

THE 1950S IN AMERICA: MYTHS AND TRUTH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF LATIN AND NORTH AMERICAN STUDIES

MARCH 2022

Approval of the thesis:

THE 1950S IN AMERICA: MYTHS AND TRUTH

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ABSTRACT

THE 1950S IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: MYTHS AND TRUTH

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MSc., Latin and North American Studies Masters Program

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahar GÜRSEL

March 2022, 81 pages

The 1950s are remembered as the period when conformity was the most intense feeling in the United States in terms of the immense growth in the American economy, its post-war social effects and cultural development. During this period, while the daily lives of the citizens of the United States changed drastically; long-term conservative trends became more established and influential. The current developments of the period also affected the cultural climate by introducing new forms of entertainment, and by changing the old understandings of classical art. Although this period is often remembered with words such as "prosperity" and "progress", there are many perspectives that reflect the events of the period in question.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the daily life, social and cultural developments of the 1950s, and to show that the 1950s period was actually the beginning of the collapse of conformity. It also aspires to illuminate some often-neglected aspects by examining a number of television series, movies and music movements of the period.

Keywords: Conformity, United States, 1950s, Television, Cinema, Music

ÖZ

AMERİKA'DA 1950'LER: MİTLER VE GERÇEKLER

EROL, Nasiye Deniz

Yüksek Lisans, Latin ve Kuzey Amerika Çalışmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Bahar GÜRSEİ

Mart 2022, 81 sayfa

1950'ler Amerikan ekonomisindeki büyük büyüme, savaş sonrası toplumsal etkileri ve kültürel gelişmeler açısından Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde konformitenin en yoğun olarak yaşandığı dönem olarak hatırlanmaktadır. Bu dönemde, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri vatandaşlarının gündelik hayatları büyük ölçüde değişirken, uzun süreli muhafazakâr eğilimler daha da belirlenmiş ve etkili hale gelmiştir. Dönemin mevcut gelişmeleri, yeni eğlence türlerinin tanıtılması ve klasik sanat türlerine yönelik eski anlayışların değiştirilmesiyle kültürel iklimi de etkilemiştir. Bu dönem sıklıkla “refah” ve “gelişim” gibi kelimelerle hatırlansa da bahsedilen dönemin olaylarının öteki yüzünü yansıtan birçok farklı bakış açısı vardır.

Bu tezin hedefi 1950'lerin günlük hayatını, toplumsal ve kültürel gelişmelerini analiz etmek, 1950'ler döneminin aslında konformitenin çöküşünün başlangıcı olduğunu göstermek ve dönemin bazı televizyon dizileri, filmler ve müzik akımlarını inceleyerek çoğu kez ihmal edilen yönlerini aydınlatmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Konformite, ABD, 1950'ler, Televizyon, Sinema, Müzik

To My Dear Family

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest and most heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahar Gürsel for her patience, guidance, advice, criticism and time throughout the research.

I would also like to thank my dear parents Ayşen and Halil Erol for their belief in me and for always pushing me forward. Honestly, I can't thank you enough for everything you do for me, I love you so much, and I'm so lucky to have you as my parents.

Finally, I would like to thank my friend Ayşe Naz Ünver for her positive attitude, assistance, suggestions and comments.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope and Objectives

This thesis aims to discuss the fall of conformity in the United States by examining television, cinema and music from 1950 to 1960. During the examination, this study will explore the common themes, reigning trends and contemporary culture of that period in the United States, and primarily provide an analytic perspective on how the notion of conformity actually started to decline instead of to rise in the 1950s. The 1950s, namely “The Age of Conformity” of the United States witnessed so many cultural and social developments that have affected the country and its reputation in the world. This study will explain the changes and developments that occurred in the society and culture of the period by analyzing the effects and scope of the current trends like television, cinema as well as the musical trends in the United States during the 1950s.

Accepting the 1950s as the era when citizens of the United States experienced prosperity in its greatest form, and the period is referred to as the “The Age of Conformity”. In this thesis, the aim is to question this commonly accepted notion; it also endeavors to explain the usually overlooked pieces of history of the period while focusing on different influences about the mentioned era. It would be only fair to point that the even though the 1950s are mostly referred as “The Age of Conformity”, it was also the period which witnessed different ranges of instances which can be the manifestations of the decline of conformity in the indicated period.

Truly the 1950s witnessed the rising popularity of television, the appearance of different genres in music, noteworthy movies which altogether became the peak point

of American consumerism because commercials on televisions prompted people to buy more and more commodities for themselves and for their houses. The developments in the music industry resulted with the increase in purchase of records and movies which set new trends in social life and fashion, and propelled people to purchase goods to catch with the trends of period. Accordingly, this thesis aims to demonstrate the different developments that occurred in the entertainment industry that changed the trends and habits of the mentioned period.

This study's main focus is to analyze the notion of "Age of Conformity" in the 1950s while using primary sources (like episodes of TV series, movies and music) and secondary sources that concentrate on the subject. The main methods used in this document used are content and discourse analyses.

1.2 The Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter of the thesis is the *Introduction*, which includes the historical background of the concepts of conformity and consumerism in American culture, the methodology of the thesis and the literature review which includes the previous works that focus on the subject of conformity, and the cultural trends and daily life of the 1950s in the United States.

The second chapter is about *Television*, which puts forward the analysis of the social impact of television, and its role in decaying of the conformity in the 1950s by studying the TV programs and viewing patterns. This chapter argues how and why television shows of the era reinforced the American Suburban life and its family values. The chapter analyzes the process of the growing effect of television in the 1950s, and points out how idleness came with a part of this process, and how this idleness later became associated with the notion of conformity.

The third chapter, *Cinema* aspires to explore the underlying themes that shaped the movies of the era. This chapter showcases the examples which connected contemporary events and fears of the era with specific movies. Also, in this chapter,

while using specific scenes in certain movies; many important instances which helped challenging the notion of conformity in the 1950s will be referred to. It gives special attention to Nicholas Ray, Richard Brooks and Douglas Kirk, and focuses on how their movies projected the realities of the era.

The fourth chapter, *Music*, concentrates on older genres like Blues, Rhythm and Blues, Country as the newest genre of the period, and Rock and Roll. This chapter attempts to discover the links between music and social movements and the early signs of civil rights movements in the 1950s by especially focusing on Rock and Roll. Even though it was perceived as simply a rebellious genre, the chapter argues how Rock and Roll changed the social and cultural climate of the period by crossing racial and stereotypical lines.

The fifth and final chapter, *Conclusion*, brings together all the chapters by sorting out the final outcome of each part. This chapter includes the over-all analysis on how conformity started to lose its power in 1950s while re-examining the trends in television, cinema and music.

1.3 Historical Background

The beginning of American consumerism was connected to the economic growth witnessed after World War II. The roots of consumerism in the United States can be traced back to the earlier times in the 18th and 19th centuries with the growing spectrum of consumer goods. The economy of the United States became more and more commercial after the early 1800s with the widespread increase in the usage of money, and with the developments in social life and politics. Before the late 1800s, American economy was mostly based on agriculture, but by the end of 19th century this old system was changed with a new one and the desire for the “new” brought on the corporations, national banks and capitalism in the daily lives of the Americans.¹ The country became

¹ William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 7.

more democratic and the differences between social classes and genders grew, and this enabled the adaptation of consumer goods to the social and political needs of the era.² The growing impact of consumerism in the United States carried on in a steady pace until the middle of the 1920s, and by this period the roots of consumerism and a developed consumer society in the United States were established.³

Conformity is defined as the “behavior that follows the usual standards that are expected by a group or society.”⁴ American Conformity that is mentioned in this study is the common behaviors and habits Americans carried through the 1950s that were based on the established mentality and traditions. Conformity in American culture is usually known to start in the 1950s. It is mainly accepted that with the economic prosperity of post-war and the luxuries it brought, the citizens of the United States became conforming members of a silent nation. However, conformity in America found its roots in the 1930s with the “New Deal” Program, which included a series of national programs that were mostly related to economy. This enabled the state to intervene in the economy and social legislation, and dulled to criticism from public, especially from intellectuals.⁵ Although conformity which was created in this period helped people to be more compliant throughout the process of World War II, the outdated idea of conformity started to lose importance after the war. The 1950s in the United States witnessed profound changes in many areas of life, and the infamous

²Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (Routledge, 2006), 44.

³Stearns, *Consumerism in World History*, 48.

⁴“Conformity,” in *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/s%C3%B6z%C3%BCk/ingilizce/conformity>.

⁵Irving Howe, “This Age of Conformity,” in *A Voice Still Heard: Selected Essays of Irving Howe*, ed. Nina Howe (Yale University Press, 2014), 3-25.

conformity of the 1950s was mainly based on the social efforts that were based on finding the balance between the changes and traditional American way of life.⁶ The fears coming from the past generations, traditional American values and habits contributed to the conformity of the 1950s. The main reason for ideological conformity in the 1950s was society's need for predictability and reliability that enabled them to feel safe, and rooted in the American values and traditions.⁷ The fears regarding the new changes in every aspect of the lives of the citizens of the United States would soon be replaced with the new understandings and adaptation to change and the rise of individuality and non-conformist ideas.

1.4 Primary Sources

The primary sources that were used in the *Television* chapter are episodes of *I Love Lucy*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *The Honeymooners* and *Father Knows Best*. The episodes are accessible internet sites like Youtube, Dailymotion and the Internet Archive. The primary sources which were included in *Cinema* chapter are the movies that constitute the main discussion points of the chapter: *Johnny Guitar*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Blackboard Jungle* and *All That Heaven Allows*. These movies were accessed on various movie websites on the internet. And finally, the songs that are mentioned in *Music* chapter are also accessible on websites like Youtube and Spotify.

1.5 Review of Literature

In *Gale Researcher Guide for: Cold War Culture in the 1950s*, Anthony Miller points out that in the minds of many U.S. citizens the 1950s signify a “golden age” in the history of America. Although the decade witnessed many fears, the 1950s were the

⁶ Lloyd E. Ohlin, “Conformity in American Society Today,” *Social Work* 3, no. 2 (April 1958), 63.

⁷Ibid, 64.

blooming days of American culture in many aspects. The culture was shaped by what W. T. Lhamon described as the “deliberate speed” of transition in *Deliberate Speed: The Origins of a Cultural Style in the American 1950s*. Contrary to that viewpoint, in *The Fifties*, David Halberstam explains that the era was rather slow-paced, orderly and mundane, and most of the novelties of the period showed their effects a decade later.

As Nancy Hendricks’ work *Daily Life in 1950s America* indicates, the daily lives of the Americans were usually in an environment of confidence except the fears of McCarthyism, nuclear weapons and the communism threat. In *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, Kyle A. Cuordileone points out that the rise of private life brought worries about the effects of suburbanization, consumerism, materialism, leisure and self-indulgence. Everyday new appliances and gadgets were introduced to the lives of the Americans, but as Nancy Hendricks points out, this brought a criticism for materialism in nation. Conformity in peoples’ lives was also criticized widely in the 1950s. Belief in government as well as television was strong in the 1950s. Hendricks argues that since the Great Depression and the World War II atmosphere for the first time, Americans enjoyed vast amounts of income and the citizens were in a mentality which made them believe that this growth and enrichment would continue to soar while the population was around 150 million at the beginning of the 1950s, and by the end of the period it reached nearly 180 million.⁸This shows us that the citizens were in a much relieved period than they were in war era.

The visual style of the era was also improving. The fashion choices that were affected by the war were abolished. The beauty standards of the era changed. As Karal Ann Marling points out, in *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s*, women’s clothes were affected the most by this change; the thin waist, petticoats and peplums were everywhere. The image of the strong woman of World War II era had changed drastically to a more feminine and fragile woman.

⁸Nancy Hendricks, *Daily Life in 1950s America* (Greenwood, 2019), xix.

One of the most important themes of the decade was the atomic bomb and nuclear weapon fear. At first when the H-bombs were under the control of the United States, the citizens of America felt rather secure because of them. Yet after the Soviet Union started to experiment manufacturing atomic bomb, the fear of a nuclear war established its roots in the American society.

Nathan Abrams and Julie Hughes' *Containing America: Cultural Production and Consumption in 50s America*, reveals how certain products in the 1950s affected the era's consumption habits and the soul of consumerism. Manufacturing and selling of cars were another important part of the decade. Nancy Hendricks points out that the act of buying new cars nearly became a patriotic act. In 1956 the American interstate highway system was authorized, and that ended up with buying more cars and being able to travel more.⁹ Hendricks indicates other important events of the era like the release of Bill Haley's song "Rock Around the Clock" and opening of the Disneyland in Anaheim, California in 1955.¹⁰

Some of the remaining important events of the era comprised the invention of the vaccination for polio, and the admission of Hawaii and Alaska to the United States. As Richard Allan Schwartz points out in *the 1950s*, other novelties that emerged in the era were the oral contraception and the *Playboy* magazine. In Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*, it is argued that the sexuality was in a political and social containment, and he argues that this could be observed from many aspects of the cultural changes in the cultural and political climate of the era.

In *Between Fear and Hope: Globalization and Race in the United States*, Andrew L. Barlow mentions that racial issues constituted a significant concern for the world, and the United States was harshly criticized for the absence of basic human

⁹Ibid, 204.

¹⁰ Ibid,xxxiv-xxxv.

rights in the post-Cold War era. Civil rights issues became much more visible in the 1950s. Nancy Hendricks notes that in 1954 racial segregation in American public schools was found unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. In 1955 Rosa Parks' arrest for not giving her seat to a white man started boycotts, and gave way to protesting segregation moves with non-violent actions.

Television, cinema and music had their fair shares of importance in this era. As it is observed in Martin Halliwell's *American Culture in the 1950s* there was a strong advancement in the music and television industry. Even though these branches gathered the main attraction, radio and cinema were still among the major sources of entertainment for American people.

1.5.1 Television

The growth in sales of TV sets started around the late 1940s and increased in the 1950s and Halliwell's study indicates that nearly 90% of the homes in United States had TV sets by the late 1950s.¹¹ This was initially about the marketing of TV sets as a technology affordable by everyone. In *Bad Old Days: The Myth of the 1950s*, Alan J. Levine points out that this growth in purchasing of TV sets caused a steady decline in reading. The early 1950s were regarded as the golden age of the TV.

