess. This fragmentation between different groups of people is called social stratification. An example of such division within modern society would be called class differences.[5] Social classes are then referred to a group of individuals, among whom we may find apparent differences of socioeconomic nature. These differences are reflected in various living standards and with accordance to this fact;

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[4] Krejčířová, Dana. *Vývojová psychologie*. (Praha: Grada Publishing 2006), 164.
[5] Giddens, Anthony. *Sociology*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 553.

people are divided into a set of hierarchical social categories.[6] In modern society the most usual division would be the upper class, middle class, working class and underclass.

Being familiar with aforementioned terms – social status, social role and social class is crucial for the following understanding of thesis because that is where, on basis of these terms, the division on mass and elite culture begins. Nowadays sociologists incline to the belief that the culture itself is the main core of the differences and inequalities in social relations.

2.3   Cultural Differentiation

The difference in class society is one of the major fields of expertise of sociologists. However with the help of culturologists, their common goal is to find relationship between a member of the class and the production and consumption of certain types of cultural goods. Whether such relation even exists, the huge question mark arose and thus it led to creation of various theories throughout the history. Majority would agree that the work of famous French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu would be most notable. His research was based mainly on the definition of identity of social groups based on the use of cultural resources and customs.[7] The main idea Bourdieu had was that the relationship between actions of consumers of cultural goods is mostly based on the position in society and also on the division of art, while low art which is solely consumed by the members of lower class and at the same time the high art is subject to high society. The thoughts of Bourdieu were continually developed by other sociologists all around the world, however mostly in Europe and the USA.

2.3.1 Homogenity and Homology

Bourdieu further aims on distinction of social structure in his work. One of these distinctions is principle of homogeneity which states that members of a

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[6] Jones, R.J. Barry. *Routledge Encyclopedia of International Political Economy: Entries A-F.* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2001), 161.
[7] Bordieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 38.

particular social class would have similar life styles to some extent which also reflects their cultural taste. Then there is another principle, principle of homology which states that the one's life style is tightly connected with his social role and position in society.[8] This principle of homology is in direct relation to the division of culture. Namely to the high-brow and low-brow culture or also know as elite and mass culture to which will be paid closer attention further in the thesis.

Nowadays progressive theories and thoughts of modern sociologists suggest that minimizing distinction of cultural styles is not enough for modern society with nearly unlimited combinations and thus developing more divisions with respect to wider selection.

2.3.2 Individualization

Individualization is another principle which evolved later on. It solely stands as a contradiction to the principle of homology and thus focuses on post-industrial society. The main feature of such society which respects customs in association with individualization principle is variability of cultural taste. The main impact on one's consumer behavior lies in mechanisms of market, widely-known brands or even powerful advertisement. Social class does not play any role here at all; customer's taste is adjusted in accordance to the current supply. For the pioneers of the theory of individualization are considered famous sociologists Mike Featherstone, Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash.[9]

2.3.3 Mass Consumerism

In modern ever- changing society we could distinct one more recent type of cultural taste which stands somewhere between the two aforementioned. It can be understood as a standalone theory or part of sociology of arts. First who established this theory were Americans Roger Kern and Richard A. Peterson. They state that in nowadays society there is a tendency to distinguish people between those who have

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[8] Šafr, Jiři. *Životní styl a sociální třídy: vytváření symbolické hranice diferenciací vkusu a spotřeby.* (Praha: Sociologicky ustav AV ČR, 2008), 21.
[9] Ibid., 21 and 39.

tendency to favor consumerism and those who favor distinctive products. They are identified as omnivores and univores rather than elite and mass culture.[10] Also they add that people with higher social status tend to approach and consume broader spectrum of cultural genres. According to them this phenomena occurred because of erasing of fixed standards in the field of art followed by broadening of supply.[11]

Best way to define mass consumerism would be to put it into opposite position of homology. Basic rule of homology states that the higher social status of individual or class is, the greater their cultural consumption is. While fundamental principle of mass consumerism is based on the same theory of social division as theory of homology, meaning it accepts that there are differences in class society, however it does not attribute solely consumption of higher culture goods to higher classes. According to Peterson's and Kern's principle of omnivores in contrast to univores, the same fact remains as in homology that the division of cultural taste is characteristic to the same consumption of cultural goods aimed at lower classes, whereas the higher classes in addition to elite culture also assimilated the cultural goods for consumption preferred by lower classes (mass culture) and they are able to freely switch between those two.[12]

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[10] Peterson, Richard, and Roger M. Kern. *Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore.* (American Sociological Review. Vol. 61, No. 5, Oct., 1996), 900 – 907.
[11] Šafr, Jiři. *Životní styl a sociální třídy: vytváření symbolické hranice diferenciací vkusu a spotřeby.* (Praha: Sociologicky ustav AV ČR, 2008), 41.
[12] Ibid., 41.

On the following graphical scheme we are able to observe, the lower we are moving down on the social ladder (socio-economic axis), the more dramatic decrease in topics related to elite culture. We can also observe the higher class has on average one popular media topic more than the lower class.
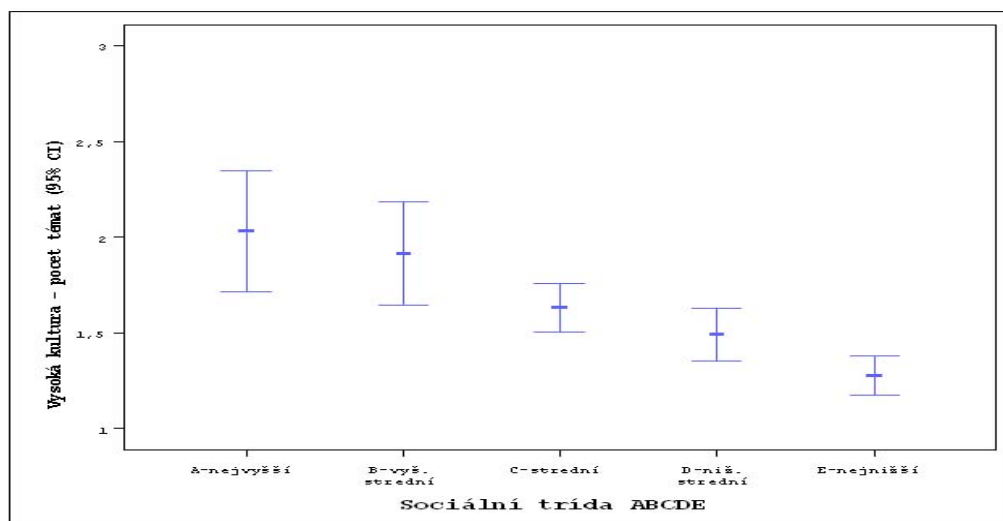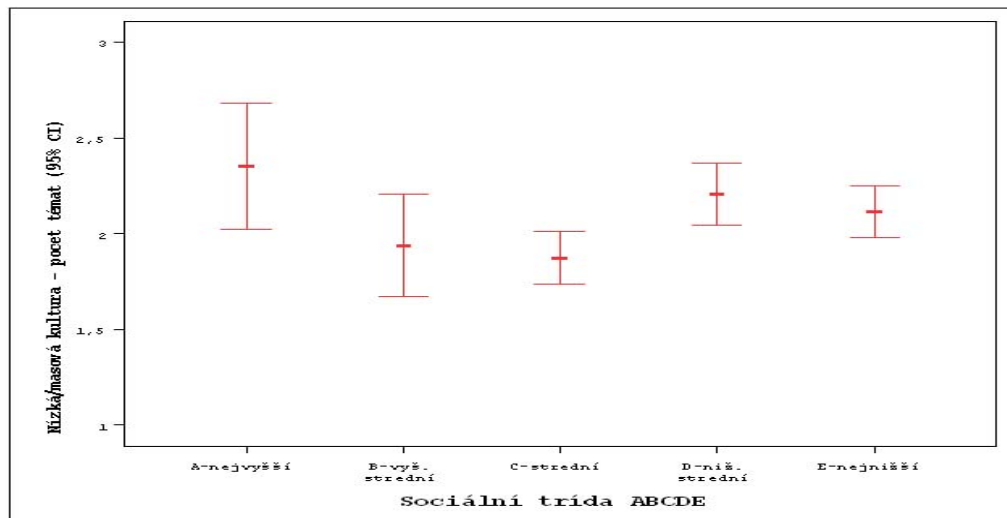
Source: ŠARF, Jiři, Co je to kulturni všežroutstvi? *Socioweb*. Accessed 2008.
http://www.socioweb.cz/index.php?disp=temata&shw=306&lst=116.

