

Recycling Hollywood: The Case of Classical and 1990s Cinema

Martina Martausová

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice

Abstract

This paper examines the implications of Hollywood's tendency to recycle formulas. It proposes a pattern of a recycled narrative structure which reinforces dominant ideologies and determines the mode of male representation in mainstream cinema, focusing on two specific cinematic eras – the classical period and 1990s Hollywood cinema. The comparison of these two periods reveals the mutual inter-reliance of notions that are still vital and evocative in cultural research – ideology and gender representation – and uncovers the tendencies and practices used by Hollywood to secure its dominant position in contemporary productions. It also discloses practices which, in Foucaultian terminology, help dominant ideologies engrave American mythology and reinforce “the pursuit of conformity” (Foucault 32–50).

Keywords: Hollywood, American dream, classical Hollywood cinema, 1990s, hero

Hollywood's challenge lay in developing rules of condensation and displacement that would work for the audience as a whole or, to put it another way, that would provide immediately (albeit unconsciously) recognizable objective correlatives for the common wishes and fears of the mass audience. (Ray, “Hollywood” 137)

Robert Ray, in his book *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema 1930–1980* (1985), suggests that American cinema has, as a result of Hollywood's commercial success and its wide recognition, often been equated with the success of film itself (25–28). Hollywood production is also often characterized as international, and with some exaggeration, even world cinema. This institution gained its worldwide recognition

by establishing a firm basis on the market of competing cultural discourses, by mediating cultural export, and by articulating and globalizing American historical and social experiences (Hansen 197–210). As Robert Ray explains, Hollywood is an institution that uses strategies and ideological conventions to respond to specific historical situations that appeal to audiences (“A Certain Tendency” 25–70). And yet one of the most significant processes that secured Hollywood its far-reaching success is based on what Thomas Elsaesser identifies as the recycling of formulas, which is a method that involves the perpetual repetition of the perpetual repetition of conventions – subjects, experiences, or desires, and functions as an important factor for the continuity of the medium (274–277). It is a process that has made Hollywood “the most adaptive and the most conservative, the most revolutionary and the most reactionary force in global culture” (Elsaesser 7).

Analyses of this process have revealed ongoing negotiations of dominant ideologies with cultural and social changes throughout the decades of Hollywood’s existence. And this process is also in the focus of this short study, which brings together two specific Hollywood eras – classical Hollywood cinema (1930–1945) and the cinema of the 1990s – the comparison of which reveals the implications of Hollywood’s tendency to renovate formulas and bind them with specific representations of model male identity in order to achieve optimum commercial success. The focus is especially on one formula that revives American collective experiences and thus reinforces Hollywood ideologies, and at the same time substantially determines the mode of representation of the American man in its production – the narrative of the American dream. These two eras make significant use of this narrative, which is which is a very frequently used device in Hollywood cinema.

As I shall argue, this narrative structure, which was preferred and exploited mainly by classical Hollywood cinema, was re-exploited in the 1990s in order to perpetuate mainstream ideologies and essentially influenced the representation of the hero. I will demonstrate this by providing specific examples from both eras, particularly focusing on four films: *It Happened One Night* (1934) and *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), representing the classical Hollywood era, and *Forrest Gump* (1994) and *American Beauty* (1999), representing 1990s cinema. It is important to mention that this study addresses commercially successful films only, films that received the Academy Award for Best Picture or a nomination for this award in the year of their release. The choice has been made to emphasize the commercial value and profitability of the narrative of the American dream along with its strong ideological potential.

The two selected eras are, accordingly, related through the kind of cinema that attempts to represent the American national character and revive its mythologies. Classical Hollywood constructed a form of cinema that “purports to be realistic [. . .]; that strives to conceal its artifice techniques of continuity and invisible storytelling, that should be comprehensible and unambiguous; and that it possesses a fundamental emotional appeal that transcends class and nation” (Bordwell 3). The cinema of the 1990s, as a response to wider cultural impulses to re-define the national character, makes significant use of classical formal and thematic paradigms, the narrative of the American dream in particular. It primarily does so by re-experiencing national

history (as the examples will indicate) and by applying formulas that also determine the mode of male representation in the mainstream cinema.