As Anna McCarthy's work, *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America* shows, television was used to shape citizens' habits, morale and mental development. The television also was often portrayed as a distraction from serious issues and subjects. TV programs did not include unpleasant and serious subjects, and the HUAC investigations¹² played a big part in this. Halliwell points out that TV shows

¹¹Martin Halliwell, *American Culture in the 1950s* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 147.

¹²HUAC investigations are a series of investigations on communist activity allegations in USA run by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) during Cold War period.

were mainly consisted of quiz shows, light entertainment and comedy which dominated family viewing. By the mid-1950s the most popular programs were comedies and quiz shows. The most popular quiz shows were *Take It or Leave It*, *The \$64,000 Question*, *Twenty-One* and *Dotto*. Towards the late 1950s the quiz show scandal broke out and the genre lost its popularity. TV comedies of the period consisted of stock characters and certain social types. Like housewives, working husbands, naughty kids. Every conflict in comedies always ended with the restoration of domestic order.

Alan J. Levine argues that even though comedy shows of the decade were not educational or critical of the period, viewers did not watch or expect these shows to be any other than funny. The famous comedy shows of the period were *I Love Lucy*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Our Miss Brooks* and *Father Knows Best*. Ethan Thompson's work, *Parody and Taste in Postwar American Television Culture* analyzes the relationship between parody and the television, as the new medium became an important household in the 1950s. Halliwell points out that TV programs flattened the region, ethnic and class differences to avoid befouling certain groups. The development of generic shows became important and TV viewers were seen as similar to each other and sharing the same tastes.

In *What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s*, Marsha F. Cassidy points out that television played an important role in women's lives in the 1950s. Shows like *The Kate Smith Hour*, *Home*, *Queen for a Day*, *Strike It Rich*, *It Could Be You*, *Art Linkletter's House Party*, *Matinee Theater*, *Glamour Girl*, *The Garry Moore Show* and *Arthur Godfrey Time* targeted especially female viewers, and tried to establish a "leisure time" for women to drop the housework and watch the TV instead.

1.5.2 Cinema

As Murray Pomerance's work, *American Cinema of the 1950s: Themes and Variations* indicates, rapid technological changes in the era affected culture and also cinema. The biggest competition of the era was between the television and movies.

After the war, especially in the mid-1940s, cinema lived its golden times. The emergence of television caused many people to change their habit of going to the cinema with watching TV at home. Halliwell points out that this paved the way for new technologies in cinema like cinemascope, vistavision, 3D movies, perspecta sound, smell-o-vision and aromarama. These technologies enabled cinema going to be a different experience than watching TV at home. The film making process followed certain formulas and generic movie production was apparent, but movies were better than TV programs in questioning social stereotypes since they included more diversity and complexity compared to the television shows. Also, the characters and story lines were more various.

A well-known theme of the movies of the decade was the nuclear war awareness. In *It Came From the 1950s!: Popular Culture, Popular Anxieties*, Kim Newman points out that this was especially apparent in science fiction movies of the era, and it usually manifested itself as radioactive monsters. Science fiction movies of the 1950s usually belonged to the B genre. The first example of radioactive monster movies is *The Lost Continent (1951)* by Samuel Newfield. Other examples of these movies include *Mr. Drake's Duck (1951)*, *The Atomic Kid (1954)*, *Timeslip (1955)*, *The Gamma People (1956)*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man (1956)*, *The Amazing Colossal Man (1957)*, and *From Hell It Came (1957)*. Newman suggests that every monster movie had subtexts like the hydrogen bomb or the Vietnam War.

The famous and distinctive directors of the decade were Douglas Sirk, Alfred Hitchcock and Nicholas Ray. Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause (1955)*, *In a Lonely Place (1950)*, *On Dangerous Ground (1952)*, *Johnny Guitar (1954)*, and *Bigger Than Life (1956)*; Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train (1951)*, *Dial M for Murder (1953)*, *Rear Window (1954)*, *Vertigo (1958)*, *North by Northwest (1959)* and Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows (1955)*, *Written on the Wind (1956)* and *Imitation of Life (1959)* were the most critically acclaimed movies of the decade. These movies shaped the fabric of cinema in the 1950s, and are still known among the most important movies of all time. The

scenarios and shooting techniques were revolutionary, and the subjects were interwoven with the era.

Alan Nadel's work, *Demographic Angst: Cultural Narratives and American Films of the 1950s*, examines the 1950s cultural upheaval by analyzing the most known movies of the period. He examines the correlation between cultural narratives and the movies of the era. Halliwell suggests that the movies of the decade usually included certain roles made especially for women who encouraged family life and motherhood. Alan J. Levine, on the other hand, argues that the movie and entertainment industry of the era were far from brainwashing women to have children and value family life. On the contrary, movies included strong female leading characters. Movies like *All About Eve* (1950), *The Big Heat* (1953), *Johnny Guitar* (1954), *Witness for the Prosecution* (1958) can be shown as examples to this.

1.5.3 Music

Music was one of the main branches of entertainment in the 1950s. American music was usually created as between genres and transcended racial stereotypes of the period. The older genres of the period were Rhythm and Blues, Country and Blues. William Young and Nancy Young's work, *the 1950s*, shows that folk music was also popular in the 1950s. As Halliwell's work points out that the main genre of the period was Rock and Roll.

Halliwell suggests that Rock and Roll had faced much criticism at the beginning. In *That Old-Time Rock & Roll: A Chronicle of an Era, 1954-1963*, Richard Aquila points out that Rock and Roll was the music of rebellion for teenagers and a recipe for complexity for grown-ups. In *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War*, George Lipsitz points out that the youth of the 1950s made the music of the era that reflected and crossed class and racial lines, and posed important challenges to the traditional American values.

CHAPTER 2

TELEVISION

One of the most influential items of the 1950s was television. The era was shaped greatly by television sets; in fact, it was known as the Golden Age of television. Women were the number one customers of televisions, and television programs usually targeted to make them stay at home as housewives and mothers. With the economic boom of postwar America, many of the houses in America had TV sets. The limited programming developed by the demand. Millions of people by the end of the era had television. Just in 1950, 7 million television sets were sold.¹³ By the mid-decade, television presented itself as a technology that was affordable for everyone. With the growing attention to television programs, the biggest battle of the cultural currents in America in the 1950s occurred between cinema and television.

As Martin Halliwell points out “television had a dramatic impact in its challenge to cinema-going, as well as a negative effect on the attendance of live events, the sale of newspapers and magazines, and the use of lending libraries.”¹⁴ The most important networks of the era were Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and The American Broadcasting Company (ABC), and over 80 per cent of the broadcast was live.¹⁵ The most known programs and shows of the era were; *I Love Lucy* (1951), *The Donna Reed Show* (1958), *Father Knows Best*

¹³Halliwell, *American Culture*, 147.

¹⁴*Ibid.*,151.

¹⁵*Ibid.*,153

(1952), *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952), *Your Show of Shows* (1950), *Life of Riley* (1953), *Leave It to Beaver* (1957) and *The Honeymooners* (1955). The chapter will focus on some of these programs, and provide details about their importance in the era.

The idea of “American” family and individualism was re-established with the sitcoms and children’s shows like *Leave It to Beaver*. Programs like *The Mickey Mouse Club* that were designed only for children also became popular as an outcome of the baby boom. Postwar relief in America caused a population growth between 1946 and 1964. The period between 1946 and 1964 is known with the baby boom which reached its peak in 1957 with 4.3 million births.¹⁶ In this period many people started to get married and establish families. With the baby boom a new market was open and the television channels also started to broadcast shows and programs for children.

2.1 I Love Lucy

I Love Lucy was the most popular comedy series of the 1950s. With the leading female actress Lucille Ball and her on and off-screen husband Desi Arnaz the show made its mark on history of television. It started in 1951 as a sitcom, the series ran on CBS, and had 180 episodes and total of 6 seasons and ended in 1957. The series focused on the lives of Lucille and Rick Ricardo, a middle-class family and their best friends. The show is still popular in present time because it portrays a good presentation of the 1950s. It was one of the first American programs screened abroad, and translated into different languages. It was shot on 35mm film with an audience and was the first scripted TV show. The show follows the lives of a middle-class couple, a housewife Lucille Ricardo and her singer husband Rick Ricardo and their neighbors Fred and

¹⁶ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, *The Baby Boom Cohort In The United States: 2012 to 2060*, Current Population Reports (United States Census Bureau, 2014), <https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p25-1141.pdf>.

Ethel Mertz in New York City. The series also included their son Rick Ricardo Jr. in the second season.¹⁷

Lucy Ricardo is portrayed as an innocent woman with a passion for show business. However, she lacks talent to be successful in any area. The series follows Lucy and her husband as they get into new troubles every episode. Even if she was the lead, there was not much of information on Lucille Ball's life before the show. The character of Lucy contains many traits that are known within the scope of the female perception of the era; materialistic, spending excessive amounts of money, not being able to hold on to jobs and care about finances. Another important part of Lucy's character was that she was a true housewife and dedicative mother. Depicting many women's lives of the era, Lucy remained at home, did the housework and took care of her child while her husband was at work.¹⁸ Lucy often tried to get into different jobs, but she was portrayed as unable to work in these jobs.¹⁹ Because she was portrayed as a clumsy and careless person throughout the whole series.

I Love Lucy became immensely popular because of many different reasons. First of all, the show was recorded on 35 mm film, and this meant better quality and techniques for film shooting but more important than that *I Love Lucy* gave a piece of American Dream to the audience. Like the other sitcoms of the era, it included specific gender roles, but at the same time it defied them in a way. Lucy's inaptitude in different jobs emphasized her place at home, but she was not a perfect homemaker either. She wanted to achieve fame and money but she was bound by her house and family. Her interracial marriage was also another appeal the show had. The character of Ricardo presented the

¹⁷"Radio: Birth of a Memo," *Time Magazine*, accessed February 20, 2021, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,817789-1,00.html>.

¹⁸Susan M. Carini, "Love's Labors Almost Lost: Managing Crisis during the Reign of 'I Love Lucy,'" *Cinema Journal* 43, no. 1 (2003), 47.

¹⁹Lori Landay, "Millions 'Love Lucy': Commodification and the Lucy Phenomenon," *NWSA Journal* 11, no. 2 (1999), 27.

Latin minority in the United States. And it was really important that a Cuban took place in such a successful series. This signifies that the series were challenging conformity by placing a main character that belongs to a minority in the United States. *I Love Lucy* is added to this study because it contains various elements that challenges conformity. As indicated above, Ricky Ricardo is a Cuban which means a minority in United States of American found a representation in a television series and this series also included an interracial marriage, these points were unusual instances that contradicted with conformity and social norms of the era.²⁰ The character of Lucy as a loving but also free-spirited and highly clumsy housewife is a unique perspective for 1950s' television. On the other hand, the series also included the intense materialistic view of the 1950s. Lucy's excessive spending found relatable to many women and men in the middle class, and it was the essence of 1950s. The postwar monetary boom enabled people to buy more and the middle class to soar. Ricardo and Lucy were found relatable by the audience because they were the middle-class neighbors they could easily found down the street. Ricky Ricardo, portrayed by Desi Arnaz, was a Cuban-American male with a singing career in a band. There is not too much information about his life before the show, as with the character of Lucy. Lucy is generally portrayed with her best friend and neighbor Ethel Mertz. Ethel was a model from New Mexico and a vaudevillian. She often joins Ricky in his club performances because she can dance and sing. Her husband, Fred Mertz was a soldier in World War I. He is extremely careful on monetary matters, and is a very serious person. He is also a vaudevillian, and sings and dances with his wife Ethel.

In one episode titled "Pioneer Women"²¹, Lucy and Ethel apply for the Society Matrons League, which was a famous group of rich and established women of the

²⁰David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (Ballentine Books, 1993), 196.

²¹"Pioneer Women," *I Love Lucy* (CBS), accessed January 20, 2021, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7z0oa1>.

society, and Lucy asks Ricky for an automatic dishwasher. Ricky and Fred complain about how spoiled modern women are. So, Lucy and Ethel make a bet with Ricky and Fred on who would survive without modern appliances. They turn back to year 1900, and try to live without every day conveniences. In the episode, Lucy and Ethel churn butter from scratch and bake bread. They use too many yeast, so the bread turns out to be enormous. During this bet, two women from the Society Matrons League come to visit Lucy and Ricky's house with a surprise inspection. Seeing Lucy, Ethel, Ricky and Fred in old clothes they become appalled because they simply seem very outdated and poor. Ricky makes up a lie and says that they are preparing for a show night at the club where he is working. Hearing Ricky is working in a club; the ladies of the Society Matrons League hesitate to let Lucy and Ethel in the society because the main characteristic of the members of the Society Matrons League is their wealth. Lucy gets angry and explains that she and her friends do not need the Society Matrons League, and shows the ladies off. Ricky calls of the bet and the episode ends with the restoration of order. This episode is an important instance which demonstrates the norms that were emphasized by the society, in this case the Society Matrons League, and Lucy and Ricky's refusal to conform to these norms. Ricky and Fred might complain about the spending habits of Lucy and Ethel very often but especially in this episode, Lucy and Ethel portrays women that were not affected the needs and pressures of them. They are not bound by and challenge conformity and the materialistic views of the Society Matrons League and the 1950s.

In another episode called "Lucy Wants New Furniture"²², Lucy complains Ricky about old furniture at the house, she mentions a new couch and a coffee table she really liked, but Ricky rejects her ideas completely and closes the argument. After Ricky leaves the house, Lucy confesses her neighbor Ethel that she has already bought the couch and the coffee table. Afraid of Ricky's reaction, the two hides the furniture in

²² "Lucy Wants New Furniture," I Love Lucy (CBS), accessed September 10, 2021, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x809xua>.

kitchen which blocks the kitchen door from inside. When Ethel asks about the old furniture to install them back to living room Lucy confesses that she has sold the old couch and coffee table. Lucy mentions that she will prepare the dinner in living room with the table set in the place of old couch, which enables Ricky to not notice the missing furniture.