The gradual but relatively recent ascent of theory of mass consumerism in the past few decades was dependant on several factors, according to its authors. Foremost it was the advent of mass cultural education and presentation of arts in the media what contributed to allowing earlier inaccessible elite cultural goods to wider classes of society. This fact also made society way more tolerant towards different minorities, including religious or racial and their cultural manifestations. Another factor that

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contributed to the change in approach was technological development and the ascent of cultural industries and the integration of culture into the sphere of market economy. Rapid technological advancement and the process of digitalization also played a major role in delivering of culture to the wider number of consumers. This resulted in partial shift of how the lower culture is perceived by the upper classes. The members of the groups with the highest social status began to perceive popular culture, which was previously regarded as low and unfit for consumption, as somehow acceptable and gradually began to partially incorporate lower culture to the prevailing dominant culture.[13]

Before moving on to the explanation of the elite and mass culture, I would shine some light on the difference in consumption of cultural goods which is cowered in following sociological theories. The first theory, known as theory of informational capacity states that any consumption of cultural goods and enjoyment that comes out of it are subject to the ability to comprehend it. The greater this capacity is, the greater the following enjoyment it and thus increasing the likelihood of future repetition of cultural occasion.[14] The other theory states that individuals tend to act in accordance with the standards appropriate to their social status and background and therefore the consumption of elite cultural goods is the direct expression of their high social status.[15]

2.3.4 Elite Culture (Highbrow)

In historic context, the elite culture or also known as highbrow, is the product and at the same time functions as the article of consumption, of social, intellectual, political and cultural elites. These elites consist of experts with different fields of expertise, including arts, aesthetics and education. They took a position of designers of elite culture. They form it and at the same time they serve as a model for active artists.[16]

There is a general prerequisite that needs to be met. Certain degree of intellectual and educational level is required; lacking such level, the consumers would

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[13] Ibid., 43.
[14] Ibid., 27.
[15] Ibid., 28.
[16] Ibid., 37.

not be able to understand elite culture and therefore not even have any pleasure from it. Such restrictions on the consumption of elite culture resulting in appreciation by only a very limited spectrum of society. These consumers use certain aesthetic standards, which in most cases are in no way dependant on the taste and opinions of the average consumer of a specific work of art or performance.[17] Among such consumers, not only standard consumers count here but also the art critics, as they often define what may be considered as an elite culture. As the proof of this case we can demonstrate this fact on the auteur theory. Common discussions of critics and filmmakers on the subject of the authorship of the film state that all the credits for the final form of the film go solely to the director of the film and each individual film differs from director to director, thus it lead to conviction that films of certain directors began to be considered elite cultural goods.[18] In products of elite culture we may often encounter elements which make us think about different aspects of life, including sociological or philosophical questions. These kinds of questions also occur in mass culture, however from a slightly different perspective. For instance, the issue of livelihood is addressed rather in mass culture. It is because the consumers of elite cultural goods do not need to take this issue into consideration at all.[19] There are numerous examples of what can be considered elite cultural goods nowadays, namely it would be professional journalism, theater, opera, art films and classical music, literature and art. Institutions like theaters, museums and galleries are places where we would find this type of cultural goods performed.

2.3.5 Mass Culture (Lowbrow)

The mass culture stands as an opposite to the elite culture. The main aspect of mass culture is that it tries to act as cultural goods for the widest possible range of social classes. Characteristics of such cultural goods are especially a high degree of standardization of their production and also mass behavior of consumption. Standardization, or also known as unification of a form, is the result of efforts to

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[17] Ibid., 37.
[18] Gans, Herbert J. Popular Culture And High Culture: An Analysis And Evaluation of Taste. (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 103.
[19] Ibid., 104

satisfy the average taste of broad audience and stimulate the basic lust for primitive pleasure.[20]

The history of mass (popular) culture in today's concept dates back to the 18th century, back to the period of ongoing industrial revolution.[21] The industrial revolution brought radical changes urbanization, industrialization, technological development, improvement of education and generally brought more free time into one's life. Furthermore, it enabled emergence of a new class of society, the middle class. This class possessed more capital and has been able to pay for cultural goods that was previously available only to elite society. It was the middle class which started a new way how to entertain themselves in their free time through visiting theaters, museums and galleries and thus creating a powerful new class hungry for new forms of artistic production, however this time accessible to a broader spectrum of social classes.[22] As the title implies, the mass culture is created for masses, in short, accessible to the entire spectrum of social classes. Each individual consumer does not need to possess extraordinary intellectual properties. Mass cultural goods are not difficult to understand and often offer its consumers a sense of comfort and self-satisfaction. Distinct trait of mass culture is simplification of complex issues and also we can often come across issues which are interrelated with our current life situation. Mass culture is mainly associated with entertainment and relieving of one's spirit and it is created with intention of no deep thinking about it in order to understand it. The concept of mass culture may be associated with another concept where 'mass' is used, namely it would be mass media through which most of the mass cultural goods is brought to broader audience. This distribution provides mass Medias with tremendous amount of profits which may lead to association of mass culture with market economics and commercialism. Among the forms of mass culture we can include television series or shows, leisure literature, pop, rock or electronic music, videogames or high-grossing and successful films also known as blockbusters.

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[20] Šafr, Jiří. *Životní styl a sociální třídy: vytváření symbolické hranice diferenciací vkusu a spotřeby.* (Praha: Sociologicky ustav AV ČR, 2008), 37.
[21] Mullan, J. *The invention of popular culture.* Guardian.co.uk [online]. Accessed October 28, 2000. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/dumb/story/0,7369,387444,00.html>.
[22] Mullan, J. *The invention of popular culture.* Guardian.co.uk [online]. Accessed October 28, 2000. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/dumb/story/0,7369,387444,00.html>.

3 Cinematography

In the previous chapter we have covered the introductory sociological aspect of the thesis and prepared a conceptual framework for the upcoming chapter which deals with cinematography. This following chapter will mainly deal with the description of cinematographic terms, historic data in the relation with American cinematography up to the era of silent film and film as a piece of cultural good and thus establishes background for the combination of cultural and sociological aspects.