The significance of classical cinema thus resides in the application of universally appealing conventions that transmit American social and historical experiences to audiences in a concealed manner, which also allows for the invisible reinforcement of sexual differences. This form of Hollywood realism, also denounced as “fictional” (Elsaesser 83), invisibly celebrates American ideals, and as such it has also been described as emotionally committed and subjective (84) and rigidly sexist (Mulvey; Doane; de Lauretis). The formal conventions of this form of cinema, presented as a unique visual language of American cinema (Bordwell), have also been described and heavily criticized for the social and cultural contexts within which American cinema operates, which mystify social realities rather than describe them. Or in Annette Kuhn’s words, by applying these practices Hollywood attempts to convey the ideology of the visible as evidence of the truth (Kuhn 26).

These conventions, which have been a central target of feminist critique, have become uniform as a result of their dependence upon a specific economic mode of film production and consumption. This has led to a standardized film style that operates within a mass-production system, causing it to become dominant internationally. One of the most significant conventions that was employed by Hollywood production for over 70 years during the classical era is a narrative structure that builds on character-centred causality and traditionally places the main male protagonist at the centre of the storytelling. Hence the story is character-driven, and the narrative is psychologically, and thus individually, motivated (Hayward 64). This motivation allows for the character’s self-determination on the individual level, which is expatiated upon within the narrative (Kuhn 137) and provides space for the male hero to demonstrate himself through self-constituting acts. These, along with his actions and decisions which stimulate the development of the film, make linearity and continuity among the predominant features of the Hollywood style. And because one of the most effective ideological conventions of Hollywood storytelling is optimism, the hero is in many cases associated with success, which best demonstrates itself in the form of a success story that exploits the narrative of the American dream. Applying this narrative structure, the hero is bound to fulfill the American myth of the pursuit of happiness, “be it political, monetary, or social” (Pearson 645).

This pursuit of happiness – a formula used for the purposes of recycling,¹ also functions as a “retardation device” (Kuhn 29), which is a narrative device that formulates a traditional narrative thread to create pleasure derived from the audience’s anticipation of the held-off narrative closure. This comes in the form of the restoration of the status quo by “vanquishing a villain or liquidating a lack” (29). The disruption of the status quo – whether by villain or lack – is a typical motivator, and provides opportunities for the hero’s active participation in its restoration, either by conquering the villain or by marriage with the ‘princess’ (29). This narrative plot traditionally occurs in a classical Hollywood story and provides space for self-constituting performative acts that allow heroes to self-assert their position in

society. And because this pattern also aligns with the Oedipal trajectory,² it causes the move of the male protagonist towards the resolution of a crisis or social stability that ultimately binds him to the active position of subject (Hayward 261). This trajectory thus, by implication, indicates that the female character functions as a “stationary site [that is, a passive object] to which the male hero travels and upon which he acts” (261). Hence the pursuit of happiness, as a narrative structure, also reinforces sexual difference and embraces the rigidity of the binary form of gender representation.

Some films in classical Hollywood cinema feature the narrative of the American dream to emphasize moral aspects of the economic pursuit and stress personal happiness above economic happiness, as for example in *Grand Hotel* (1932), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), or *You Can't Take It With You* (1936) – films that directly respond to post-Depression American society. By shifting the form of the pursuit of happiness from economic to personal, these films attempt to present collective experiences to their audiences which soothe the effects of negative economic reality. The fact that these films received the Academy Award for Best Picture points to the effectiveness of Hollywood's tactics. Another successful classical film that features the narrative of the American dream is *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936), a biography that celebrates success both in personal and economic terms. In alliance with the traditionally standardized binary-determined representation, the film represents a historically real character who, by fulfilling the motivation and causality determined by the narrative structure of a success story, mystifies and praises a man's success. Similarly, this narrative structure was also used in Hollywood films about social problems, the best examples of which are perhaps *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), which tells a story of three veterans returning home, trying to adjust to their civilian life, or *The Lost Weekend* (1945), which presents a man who overcomes alcohol addiction and makes a life as a successful writer.