At the dinner Ricky asks for things like butter and steak knife, having blocked the kitchen door from inside, Lucy has to make up reasons to go to Ethel and Fred's house to get through her kitchen to pick up Ricky's butter and knife. But when she is away Ricky needs salt, and tries to enter to the kitchen but sees the new furniture. Ricky turns back to table before Lucy comes back and when she does he does not give away that he knows the truth right away, instead he asks Lucy to bring salt and when she leaves the house to get to their kitchen from Ethel and Fred's house, Ricky gets in to the kitchen from the little window between the living room and kitchen, and hides behind the door and scares Lucy out when she gets in to the kitchen for salt. After all of this, Ricky accepts paying for furniture with the condition to keep them in his Club until Lucy pays the exact price of the furniture to him. He tells Lucy to be more careful with her spending. Lucy agrees on these terms. On the next day when Ricky comes to breakfast, Lucy serves him little portions of orange juice, bacon and eggs, and she explains that she does this to be more careful with her spending. This comeback from Lucy to Ricky's reaction on her spending is an important instance in 1950s television because Lucy challenges Ricky's authority on her spending with her wit while serving small portions of breakfast.

After this the couple make another make another deal, this time Lucy agrees to not buying a new dress and to not going to beauty parlor for a special night in Ricky's Club. She decides to make her own perm and her own dress. On the following scenes we see Lucy's lack of experience in tasks like hair making and sewing. This is a good example of instances where *I Love Lucy* challenges the norms pressured on women by putting Lucy's clumsiness on very "womanly" tasks regarding beauty. Lucy is a strong

example of an anti-housewife that challenges the perfect housewife stereotype of the 1950s.

2.2 The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet

The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet is a sitcom that aired on ABC for 14 years. The show first came to the screens in October 1952, and ended in April 1962. It was the first show in America that broadcasted for over 10 years. The show followed the life of a real-life family, the Nelsons. The program was first broadcasted on radio, and in 1952 was transferred to television and continued to run in both television and radio. The show starred Harriet Nelson, Ozzie Nelson, Ricky Nelson, David Nelson and Don DeFore. *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*'s interior shots were shot in Hollywood Center Studios, and the exteriors were shot at the family's real-life house. Even though the show aimed to be realistic, at the beginning of every episode it was noted that the characters were enacted by the Nelson family, so the adventures were not real. The real members of the Nelson family were enacting scenes in scenarios written by writers.

Ozzie and Harriet and their two sons David and Ricky epitomized the ideal nuclear family without any major worries: they were reasonably affluent, lived in a white neighborhood, Harriet was an ultra-organized housewife, and Ozzie had enough free time to spend his days with their two clean-cut boys (in fact, it was hard to work out what Ozzie did for a living).²³

David and Rick Nelson grew up as the series continued and when the boys got married, their spouses Kristin and June joined the show. With the changing climate of the 1960s, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* became a show that represented the values of the 1950s like suburban life, ideal middle-class family. So, as the time passed, the series was regarded as a part of a past era. The ratings fell down hard especially in the 1963-1964 seasons. The show was transitioned from black and white to color in the

²³ Halliwell, *American Culture*, 160-161.

last season. It is still the longest running live action sitcom in America.²⁴ In an episode titled “Over Protection”²⁵, Ozzie confronts Harriet on how much protective she is to Ricky. Harriet first does not accept this but later understands that she really is very over protective, and starts to try to become more confident with Ricky. Later in the episode Ricky receives a letter from a friend calling him over to his house in another city which is 150 miles away. Harriet, with her new confidence in Ricky, gives her permission to him immediately, but this time Ozzie hesitates and worries that it is too far away. Later with some thinking he also gives his permission to Ricky. They leave the house and go to station together, and Ozzie and Harriet see Ricky off to his friend and go back home. At home couple receives a telegram saying Ricky is well and arrived to his destination, but the telegram is not from Ricky but from David.

It is later understood that Ozzie has sent David behind Ricky to make sure he is safe and sound. The episode ends with Ricky’s return. This episode portrays good examples of family values of the 1950s. Harriet is portrayed as the devoted mother, who worries about her son even though he is not very young anymore, Ozzie’s commentaries about Harriet’s over protection supports the idea of logical and cold-blooded man and emotional and motherly woman figures of the 1950s. However, at the end of the episode when audience finds out Ozzie sent David after Ricky to watch over him, we see an instance of a role-switch where Harriet’s overly protective and motherly instincts are passed to Ozzie. This instance challenges some familial roles emphasized in the 1950s by showing feelings like over protection are not specific to women or mothers, men as fathers can feel the same “womanly” instincts.

²⁴“David Nelson, Last Surviving Member of Ozzie and Harriet Family, Dies at 74,” TV Guide, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://www.tvguide.com/news/david-nelson-dies-1027576/>.

²⁵“OverProtection,” *The Adventures of OzzieandHarriet* (ABC), accessed February 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrZd5bx17dw>.

In another episode called “Tuba Incident”²⁶, at the breakfast table Ozzie and Harriet discuss a newspaper article about a woman who is divorcing her husband because he is always playing tuba and going to bed early. Ozzie believes the woman is unreasonable and divorce is too much of a harsh decision for a situation like this, and Harriet believes that the woman is right and her husband is really inconsiderate. Ozzie and Harriet end their discussion but Ozzie feels like he is not in control of their relationship and this bothers him. In a later scene in kitchen while Ozzie and Harriet are talking about the dinner, Ozzie disagrees with the menu Harriet has prepared which includes meatloaf, chocolate cake and baked potatoes, and indicates that he wants pot roast, apple pie and mashed potatoes. He later accepts his defeat by calling Harriet “master” and accepts Harriet’s menu. After that scene, Harriet has a conversation with David and she learns that “bossy” girls are not nice, and David appreciates his mom for always agreeing with his dad. This affects Harriet and with the aim of being a “good wife” she bakes apple pie and mashed potatoes for Ozzie. Meanwhile Ozzie has a conversation with their neighbor Thorny and tells him about the issue between him and Harriet, and Thorny says:

The way I figured, you’re just a little too easy-going. You gotta be a little more masterful women like men to get a little tough with them once in a while... You can’t beat the mother nature and this is the way she’s got it planned out. Man is supposed to be the dominating force, the masterful one, the head of a household and believe me Oz this is the way that women like it, too. They don’t wanna boss their husbands around, they like a strong, forceful man. They are the ones who would like to be dominated. Now listen to me Oz, you’ve got to go back to the house and assert your right, assert yourself. Show Harriet that you’re the boss and believe me she will love you for it.²⁷

²⁶ “Tuba Incident,” The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (ABC), accessed January 22, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNW1G4Tr4Ug&ab_channel=CLASSICCOMEDYCHANNEL.

²⁷ Tuba Incident,” The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (ABC), accessed January 22, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNW1G4Tr4Ug&ab_channel=CLASSICCOMEDYCHANNEL.

With Thorny's advice Ozzie returns home and tries to fit into the role of the "master of the house" while hesitating at the same time because in his mind the real master is Harriet. However, because she is trying to be good wife, Harriet does not object Ozzie's attitudes, tells Ozzie to rest in couch, and goes to kitchen to get the dinner ready and she has another conversation with David. David mentions the girl he likes and he says he does not mind her being bossy because he likes her so much. After this revelation Harriet goes back to living room wakes Ozzie up to help her in the kitchen, and the natural state of Nelson house is established once more.

This scene is important because it defies the gender roles of the era by simply showing that the real power is in the hands of the woman. Ozzie's nervous talks when it comes to taking charge of the house is a good example of the challenging of the male authority and reject conforming to the gender roles. Even though the episode has some dialogues about how men are the master of the house throughout the episode the female dominance is the real message which is given to the audience. Although *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* portrayed the perfect American suburban family by portraying imaginary life of a real family, the real Nelson family was far from perfect. The perfect father figure Ozzie Nelson was a savvy business man in real life that did not let his sons to finish school just to keep them playing their roles in TV; Harriet Nelson, on the other hand, was a very lively and social woman in comparison to her TV character. Her personality did not consist of just being a good wife and mother and little Ricky was shackled by his TV characters clean-cut American boy image throughout his music career even after the end of the series.²⁸ This shows that even though a perfect and stable family image was emphasized on TV by the Nelsons and

²⁸ Bernard Weinraub, "Dousing the Glow Of TV's First Family; Time for the Truth About Ozzie and Harriet," *The New York Times*, accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/18/arts/dousing-the-glow-of-tv-s-first-family-time-for-the-truth-about-ozzie-and-harriet.html>.

many other sitcoms, the realities of 1950s family life were far from these fairytales. Even though TV series like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* tried to push on an imaginary perfection and the idea of conformity to the audience, the truth of the American families of the 1950s was far from being perfect.

Compared to *I Love Lucy*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* is at more tune with the established mentalities of the 1950s. The family life portrayed in *I Love Lucy* is not as much relatable as it is in *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* for the 1950s. Because *I Love Lucy* contains an interracial marriage, a Cuban character and a clumsy housewife, which are rare instances in 1950s television. *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, however, includes a White middle-class family in suburbs with a strong father figure, skilled housewife and clean-cut American teens, which was the common theme in 1950s sitcoms.

Including the dominant male figure, obedient and intellectual homemaker and near to perfect children, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* was another good example of middle-class American family. Although Ozzie was mostly in the house and not at work, he was the man of the house. Harriet can always be found in the kitchen and the worst problem the children had was how to find a date.²⁹ The average middle-class family in America found its reflection in *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

2.3 Leave It to Beaver

Leave it to Beaver is an American sitcom about a boy's, Theodore Cleaver's (The Beaver) adventures, his family life and school life. The show also includes Theodore's parents Ward and June Cleaver. Again, in this show, the Cleavers portray the ultimate suburban family, and follow Beaver as he gets into trouble and faces his parents as the consequence. The series has a total of 232 episodes. It started in October 1957 on CBS, and by the second season moved to ABC. The show ended in 1963.

²⁹ Weinraub, "Dousing the Glow Of TV's First Family".

Leave it to Beaver did not win any awards, but it was on *Time Magazine*'s "All-TIME 100 TV Shows" list.³⁰ This indicates that the series had an important attention from the audiences.

In one episode titled "Beaver on TV"³¹, Beaver earns a chance to appear on a TV show called *Teen Age Forum*, and to represent his school. His family and school friends are very happy for him, and cheer him up for being on TV. When Beaver arrives at the studio he goes out to get water, and in this instance the producer announces that the show will not be live but taped, so they will be on TV in the following week. Beaver does not hear, this so when he goes back to school he is humiliated by his friends for being a liar. Embarrassed and confused he leaves school and does not attend the classes. His teacher reaches out to his family to tell them he is missing. Ward Cleaver later finds out that the show would be taped and screened in the following week, and understands why Beaver has run away. Beaver later turns back home, and finds out that show will be taped and he really has not lied. By the end of the episode, his father and Beaver make a small talk about how important it is to tell the truth even no one believes in you. This gives a good example of mindset of the 1950s. The society's pressures on individuals to conform to the norms like morality and honesty. The strong emphasis on being honest is another form of fear of corruption in the society which was another theme in the 1950s. This fear gave birth to the need of balance and certainty which gave way to the notion of conformity.

³⁰James Poniewozik, "All-TIME 100 TV Shows," *Time* (Time), accessed January 25, 2022, <https://time.com/collection/all-time-100-tv-shows/>.

³¹ "Beaver on TV," *Leave It to Beaver* (ABC), accessed May 6, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/leave.it.to.beaver.complete.series/Season+6/Leave+It+To+Beaver+-+S06E22+-+Beaver+On+TV.avi>.

In another episode called “Party Invitation”³², Beaver gets an invitation to a birthday party from a girl that likes him, but he hesitates to go to the party after he calls his friends and learns that he is the only boy invited to the party. After getting humiliated by his friends in the class, Beaver decides that he will not be going to the party. Even after his parents’ pressures with the help of his brother, he tricks his friend’s parents about being sick and not being able to go to the party. But after Beaver and his brother get caught by their father, Beaver goes to the party against his will. Later, when it is understood that it was an all-girls party, Beaver’s parents feel bad for making him go to the party.

This episode contains a few elements that demonstrate the mindset of the 1950s. First of all, Beaver’s nervousness about being the only boy in an all-girls party stems from his fears of being ridiculed by his friends. This shows the rejection of female influences by the male gaze. The way Beaver’s parents feel bad when they learn that Beaver is the only boy in the party is another instance of the society’s pressures on separating gender roles and their social spaces. At the party scene, when Beaver hides from the girls, he finds himself in his friend’s father’s room. This man gives Beaver a small lecture on how “boring” female gatherings can be, and finds a way to cheer Beaver up by showing him his gun collection. This is another example of forcing gender roles on younger people through the medium of TV; also, it is an important detail considering the masculine American culture. After Beaver goes back home happy, his father gets nervous because he finds it “disturbing” for his son to be coming back happy from a party filled with girls. He hints being scared of Beaver’s strangeness which indicates his fear of his son being happy with female friends which is another example of forcing gender roles on kids. The formula of a happy life is presented as including education, job and family life in *Leave It to Beaver*. Beaver and his brother

³²“Party Invitation,” *Leave It to Beaver* (CBS), accessed January 25, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/leave.it.to.beaver.complete.series/Season+1/Leave+It+To+Beaver+-+S01E15+-+Party+Invitation.avi>.

are both enrolled in public schools, and are encouraged to continue college to be prepared for the future. Since their parents have attended college, both children are expected to do the same because happy life includes college education. The family is from the middle class, but the parents encourage Beaver and his brother to respect every one. This signifies the show's emphasis on conforming the morality standards of the period. The show had good ratings, but it was never placed in Nielsen top 30 ratings.³³ *Leave It to Beaver* usually received good critics, and was generally regarded as a warm and wise children's show.

2.4 The Honeymooners

The Honeymooners is an American sitcom from the 1950s. The show made its debut in October 1951 on CBS. The show follows the lives of Ralph Kramden and his wife Alice, and his best friend Ed Norton. Most of the episodes include Ralph's everyday dilemmas and his answers to those dilemmas in a funny tone. The series also includes social issues like women's rights, and had good ratings at the beginning having hard competition from rival TV stations.³⁴ With time, the ratings fell and show was ended after 39 episodes in 1956. The show is also important because it is one of the first series to include a working-class family. Many of the episodes of the series takes place in Kramden family's house. It is a small, scarcely furnished apartment with two rooms. The series usually focuses on Ralph's and his best friend Ed's adventures, but Alice Kramden also plays an important role. Every episode tells a different story that usually does not continue with the following episode. *The Honeymooners* includes well known sitcom formulas like adventures about getting rich easily, comical failures, etc.