3.1 Cinematography as a Form of Art

It is safe to assume that cinematography can be viewed as a relatively young field however its vast history is deeply rooted in human memory. Rapid emergence of new technologies of coming modern age enabled an extraordinary dynamics of development of film and cinematography. The mingling of never before combined things became common thing – art with industry, original and copy or even silence with noise.[23] Major and minor things of one's day-to-day life suddenly started swapping places on the line of importance and the film was perfect mean how to mirror these situations in which one could find himself in the beginning of 20th century on the screen with fast changes of images and sounds. The new medium was born whose versatility greatly influenced the history of man like the invention of motoring or letterpress.

Cinematography, unlike most of other inventions, started to spread on a global scale right from the very beginning of its existence. The centers of sudden growth shifted between countries and even continents. Film is a part of cultural context of any given country and at the same time it is intelligible on an international scale and it is appealing to the audience regardless of country or even the language of their origin.[24] In the past hundred years we can observe a constant deepening of film language on global scale. Especially the works which are able to attract an international audience are often found to be deeply rooted either in specific regional, national or cultural

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[23] Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Dějiny filmu: Přehled světové kinematografie.* (Praha: Akademie muzických uměni v Praze a Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2011), 5.
[24] Ibid., 6.

traditions. We can find groups among the people we know or even find ourselves to be enchanted by films which originated from places where we would never expect them to or even from countries which we have never known they existed in the first place. Thanks to this fact our world bond together and enriching our knowledge. This process of learning plays a major role in shaping the humanistic nature of a man. The reality we perceive through the vision of film producers can never be whole however the stories which are presented in films have the ability to tell us the meaning of human destiny. It is not strictly necessary for them to be the stories in the true sense of the word; they may appear to us as mere fragments, partial images or a play of sounds but this is exactly what makes them magically appealing to audiences.

3.2   The Invention of Film

All that has been written in the last paragraph was enabled only by marvel of engineering called cinematograph and with that, the tight connection to invention of motion picture followed.

3.2.1   First Steps of Motion Picture

In the 19th century the huge expansion of visual forms of popular entertainment for common folks began. Industrial era offered the possibility of mass production of light paintings, photo albums and illustrated stories for kids. This allowed the middle and working class to see sophisticatedly elaborated dioramas - painted decoration with three-dimensional characters usually displaying historical events. Apart from this audience was left with not much else. Other equivalents of similarly tuned entertainment have become the theaters, circuses and cabarets. However, later it proved to be uneconomic to haul whole theater productions from city to city. Also at a time of limited and complicated travel this turned out to be problem for most of viewers as well.[25]

The solution was found in the form of cinematography. It offered a cheaper and easier way to provide entertainment to the masses in an elegant manner. It allowed

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[25] Ibid., 21.

filmmakers to record those theatrical performances which could they be screened to audience afterwards all over the world. The popularity of the films grew at a rapid pace and they soon became the most popular visual art form in the late Victorian era.[26] Motion picture was understood as a fresh and unseen form of entertainment and a new way how to express your artistic self. During the first ten years of its boom, inventors were working tirelessly on improving their devices for filming and projection. There were stand-backs that held inventors from moving on, they had to figure out which kind of image they wanted to capture and on the other hand theater owners had to figure out how to present these images to the audience.[27]

3.2.2 Predisposition for Film Creation

Film as is, is very complex medium and before the first functional film in its true meaning was invented, several technical predispositions had to be met.

Firstly, scientists had to find out that the human eye perceives movement as a series of slightly different images in rapid succession – at least at a pace of sixteen frames per second. This phenomenon was studied during the whole 19th century. In 1832, the Belgian physicist Joseph Plateau and the Austrian professor of geometry Simon Stampfer created an optical device independently on each other which later came to be called *fenakistiskop.* Another invention called *zootrop* which was directly based on the *fenakistiskop* was developed in 1833. Both inventions were based on feature of forming a series of drawings on a narrow strip of paper inserted into the rotating cylinder. After 1867, *zootrop* was vastly successful; however its downside was in repeated sequence in the loop.[28]

Another technological predisposition for the creation of the film was the ability to project a rapid series of images on the screen. Since the early 17th century, vaudeville performers used *laterna magica* – an early type of image projector to screen glass light images but it proved to be impossible to show a large number of images fast enough to produce the illusion of movement.[29]

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[26] Ibid., 21.
[27] Ibid., 22.
[28] Ibid., 22.
[29] Ibid., 22.

Another predisposition in line was the possibility to use the photo in the creation of successive images on a smooth surface. The exposure had to be so short that it could capture at least sixteen or more images in a single second. For many years, photographs were made only on metal or glass panel without the developing negatives. It meant that for every picture there was only one copy and the exposure was lengthy process which took minutes back then. In 1839, Henty Fox Talbot introduced a progress in making negatives on paper. In that year, it was already possible to transfer photographic images on glass panels and project them.[30]

Fourth predisposition lied in transferring photos to a flexible material which could slide quickly through the camera system. Glass sheets were considered but the downside of them was that only a short sequence of images could be captured on them. In 1888, George Eastman invented the camera that was able to capture photos on the photo-sensitive paper rolls. This breakthrough simplified taking pictures to that extent that even inexperienced individuals were able to capture photos. Not even a year later, Eastman introduced transparent celluloid film roll, which was a major step towards invention of film. His celluloid was primarily designated to be used for photo taking cameras, but later on this material proved to be useful when designing the instruments that were supposed to capture and project moving pictures.

Last but not least, equally important was coming up with suitable mechanism for film cameras and projectors on the stepper feed basis. It meant that celluloid had to briefly stop for a moment each time while light beamed through the lenses and illuminated film image. After that, the celluloid was covered with visor and was moved to the next frame. Similar technique was used for projecting device where each frame stopped for a split second in the visor so it could be projected on the screen. In practice, at least sixteen boxes had to fit in the right place, stop and move on to the next frame each second in order to create motion picture.[31]

All the technical conditions for the invention of film were set in stone at the beginning of 90s of 19th century. The question was who possessed sufficient expertise to make this marvel successfully become reality. Invention of film can not be simply attributed to one single person. Cinematography did not suddenly appear in a given moment. Technology of filming was rather created by accumulation of individual

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[30] Ibid., 22.
[31] Ibid., 23.

experiments carried by scientist and inventors mostly in the United States, Germany, Great Britain and France.

The very first attempt to screen to audience took place on Broadway in 1894 where people had a chance to witness four minute long film *Young Griffo v. Battling Charles Barnett* (1894) for the admission fee of twenty five cents. However, the cinematography in today's historical context officially dates back to the end of the 19th century, to be exact on 28 December 1895 in Grand Café in Paris[32] when for the first time in public brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière projected their films for money using their patented invention called cinematograph. Every beginning tends to be difficult and Brothers Lumière had to deal with initial trouble of economic nature because this first public screening did not attract as much audience as they thought it would and scarcely yield any profit. Nevertheless, they were not discouraged by this inconvenience and in a few weeks Lumière brothers offered to audience twenty screenings a day.

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[32] Ibid., 27.

3.3 The Rise of American Cinema – Till 1912

In the field of entertainment media the Hollywood nowadays take the leading position on the international market. Economically speaking the United States was not as significant as countries before the First World War. Great Britain was the sole exporter for the rest of the world and London was the world's financial center. The war allowed the United States to overtake England and other European countries.