However, more than for any other genre the success story was typical of comedy in all its idealized, romantic forms. Comedy, perceived as a positive force in social change and social renewal (Neale 71), was employed by Hollywood as a genre whose narrative was characterized by its happy ending (66). Therefore as a genre it proved very compatible with the narrative of the American dream. Two of the most successful comedies that apply this narrative, *The Band Wagon* (1953) and *42nd Street* (1933), combine musical, romance, and comedy with a happy ending to narrate a story of success. *It Happened One Night* (1934), one of the films in focus of this study, is also a comedy that combines romance and features of the road movie to tell a story of success, as the main male character develops and attains personal and economic happiness. The quest for happiness forms the central plot of the film, and the narrative pre-determines the hero to succeed – fulfilling the pattern of the predictable and successful American dream narrative.

However, the success of the main male protagonist in this film, Peter Warne (Clark Gable), does not rely on his individual persistent actions that eventually lead to success through hard work and decisions under his own control – which are proper methods to attain the American dream (Cullen; Hochschild). The film instead presents Peter as holding control over his performance of masculine dominance and authority, and

the narrative focuses on these activities to such an extent that it distracts the attention from his performance of the pursuit, which is overshadowed by the assertion of his masculinity. By focusing on Peter's authoritative manly behaviour, the narrative intentionally maintains Peter's image as a reluctant hero,³ who will not lose his male pride by insisting on a romantic commitment – which the reluctant hero rejects in favour of freedom. *It Happened One Night* is thus a story of a classic Hollywood hero, who, despite (or precisely because of) his contradictory character, achieves the American dream of upward mobility, as he (after a long struggle with his vices) marries the daughter of a wealthy man. The hero is defined by his moral ambiguity, which progresses to a reluctance to change his destiny; this is a feature favoured by classical Hollywood cinema precisely because it involves the presence of dichotomies that are so fundamental for American mythology. The depiction of the hero thus follows classic canons built on the codes of ideal Western masculinity, presenting a hero who, despite his reluctance, pursues happiness to at last assert his moral authority. The story's resolution takes the form of Peter's advancement, which he attains as a reward for self-assertion, and thus the narrative addresses a very straightforward message of moral victory ascribed to the hero, directly speaking to American men.

Nevertheless, the narrative of success is not – despite the preference for it in some genres – a genre-specific formula, and within mainstream Hollywood cinema it operates by generally responding to broader social changes that generate different genre preferences among audiences. This is the case of *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) – another film addressed in this study, a melodrama which explores a set of dichotomies characteristic of postwar classical Hollywood production: adventure versus domesticity, individual struggle versus community, and most importantly, worldly success versus ordinary life. *It's a Wonderful Life* attempts to return traditional values to everyday life as a response to general attitudes associated with the disillusionment that was characteristic of the era by providing a hero – George Bailey (James Stewart) – who overcomes his internal struggle and makes the ordinary his ultimate happiness. By reminding the audience of the real values in one's life, the film conveys a message the hero addresses through his experiences. George, primarily speaking to male audiences, does so by recognizing his male identity in a world affected by a postwar reconfiguration of traditional gendered positions, especially related to economic patterns. The film narrative contributes to George's statement by making him consider immediate problems that emerged upon the return of American men from WWII, who, seeking to go back to normal life, tried to return to it through the ideal pursuit of the American dream “as they had idealized it while risking their lives in its defense” (Sullivan 115). George Bailey thus becomes a representative of the ordinary American man who struggles to find his way to happiness and achieves it with the help of the community, demonstrating the eventuality of living the American dream to the American men of the postwar era.

