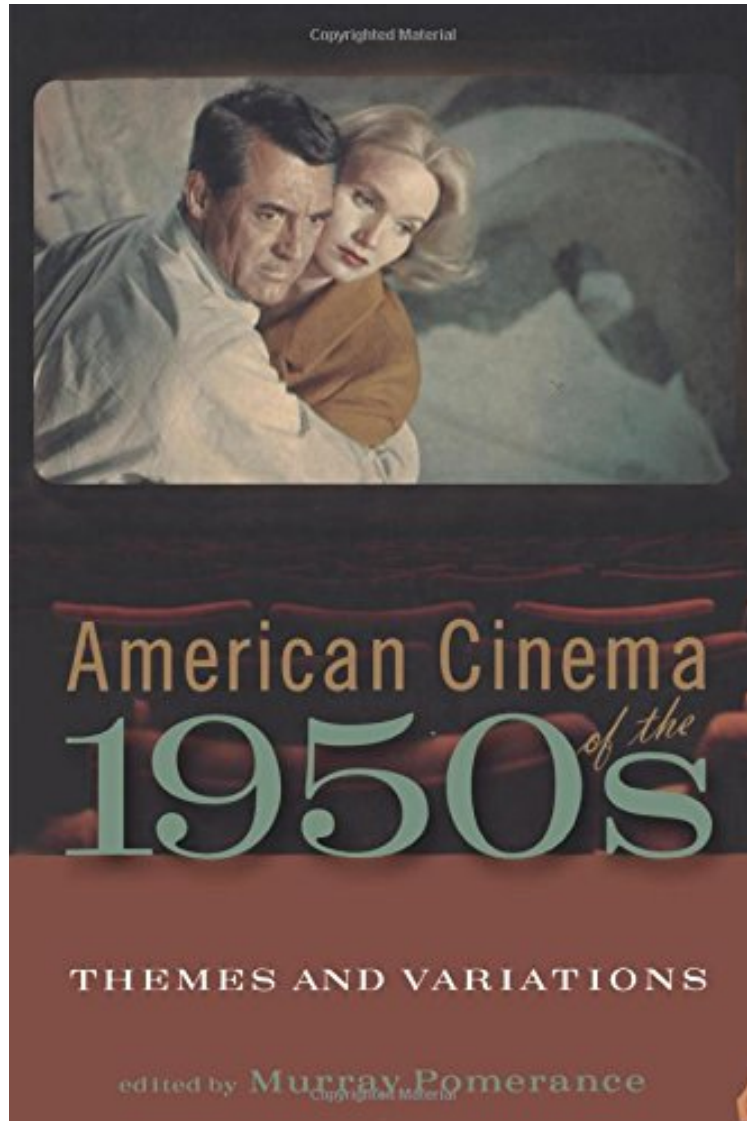


[Library ebook] American Cinema of the 1950s (Screen Decades S)

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Murray Pomerance

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Murray Pomerance : American Cinema of the 1950s (Screen Decades S) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Cinema of the 1950s (Screen Decades S):

0 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Chapter ShortBy Redbullgurlthe book has pictures and the chapter are really short to read which is nice for a quick study guide for a film exam.1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. "The fifties are still here. . . . They never went away." - - David LynchBy Found HighwaysAmerican Cinema of the 1950s doesn't include any movies by David Lynch (his first major film, Eraserhead, didn't come out until 1976), but this book proves Lynch's point.Adrienne L. McLean's essay on Vertigo and Hitchcock (1958) kept reminding me