As for the film industry, American firms focused on meeting the requirements of the domestic market, and did not plan to invade foreign markets before the war. They also struggled in taking leading position in this newly forming industry. The period between 1905 and 1912 meant for American producers, distributors and cinema owners attempt to achieve some stability in this dynamic and somewhat chaotic business.[33]

Around the year 1905, the films were only available to be seen in vaudeville theaters, local theaters or other place however they were unavailable for the lower classes due to higher admission fee. This was changed by significant change between 1905 and 1907 when mass growth of cinemas occurred which were later labeled as nickelodeons simply because of the admission was five cents or a nickel. Nickelodeon became popular for several reasons. When producers switched from news programmes to actual film plotlines, going to the cinema became a standard form of new entertainment. High attendance allowed owners to project various programs (up to 450 different programs a year) and year-round availability only strengthened their popularity even more. Almost every projection was accompanied with sound in the form of commentary or piano music. In small towns, nickelodeons could be the only place where films were shown and people from all social classes could watch them together. Also most of the well-known studios began as simple nickelodeons such as Warner Studios, Universal or MGM.[34]

The situation in the film market gradually became very chaotic. Cinema owners needed more films but the producers were busy fighting over the rights and patents for the use of projection equipment and cameras. The main actors of these disputes were Thomas A. Edison and the American Mutoscope & Biograph. To solve

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[33] Ibid., 45.
[34] Ibid., 46.

the disputes, in December 1908 Motion Picture Patents Company or MPPC in short was established which controlled the entire market and it charged the license to all patents. This indirectly created oligopoly and thus control over the market and with regulation in favor of domestic production.[35]

In the years to follow there were also changes in the area of projection areas. Some of nickelodeons were still in business back in 1915 however beginning in 1908 the construction of much larger projection areas for screenings began. Admission was between 10 to 25 cents, in the case of longer programs even more. In some of those cinemas there was film projections combined with live vaudeville performance. In addition the projections were accompanied with orchestra or pipe organ, decorative curtains and sometimes even educational lectures. This approach significantly distinguished them from nickelodeon and made them very desirable.

It became part of the trend to strive to longer programs and more prestigious films as well as lengthening the runtime of films. At the beginning of the century the new term which labeled unusual film as "feature" was introduced which was usually accompanied with some kind of minor advertisement. However, this term soon after started to be associated with films with longer runtime. Before 1909 most of this film production contained biblical or sport thematic and they were screened rather in prestigious cinemas than in nickelodeons. Around 1909 American producers tried different approach with making films which continued with sequels. The strict system of MPPC did not allow more than one sequel per week so the films became to be continued week by week. After 1910, longer films became the cornerstone of program of most prestigious cinemas and shorter films preferred by the owners of nickelodeons slowly started to vanish. Since the films started to come out on regular basis, large studios began to sell their films under their name. Viewers were familiar with name of studios where the film originated, names of producers however individual actors were unknown to them because they were not listed in credits. Around 1910 star system was born. Some of the studios answered the call of their audience and turned the popularity of actors to their advantage through advertising their pictures and names in the entrance halls.[36]

In the upcoming heyday of cinematography, first of the larger studios were located in New Jersey and New York. Some smaller ones originated in Chicago or

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[35] Ibid., 47.
[36] Ibid., 50.

Philadelphia. Films were mostly shot in the open and sometimes local climate with cloudy weather could interrupt the production. Studios began to move to areas with sunnier climate and by 1910 sunny Los Angeles in California turned into major place for filmmakers. Bright and dry weather allowed producers to shoot under open sky during most of the year. South California offered perfect sceneries of ocean, mountains, deserts and forests and genre of western began to nourish.

Little suburb called Hollywood was one of the places where new studios were founded and later on the name became symbol of all American film industry. Small studios rapidly grew into extensive complexes. Around 1912 MPPC finally abandoned the idea of monopolized market and let the film industry grow into much stable and huge commercial industry.[37]

3.4 Classic Hollywood – 1913-1919

In the era just few years before and right when the war broke out there was substantial impact on the whole film industry all over the world. In some countries, it was possible to observe the formation and consolidation of the major film companies and studios which later on dominated the market for decades and that is when the Hollywood industry established its form. In August 1914 the First World War broke out. It had profound impact on the film industry on the international scale which we can still experience to this day. War efforts significantly reduced film production as a whole but mainly the Europe was inflicted the most. American companies took advantage of this and tried to fill the newly created empty spots in the market. Since about 1916, the United States has become a major supplier of films in the world market and this position has been maintained since. [38]

The Motion Picture Patents Company prevailed in the American film industry in the years 1908 up to 1911, but after 1912 their position diminished when the court decided to remove their exclusive patent rights. Independent companies saw this as an opportunity and expanded into the studio system, which formed the basis of American cinema for decades to come. In order to build the typical Hollywood studio system it often involved the merger of two or more minor production companies. From that

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[37] Ibid., 50-51.
[38] Ibid., 63-64.

moment huge studios started to emerge which were later branded as "Majors". Between 1912 and 1920 most of those major that prevailed to this day were established. Namely it would be Paramount Pictures which originated from two companies – Adolph Zuckor's Famous Players in Famous Plays based on a star system and prestigious literary adaptations and Jesse L. Lasky's Feature Play Company, which focused on the long "feature" films. However there were even more companies emerging during first decade of 20th century which had a key position in the industry. Sam, Jack and Harry Warner moved into distribution in 1913 and founded Warner Bros. William Fox who gradually built Fox Film Corporation ultimately became major Hollywood player in the twenties when he renamed his company to 20th Century-Fox. Three smaller companies which were founded during the twenties – Metro, Goldwyn and Meyer merged in the year 1924 to MGM. Gradual increasing of emphasis on the importance of individual film stars and directors underlines the fact that in 1919, the three most popular actors – Charles Chaplin, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks joined forces with the most reputable director D. W. Griffith and founded new company – United Artists which soon became prestigious distribution company featuring independent films exclusively created by its founders.[39]

Back then, most of the Hollywood studios were labeled as factories that produce a number of similar films like on assembly line. It was not entirely true. Each film was different and required a specific plan and implementation. However studios attempted to develop the most effective methods of film production. By 1914, the largest studios distinguished between the director who was responsible for the shooting of film itself and the producer who oversaw the production as a whole. During this period major Hollywood companies flourished into greater proportions. Around 1915 "feature" films which lasted about 75 minutes back then made most of the sales. Different studios competed with each other by having popular actors signing long-term contracts with them. At the end of the decade most popular stars such as Charles Chaplin could earn thousands of dollars a week because of these contracts. Studios also purchased the rights for the famous literary works and adapted them as their profile films of their actors.[40]

Development of the Hollywood studio system during the second decade of the 20th century in connection with overtaking of international film market by American

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[39] Ibid., 76-84.
[40] Ibid., 80.

production is seen as the most significant change in the history of cinematography. These events of this era set the standards of commercial filmmaking. Most of the "Majors" which were founded at this era prevailed and are main filmmakers of Hollywood nowadays. So is the method of dividing different activities of filmmaking process. Same goes for the star system which is main factor of appeal of films to the broad audience. All in all basic principles of classical Hollywood style of filmmaking have not changed at all. Whether it is good or bad one could argue but terms Hollywood and film have not become synonymous all across the globe for nothing.