The film employs the narrative of the American dream to display traditional American ideologies that re-affirm the destabilized American consciousness after WWII, and discusses social issues that were important for post-WWII audiences. Melodrama and drama, along with romantic comedies, became one of Hollywood's

most profitable genres, not only in classical but also in post-classical production. Especially drama, which maintains a flexibility in form to reflect Hollywood negotiations of cultural and social issues, remains appealing to the audience through their emotional engagement achieved by the tension and suspense that are characteristic of this genre.

The Hollywood cinema of the 1990s makes use of a broad spectrum of genres, including drama. But what is significant in the 1990s is the return to the classical Hollywood narrative of the American dream, following a departure from the traditional pattern marked by the mainstream cinema of the 1970s and 80s. Mainstream Hollywood cinema of the 1990s partially re-embraces classical narrative strategies, “instead experimenting with irony and disengaged tone as a means of critiquing mainstream taste and culture” (Sconce 430), which was also characteristic of some films in the 1980s. This trend is especially visible in Hollywood blockbuster production, which places greater emphasis on narrative structure, character arcs, and other parts of the traditional architecture of Hollywood film (Langford 246).

This return to the classical form implies a return to the subjects that best defined national (and cinematic) history. This trend is most visible in films that were acclaimed and awarded as Best Pictures of the 1990s, for example *Dances with Wolves* (1990), a film that restores romantic visions of a Civil War hero with contemporary perspectives, or *Unforgiven* (1992), which revives the classical Western, one of the most significant American film genres, re-told in a contemporary, deconstructed manner (Piazza and Kinn 274) to address its sentiment to contemporary audiences. *Titanic* (1997) is another film in which Hollywood directly explores and renews the American past in the form of a romantic epic that won 11 Academy Awards. Other highly acclaimed films that restore historical experiences and present them to contemporary audiences are *Schindler's List* (1993), *Braveheart* (1995) or *The English Patient* (1996), which do not directly deal with American historical experience, but are pictures that restore the sentiment in a Hollywood-like manner, shaped by Hollywood tendencies and conventions that re-tell the emotion in Hollywood terminology. However, what is also significant about these films attempting to re-experience the sentiment of the past is that they also restore the American man in the form of a hero, who, drawing on his mythical attributes, adapts to contemporary society and attempts to directly address contemporary American men.

The identity and character of the contemporary American man is also central in the two 1990s films explored in this study – *Forrest Gump* (1994) and *American Beauty* (1999). Both films explore the position of the American man and his pursuit of happiness in present-day society, each in a very specific way. And despite the remarkable difference between the main characters – Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks) and Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) – the search for happiness in both films is ultimately bound up with the search for a metaphorical definition of the position of men in society and the traditional assertion of masculine omnipotence as a method that re-establishes this position. The narrative in *Forrest Gump* generously allows the handicapped Gump to achieve everything the American man possibly can – the American dream and the golden girl – just to present Gump as the

American archetype. By contrast, Lester Burnham, in his attempt to recover his lost position by self-constituting his identity (which, he believes, will help him restore his potency and life vigour), dies shortly after reaching his happiness. Interestingly, Lester's death does not come as a punishment, but rather as a warning against the 'extraordinary' that poses a real threat to traditional American men seeking their happiness and American dream. Lester is the embodiment of men in crisis, whose traditionally masculine consciousness has been numbed by the progression of feminist egalitarianism, and by intellectual discussions that denounce traditional masculinity. Hence, Lester represents the ordinary American man intimidated by 'extraordinary' forms of male identities (homosexuals – in the film represented by the characters of Sam and Scott, and the Reaganite Colonel Frank Fitts, who, after having been rejected by Lester, kills him). His death thus becomes a direct reference to this alleged intimidation of traditional American families and men.