³³ Nielsen ratings is an audience measuring system that is run by Nielsen Media Research.

³⁴Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows* (Ballantine Books, 2003),464.

Ralph Kramden is portrayed by Jackie Gleason. Ralph Kramden is a bus driver and portrayed as a working-class man with a life full of financial difficulties and struggles, who desires and works for a better life for his family. He and his best friend, Ed Norton, try to get rich easily many times, but usually fail. Ralph is usually a hot-tempered man, using insults and threats often. Ralph loves playing pool and bowling, and his family is rarely mentioned. Alice Kramden is played by Audrey Meadows. She is Ralph Kramden's wife. She is portrayed as a patient but quick-witted woman. She usually is insulted by Ralph but answers back with a sharp tongue, and gives Ralph advices that he often ignores. She works as a secretary for a while. Her family is often mentioned, and her mother can be seen in some episodes. Ed Norton is portrayed by Art Carney. Norton is a sewer worker in New York City. He is much nicer, but still uses insulting words towards Ralph. He usually joins Ralph's adventures. His naivety usually makes him the target of Ralph's insults and anger. Even Ed is more educated and well-mannered than Ralph, yet he usually lets him take the lead. He also likes playing pool and bowling. Thelma Norton is portrayed by Joyce Randolph; she is Ed Norton's wife and best friend of Alice. She was not in every episode of the series, so her character is not very developed.

In one specific episode titled "Mind Your Own Business"³⁵, Ralph causes Ed to lose his job in sewers with an advice he has given. Hence Ed and Thelma start to go through a rough patch. Ralph and Alice help them out in these hard times. Finally, Ed finds a job as a door to door salesman, but he is not very successful at it. Still he and Thelma decide to tell Ralph and Alice that Ed has done fine at his new job and earned \$40 in his first day, so they do not have to worry about Ed anymore. Hearing this, Ralph decides to start being a salesman as well, but he cannot leave his steady job. At the end of the episode, Ed gets his old job back, and confesses that he has been a lousy

³⁵ "Mind Your Own Business," *The Honeymooners* (CBS), accessed September 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yykFKYkipr4>.

salesman. This episode portrays a good insight into the lives of working-class families in the 1950s. The episode is different from other episodes of other sitcoms because, instead of portraying an ideal family life, the series portrays the difficulties of professional life and financial struggles. In another episode titled “Brother Ralph”³⁶, Ralph gets temporarily laid off because of a suggestion he has made at work. When it becomes clear that they will not be able to pay their bills and simply afford living, Alice makes the suggestion to work until Ralph gets his job back. Ralph rejects the idea fervently, and they argue for a while but because their financial status is very bad Ralph accepts Alice’s offer and Alice starts to work as a secretary. After this, the next scene starts with Ralph in an apron preparing supper for Alice, and then Alice comes home. This scene displays a very apparent switch in gender roles. Alice comes home tired, asks Ralph for a neck massage and complains about the food Ralph has prepared. Her comments wound Ralph, and he starts to complain about his allowance, which is given by Alice, not being enough for preparing better food. He asks to go out to go to the movies, but Alice refuses because she is tired. He complains about being alone in the house all day and doing all the work, just like Alice was doing before. Alice refuses again, and tells Ralph that she has to work and her boss will come to pick her up any minute. She also mentions that she has not told her boss that she is married because they only hire single women. When her boss comes, Ralph pretends to be Alice’s brother. Yet realizing that Alice’s boss is a very good-looking man who is charmed by her, Ralph convinces Alice’s boss to stay and work from house. Alice’s boss agrees, and after a couple of scenes that show Ralph’s jealousy, a co-worker of Ralph comes to visit and gives the news of his return to his job. Overjoyed, Ralph kicks out Alice’s boss from the house. This episode contains a great example of switching gender roles. However, it is apparent that Ralph feels uncomfortable and insecure when he is taking

³⁶ “Brother Ralph,” *The Honeymooners* (CBS), accessed January 25, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/FlashbackComedyVideos/videos/the-honeymooners-season-1-episode-1-brother-ralph/1380029248719750/>.

of the chores of the house. Still, it is a good instance that portrays the daily struggle of housewives through the eyes of a very masculine character.

The Honeymooners was the epitome of the working-class man and family of the postwar era, and because of this it appealed to many families in America. Since many of the 1950s sitcoms included middle class family image, the perfect and idyllic family life the working-class people would not much relate to these shows. Because many of the working-class families did not gain the same income as middle-class families, and were not able to enjoy same luxuries hence they had similar problems. *The Honeymooners* filled this hole and gave working class a relatable family life. Their home was small and usually appliances would be broken so the perfect family notion was left behind.

2.5 Father Knows Best

Father Knows Best is an American sitcom, debuted on 1954 in CBS and ended in 1960. The show starred Robert Young, Elinor Donahue, Billy Gray, Jane Wyatt and Lauren Chapin. It followed the life of Anderson family living in Springfield. Andersons were consisting of the father figure Jim Anderson, his wife Margaret and their children Betty, Bud and Kathy. Jim was the intelligent father; his wife Margaret was the voice of reason. At any problem that the children had, they were able to rely on their father because simply he knew the best.

Although the series was cancelled once and changed channels, it was popular in the 1950s because the Andersons were another ideal family portrayed on television. They were relatable and viewers would emulate them.³⁷ They represented the middle class white American family of the 1950s perfectly. The father, Jim Anderson was the wise bread maker and problem solver of the family. The mother, Margaret Anderson was his common sensed wife, the perfect homemaker. The gender specified places of

³⁷Brooks and Marsh, *The Complete Directory*,338.

the 1950s popular households in the show were very apparent. The children were seen in their own separate rooms, the mother was usually seen in the kitchen or patio, handling the housework, tending the garden and making dinner. Although the character of Kathy was portrayed as a tomboy and this character is an example of challenging the accepted gender roles.

In one specific episode of *Father Knows Best* titled “Betty Earns a Formal,”³⁸ the oldest child in family, Betty, wants a dress to wear in country club dance Jim refuses to give her money and tells she might want to work to earn money to buy the dress because he wants to teach Betty the importance financial values. So, Betty finds a job and starts to sell peaches, and does not tell the place where she works. Her father has a nightmare about Betty’s workplace. In his nightmare he sees Betty working in an awful place with awful people. After that, he says that Betty could drop the job because he will buy her the dress. But Betty refuses and miraculously she earns enough money to buy the dress. At the end of the episode it is revealed that his father Jim has bought cases of peaches to get Betty to earn enough money to buy the dress and quit her job. As we can see from this episode, the order of the family is established by the father again with his invisible hand. The adventures are resolved by the initiative from father. This reflects the general attitude in the 1950s. The father, as the central male figure in the family, is there to establish order and solve the problems, while the females are expected to stay at home and can be supported by the male figure.

In another episode titled “Kathy Becomes a Girl”³⁹, the youngest of the family, Kathy, gets criticized by her family about being too much of a tomboy, not having any female friends and not being girly enough. Her mother mentions that in her time “the

³⁸“Betty Earns a Formal,” *Father Knows Best* (NBC), accessed October 15, 2021, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x834baq>.

³⁹ “Kathy Becomes a Girl,” *Father Knows Best* (CBS), accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8425hn>.

girls were girlier”, and she encourages Kathy to have more female friends. Kathy tries to be friends with their neighbor and her school friend Patty, but she does not get an invitation to her birthday party, and afterwards she tears Patty’s dress by mistake and gets insulted by Patty. Later Kathy tries to get romantically close with her best friend Errol, but Errol does not really understand this, and mentions how he sees Kathy as a boy. When Patty comes to apologize to Kathy for insulting her, Errol takes Patty to eat ice cream instead of Kathy, and she feels heartbroken.

With the help of her mother and sister, Kathy decides to become more girly by letting her sister do her hair and makeup and wearing a dress and high heels. At the same time, her father Jim plans a surprise party for Kathy to wear her new dress and heels, and invites her guy friends to make up for her sadness for not going to Patty’s birthday party. Before the party, Jim has a small talk with Kathy and mentions girly “little tricks” of Kathy’s mom use on him. He mentions that pretending to be dependent and a little helpless is not bad because men like to feel in control. Although Kathy thinks it is a form of taking advantage, her father says that it is not because men like to feel like big protectors. By the end of the episode, Kathy learns about the party and comes downstairs to meet her friends, but she falls at the last step and sprains her ankle. Her male friends help carry her, and at the end of the episode her father and mother discover that Kathy’s foot is actually fine; she just took her father’s advice on being “a little helpless”.

This episode of *Father Knows Best* starts with a challenge to gender roles by portraying Kathy as a happy girl in the beginning, but with her parents’ and siblings’ pressures, Kathy feels the need to become more feminine because she thinks this is the only way she can gather the attention of boys and every other person. The pressures on conforming to gender roles is a common theme for the 1950s, but still by portraying a tomboy character on screen and using supposedly feminine traits to her advantage Kathy represents another example of the decaying hollow conformity.

CHAPTER 3

CINEMA

Even though cinema lived its golden years in the beginning of the 1940s, starting with the 1950s and with the rise of television, it faced a hard challenge since television became the dominant cultural medium of the era. The movies of the 1950s were often overshadowed by the movies of the 1960s and 1970s because cinema going habit was haltered by television, but still the period witnessed some of the most significant movie- makers and masterpieces of the 20th and 21st centuries. Moving into suburbs also affected the faith of cinema. While more men and women moved to suburbs and started to build families, the habit of going to the movie theater started declining. With the postwar economic boom in 1950, the household income increased by %178 since 1934-1936 and home ownership increased by %48 nationwide.⁴⁰ People were able to purchase expensive goods like cars and home appliances. In 1953, 6.1 million American made cars were sold and this number peaked at 1955 with 7.9 million cars.⁴¹ Buying and owning houses was also on the rise. Consequently, numerous people moved away from the cities, and far from the downtown movie theaters. So, the habit of going to the movies decreased drastically, and was replaced by television owning.

⁴⁰ Elaine L. Chao and Kathleen P. Utgoff, *100 Years Of U.S. Consumer Spending Data For The Nation, New York City, And Boston* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006), <https://www.bls.gov/opub/100-years-of-u-s-consumer-spending.pdf>.

⁴¹ Avner Offer, "The American Automobile Frenzy Of The 1950S", in *From Family Firms To Corporate Capitalism: Essays In Business And Industrial History In Honour Of Peter Mathias* (Clarendon Press, 1998), 315-353.

In the 1930s the invention of the drive-in theater was an important part for the habit of going to the cinema. Because of the boom in car sales in 1950s, the demand for drive in theaters majorly increased. The increase in the number of drive-in theaters affected the movie industry rather positively in the early 1950s. People preferred drive-in theaters to regular theaters, for a while this affected the faith of cinema in a positive way. The 1950s also was the period to change the B movies' definition. With the decrease in cinema-going habit, double feature films lost their appeal. B movies included the movies that were inexpensive and produced for the demand from drive-in theater market. The movies in the era gave way to conventional ideals of men and women, but also in this era, the "rebellious" type was born. The demand for ideal men and women characters that corresponds with the common male and female understanding of the 1950s was in decline, so the rebellious type was invented as a critique to these common understanding of genders.

The well-known actors to play the rebellious hero were Marlon Brando, Paul Newman and James Dean. Female characters were played by popular artists like Marilyn Monroe, Kim Novak or Ava Gardner. The 1950s also opened the way for Rock and Roll to younger audiences. The older forms of movies were considered outdated, and the marketing was directed to teenagers. Film production-based on genre and formulas continued, so movies with similar premises and stories were introduced. Still, independent movies and directors also became popular. To ensure the increase in the habit of cinema-going, new technologies like widescreen, enhanced color, 3D and stereo sound were introduced to viewers in the 1950s. The new technologies included Cinerama, CinemaScope, VistaVision, Vistarama, 70mm, Technirama, 3D movies, Perspecta Sound, Stereophonic Sound, Aromarama, Smell-O-Vision.⁴² The increase in the popularity of television was a big source of concern for Hollywood in the 1950s. The big studios did not let their famous stars and movies appear on the television. By the mid-1950s, big studios started to sell their old B-movies to television. The first

⁴²Halliwell, *American Culture*, 149-151.

movie that was broadcasted on television was *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) in 1956. The movie starred Judy Garland as Dorothy Gale, alongside Jack Haley, Bert Lahr and Ray Bolger. *The Wizard of Oz* is about a girl named Dorothy who mysteriously finds herself in a magical land called Oz and starts her quest to go back home to Kansas. The movie includes many metaphors. For example, red shoes present the female imagination and the whole movie is a way for Dorothy to learn she hold the power she needs to return home inside her all along but she still chooses to return home and confirm to the idea of the “women’s place” emphasized on women by the men.⁴³The movie was chosen to be the first broadcasted film in televisions, because it reached a cult status and was very popular ever since it was produced. This chapter will try to demonstrate how the idea of conformity in 1950s was a mere delusion by using the influential directors and their movies. The initial idea of the chapter is to show the shallow and make-believe substance of the American conformism in 1950s by using particular movies. The directors and movies that will be examined in this chapter are Nicholas Ray (*Johnny Guitar* (1954), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)), Richard Brooks (*Blackboard Jungle* (1955)) and Douglas Sirk (*All That Heaven Allows* (1955)).

3.1 Nicholas Ray

Nicholas Ray was born in Wisconsin in 1911. His most known movies were; *They Live by Night* (1949), *In a Lonely Place* (1950), *On Dangerous Ground* (1952), *Johnny Guitar* (1954), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), *Bigger Than Life* (1956). Although he had directed many movies, his most productive era was the 1950s. *Johnny Guitar* was a western movie with female lead, which was unusual for that period. In *Vulture’s 50 Best Western Movies Ever List*⁴⁴, there are 16 movies that are made in

⁴³ Linda Rohrer Paige, "Wearing The Red Shoes: Dorothy And The Power Of The Female Imagination In The Wizard Of Oz", *Journal Of Popular Film And Television* 23, no. 4 (1996): 146-153.