3.5 Late Era of Silent Film in Hollywood – 1920-1928

During the First World War, the United States ensured their position to become a global economic leader. The center of global finance gradually moved from London to New York and goods manufactured in the States were delivered all around the world. Despite the short but severe recession which occurred in 1921 caused mainly by return to the peace economy, most of the companies yield considerable profit. The film industry was no exception and it has benefited from a high level of revenue achieved in this period. Produced films reflected the rapid rhythm of ongoing jazz era. At that time, major investment companies of the Wall Street finally acknowledged the power of this young industry and started to nourish its growth. Between the years of 1922 and 1930, total investments rose from 78 to 850 million dollars. Average weekly cinema attendance has doubled from 40 million in 1922 to 80 million in 1928. This was mainly achieved by the strategy of buying and building new cinemas. This progression ensured vast sales of films for their producers. Hollywood also hired more foreign filmmakers who brought their own stylistic innovations here.[41]

The appearance of cinemas was very important. They were supposed to evoke something magnificent so big companies tried to make them appealing to audience not only by the type of exhibited films, but also by promising an extraordinary experience of the visit of cinema itself. Therefore, the twenties became the era of film palaces offering wide variety of things to do accompanied with thousands of seats, splendid halls and corridors, dressed ushers and orchestral music playing during screenings. Also installation of first air-conditioners to the cinemas made visiting cinemas

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[41] Ibid., 151-152.

enjoyable entertainment during the summer months. Silent films were always accompanied by music. Great palaces usually used entire orchestra while smaller cinemas had group of few musicians or just one pianist. Some cinemas also added some value for the admission in a form of live theatrical performances during screening breaks. In addition, the architecture of movie palaces itself provided the visitors from the lower and middle class the feel of exceptional luxury. There were two basic approaches used while building palaces – classic or atmospheric. Classic style imitated theater with using ornamental decorations in the Italian baroque style, while the atmospheric style provided audience with the impression of sitting under a starry sky where the dome's flickering lights imitated the fell of stars. However, the Economic crisis ended this extravagant era.[42]

The expansion and consolidation of the Hollywood film industry took place in parallel with improving classic continuity style developed at the beginning of the 20th century. In the twenties, major companies had dimmed studios at their disposal, rooms completely isolated from direct sunlight which allowed producers to illuminate whole scene with artificial lighting. Several years after First World War, Hollywood studios were ahead over the world in sense of technological advancement which allowed producers to make films with higher budget (up to ten times more than in Europe) which afterwards lured adequate amount of viewers into cinemas.[43]

In the mid-twenties, increasing investments from the Wall Street allowed Hollywood to further increase budgets of their films and raise the bar even higher. Epic films with colossal decorations and pompous costumes were no exception. As viewers demanded increasing feel of realism, producers heard the plea of their fans and moved their production sets to the authentic landscapes across the country. Thanks to this, producers were able transform formerly very popular genres like western or war film to a much grander scale. Silent comedy continued to be among most popular however producers kept experimenting with secondary genres such as horror or gangster films which ultimately became popular later on in thirties.

Soon after, Hollywood came up with other variants of mainstream entertainment. Usually it was specialized movies that were oriented on specific audience. In the era of silent film a small infrastructure of cinemas for Afro-American audience emerged and even films with Afro-American cast. However these cases were strictly rare and

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[42] Ibid., 153.
[43] Ibid., 153.

mostly their cast was based on ingrained stereotypes. They often appeared as servants, vagrants or comic children. On top of that Afro-Americans were also refused admission to cinemas and they had to be segregated. Chance for African-American population came with the arrival of the sound era, when they were highly demanded in musicals or even experimenting with films with full Afro-American cast.

Post war period was also the time of rise of animation and increasing demand for animated films enabled increased production and founding of new studios. Most studios produced series with the same characters and themes. These films were distributed by single distributors or the artist could enter into contract with one of the Hollywood companies. At the beginning of the twenties there were several popular series. Among best acclaimed were *Mutt and Jeff* based on comic book by Bud Fisher or Fleischer's brothers *Out of the Inkwell* or early attempts of Walt Disney who later in 1923 founded with his brother Roy Disney Brothers Studios which gradually grew into one of the biggest entertainment conglomerates. Undoubtedly the most popular figure in that era became Pat Sullivan's animated cat Felix thanks to the charm of the feline hero and flexible style of animation.[44]

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[44] Ibid., 172-173.

4   American Society and Cinema

In the following chapter the main focus will be put on the factors which led to the fact that the film began to be perceived as a new type of art very much unlike the other types that have been rooted in society for a long time. Rapid technological advancement leading to invention of cinematograph, introduction of motion pictures and sociological transformation of film arose one question. Theorists dealing with art could not decide whether the film should be ranked among the elite culture or the mass culture. Following lines will try to shed some light into the matter how the film was perceived by American society throughout the history.

4.1   Evolution of American Society in American Cinematography

At the early stage of the last century, the emergence of film were not only perceived as a scientific experiment that accidentally worked out, but society started to integrate them into their lives and films have become a popular form of entertainment for the working class. The growing popularity of film screenings had the effect of creating 'nickelodeons'. Special places originally transformed from buildings such as dance halls or theaters for the purpose of screenings. As the title of nickelodeon suggests, its name comes from the name for an American coin, nickel. One nickel which is five cents and also an admission fee that was charged per one screening, which made it accessible, even for American working class at that time. Nickelodeons used to be usually open from early morning till midnight.[45]

In the first decade of the 20th century, various movements, including religious organizations and other associations began to fear that the films and their content would undermine social thinking and morality and thus intervene in the form of demand of censorship. According to those movements, the films encouraged their viewers to act like criminals because they were considered as instructions for robbery and prostitution. The French production has been criticized mainly for displaying and disparaging adultery with a comic relief. The amount of violence shown was also disturbing because showing scenes such as murders or even executions was common

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[45] Ibid., 45-47.

in the heyday of nickelodeon.[46] In 1915 the Supreme Court in the America arbitrated that film production is not subject to subject to the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution which deals with the right to freedom of speech. The judges came to the decision that film production would be classified as popular show. The growing filmmaking studios were partially helpless against censorship so they decided to bypass this regulation. In order to get control over the censorship, studios claimed they would regulate the content of films by themselves. This set of events led to the foundation of Motion Picture Association of America in 1922 which was mostly entrusted with the supervision of moral wholesomeness of the films released for the purpose of screening.[47]

In the period of second decade of 20th century dramatic shift occurred in the perception of film as art. This trend has begun in Europe, where primarily French intellectuals have begun to recognize the film as a work of art and adjusted their assessment in accordance with the same standards that applied to other form of arts. This idea slowly started to spread from France to other European countries. At that time this shift, however still did not apply to American film production and consumption because it did not reach the standards of elite cultural goods. The film, newly established form of entertainment, was seen mostly as amusement aimed for masses, especially because it was cheap and most of the nickelodeons were originally located in areas made up mostly by working class and immigrants. Experts among American intellectuals acknowledged that European film production may be regarded as work of art; however they did not share this idea when considering Hollywood film production. According to them, they were designed to entertain its viewer, not to make him ponder over complex life issues.[48]