The narrative exploration of the American man's position in society is manifested more in these two 1990s films than in their classic counterparts, and reveals the re-defined form of happiness in relation to man and his contemporary concerns. *Forrest Gump*, a drama that extends into the territory of romance to create an emotionally engaging picture, is a film that became culturally and politically very resonant. It presents a journey of fictitious characters interwoven with major historical events from one of the most socially and politically generative eras of the 20th century, and it dramatically demonstrates the struggle of the divided nation over the main social and political events of the period (the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, etc.). Born in the 1950s, Gump makes a journey through the turbulent era of the 1960s–1980s to find his happiness in the 1990s. He undergoes this to fulfil the nation's plea for a re-defined image of an ordinary American pursuing the American dream despite his handicap. At the same time, the socio-historical context of these four decades allows *Forrest Gump*, the hero, to challenge traditional constructions of masculinity, which he rejects and transcends by parodying the prevailing cinematic stereotypes of masculinity of the 1970s and 80s (the Reaganite cinematic representation of men that insists on muscularity and self-confidence).⁴ With this, Gump becomes a cinematic representation of a male identity that aims to overcome the previous representations – those relying on the aesthetics of toughness, power, and authority. His transcendental manly qualities develop with the binary nature of the main protagonists. Transcendental because they are qualities which represent "the myth of the Adamic innocence" (Carpenter 600), yet demonstrate the development of the "deep structure of masculinity, a global archetype of manliness" (Beynon 5).⁵

Similarly as in *It Happened One Night*, *Forrest Gump* also bears features of a road movie, providing space and opportunities for the characters to develop. Forrest, like Peter Warne, undergoes a spatial and historical journey, but the development of his character, unlike Peter's, seems static and unchanging.⁶ The classical narrative structure of both films, however, reveals Hollywood conventions of representation that classically rely on binary determination – a strategy which places emphasis on the representation of the male protagonist in opposition to his female counterpart, which is a strategy that has been intensively denounced in feminist film theory.

American Beauty, on the other hand, is a film that belongs to the Hollywood production that focused on family in order to explore the theme of repression and miscommunication among white middle class people in America, leading to interpersonal alienation (Sconce 436); these are themes that are usually characteristic of post-classical Hollywood. This type of cinema focuses on the constraints of suburban family life and consumer identity which shape the needs and demands of the contemporary American man. Proclaimed an “all-time classic” (Piazza and Kinn 302), *American Beauty* narrates a tale of a “beleaguered suburban male” (302) who explores the constraints to his contemporary quest for happiness.

American Beauty, more than any other film described in this analysis, features a hero who defines his pursuit of happiness through the pursuit for the restoration of his manliness, which he performs through activities that he believes will eventually lead him to success (taking possession of a teenage girl). He strives for the change through persistent physical activities, as when he takes up jogging only “to look good naked” (*American Beauty*, 00:46:31). His involvement in activities that shape his body (body building, jogging) is a direct reference to the vehement attempt to deny the nurturer in him. The nurturer was a new model of masculinity that appeared as a reaction to the second wave of feminism and “sensing justice in the feminist movement [. . .], attempted to foster a more caring, sharing, nurturing man” (Beynon 100). Lester’s focus on physical attractiveness reveals his attempt to identify with the men that relied on their muscularity and self-confidence (again, the Reaganite model of masculinity) in an effort to overcome the nurturer, who, with his supposedly weak nature, contributes to Lester’s crisis.

Moreover, Lester’s position in society typifies that of a disempowered middle-class white male, whose identity is highly affected by “the new corporatized, managerial late capitalist culture” (Hunter 72) which confines him to his office space. Alienation and management culture, prompted by the growth of capitalism and corporatization which transferred men to managerial positions and defined their work by their office space, is identified as one of the main contributors to the crisis of masculinity. Lester too identifies this threat and relates the loss of his location (i.e. the place or position of the American man in American society) to his estrangement from the physical – despite ostensibly blaming it on his wife’s self-assertion. Corporate culture, as another step in the process of workers’ disassociation from the product, significantly contributes to the 1990s crisis of masculinity (Beynon 86–89) by causing men’s indifference and the loss of their position in society. Lester confirms the significant implications for his manly ego by remarking that it is the managers of the company who determine one’s worthiness, highlighting the repressed anger of men lost in the ranks of management culture (Hunter 72).