⁴⁴Keith Phipps, "The 50 Best Western Movies Ever Made", *Vulture*, 2021, <https://www.vulture.com/article/50-best-western-movies-ever.html>.

1950s. Some of these movies are; *The Searchers* (1956), *Rio Bravo* (1959), *Forty Guns* (1957), *High Noon* (1957). Among these 16 movies *Johnny Guitar* (1954) is the only 1950s western movie with a female lead. *Rebel without a Cause* was his best known film. The movie had an important effect on youth culture and cinema industry of the 1950s, because juvenile delinquency is apparent and used effectively in the film. His movie style was usually expressionist, colorful and dramatic. Considering the notion that the 1950s were the peak example of conformity in United States of America, Nicholas Ray was known to be a director who was aware of the delusions of this conformity and the American way of life⁴⁵ and he was not afraid to challenge the idea of conformity by using a non-strict approach in gender roles in his movies. The examples of this will be shown in the analysis of the *Johnny Guitar* and *Rebel without a Cause*.

3.1.1 Johnny Guitar

Johnny Guitar is an American western movie directed by Nicholas Ray in 1954. The movie stars Joan Crawford, Mercedes McCambridge, Scott Brady and Sterling Hayden. It is an adaptation of a Roy Chanslor novel, which takes place in Arizona. The leading character Vienna is an owner of a saloon that welcomes misfits of the town. Vienna runs this saloon with her lover, gunslinger Johnny Guitar. Vienna's relationship with the town is shaky. This is because she welcomes "The Dancin' Kid" and his friends to her saloon, and she supports the railroad that will be establish near town and is objected by the town members. Her rival Emma Small and the other residents of the town want Vienna, Johnny Guitar and The Dancin' Kid and his friends to leave.

After a series of adventures, The Dancin' Kid and Emma Small die, and the town residents allow Vienna and Johnny Guitar to leave the town in peace. In the

⁴⁵ Jacqueline Frost, "Review Of The Films Of Nicholas Ray: The Poet Of Nightfall", *Journal Of Film And Video* 58, no. 3 (2006): 55-57.

beginning, the movie received negative and mixed up reviews.⁴⁶ Yet it grossed highly on box office and made its way up into the movie charts. In his review, Bosley Crowther states that “No more femininity comes from her than from the rugged Mr. Heflin in 'Shane.' For the lady, as usual, is as sexless as the lions on the public library steps and as sharp and romantically forbidding as a package of unwrapped razor blades.”⁴⁷ The movie later was mentioned as one of the best movies of Nicholas Ray. François Truffaut described the movie as “Beauty and the Beast of Westerns, a Western dream.”⁴⁸

This movie is included to this study, because it included a very strong female lead and non-confirming gender roles which was a rare instance in a male dominated era where conforming to gender roles was deemed very important. Nicholas Ray defies with gender roles very cleverly by making the female figure stronger willed and more masculine than the male character in some scenes.⁴⁹ Joan Crawford is portrayed as a very strong woman and a female lead, which was unusual for the 1950s. It was not usual in the 1950s that leading female character to be so powerful, almost manly in her strength. 1950s was an era that reflected very strong pressure on women. Women were only seen as an accessory, a household item. In the movies women were usually in

⁴⁶Shane Scott-Travis, "Pulling Focus: Johnny Guitar (1954)", *Taste of Cinema - Movie Reviews And Classic Movie Lists*, 2016, <http://www.tasteofcinema.com/2016/pulling-focus-johnny-guitar-1954/>.

⁴⁷Bosley Crowther, "The Screen in Review; Johnny Guitar' Opens At The Mayfair", *The New York Times*, 1954, <https://www.nytimes.com/1954/05/28/archives/the-screen-in-review-johnny-guitar-opens-at-the-mayfair.html>.

⁴⁸François Truffaut, *The Films in My Life* (Da Capo Press, 1994),142.

⁴⁹John Duncan Talbird, "Johnny Guitar", *Quarterly Review of Film And Video* 27, no. 5 (2010): 396-399.

supporting roles or damsels in distress. In *Johnny Guitar* (1954), the character of Vienna brings a fresh perspective to the women's role in cinema in the 1950s.

3.1.2 Rebel without a Cause

Rebel without a Cause is an American film directed by Nicholas Ray in 1955. The movie starred James Dean as Jim Stark, Natalie Wood as Judy and Sal Mineo as Plato. The movie is known for its emphasis on juvenile delinquency and the fight between different generations. The name of the movie is adapted from a book titled *Rebel without a Cause: The Hypnoanalysis of a Criminal Psychopath* (1944) written by Robert M. Lindner as a psychoanalysis book about a criminal psychopath named Harold, but movie did not make any references to the book. The movie received mixed reviews at its release in October 1955, nearly one month after James Dean's death. His performance was appreciated by most of the critics.

The movie takes place in Los Angeles. It starts in a police station, where we see the main character Jim Stark taken into custody in the juvenile division for being drunk. Accompanying Jim, in the station there are also Plato and Judy. Plato is there because he shot a litter of puppies and Judy is there because she was on the streets in a late hour. Three people arrive at the station separately and later it is discovered that all three of them have familial problems.⁵⁰

Jim is annoyed by his parents Frank and Carol. He is very disappointed with his father because his father is very afraid of his mother, and very shy against her. Judy claims her father does not love her like before, because she is not a little girl anymore. She picks up womanly clothes to attract attention, and her father calls her a "dirty tramp" so she leaves the house. Plato also comes from a difficult family background. His father abandons the family when he is little and his mother is not really at home to take care of him. In the first day of school, Jim sees Judy and offers her to go to school together. Judy declines this offer saying she will travel with her friends, led by her

⁵⁰Nicholas Ray, *Rebel Without A Cause*, film (Warner Bros., 1955).

boyfriend Buzz, who is a juvenile delinquent. Jim is not welcomed by the rest of the school, but becomes friends with Plato. Plato sees him as a father figure.

Later, the students take a trip to the Griffith Observatory. After the trip Buzz starts a knife fight with Jim. Jim wins the knife fight, so Buzz challenges him a car race near a cliff. At night, Jim fights with his father and asks for his advice without telling about the race. His father advises against any confrontation. Still, Jim goes to the race area. He and Buzz starts the race but at the last-minute Jim jumps outside of the car. Buzz's shirt tangles with door latch and he could not get it loose, so he falls into his death from the cliff in his car. Everybody leaves the crime scene except Judy, Jim and Plato. The three leave the site soon after.

Jim confides in his parents about what happened and expresses his wish to go to the police station and confess. His parents advise against this, so after a big fight he goes to police station to confess but no one takes him seriously. After the police station, he goes back to house and meets with Judy. They decide to leave their homes and flee to an old mansion. Plato is followed by three people from Buzz's gang. They fight and took Plato's notebook and learn Jim's address from there and leave him. Plato takes his mother's gun to find Jim and Judy and discovers them in the mansion. The three friends spend some time together and then Plato falls asleep. Jim and Judy go to explore the mansion. The three people from Buzz's gang find Plato sleeping and awake him. Frightened, Plato shoots one of the members of the group. Jim tries to talk to Plato but he accuses Jim of leaving him.

Police comes to the scene and Plato runs to the observatory. Jim and Judy follow him, and Jim talks to Plato until he calms down. He gives his jacket to Plato and takes his gun. He offloads the gun and gives it back to Plato. Jim convinces Plato to go outside together, but when the police see the gun in Plato's hand they shoot and kill him.⁵¹

⁵¹Nicholas Ray, *Rebel Without A Cause*, film (Warner Bros., 1955).

This movie is an important reflection of 1950s in many ways. First of all, it is intensely about juvenile delinquency, which was a big problem in the 1950s. The FBI releases a semiannual report titled *Uniform Crime Report*. In the one released in 1959, it is emphasized that cases on juvenile delinquency increased 220% from 1941 to 1957. According to the FBI, numbers of arrests of those under 18 years old and total arrests in the 1950s increased dramatically.⁵² The movie gives details on what drives the teenagers to crime and delinquency by analyzing family ties. For example, Jim's father is portrayed as a coward man who cannot stand up to his wife on even littlest inconveniences. Jim is virtually deprived from a strong father figure, so he has to solve his problems by himself with his own decisions. On the other hand, Judy and her father's relationship is complicated too. For example, when she demands more attention from her father in the form of a kiss on the lips, his father refuses to do this saying she is not a little girl anymore. Plato's family is never by his side, practically raised by their housekeeper. He is desperately searching for family guidance. All three of these kids have damaged family lives, but their lives seem perfect from afar.

The movie brilliantly criticizes the 1950s understanding of suburban family. Even though these families look functional, in their private lives all of them live dysfunctional episodes. This point is most apparent when the three kids act like a family in the mansion. Jim takes up the role of the father, which he is always in need for; Judy is the mother, the grown-up woman figure her father always tries to impose on her and Plato is the beloved son of a loving family, just like he always yearned to be. Another important component piece of movie is Nicholas Ray's clever use of Griffith Observatory in the movie. The observatory is the place where some of the most crucial scenes of the movie took place. The scene where there is an exhibit about the end of the world portrays Ray's view of the crash and burn of the ideals of conformity in 1950s

⁵²Jason Barnosky, "The Violent Years: Responses To Juvenile Crime In The 1950s", *Polity* 38, no. 3 (2006): 314-344, doi:10.1057/palgrave.polity.2300057.

and in the final scene when the three main characters form their own unique family it portrays a shelter from the dysfunctional suburban family life of 1950s.⁵³

Rebel without a Cause (1954) is added to this study because it portrays and the complexities inside the mechanism that is accepted as the “perfect” suburban family of the 1950s and challenges the conformity which is created as a result of this. It shows how the standards decided and imposed by parents could not be in line or meet with what the children want or need. The movie also aims for the interest of the American teenager of the 1950s and in that manner it portrays the needs and desires of the teenagers of the era. Nicholas Ray successfully portrays how the teenagers in 1950s American Society felt trapped and bound by the delusions of the so-called perfect Suburban Life.⁵⁴

3.2 Richard Brooks

Richard Brooks is an American director, producer and screenwriter. He was born in 1912 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was a very successful director and was nominated for 8 Oscars throughout his career. His best-known works were *Blackboard Jungle (1955)* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1958)*.

3.2.1 Blackboard Jungle

Blackboard Jungle is a 1955 American film. Directed by Richard Brooks, the film is adapted from a novel named *The Blackboard Jungle*, written by Evan Hunter in 1954. The movie is mostly known for its use of genre of Rock and Roll in its soundtrack (especially “Rock around the Clock” by Bill Haley and His Comets), Sidney Poitier’s impactful role as a black actor and movie’s depiction of student life of 1950s as a social

⁵³Merrill Schleier, "The Griffith Observatory In Ray's Rebel Without A Cause (1955): Mystical Temple And Scientific Monument", *The Journal Of Architecture* 16, no. 3 (2011): 365-385, doi:10.1080/13602365.2011.570102.

⁵⁴Frost, *Journal Of Film And Video*, 55-57.

commentary film. The movie stars Glenn Ford as Richard Dadier, Vic Morrow as Artie West, Sidney Poitier as Gregory Miller and Anne Francis as Anne Dadier.

The movie is about a teacher named Richard Dadier who was assigned to a school in inner New York with high teenage delinquent rate. A group of students in this school violently threaten other students and teachers. On his first day Richard Dadier witnesses a teacher almost get raped by a student. He blocks the assailant but gets attacked by Artie West and his friends. This and similar incidents like this do not affect Richard Dadier's determination to reach his students and help them. In the end, he puts an end to the influence of Artie West and his friends on other students. The movie received mostly positive reviews. Bosley Crowther wrote in *The New York Times* "As a straight melodrama of juvenile violence this is a vivid and hair-raising film. Except for some incidental romance, involving the teacher and his wife and a little business about the latter having a baby, it is as hard and penetrating as a nail."⁵⁵

This movie is included to this study because of the way it questioned the idea of perfect American teenager and distortions in American education system by picturing inner workings of American high schools. The movie included real issues concerning juvenile delinquency and American education system and Richard Brooks wanted viewers to understand these problems without hiding the truth.⁵⁶The director and movie was criticized later for showing the corruption in the education system and United States of America.⁵⁷Also being one of the first movies to include the genre of

⁵⁵Bosley Crowther, "The Screen; 'Blackboard Jungle'; Delinquency Shown In Powerful Film", *The New York Times*, 1955, <https://www.nytimes.com/1955/03/21/archives/the-screen-blackboard-jungle-delinquency-shown-in-powerful-film.html>.

⁵⁶Douglass K. Daniel, *Tough As Nails: The Life And Films Of Richard Brooks* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 88.

⁵⁷Ibid, 93.

Rock and Roll to its soundtrack and help the genre grow is another accomplishment of the movie.

Although in some screenings the soundtrack "Rock Around the Clock" was not included because Rock and Roll was seen as a bad influence on teenagers, the movie still affected the musical current of the decade. The movie even affected the everyday slang of the era and added "Daddy-O" to everyday language. The music enabled many teenagers to relate to the movie. In some instances, this interest in movie was reflected in vandalism, riots and violent acts.⁵⁸ This can be considered as another way the director reflected the distortions in the view of the ideal American Teenager in the respect of conforming ideas of 1950s life-style. The movie was banned in Atlanta and Memphis because it enabled teenage riots in 1950s.⁵⁹ This movie is a great example of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s.

3.3 Douglas Sirk

Douglas Sirk is a German director born in 1897 in Hamburg. He started his career in Germany but moved to Hollywood in 1937. He is best known for his Hollywood dramas. At his contemporary period, Sirk was seen as a director that makes movies appealing to women but recently he is known as one of the most influential directors of the 1950s due to his criticism and talent.⁶⁰

His best-known movies are; *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956) and *Imitation of Life* (1959). Douglas Sirk is known

⁵⁸Todd Leopold, "The 50-Year-Old Song That Started It All.", CNN, July 8, 2005. <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/SHOWBIZ/Music/07/07/haley.rock/>.

⁵⁹"Blackboard Jungle - Notes," Turner Classic Movies, Accessed November 26, 2021, <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/1206/Blackboard-Jungle/notes.html>.