Prior to the start of the thirties of last century and beginning of the Great Depression, there was a substantial increase in the popularity of film production. New technological innovation in the form of sound film was considered as the main reason of this sudden boom. Starting in 1928, the introduction of direct sound and therefore involvement of viewer's another sense begun to attract representatives of middle class into cinemas. Even though films were still considered a privilege of a working class, the figures of weekly attendance implied otherwise with peeks in tens of millions

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[46] Ibid., 2011, s. 48.
[47] Baumann, Shyon. *Hollywood Highbrow. From Entertainment to Art.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 8.
[48] Ibid., 9.

viewers.[49] The financial crisis resulted in temporary abatement of interest in cinema. At the end of the 30s, situation started to take a turn for the better and the weekly attendance in cinemas reached millions once again. This trend was maintained until the end of World War II. However the situation stagnated and film studios realized something had to be done in order to maintain their position in the market. If they wanted to attract more viewers into cinemas they would have had to focus on other social classes in society, especially on the middle class. They improved their production so it could become more appealing to the middle class, the middlebrow. They achieved this goal by producing films with much greater budget and epic stories screenplays.[50] Even though the America is separated from Europe by vast Atlantic Ocean, the influence of European intelligence could not be stopped. As a result of social and political changes undergoing in Europe, especially in pre-war Germany, substantial part of Europe's artistic elite immigrated to the United States and brought new artistic movements with them. New techniques and procedures of film production improved innovated current state of Hollywood. After the World War II, American society underwent some radical changes which also had an impact on film industry. The invention of television was introduced on the consumer market and caused the outflow of viewers from projection screens. Outflow was highest among working class. For them watching television from the armchair of their cozy homes was reasonably more comfortable and affordable.

At the beginning of 50s, shortly after the end of the war, the significant improvement of standard of living could be observed. It also brought noticeable change in lifestyle due to an after-war baby boom and strengthening of market and social standing of middle class. For many owning a car and buying a house in the suburbs was no longer just a dream. Families were raising little children at home and rarely did they have opportunity to venture to the city center for purpose of entertainment which contributed to the decline of attendance in cinemas.[51] Continual prosperity of the United States and development of new leisure activities furthermore enticed away more viewers from movie theaters.

Numerous film producing studios decided to fight the decline in attendance by focusing on production of selective films that were designed just for a specific fraction

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[49] Ibid., 9.
[50] Ibid., 9.
[51] Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Dějiny filmu: Přehled světové kinematografie.* (Praha: Akademie muzických uměni v Praze a Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2011), 336.

of population. Walt Disney Company began to produce classic adventure films for children and youth. Films with romantic theme yield considerable sales among adolescents. Producers seized this opportunity and switched their marketing towards flourishing youth culture whose daily routine was filled with popular music, dating and consuming of fast food.

Returning soldiers from the World War II home to America who valiantly fought on the battlefields of Europe showed interest not only in American films but mainly in international films because they felt like part of the whole world. These artistic films originated from Europe also impressed the well-educated part of the society and thus attracted more audience and ensured the origin of specialized new kind of cinema, the art cinema. Popularity of these cinemas rapidly grew, at the beginning of the 50s, there were about one hundred art cinemas in America. During next decade up to year 1965 we could visit more than six hundred art cinemas across whole country. They were mainly located in cities with universities and their audience mostly comprised of educated people interested in art. That is why you could also visit art exhibitions in some of them. The typical trait of art cinemas was that they were considerably smaller and maintained independent modern spirit. Unlike at cinemas created for broader audience where you could have bought popcorn or soda, art cinemas on the other hand served coffee and pies of different flavors to maintain simple artistic feel.[52]

These set of events led to increase in general education with more people attending universities who entitled themselves educated film generation.[53]

The period of 50s and 60s was significant from the perspective of art history when French critics gradually acknowledged the American Hollywood production. As I have already mentioned in the thesis, French critics applied on these films new Auteur theory which states that the main artistic creator of the work of art, in this case art in the form of film, is director. Soon after, the American intellectuals acceded to Auteur theory and other aspects of European approach to films and Hollywood films began to be perceived as a work of art. [54] This progressive French new era influenced production of films from east Europe up to South America in 60s.

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[52] Ibid., 342.
[53] Baumann, Shyon. *Hollywood Highbrow. From Entertainment to Art.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 15.
[54] Ibid., 10.

Sixties played a significant role for Hollywood film production. Film scholars accepted the artistic nature of film. Nature of production underwent a radical change; films were supposed to display and reflect true American society, even with its negative aspects. Understanding of European film production enabled intellectual enlightenment of Hollywood films.[55] The invention of television caused huge decrease in attendance in cinemas which led to weakening of link between cinema and middle and lower classes. Film studios realized that this sudden emptiness in film production needed to be filled. As mentioned before, in mid 60s there has been noticeable emergence of independent art cinemas which supported the production of avant-garde and controversial films. In addition to the usual film screenings in cinemas, independent organizations arranged film festivals for the purpose of publicizing new films and provided adequate reputation for them. Teaching of film arts as a subject found its way to universities which led to schooling of other experts who regarded film as a work of art.[56]

Subsequent evolution of the Hollywood film industry led to the experimentation with new approaches and usage of new methods how to appeal to the ever more demanding society. And thus the next decade is mainly connected with the blockbuster method. The general gist of blockbuster is that the producing studio expends enormous amount of resources on production of several films at any given moment. In theory, afterwards, according to the producers, one of these films would have become a guaranteed success and thus compensate for the failures and mild reception of the other films. In fact, this method is seen as a huge gamble for producers. Taking a risk and at the same time not knowing whether one of these films would be successful enough. However this method proved to be quite popular among the producers since it is still used by big studios to this day to some extent.[57]

Since the early eighties up to the present day, the perception of the cinematography and film as a work of art has not changed drastically. Major increase in accessibility of information of any kind led to the gradual rise in level of education across all social classes. Highest impact of this was among underprivileged. Since then, they could experience the same and most of the film producers diminished any remaining barriers between any social classes and started to produce films for the

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[55] Ibid., 10.
[56] Ibid., 16.
[57] Ibid., 11.

broadest audience as possible in general. Major change that is tightly connected to this process can be observed through the introduction of new technologies and their easy accessibility. Mediums such as Video Home System or shortly VHS and Digital Versatile Disc or known as DVD opened new frontiers for the consumers in a way of reproducing the experience in their homes which was previously possible only by visiting cinemas. And the ubiquitous presence of internet in nearly every household of the world deepens this fact.

It was no longer only in the competence of the film producers whether people would care about the films but the shift was made onto the owners of cinemas. The responsibility of these owners to lure audience into the cinemas is rising each year so in mid eighties they started reforming the appearance of their cinemas to the form we come across today in most cases. Viewers became spoiled too much by foregoing mediums and did not want to give up their precious comfort in order to come to see their favorite film in the environment where they would not enjoy it. The cinema owners have had to come up with something fresh and exciting together with overcoming the problem of minimal screening space since film producers churned out one film after another in order to lure the audience back. The solution to these problems was found in the form of transformation of cinemas into multiplexes - enormous buildings with vast screening space which could offer great comfort, high-end technologies and much bigger screens.[58] This bold move proved to be the right impulse for the viewers to start visiting cinemas again. Cinemas became a favorite weekend destination for families of all classes. And apart from seeing a film the experience expanded into much broader scale since multiplexes are often part of vast shopping centers which offer multitude of different activities.