Like *It’s a Wonderful Life*, *American Beauty* also explores the dichotomy of individual struggle *versus* community, adventure *versus* domesticity and success *versus* ordinary life, however in a more contemporary way, emphasizing the specific mundane concerns of a suburban family in the 1990s. The formulation of these concerns complies with the mode of cinematic practice that emerged among a generation of post-baby boomer filmmakers during the 1990s and “rel[ies] heavily

on irony, black humour, fatalism, relativism, and occasional nihilism” (Sconce 429). This form of cinema, as Jeffrey Sconce points out, reacts to mainstream Hollywood production by shifting its sensibility and tone to one that is full of “irony, postmodernism, and skepticism” (429), but also responds to the classical Hollywood narrative by re-embracing its narrative strategy. This form of cinema attempts to mark an explicit counter-distinction to mainstream Hollywood cinema by paradoxically drawing on its conventions. *American Beauty* and its success as a blockbuster Hollywood motion picture directly refer to the process of Hollywood negotiations when the picture adopts features (in this case the tone) that seemingly transgress mainstream conventions and conceal traditional conventions. *American Beauty* demonstrates the Hollywood tactic of repositioning its audience focus to reflect “the nation’s move toward an ironic sensibility on the so-called Generation X” (Sconce 431) and thus respond to contemporary demands for this type of cinema by adopting some of its formulas. With this approach, Hollywood attempts to appeal to more fragmented audiences along with its universal address, in order to maximize profits and sustain its success.

As has been briefly outlined, the example of the four discussed films, all of which make use of the narrative of the American dream and feature main male protagonists in pursuit of their happiness, representing the ordinary American man of his era, reveals the Hollywood tendency to re-embrace the classical narrative in order to revive American mythology as a collective experience that relies on optimism and hope; this is also demonstrated by the similar structures of these films. While *It Happened One Night* and *Forrest Gump* focus on the hero’s pursuit in relation to his (un)developed character in order to reinforce the mainstream formulation of the American man, *It’s a Wonderful Life* and *American Beauty* explore the pursuit of happiness within the family and with a focus on societal repression – by intensifying the traditional position of the father within the family, and thus the man in American community.

An interesting finding regarding the American dream narrative and its interconnectedness with specific models of the American man, who reflect their era, is that the heroes in these four films undergo a process of realization which discloses their true source of happiness. In the case of *Forrest Gump* the emphasis is on the revelation of his fatherhood and his subsequent recognition of his new position in society. In the remaining three cases, the act of realization is demonstrated in its literal form and defines the ultimate happiness for each hero. This shift is an important narrative device used for ideological purposes because it allows the existence of dichotomies in a story and it enables the hero’s internal conflict, which is crucial for narrative purposes. Thus, it is important to emphasize that the protagonists in the four films recognize their source of happiness only after a set of both intentional and unintentional performative acts that assert their male position. Unintentional performances occur in *It’s a Wonderful Life* when George Bailey asserts his moral authority and selfless character, winning him the community’s recognition, and in *Forrest Gump* when Forrest demonstrates his unshakeable innocence and morals caused by his handicap. Such an intentional performance occurs in *It Happened One*

Night when Peter Warne consciously asserts his masculine dominance through acts that identify his masculine pride and dignity and in *American Beauty* when Lester Burnham re-asserts the masculine authority which is the object of his pursuit.

Nevertheless, what best supports the proposal that the cinema of the 1990s re-exploits the narrative of the American dream by featuring model male identities as subjects who undergo the American collective experience of success (involving Foucault's notion of the pursuit of conformity)⁷ is the fact that Hollywood in the 1990s partially adopts non-mainstream features, which implies the strategy to adjust general trends in cultural (and gender) representations to Hollywood terminology in order to gain larger audiences – which by the 1990s had become more preference-specific, fragmented, and keen on alternative formulations of the mainstream.