⁶⁰Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 4-6.

for his not-very-happy happy endings and for ending his films with safe places turned into prisons and the feeling of impossibility for reaching picture perfect happiness.⁶¹

3.3.1. *All That Heaven Allows*

All That Heaven Allows is a 1955 American romance film. Directed by Douglas Sirk, the movie features Jane Wyman as Cary Scott and Rock Hudson as Ron Kirby. The movie is about the romantic relationship between a middle class suburban housewife and her younger gardener. The movie revolves around a widow named Cary Scott, living in suburban New England. Her life is a standard suburban housewife's life; all about her children, her house and her country club friends. In time, he develops a relationship with her gardener, young and handsome Ron Kirby. Comparing with Cary, Ron lives a much simpler and non-materialistic life.⁶² Ron considers himself as a unique person who would not bow down to conformism of 1950 America. The two people eventually fall in love. Ron introduces Cary to his friends and Cary loves them. When Ron asks her to marry him, she accepts it with joy, but her children and friends do not approve this relationship. They see this engagement as socially unacceptable. They receive Ron as a lower-class man with no future. In time, Cary gives in to pressure and breaks off the engagement.

They continue to live separate lives with their yearnings for each other. Cary's children tell her they will move out of the house soon. She realizes she has thrown away her last chance in happiness. She owns a television set to feel less lonely. Before that her daughter says she's sorry for not letting her be happy with Ron and blocking their engagement. She says Cary should be with Ron if he really loves him. Ron has a

⁶¹Christopher Small, "ReviewedWork(s): TheFilms of Douglas Sirk: ExquisiteIroniesandMagnificentObsessionsbyTomRyan", *Cineaste Publishers* 44, no. 4, (2019),77–78.

⁶²Robert Pippin, "Love and Class in Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*", *Critical Inquiry*45, No:4, (2019) 945.

serious accident and Cary realizes how much she loves him. She stands by Ron's side while his recovering with her decision to spend her life with him.

All That Heaven Allows is a great example of the suburban life style of the 1950s. This movie is included in this study because it captures how the suburban life style and values put women in a golden cage, and restrict American citizens according to the heavy impressions of conformity. Cary is indecisive when it comes to joining her life with Ron because he is from a lower class, and her family's and friend's reaction to their engagement reflects the social norms of the era perfectly. In the film, Douglas Sirk, as he does in most of his films, cleverly shows a social group who are bound by the invisible social restrictions of conformism and knowingly continue to play their parts in this make-believe world.⁶³ The movie depicts effects of conformity and the repression of social norms while pointing out that escaping this situation and living a life based on one's authentic, genuine and individual views and freedoms are nearly impossible because of the restraints of conformity. This can be seen in Cary's doubts to be with Ron, because being with him would mean for her to abandon her old life-style, family and friends and live an entirely different life with Ron, as these two worlds don't share any common points.⁶⁴

The "happy-ending" of the film is Douglas Sirk's depiction of a prison type of heaven, where Cary and Ron's reunion is only possible after Ron's accident and the loss of his power which enables Cary to assume the role of the nurse and make this couple, in a way, conform to the norms of the society.⁶⁵

⁶³Pippin, "Love and Class", 942.

⁶⁴Ibid, 957.

⁶⁵Ibid,959-960.

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC

The music of the 1950s made the American Youth more inclined towards nonconformist and individualistic ideas. Rhythm and Blues, Blues and Country genres were important components of the music of the era, especially because they paved the way for Rock and Roll as a music genre. The 1950s were a time for a rapid change and music reflected these changes on the era. After World War II, United States of America went through a big change in music, a change that also shaped the future of the music industry. Music included the racial tendencies that were reflected in the social life of the era. The roots of the civil rights movement also developed in music.⁶⁶ White and African American audiences listening to the same African American and White artists created a sense of togetherness and challenged the idea of segregation. Also, music genres of the era like Rock and Roll and Rhythm and Blues put a light on the African American culture and music. Many African American artists became popular in the 1950s, but still most of them were not able to enjoy fame and fortune, and many were not able to connect with their fans because of the issue of segregation. Still the 1950s witnessed some important events in the account of the civil rights movement, like the integration of public schools with *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 and desegregation of buses in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955-1956.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock "n" Roll Changed America* (Oxford University Press, 2003),35.

⁶⁷Mitch Yamasaki, "Using Rock 'N' Roll to Teach the History of Post-World War II America ," *The History Teacher* 29, no. 2 (1996): 182.

Rhythm and Blues and Rock and Roll were also seen as bridges between African American and White culture, and supported the civil rights movement. Meanwhile these two genres constituted the future of music; Country Music, Folk and Pop went ahead by following old standards. The 1950s was an era that shaped the future of music, in the sense that it paved the way for experiments in music, and allowed curiosity and discovery to be a part of the musical sphere. Cars were big part of the 1950s because they were a great way to reflect the abundance and individuality of the era. Most cars came with radios, which filled the outside world and streets with music. Rock and Roll was a very impactful genre in 1950s and the most important artists that shaped Rock and Roll in that era were African American. Little Richard (1932-2020), Chuck Berry (1926-2017) and Bo Diddley (1928-2008) were among these musicians. Elvis Presley (1935-1977) was White but he also made a remarkable impact on Rock and Roll. In the 1950s, music had a massive impact on the American society. Especially Rock and Roll's impact was undeniable, because it was both a uniting and a separating subject for the American society. First of all, teenagers adored Rock and Roll; but media, parents and government turned against it, insisting that Rock and Roll had a drastic role on premarital sexual attitude.⁶⁸ Secondly, it helped build a bridge between African American and White cultures, which helped decrease the prejudices against the African Americans. However, the lyrics were regarded as very sexually provocative by the elders and the fact that this genre was rooted in the African American culture was also seen as a reason for negative attention.

Teenagers became the largest consumers of the inexpensive 45 RPM records, putting black artists on the mainstream pop charts. To avoid Rhythm and Blues' negative image, record labels marketed their music as "Rock'n'Roll". Some labels went further, 'covering' songs originally recorded by Black artists with clean-cut White singers like Pat Boone.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Altschuler, *All Shook Up*,68.

⁶⁹ Yamasaki, *The History Teacher*, 187-188.

Rock and Roll naturally had a rebellious attitude, causing it to be seen as unbecoming was not approved by the parents and mass media. Also, by listening to *Rock and Roll* music, young White people interacted more with the African American culture and African American artists. Rock and Roll also affected cinema and movies like *Blackboard Jungle (1955)*; which included integrated schools, as well as African American characters, who made teenagers question long standing misunderstandings against their culture. Rock and Roll and generally music was delivered to masses by firstly radio then television and records, and this had a big impact on the social life of the decade.

The defiance of *status quo* was enabled by music and Rock and Roll which challenged and also enabled the deeply rooted misconceptions and prejudices against the African American culture. The genre became the target of many critics; Glenn Altschuler shows this while quoting Asa Carter and this is a good example of how Rock and Roll actually put a light on long-standing misconceptions about African American culture and music:

Asa Carter, former radio commentator, soft-drink salesman, and member of Ku Klux Klan Klavern No. 31, used the threat of rock 'n' roll to enhance his status as a leader of the White Councils in Alabama. Lumping together rock 'n' roll, bebop, *Blues*, "Congo rhythms," and "jungle music," Carter got the attention of Newsweek and the New York Times with an assault on the "basic, heavy-beat music of the Negroes. It appeals to the base in man; brings out animalism and vulgarity." The roots of rock 'n' roll, according to Carter, were in "the heart of Africa, where it was used to incite warriors to such frenzy that by nightfall neighbors were cooked in carnage pots! The music is a designed reversion to savagery!"⁷⁰

Rock and Roll became the musical medium that brings White culture and African American Culture in United States together and through Rock and Roll African American culture was brought closer to mainstream White culture. Rock and Roll was deemed and criticized with its role in integrating White and African American

⁷⁰Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 37-38.

culture.⁷¹It was the initiation of the understanding that African American culture was not inferior to the White culture. The understanding that was keeping Whites and African Americans apart physically and culturally was starting to be challenged. The main focus of this chapter is to denote the role of music as a challenge to the 1950s conformity. The music genres that will be referred to in this chapter are Rock and Roll, Rhythm and Blues, Blues and Country. Rock and Roll was the most important genre of the 1950s within the perspective of conformity, because the rise of Rock and Roll helped, and presumably became the soundtrack of American citizens, it voiced the experience of average American people, especially the teenagers that started to rebel against the long-established norms of the American society.

4.1 Rock and Roll

Rock and Roll was rooted in late 1940s and 1950s. It was originated in the United States and spread worldwide. Rock and Roll can be defined as a mixture of pop, country, gospels and Rhythm and Blues. Alan Freed (1921-1965) is the first one to use the term Rock and Roll. Electric Guitar became popular in the 1950s. Gibson Les Paul was one of the most popular types of electric guitar and it was prototyped based on Les Paul (1915-2009) drawings and went on sale in 1952. Chuck Berry (1926-2017) was known as one of the leaders of Rock and Roll music and added special elements to Rock and Roll with guitar solos and performance art. Rhythm and Blues influenced many artists and made big contributions to Rock and Roll. Some of the well-known artists include The Fontane Sisters (1941-1961), Johnnie Ray (1927-1990) and The Crew-Cuts (1952-1964). The release of the 1955 movie *Blackboard Jungle* had an important impact on Rock and Roll genre. The movie's soundtrack included a Rock and Roll song called "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and His Comets (1952-

⁷¹Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 35.

1981) in its opening credits.⁷² Even though lyrics were not full with a lot of meaning the song captured the attention of the 1950s youth with its repetitive lyrics and energizing rhythm. It created a big sensation in 1950s and affected the teenagers' music taste dramatically. The most known teen idol of Rock and Roll was Pat Boone (1934). He became famous with his covers of Rhythm and Blues songs like "Ain't That a Shame" (1955) and "Two Hearts, Two Kisses (Make One Love)" (1955). Pat Boone was a perfect example of American youth with his clean image, which helped him reach to a wide audience. Another leading figure of the Rock and Roll was Elvis Presley. He was known by the middle 1950s. Soon he became highly famous with his Rock and Roll songs and television appearances and movies. His African American sourced song interpretations and his performance style made him a leading and controversial figure at 1950s. Pat Boone and Elvis Presley represented two opposite ends of the spectrum and remained in a competition throughout the decade. Rock and Roll contributed to the attitudes, fashion, life style and everyday language of the era.⁷³

The genre also challenged the idea of conformity and social norms of 1950s America by becoming a common denominator for African Americans and Whites and enabled them to bond through music. Both White and African American teenagers enjoyed Rock and Roll, and the genre contributed to the civil rights movements because it brought many aspects of African American culture to mainstream.⁷⁴ Early phases of Rock and Roll genre included issues like dating, school life, cars and fashion. Many teenagers find Rock and Roll lyrics relatable, comparing them to their real-life experiences and feeling understood by it. Even though there was an apparent conservative pressure on music in 1950s Rock and Roll was able to be a very successful

⁷²Ibid, 32.

⁷³Altschuler, *All Shook Up*, 121.

⁷⁴Ibid, 35.

musical genre because it contained many different musical influences inside and it helped the youth of 1950s to find a way to break away from the traditional influences of their parents and older generations. Rock and Roll had that impact which eventually helped music of the 1950s to challenge the conformity and the norms of the past. The Rock and Roll trend started in a period when the United States entered a new era with the desegregation of the schools and the beginning of civil rights movements. The unification of the White teenage youth with African American music started a racist reaction in United States, many were worried that Rock and Roll was crushing down the race barriers between Whites and African Americans⁷⁵; this is a good example of questioning of conformist ideas on race. Others saw Rock and Roll as a tool which will enable racial togetherness and experience sharing.⁷⁶

4.2 Rhythm and Blues

In 1923 the Okeh record company became the first to use the term “race records” specifically to identify its catalog of music created by and targeted to African Americans. Before long the term became standard in the record industry, and it remained so until after World War II. By the late 1940s the word “race” began to have a negative connotation and was replaced with “Rhythm&Blues,” a term first used by Billboard magazine in its June 25, 1949, issue when the company switched the name of the African American record sales chart from “Best Selling Race Records” to “Best Selling Retail Rhythm &Blues Records.”⁷⁷

Rhythm and Blues was a popular music genre that was produced in African American communities in the 1940s. “...the core style of Rhythm and Blues inherits

⁷⁵Altschuler, *All Shook Up*.

⁷⁶Michael T. Bertrand, *Race, Rock and Elvis* (University of Illinois Press, 2000),95-96.

⁷⁷Richard J. Ripani, *The New Blue Music: Changes in Rhythm &Blues, 1950-1999* (University Press of Mississippi, 2006),5.

much of its identity from earlier African-American folk and popular music, such as work songs, string band and jug band music, fife and drum music, minstrelsy, black vaudeville, black religious music, Blues, and boogie-woogie. Rhythm and Blues style arose from, continued its development in, and still has its home in America's African American community. It is more urban than rural, and cities such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, Nashville, Houston, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Detroit were natural centers for Rhythm and Blues due to their large populations of African Americans."⁷⁸

Rhythm and Blues changed over time. In the beginning of 1950s it was used to refer blues songs. By the middle portion of the 1950s, this genre contributed to birth of Rock and Roll; and Rhythm and Blues musically developed and brought together many other genres, it became a genre that refers to Soul, Gospel and Blues. Rhythm and Blues in the 1950s brought Blues, Jazz, Gospel and Doo-Wop together and created a sound that was unique to the decade.⁷⁹ At the beginning Rhythm and Blues records only appealed to African Americans, but throughout the 1950s White teenagers were also very fond of the genre.⁸⁰ White Americans did not purchase Rhythm and Blues records and radios that were run by white Americans did not play these songs. But by the beginning of 1950s White American teenagers became aware of Rhythm and Blues and started to buy the records. By time, White American teenagers' music taste evolved in a way that included Rhythm and Blues.

Most of the African-American musicians that contributed to rock music were initially pushed to the Rhythm and Blues genre as a category because many of the producers wanted Rock and Roll to be a mainly White genre. Rhythm and Blues was a

⁷⁸Ibid, 6.

⁷⁹Ripani, *The New Blue Music*, 5.