In the first decade of 21st century producers resorted to a conservative way in making of films. They tried to lure the die-hard home viewers into cinemas by remaking old classics of films they used to know from their childhood. This meant recreating old films with fresh and unseen vision to appeal to the standards of nowadays audience.

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[58] Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Dějiny filmu: Přehled světové kinematografie.* (Praha: Akademie muzických uměni v Praze a Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2011), 715.

4.2   Reflection of Society in Early Films

As it was stated in last chapters, films originally began as an alternative form of affordable entertainment for members of socially underprivileged. It did not take long films started to shape its position in a society as something far more complex. Films turned into a tool with vast possibilities how to reach different viewers on different levels. However, films of the early era were not meant to arouse social unrest. Instead, they mostly expressed social problems and also the shifts in social ethics. If we look at first three decades of film history it would seem foolish to give blame to films for troubles in society or cultural changes because films were only reflections of which was already rooted in society.

However one film appeared which was the reason for outrage and blame for racial issues within society. It was in 1915 when *Birth of a Nation* (1915) was released directed by D. W. Griffith.

4.2.1   Synopsis of *Birth of a Nation* (1915)

The film tells the epic story from the era of the American Civil War focusing on two friendly families – the northern Stonemans and the southern Camerons who found themselves on opposite sides of the conflict with the background of heyday of slavery in America. The events of the films are told through the main characters of these two families and also by their black servants who portray the most important racial stereotypes. As we see the nation ravaged by the war, the slaves and their supporters are targeted as agents of all bad things. This further deepens when the film shows the rise of the Ku-Klux-Klan and their members as saviors.

4.2.2   Social Disturbances Caused by *Birth of a Nation* (1915)

Sudden increase in Ku-Klux-Klan activity during the initial release of the film could be observed which opens door to question whether the film was the agent of these social disturbances. Even though the abrupt increase in KKK activity which was considered dangerous and socially unacceptable among most of the population, the

sole fact of their resurgence cannot be accounted to the film itself which tried to convey different message nor can this social unrest be accounted to the actual audience which saw the film and was manipulated into wrongdoing action. Some may oppose that this film intentionally stirred up already ongoing racial issue but it is evident it was not the original cause. Simple fact implies that the social problems were not created by the people who viewed the film but by those who decided to act upon the hatred which was ever present in their minds and they could use this film as a clever excuse to commit hideous crimes. This behavior was not created by the film; it just stayed dormant until the convenient moment for those who took advantage of it. The film was eventually accused for the racist violence in the society. It is always easier to blame others, in this case the film for ills committed in society rather than starting at the real problem.

5 Conclusion

In this final chapter I shall evaluate the results of my work and subsequently make a general conclusion. Main aim of this bachelor thesis was to acquaint its reader with historical development of the cinematography until the invention of the sound film in the United States with observation of reception of film medium by American society and to answer the questions which deal with the problematic of elite and mass cinematography in American environment. Firstly, I attempted to answer a question whether there such differences exist in the first place when judging between elite and mass cinematography and if these differences can be found in the American cinematography. My method consisted in describing the issue in historical context and the events which led to dividing cinematography to lowbrow and highbrow. Just like any other newly emerging medium, film was in its early days focused on certain social groups. In more than one hundred years of its existence, film gradually profiled into certain segments but its essence remained basically the same. To my surprise, I came to answer rather quickly in my research.

In the early days of American cinematography cultural differences in the sense of cinematography did not exist. American film industry was built on the traditions of producing massive amount for massive audience and it naturally ruled out the cultural division. Production of early era was automatically bound to fell into the category of mass culture. If something was to change, society had to come to understanding of the film as a piece of independent art. At first they started to regard film as art in Europe and then many years later in America. Once film started to be recognized as art, critics were able to begin with the classification of film on highbrow and lowbrow. However this all did not happen well until the start of the second half of the 20th century when American intellectuals acceded to Auteur theory and other aspects of European approach to films and Hollywood films began to be perceived as a work of art. Not only this culture but also connected environment started to divide. Emergence of specialized art cinemas which are connected to elite culture found their target audience among more educated members of higher social classes and in contrast to this regular cinemas were primarily targeting people which sought out more shallow for of cinematographic entertainment.

Apart from cultural aspect of cinematography, the social aspect was also observed. From the given example it is safe to assume that since the very first steps of cinematography at the beginning of the 20th century film had the power to move with the viewers psyche on much deeper level than just shallow entertainment. These first indications showed the world that there is something more to films and the true potential was yet to be revealed in years to come.

Resumé

Za hlavní cíl si tato bakalářská práce klade seznámit svého čtenáře s vývojem rané kinematografie ve Spojených Státech do konce dvacátých let a také s kulturním a sociálním vývojem americké společnosti vůči tomuto médiu. Práce se nejen zaměřuje na jednotlivé etapy vývoje kinematografie, ale také popisuje vznik filmu po stránce technické. Mimo jiné přibližuje sociální podmínky a postoje panující skrze celou historii kinematografie až po současnost. Práce také popisuje sociální recepci v kontextu konkrétního filmu

V dnešní době je kinematografie a filmové médium hluboce zakořeněna v lidské kultuře. Na film je možné nahlížet jako na mocný a všestranný prostředek, který má mnoho využití v odlišných oblastech lidské sféry jako je kultura, vzdělávání či využití masového vyjádření svého názoru. Faktem je ale, že kinematografie ve své počáteční podobě nebyla považována za nic jiného než za levnou alternativu tehdejších divadelních představení pro méně movitější část společnosti a musela překonat cestu plnou překážek, než si získala své nynější postavení ve společnosti. Tak jak je v případě ostatních forem kulturního zboží, stejné platí pro film a panují ve společnosti různé názory na jeho podstatu a tudíž můžeme očekávat mnoho forem přijetí a chápání. Společná vlastnost, na které je možné se shodnout je, že je odrazem minulé i nynější společnosti. Vypráví příběhy, které vychází přímo ze společnosti a dokáže to způsobem, jako žádné jiné medium. V průběhu času se kinematografie a film pomalu a postupně vyvíjely ve stejně měnícím se prostředí společnosti a kultury v ní. Navzájem se kolem sebe utvářely.

Práce se ve své první části věnuje problematikou z dílčích oborů kultury, sociologie a psychologie se záměrem vytvoření konceptuálního rámce pro následující materiál. Obsahuje základy kulturní problematiky a dále se přesouvá na popis sociologického aspektu v rámci teorií slavných sociologů a antropologů, jež popisují tyto vzorce chování ve společnosti a snaží se uvést, co ovlivňuje jedince s odlišným sociálním zázemím při volbě různého typu kulturního zboží. V podstatě je to kombinace mnoha dílčích faktorů. Konkrétně se jedná o důležitost postavení jedince ve společnosti, jeho zázemí a prostředí, jeho priority a osobní vkus, ale také váhu na to má vliv podstata určitého typu kulturního zboží v kontextu momentální doby.