of Lynch. Hitchcock always said he was trying to create "pure cinema" and Lynch says he wants to put "dreams" on the screen. In *Vertigo*, Judy is Madeleine, and in Lynch's films *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive* the main characters are all really someone else. Each chapter has a brief survey of the major films of the year and then looks at whatever theme struck the author as being important. I like this approach because it emphasizes the stories themselves - - what they meant to say, what they succeeded in saying, and what they might have failed to say. In his essay on race in 1959 movies, Arthur Knight talks about Harry Belafonte's apocalyptic fantasy *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* and his crime drama *Odds Against Tomorrow*. Both movies dealt with the same theme - - the struggle between a black man and a white man. In the fantasy there's hope at the end, but in the noir each protagonist would rather die than let the other escape. In the crime story they're fighting over money, and in the end-of-the-world story they're fighting over a woman. So in *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* there may be hope for racial peace, but only if the one woman left alive will allow the two men to decide her place in the new society. There are other essays that deal with the women in fifties movies and the women who made fifties movies. In her chapter on "Movies and Landscapes" in 1950, Mary Beth Haralovich compares Nicholas Ray's *In a Lonely Place* and Ida Lupino's *Outrage*, looking at "characters who suffer emotional trauma in the violent domestic aftermath of World War II." (SPOILER NEXT PARAGRAPH.) It's interesting that in the film *In a Lonely Place*, directed by Nicholas Ray, the angry veteran Dix Steele is just as much a victim as Laurel, the woman he falls in love with but still can't help almost murdering. However in the novel the movie's based on, written by a woman, Dix is the serial killer the police are looking for. Masculinity gets examined too, in Kristen Hatch's chapter on 1951, which analyzes *A Place in the Sun*, *Strangers on a Train*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Another good essay is Barry Keith Grant's on 1956 and "Movies and the Crack of Doom." Nineteen fifty-six was the highpoint of the decade for science fiction and horror. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* of course, but also *Forbidden Planet*, *World without End*, *Godzilla*, *Earth versus the Flying Saucers*, *The Beast with a Million Eyes*, even *The Ten Commandments* would qualify (as both fantasy and horror). But the "Crack of Doom" doesn't just come via the monster from the Id or seed pods from outer space, it also comes out of "the hydrogen jukebox." Nineteen fifty-six was the start of another invasion - - of rock and roll movies aimed at a new audience, teenagers. And the door closed on John Wayne's *Ethan Edwards* at the end of *The Searchers* (the last of the old-fashioned racist Westerns, and the only John Ford movie that's still watchable for anyone born in the 1950s or later). American Cinema of the 1950s has a timeline of social, political, and military events, and major academy award winners for each year. What made this book interesting was focusing on worries that forced their way to the surface in each year of the 1950s. We still worry about the same things. 2 of 6 people found the following review helpful. P-O-P-P-Y-C-O-C-K By Femme Vitale Great book, but definitely one of those where the summation, "it is exactly as you say, except backwards" duly applies. The author could do with a little reading up on the unencrypted Venona transcripts of coded soviet spying activity in the U.S. from the 1930's to 1950's. This is a good book on the subject: 'The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America's Traitors'. The Venona material was declassified in the 1990's, and proved what the experts knew all along, that yes, Virginia, the Marxists were crawling all over sensitive industries and critical government bureaus unchecked. Hell, they stole the secret to making the nuclear bomb and gave it to our mortal enemy the Russians, courtesy of the Rosenbergs, who were executed for their treason, in what is now demonstrably an iron-clad case against them. So terms like "cold war hysteria" and "anti-communist witch hunts" are 100% balderdash, pure and simple, from the type of tenured academic who should know better, and probably does, but being a leftist sympathizer like the typical sociologist, decided to turn a blind eye to the truth instead. I'll take "cold war hysteria" over the Russian gulag any day, thank you.

America in the 1950s was a place of sensational commercial possibility coupled with dark nuclear fears and conformist politics. Cold war hysteria and anti-communist witch hunts influenced a culture already falling under the spell of suburbia, television and a brave new world of luxury goods. Throughout the decade Hollywood was under siege: from the Justice Department pressing for big film companies to divest themselves of their theatre holdings; from the middle classes, whose retreat to family entertainment inside the home drastically decreased the film-going audience; and from the House Un-American Activities Committee, attempting to purge the country of dissenting political views. This tumultuous decade also saw some of Hollywood's most talented filmmakers - John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Vincente Minnelli, Nicholas Ray and Billy Wilder - producing some of the best-loved movies in the history of cinema, including *From Here to Eternity*, *Sunset Boulevard*., *Singin' in the Rain*, *Shane*, *Rear Window*, and *Rebel Without a Cause*.

There is nothing like this series. *Screen Decades* firmly situates American cinema in the realms of material culture, popular culture, cultural narrative, reception analysis, and industrial history.