⁸⁰Yamasaki, *The History Teacher*, 183.

genre that was majorly dominated by African American musicians but there were many artists who were White and covered the Rhythm and Blues songs to mainstream popular songs. The well-known Rhythm and Blues artists of the era were Ray Charles (1930-2004), Sam Cooke (1931-1964), Lloyd Price (1933-2021) and The Drifters (1953). The biggest impact of Rhythm and Blues in 1950s was that it was one the musical genres which paved the way for Rock and Roll. Being a mainly African American influenced music; Rhythm and Blues paved the way between African American culture and White culture, and contributed to the birth of Rock and Roll. Another important role of this genre was that it was a sphere for African American audience to find a piece of their culture. The gradual popularity of the genre established the proliferation of African American culture in White America.

4.3 Blues

Blues as a musical genre gained its roots with the folk traditions created by the chants and songs of groups of African American slaves working on fields together.⁸¹The main elements of Blues music can be found back in Africa. The original sound of the genre is very integrated with the African American religious music. The subgenres of the Blues include Blues-rock, Electric Blues and Country Blues. In the 1920s, many of the African Americans migrated from the South to urban places. This new generation contributed to the new scene in music. In time Blues became integrated to Rhythm and Blues with Gospel and Jazz. In the 1950s Blues impacted mainstream popular music in the United States immensely. The well-known singers like Chuck Berry (1926-2017) and Bo Diddley (1928-2008) were influenced by the Blues style of Chicago and their merry style differentiated from the melancholic side of Blues. Muddy Waters (1913-1983) was the most known representative of Chicago Blues. In the later years of 1950s, a completely new style of Blues came into being. Long electric guitar solos were the main part of this style. In the same time period, swamp Blues which had

⁸¹Elijah Wald, *The Blues: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 12.

a slower rhythm- started around Baton Rouge and popular artists of this genre were Sam Myers (1936-2006), Lightnin' Slim (1913-1974) and Jerry McCain (1930-2012). Just like Rhythm and Blues, Blues music helped Rock and Roll to flourish. As a genre that was much more developed and rooted from Rock and Roll, Blues in a way helped African American culture to get acquainted with the White culture. Blues and the African American music in general are mainly based on feeling and individualism instead of conformity.⁸² This music genre is a great example of using genuineness of artists to get their message across the audiences. The African American culture had a chance to flourish in White culture with Rock and Roll and Rock and Roll came to being with the help of the genres like Rhythm and Blues, Blues and Rock. Blues is an important genre that helped breaking boundaries and racial norms and challenge conformity by making African American historical experience find its place in America's mainstream White culture.⁸³

4.4 Country Music

Country music or simply country is a music genre that developed in the South of the United States America and even though it began to form in the earlier decades, Country music commercialized to be a real music genre in the 1920s.⁸⁴ This genre was influenced by Blues and American Folk Music. Country music is comprised of simple forms of ballads and dance melodies, played by, banjos, harmonicas and fiddles. The

⁸²Douglas Henry Daniels, "The Significance of Blues for American History," *The Journal of Negro History* 70, no. 1-2 (1985): 18.

⁸³Daniels, *The Journal of Negro History*, 14-23.

⁸⁴Richard A. Peterson and Paul DiMaggio, "From Region to Class, The Changing Locus of *Country music*: A Test of The Massification Hypothesis," *Social Forces* 53, no. 3 (1975): 497-506.

genre became popular in the 1940s as Hillbilly Music and later it formed within the popular Western music style.

The most popular country singers of the 1950s were Jim Reeves (1923-1964), Patsy Cline (1932-1963), Tex Ritter (1905-1974), Hank Williams (1923-1953), Tennessee Ernie Ford (1919-1991) and Kitty Wells (1919-2012). The 1952 single of Kitty Wells hit "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" became the first single ever by a female artist to get on top in country charts United States. In the beginning of 1950s Country music was mostly directed by honky-tonk style and loneliness and heartache was the common themes. Around the later years of 1950s rock music highly affected Country music and Nashville sound became popular. This sound included large string parts and back vocals. The well-known artists who used Nashville sound were Jim Reeves (1923-1964) and Eddy Arnold (1918-2008).

Country music was an important genre in the 1950s because American teenagers in 1950s were affected by it just like Rock and Roll since they were rejecting the mainstream culture and middle class conformity of the past generations, and preferring the rebellious side of Rock and Roll and unfiltered emotions of country music.⁸⁵Hence country music became another example and a way from conformity of 1950s.

⁸⁵Clifford Endres, "What Hath Rock Wrought?: Blues, Country Music, Rock'n'Roll and Istanbul," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 1, no. 1 (1995): pp. 33-39, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/995548>.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study comprises a detailed analysis of the decay of conformity in the 1950s by employing TV shows, movies and different music genres. This part focuses on final thoughts and overall assessment of the three main chapters of the study. There will be short explanations of the results found throughout the study, and by concentrating on each chapter individually.

Television in the 1950s was essentially marketed as a medium that would bring the family together and promote the suburban life. The shows and programs that were televised were far from being controversial or revolutionary. The most popular genres were dramas and panel shows. Other popular genres included police dramas, game and quiz shows, comedies, variety shows and cartoons. Many of the sitcoms portrayed the ideal suburban family, including the working father, naughty children and mothers who are the “perfect” housewives. The best examples of the television shows of the 1950s are; *I Love Lucy*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *The Honeymooners*, *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*.

Even though most of these shows like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and *Father Knows Best* supports the idea of perfect Suburban Family, shows like *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners*, on the other hand, portray opposite characters and families. *I Love Lucy* contains characters like Lucy who is a housewife and a mother, but not really a good one because she is clumsy and careless which makes her a different character from the stereotyped perfect housewife characters in television in the 1950s. Also, Ricky is a Cuban that represents a minority group, and that is also an unusual instance in 1950s television. *The Honeymooners* also includes different ranges of characters like Ralph Kramden, who is a working-class man that is far from clean-

cut gentleman characters of 1950s TV. Alice is a quick-witted woman, and that is also a rare instance in 1950s sitcoms considering most of the leading female characters are level-headed devoted wives.

All these shows included episodes that contain scenes that can be examples of the decay of conformity in the 1950s. However, television is not the strongest medium in explaining the decay of conformity in this period because even though the television series might include some scenes that represent the challenge towards conformity, the overall purpose of television and television programs in general was to entertain the masses. Television shows in the 1950s did not include strong social issues, hence it is harder to track the fall of conformity by using just the television series as examples. However, television is a crucial part of this study because it provides a deep understanding on the general mentality, common beliefs, themes and life-style of the 1950s.

After the *Television* chapter, study continues with the *Cinema* chapter. Cinema has always been a great medium to make public more sensitive to social problems. Movies with strong plotlines and smart directors hold the power to show even the worst sides of a situation while capturing the audience's attention throughout. While there is a common belief that conformity lived its strongest era in 1950s United States of America, the *Cinema* chapter tried to show that 1950s was more than the peak years of conformity. The 1950s can be regarded as the era where conformity, which found its roots in earlier decades in United States, started to lose its impact and seen as a delusion as opposed to a reality of the era. Conformity that was developed from the earlier decades was brought into question by the 1950s. The movies that were included in the *Cinema* chapter provide different examples about this issue.

In *Johnny Guitar*, Nicholas Ray played with gender roles by making the female lead Vienna very strong and giving a sensitive side to the male lead Johnny Guitar.⁸⁶ This is a revolutionary step for the era, considering women were condemned to be the

⁸⁶Talbird, *Quarterly Review*, 396-399.

property of the household and to be motherly figures, Vienna was a strong and free-spirited female character which defied the norms that conformity created in 1950s America. *Rebel without a Cause* challenges the perfect Suburban life imposed on American citizens by showing the realities of family life, the pressing issue of juvenile delinquency and struggles of young Americans trying to adapt the idea of ideal American Youth while living in distorted families. The movie shows Ray's successful attempt on exposing the delusion of conformity and idea of perfect Suburban Family of 1950s America.⁸⁷

Richard Brooks' *Blackboard Jungle* is another movie that uses juvenile delinquency and struggles of American teenagers in 1950s. The movie expresses the problems rooted on the American education system⁸⁸ which is another example of the delusion of conformity. The idea of the American Teenagers that conforms to every norm society imposes on them crumbles before audiences' eyes with Brooks' movie. *All That Heaven Allows* portrays the heavy weight of conformity and heavier weight of being a non-conforming individual in 1950s United States of America by using the elements of class conflict and love.

Society's intolerance of Cary and Ron's love and imposing the pressure of conformity on them while being totally blind to their submission to this delusion is a very important aspect of the movie.⁸⁹ Even the eventual union of the couple relies on the Cary's doctor's advice, who finds nothing wrong with the attitudes of town's people towards Cary and Ron but only notices they give Cary headaches and make her sick.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Frost, *Journal Of Film And Video*, 55-57.

⁸⁸Daniel, *Tough As Nails*.

⁸⁹Pippin, "Love and Class", 943.

⁹⁰Ibid, 947-949.

This scene is another example of blindness towards conformist attitudes in 1950s America.

Although Douglas Sirk approached 1950s non-conformism in the United States as an isolating and sad road, the 1950s symbolized the beginning of conformity's unlinking and the individualism and nonconformist ideas of the present found their roots with the questioning of long-lasting norms in the 1950s. After the Cinema chapter Music chapter follows with the different genres of music in 1950s. The rise of Rock and Roll in the 1950s as a cultural phenomenon and a musical genre is the pivotal point in this chapter because with the rise of Rock and Roll the mainstream American culture and music met with the African Americans' experiences via their artists. More and more African American artists became popular since the 1950s, and today an important part of the music industry belongs to the African American artists. Merging of African American and White cultures on the basis of music in the 1950s was an important example of challenging the status quo and conformity of the period. The "normal" and the norms American citizens were attempted to be fulfilled in the post-Cold War era with the Eisenhower's leadership and met many challenges, yet one of the most important challenges of the era was the rebellious attitude of the teenagers. Rock and Roll had a wide range of audiences in both races' teenagers because the teenagers were tired of the "suburban culture" of their parents and were pursuing their individuality.⁹¹ The main reason for that is related to the fact that the adults in the 1950s were mainly afraid of the change and tried to make the teenagers conform to their old beliefs and traditions but Rock and roll enabled teenagers to question their parents' conformist ideas and rebel against the old ways while embracing the change.⁹² While Blues, Rhythm and Blues and Country music formed the background of Rock and Roll, the

⁹¹ Robert P. Snow, "Youth, Rock 'n' Roll, and Electronic Media," *Youth & Society* 18, no. 4 (1987): pp. 326-343, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x87018004002>, 326.

⁹²Richard Aquila, *Let's Rock! How 1950s America Created Elvis and TheRock and Roll Craze* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 31.

genre generated conflict between generations. Parents and teachers did not understand the teenagers, and teenagers did not understand their parents and teachers' traditional upbringing and at the midst of this Rock and Roll was seen as a "teen rebellion" and a way of defying elders and old traditions.⁹³ Rock and Roll also became the voice of both African American experience and American teenagers in the 1950s. Older generations criticized Rock and Roll and the genre became the target of their discomfort for the idea of change, many elders saw Rock and Roll as a great danger and their concerns had more to do with the genre itself than its African American roots.⁹⁴ Cinema and some of the music styles of the 1950s were considerably less affected by the conservative pressures of the era. Television was the medium that was affected most by the conservatism of the 1950s America. There are several reasons for that. Firstly, television was the newest sensation in 1950s America. Compared to cinema and music, television did not possess the historical background to break the traditions and stereotypes that was brought with American history.

Although television was the most influential object of the 1950s, it did not have the power to eliminate the norms and traditions that were derived from the past. This is because the easiest way to sell television and make this new invention popular with the American people who liked to stick to their traditions was the showcase of the traditional American family and light themed projects such as comedy and game shows. Television did not yield the development and movement that cinema and music had achieved over the years. Cinema and music were older mediums of culture in the 1950s. They developed over time, and were able respond to the changing cultural and social climate, hence it was easier for them to portray the collapse of conformity.). The main feature of the television was entertainment, initially it did not have motives to

⁹³ William T. Bielby "Rock in a Hard Place: Grassroots Cultural Production in the Post-Elvis Era." *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 1 (February 2004): pp. 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900102>, 5-6.

⁹⁴ Alan J. Levine, *Bad Old Days: The Myth of The 1950s* (Transaction Publishers, 2009), 121.

inspire social movements and changes. However, with the 1950s, television was also affected by the decay of conformity, and it was apparent in some of the scenes of certain television shows which are examined in this study.

This study is a contribution to the existing literature in the sense that it portrays a detailed framework of how conformity was actually living its last terms in America in the 1950s by giving examples of different instances in television, cinema and music. Considering that there is a plethora of studies based on the idea that makes 1950s America as the peak years of conformity, this study can be utilized in further studies on development and decay of conformity of 1950s.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde 1950'ler çoğu zaman "Altın Yıllar" veya kabullenme ve konformitenin en yüksek düzeyde olduğu yıllar olarak kabul edilir. Her ne kadar dönem aynı zamanda nükleer savaş ve komünizm korkularıyla da anılsa da geriye dönüldüğünde en yaygın gözlemler kabullenme ve içi boş Materyalizm anlayışının en yüksek yaşandığı dönem olduğu yönündedir ve 1950ler genel olarak çok fazla olaya sahne olmayan gereksiz ve tembel bir dönem olarak görülmektedir.⁹⁵ 1950'ler Amerika Birleşik Devletleri tarihinde muhafazakârlık geleneğinin en fazla hissedildiği dönemlerden biri olarak bilinmektedir. Dönemin Amerikan vatandaşlarının dönemin sosyal meseleleri ile ilgili hiçbir adım atmadığı ve yıllar boyu süregelen Amerikan gelenekleri ve anlayışlarına dayalı konformite dışında bir şey yapmadıkları günümüzde genel kanı olarak kabul edilmektedir.