Notes

¹ Thomas Elsaesser points out that Hollywood relies on the convention of recycling which sustains repetition; this is an important, audience-winning technique in popular entertainment (Elsaesser 275). Repetition and the Hollywood convention of recycling involve the viewers in “remembered pleasure and anticipated memory [. . .] and tie the cinema experience to anticipation and expectation” (275). One of the most effective techniques to achieve this outcome is a combination of a new – culturally and socially demanded – representation of the main protagonist with a culturally unique myth that associates the protagonist with a specifically American context that operates on the level of American collective memory – the American dream.

² The Oedipal trajectory is often employed by the classical narrative to create its ideological effects which motivate its function as a myth-maker. This trajectory also achieves a successful completion of romance, which, in classical Hollywood cinema, constitutes a heterosexual couple. For more on this see Susan Hayward's *Cinema Studies: Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 2000. 190–195.

³ Robert Ray explains that the reluctant hero stands for the American imagination which values self-determination and freedom from entanglements (Ray, “A Certain Tendency” 65). And despite the existence of the official hero, who is an embodiment of American belief in collective action, the character of the reluctant one was most appealing and attractive especially to 1930s–40s audiences. As Ray further emphasizes, “the reluctant hero story's tendency to minimize the official hero's role (by making him dependent on the outsider's intervention) suggested an imbalance basic to the American mythology: despite the existence of both heroes, the national ideology clearly preferred the outlaw” (66).

⁴ Ronald Reagan's rhetoric strongly associated masculinity with patriotism, military strength, capitalism, and moral righteousness. This rhetoric insisted on a masculine image that stood against the 1960s counterculture and feminist challenges to traditional patriarchal domestic relations, which, according to the Republicans' conservative ideology, undermined moral values and the stability of the family. During and after Reagan's presidency there was a growth in the appeal of Republican ideology implying Reagan's association of masculinity, patriotism, business, military prowess, and moral conservatism which powerfully pervaded American political and cultural life (Carroll 386).

⁵ For an in-depth analysis of *Forrest Gump* and his archetypal representation see my article “Forrest Gump, the Unmotivated Hero.” Martina Martausová. *Gender in the Media: Transnational Perspectives*. Košice: P. J. Šafárik University, 2013. 123–149.

⁶ Gump’s little character development is sustained by Forrest’s low IQ, which is a handicap that prevents him from abandoning his innocence and preserves his moral republican values and virtues instilled by his mother; these are characteristics that make him an archetype of the American man and win him the American dream.

⁷ Michel Foucault’s critique of conformity and conventions expressed in his work devoted to the conception of the power-knowledge relation develops the notion that constraints, conventions, and conformity create social codes that function as homogenizers of society, which through the practices of normalization reinforce social codes in order to limit alternatives that disrupt the homogeneity which is so important for the concentration of power. And even when alternatives occur, they occur within the limits of constraints and thus only re-assert conformity by means of a new form that puts forward another model of identity, again to homogenize society. For more on this see Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge* (1980).

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Index of film titles

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- 42nd Street* (1933, Lloyd Bacon)
- The Great Ziegfeld* (1936, Robert Z. Leonard)
- Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936, Frank Capra)
- You Can't Take It With You* (1936, Frank Capra)
- The Lost Weekend* (1945, Billy Wilder)
- The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946, William Wyler)
- The Band Wagon* (1953, Vincente Minnelli)
- Dances with Wolves* (1990, Kevin Costner)
- Unforgiven* (1992, Clint Eastwood)
- Schindler's List* (1993, Steven Spielberg)
- Braveheart* (1995, Mel Gibson)
- The English Patient* (1996, Anthony Minghella)
- Titanic* (1997, James Cameron)

Address:
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University
Faculty of Arts
Dpt. of British and American Studies
Petzvalova 4,
040 11 Košice
Slovakia
martina.martausova@upjs.sk