Další část se zaměřuje na kinematografickou složku práce a na film samotný. Popisuje historický vývoj kinematografie od počátku jeho vzniku, ale také se věnuje

technologické stránce věci v podobě popisu postupného bádání a vývoje před vlastním vznikem filmu. Zobrazuje film jako nově vznikající médium a vývoj jeho okolí. Z historického hlediska je záměrem popsat americkou složku kinematografie a její první krůčky až do samotného vyvrcholení éry němého filmu. Tato část je tématicky rozdělena do tří pasáží zobrazující nejdůležitější mezníky této éry. Popisuje období konce devatenáctého století až po konec let třicátých dvacátého století a zahrnuje dobu před vznikem Hollywoodu, vznik Hollywoodu a nakonec konec zlaté éry němého filmu.

Třetí a poslední část propojuje dvě předchozí složky, socio-kulturní s kinematografickou, a snaží se odpovědět na otázky, jestli je možné film považovat za umění a na jakou sociální skupinu je primárně zamířen. Toto vše je popisovánu se zaměřením na americkou společnost a historii od počátků kinematografie až do dnešní doby s popisem jednotlivých důležitých událostí, které měly zásadní vliv na povahu vnímaní filmu. Sociální dopad stránky filmu je ilustrován na příkladu filmu ze zlaté éry němého filmu – *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Film obsahuje kontroverzní tématiku rasového charakteru a vyvolává pobouření a odpor ve společnosti a tím dokazuje sociální dopad filmu na širokou společnost.

Je důležité uvést, že cílem práce není uvést každý aspekt kinematografie nebo obecně filmovou tvorbu tehdejší doby, ale snažit se popsat vývoj kinematografického prostředí se zaměřením na sociální a kulturní stránku diváků. Důraz je kladen na zodpovězení otázky rozdílu mezi elitní a masovou kinematografií v průběhu historie.

Annotation

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The main aim of this work is to introduce early era of American cinematography not only as a newly established medium in the form of film but also as a piece of art in the context of its reception by society as well as briefly describing the history of American silent film era. The first part of the thesis contains a brief overview of cultural and sociological terms. Second part is divided into chapters which deals with the description of film as cultural goods, as well as with the technological side of film and eventually the history of American cinematography from the end of 19th century up to the end of silent film era at the end of second decade of 20th century with the emphasis on social perception of cinematography. The third and final part deals with the connection of aforementioned aspects – cinematography with culture and sociology. It describes society and its approach to the film and cinematography as a whole throughout the history. Eventually, this connection is illustrated on an example of one film from silent era.

Anotace

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Hlavním cílem této práce je představit ranou éru americké kinematografie nejen jako nově vznikajícího média ve formě filmu, ale také jako umělecké zboží s přihlédnutím na jeho přijetí ve společnosti a také popsat historický vývoj v němém filmu ve Spojených státech. První část práce obsahuje krátký popis kulturních a sociologických termínů. Druhá část je rozdělena do kapitol, které jsou rozděleny na popis filmu jako kulturního zboží, stejně tak popisuje technologický aspekt filmu a nakonec obsahuje historii americké kinematografie od konce devatenáctého století až po konec éry němého filmu na konci druhé dekády dvacátého století s důrazem na sociální přijetí kinematografie. Třetí a poslední část se zabývá propojením dříve zmíněných termínů a to kinematografii s kulturou a sociologií. Popisuje společnost a její přístup k filmu a kinematografii jako celku skrze historií. Nakonec, toto propojení je ilustrováno příkladem na zvoleném filmu z doby němého filmu.

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Abbreviations

DVD - Digital Versatile Disc

KKK – Ku-Klux-Klan

MGM - Metro Goldwyn Meyer

MPAA - Motion Picture Association of America

MPPC - Motion Picture Patents Company
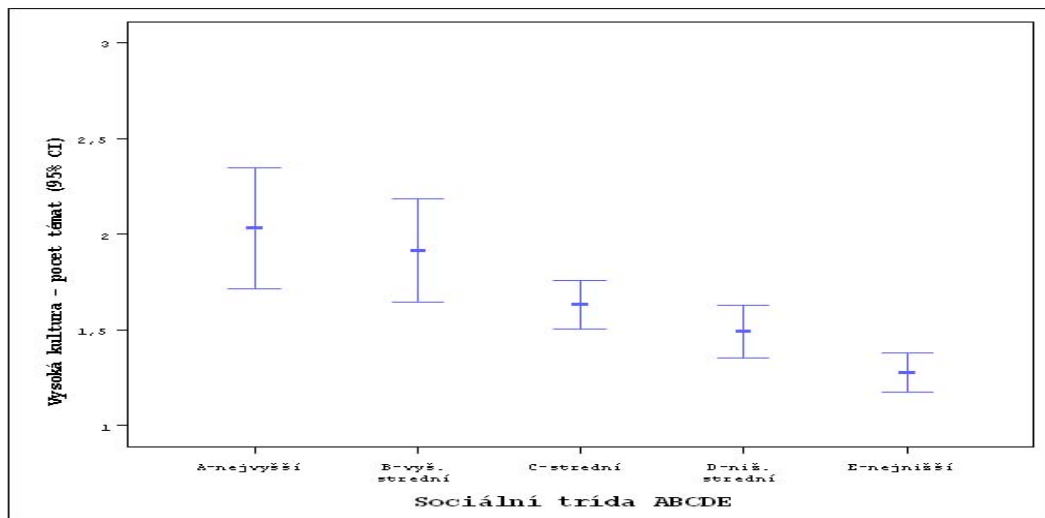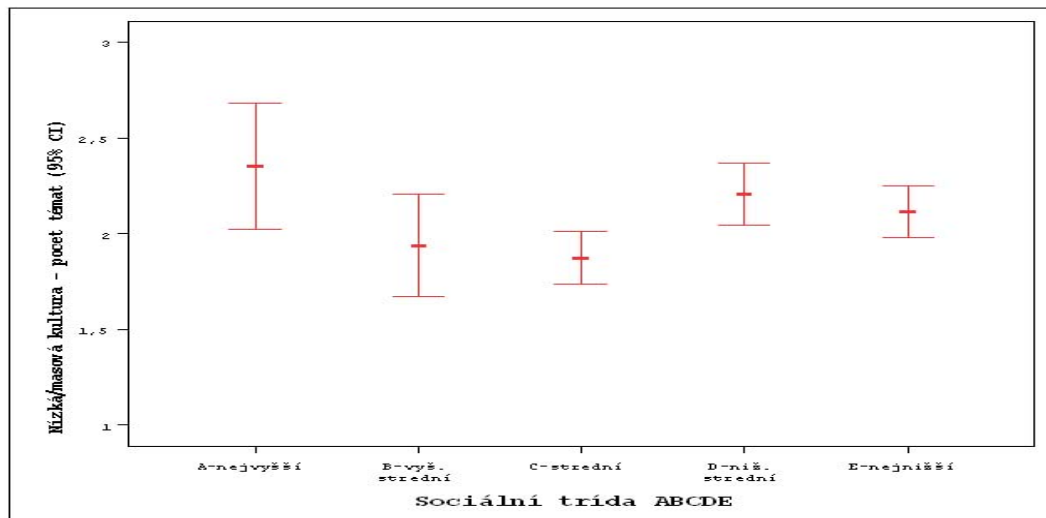
US – United States

VHS - Video Home System

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: An overview of different social classes and their relation to number of cultural goods consumed from elite and mass culture.

Appendices

Appendix 1: overview of different social classes and their relation to number of cultural goods consumed from elite and mass culture.

Source: Šafr, Jiři, Co je to kulturni všežroutstvi? *Socioweb*. Accessed 2008.
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