Bu tezin temel amacı, 1950'lerin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri için aslında konformitenin doğumu değil konformiteye olan inancın çöküşünün başlangıcı olduğunu göstermektir ve bunu 1950ler Amerika'sındaki televizyon dizileri, filmler ve müzik anlayışını irdeleyerek ortaya koymaktadır. Televizyon, film ve müzik 1950'lerde konformitenin çöküşünün zeminini hazırlayan değişikliğin üç temel aracı olmuştur. Televizyon, 1950'ler Amerika'sının en etkili teknolojilerinden biri olarak bilinmektedir. II. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında Amerika uzun süredir görülmemiş bir refah ve bolluk dönemine giriş yapmıştır. Amerikan vatandaşlarının gelirleri yükselmiştir ve

⁹⁵ Levine, *Bad Old Days*, 1.

alım gücü artmıştır. Bu sayede, Amerika’da 1950’lerde neredeyse her eve bir televizyon girmiş ve televizyon Amerikan vatandaşlarının sinemaya gidip vizyona yeni giren filmleri izlemek ve kütüphaneye gidip kitap ödünç almak gibi alışkanlıkları üzerinde oldukça belirgin bir şekilde negatif bir etki yaratmıştır.⁹⁶

1950’lerin en çok izlenen televizyon programları ihtilafli ve yenilikçi olmaktan uzak televizyon dizileri, bilgi yarışmalarından oluşmaktadır. Televizyonun 1950’ler Amerika’sı için en önemli etkilerinden biri, yayınlanan dizi ve programlar ile “Mükemmel Amerikan Banliyö Hayatı” fikrinin dönemin yaygın anlayışlarından biri haline gelmesini sağlamak olmuştur. Örnekleri tezde sunulan *I Love Lucy*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Honeymooners* ve *Fathers Knows Best* gibi programlar Amerikan Banliyö Hayatının televizyon ekranına yansımalarının en önemli örnekleri arasında yer almaktadır. Özellikle *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* ve *Father Knows Best* içerdikleri çalışan baba, ev hanımı hamarat anne ve yaramaz çocuk figürleri ile Amerikan Banliyölerindeki ailelerin özeti niteliğindedir. *I Love Lucy* 1950’lerin en popüler televizyon dizilerinden biridir. Lucy ve Rick Ricardo’nun günlük yaşamını konu alan dizi altı sezon sürmüştür ve 1950’lerin ideolojisini başarılı bir şekilde işlemiştir.⁹⁷ Dizinin bölümleri şov dünyasına girmek için büyük bir istek duyan fakat oldukça yeteneksiz olan ev hanımı Lucy ve eşi Ricky’nin atıldıkları çeşitli maceraları içermektedir. Dizinin farklı bölümlerinde dönemin anlayışına uygun olarak Lucy farklı iş alanlarında çalışmayı denese de her seferinde en başarılı olduğu işe yani ev hanımlığı ve anneliğe geri dönmektedir. Lucy’nin Küba kökenli Ricky ile evli olması da dönem içerisinde nadir görülen ırklar arası evliliğin ve Ricky karakteri ile Latin azınlığın televizyonda temsil edilmesi bakımından önemlidir.

⁹⁶Halliwell, *American Culture*,147-151.

⁹⁷Ibid, 166.

I Love Lucy 1950'lerin materyalist anlayışının başarılı bir örneğini teşkil etmektedir. Lucy'nin dikkatsiz ve Ricky tarafından gereksiz olarak değerlendirilen harcamaları, 1950'lerdeki savaş sonrası artan refahın televizyon ekranına yansımalarının örneklerinden birini oluşturmaktadır. Lucy ve Ricky Ricardo 1950'lerde Amerikan banliyölerinin her sokağında rastlanabilecek ortalama Amerikan ailesini televizyonda temsil ettikleri için *I Love Lucy* dönemin en önemli dizilerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Dizi ayrıca Küba kökenli Ricky karakterine yer vererek ve Latin Amerikalı bir birey ile Anglo-Amerikan kökenli bir bireyin evliliğini konu ederek dönemin konformite anlayışına meydan okumuştur.

Radyo şovu olarak başlayan *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* 1952-1962 yılları arasında on sene televizyonda yayınlanarak Amerikan televizyonunun en uzun soluklu dizisi olmuştur. Dizi, Baba Ozzie Nelson, Anne Harriet Nelson ve çocukları David ve Ricky Nelson'ın gerçek hayatını konu etmektedir. Yaşananların gerçek maceralar olmadığı dizide hatırlatılsa da, olaylar gerçek bir aile olan Nelson'lar tarafından canlandırılmıştır. Hep evde geçirecek boş zamanı olduğu için ne iş yaptığı pek anlaşılmayan baba Ozzie, düzenli ve mükemmel banliyö annesi Harriet ve düzenli ve temiz oğulları David ve Ricky ile Nelson ailesi 1950'lerin tipik orta sınıf Beyaz ailesini televizyonda temsil etmiştir.⁹⁸ 1960'lara gelindiğinde ailenin çocukları David ve Ricky büyüyüp evlenmiş ve *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* 1950'lerin miadını doldurmuş ideal orta sınıf Beyaz ailesini yani geçmişi temsil eden bir dizi olarak yayın hayatına son vermek durumunda kalmıştır.

Amerikan Banliyö Ailesinin temsil edildiği başka bir dizi olan *Leave It to Beaver* Theodore Cleaver adındaki bir çocuğun aile ve okul hayatını konu etmektedir. Çocukları eğitmek üzerine mesajlar içeren diziye göre mutlu bir hayatın formülü eğitim, meslek ve aile hayatının birlikteliği olarak sunulmaktadır. Dizide kendileri üniversite mezunu olan anne ve babaları Beaver ve erkek kardeşinin de üniversiteden

⁹⁸ Halliwell, *American Culture*,160-161.

mezun olmaları gerektiğine inanmıştır. Zira onlara göre üniversite mezuniyeti de mutlu hayata ulaşmakta gereken şeylerden biri olmuştur.

1951'de televizyonda yayınlanmaya başlayan *The Honeymooners*, bir otobüs şoförü olan Ralph Kramden ve karısı Alice Kramden'in gündelik hayatını konu almaktadır. 1950'lerdeki çoğu dizinin aksine Amerikan Banliyö ailesi yerine işçi sınıfından bir ailenin gündelik hayatlarını ve sıkıntılarını konu etmesi bakımından dizi dönemin standart anlayışının yıkıldığını önemli yapıtlardan birisidir. Dizi ayrıca dönemin nadir işlenen konularından biri olan Kadın Hakları konusuna değinmesi bakımından da önem teşkil etmektedir. Baskın erkek karakter olan Ralph'in karşına onun tarafından aşağılansa da susmayan zeki ve güçlü bir kadın karakter olan Alice'in çıkartılması da dönemin banliyö ev hanımı anlayışının yok sayıldığı olaylardan biri olmuştur. Ev eşyalarının bozulduğu küçük evleri ile Kramden ailesi 1950'ler televizyonunu işgal eden mükemmel Amerikan Banliyö evleri ve ailelerinin hayatı ile kendi hayatlarını özdeşleştiremeyen ve Amerika'nın çoğunluğunu oluşturan işçi sınıfı ailelerin bağ kurabileceği bir televizyon dizisi olarak yayınlanmıştır.

Father Knows Best sorun çözen ev babası karakteri ve mükemmel ve nazik ev hanımı anne karakteri ile Amerikan Banliyö hayatını ekrana taşıyan başka bir dizi olarak 1950'ler televizyonunda yerini almıştır. Dizinin önemli noktalarından biri 1950'lerde erkek ve kadınlara cinsiyetleri özelinde belirlenmiş alanları ve rolleri işlemek konusunda başarılı oluşudur. Annenin her zaman mutfakta bir şeyler pişirirken ya da bahçede çiçekler ve bitkilerle uğraşırken görülmesi ve çocukların genelde kendi odalarında olması bunun güzel birer örneği olarak gösterilebilir. Aile hayatının, belki de genel olarak sosyal düzenin, babanın yani erkeğin görünmez eli tarafından düzenlenişini ve kadınların ev işleri yapıp erkek karakter tarafından maddi olarak desteklenmesini işlediği bölümler göz önüne alındığında, *Father Knows Best* 1950'ler Amerika'sının kalıplaşmış ideallerini ekrana yansıtan bir diğer banliyö dizisidir.

Sinema her zaman toplumun sosyal problemleri algılamasına yardımcı olmak konusunda etkili bir araç olarak bilinmektedir. Güçlü hikâye örgüleri ve zeki

yönetmenleri olan filmler sosyal bir meselenin en kötü yanlarını bile seyircinin ilgisini kaybetmeden sunabilmektedir. Konformitenin 1950'lerde en güçlü zamanını yaşadığına dair genel kanıya rağmen bu çalışmadaki *Sinema* bölümü 1950'lerin konformite yıllarından daha fazlası olduğunu göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Banliyölere taşınmak ve televizyonun yaygınlaşması 1950'lerde Amerikan vatandaşlarının sinemaya gitme alışkanlıklarını etkilese de, dönemin önemli yönetmenleri ve çektikleri filmler 1950'lerde konformitenin artık dönemin varsayılan eylemi olmadığını göstermek konusunda önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu tezde değinilen filmler, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde uzun zamandır yer etmiş çoğu anlayışın 1950-1960 yılları arasında yavaş yavaş çözülmeye ve sorgulanmaya başladığını göstermek için seçilmiştir. Amerikan Banliyösü, banliyödeki aile hayatı, cinsiyet özelinde belirlenmiş roller, gençliğin üzerine empoze edilen rollerin filmlerin yönetmenleri ve izleyenler tarafından 1950'ler döneminde sorgulanışı filmler aracılığıyla işlenmiştir.

Nicholas Ray 1950'lerde Amerika'daki konformiteye dair yanılgıyı ve ideal Amerikan hayatının işleyişini eleştiren bir yönetmen olarak bilinmektedir.⁹⁹*Johnny Guitar* ve *Rebel Without a Cause* yönetmenin eleştirel yaklaşımının önemli örneklerini içermektedir ve bu çalışmada Nicholas Ray başlığı altında bu iki film irdelenmiştir. *Johnny Guitar* Nicholas Ray'in 1952 tarihli romandan uyarlanmış bir filmidir. Filmin başrollerinde Joan Crawford, Mercedes McCambridge, Scott Brady ve Sterling Hayden yer almaktadır. Film salon sahibi Vienna ve sevgilisi Johnny Guitar'ın salonlarına Dancin' Kid ve arkadaşlarını kabul etmesi ve kasabanın yakınına kurulacak demir yolunu desteklemesi olayları temelinde yaşananları anlatmaktadır. Filmin bu çalışmada yer almasının en önemli nedeni erkek egemen fikirlerin hüküm sürdüğü ve kadının rolünün ev hayatına, ev hanımlığı ve annelik yapmaya sığdırıldığı 1950ler döneminde, Nicholas Ray *Johnny Guitar* filmi ve Vienna karakteri ile güçlü kadın karakterlerin başrollerde olmasına yol veren ilk adımlardan birini atmıştır. Yönetmen, Johnny Guitar'ın feminen tavırlarını ve Vienna karakterinin kaba ve erkeksi tavırlarını

⁹⁹Frost, *Journal of Film And Video*, 55-57.

işleyerek cinsiyet rolleriyle oynamış ve dönemin cinsiyetçi normlarını yok saymıştır. Vienna filmin bazı sahnelerinde erkek karakterlerden daha kararlı ve güçlü işlenmiştir ki bu da 1950'lerin televizyon dizilerinde işlenen zayıf karakterli ve erkek birey tarafından desteklenmesi gereken ve ev dışında işe yaramayan kadın karakterlerinin tam zıttı bir anlayışın varlığına işaret etmektedir.¹⁰⁰ Vienna karakteri gibi güçlü kadın karakterlerin beyaz perdede işlenmesi 1950'ler Amerika'sı için alışılmadık bir durum teşkil etmiş ve Vienna 1950'lerin yardıma muhtaç ve eve hapsolmuş kadın karakterleri arasından sıyrılıp dönemin yaygın kadın imajına yeni bir soluk getirmiştir.

1955 tarihli ve ismini bir romandan alan *Rebel Without a Cause* Nicholas Ray'in en önemli filmlerinden biridir. Filmin başrollerinde James Dean, Natalie Wood ve Sal Mineo yer almaktadır. *Rebel Without a Cause* sinemalarda yayınlandığı dönemde çocuk suçlarını ve kuşaklar arasındaki farkları işlemesi açısından ses getirmiştir. Los Angeles'ta geçen film, Jim, Judy ve Plato adında üç gencin aile sorunları, akran baskısı ve ergenliğin kendi problemleri karşısında kendilerine özgü bir aile oluşturmaları ve Nicholas Ray'in Amerikan aile yapısına olan eleştirileri temelinde ilerlemektedir. Filmin en önemli noktalarından biri olan çocuk suçları 1950'lerin en önemli sorunlarından birini teşkil etmektedir. Filmde gençleri suça itenin ne olduğu aile bağları üzerinden sorgulanmaktadır. Film, sağlam bir baba figüründen yoksun olan Jim, babası ile sorunları olan ve hızlıca büyüüp bir kadın olmak isteyen Judy ve bir aileden mahrum kalan ve bakıcısı tarafından büyütülen Plato üzerinden 1950'lerin mükemmel Amerikan Banliyö ailesini eleştirmektedir. Filmde çocukların aile hayatları dışarıdan ne kadar iyi görünürse görünsün aslında hepsi yalnız hissetmekte ve kendi başlarına büyümek zorunda bırakılmaktadır. Ailelerinin işlevsizlikleri bu 3 genci filmin bir noktasında Jim'in baba, Judy'nin anne ve Plato'nun çocuk olduğu kendilerine özgü bir aile yaratmaya itmiştir. Nicholas Ray *Rebel Without a Cause* ile mükemmel Amerikan Banliyö ailesi yanılığının iç yüzünü gözler önüne sermiştir.

¹⁰⁰Talbird, *Quarterly Review*, 396-399.

Richard Brooks 1912 doğumlu Amerikalı bir yönetmendir. Yönetmenin *Blackboard Jungle* isimli filmi bu tezde işlenmiştir. *Blackboard Jungle* 1955 tarihli romandan uyarlanmış bir filmidir. Film 1950'lerde çocuk suçluluğunu ve Amerikan Birleşik Devletleri eğitim sisteminin aksaklıklarını işleyen bir film olarak ün kazanmıştır. Yönetmen Richard Brooks, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin eğitim sistemindeki aksaklıkları çok açık bir biçimde gözler önüne serdiği için eleştirilmiştir.¹⁰¹ Glenn Ford, Vic Morrow, Sid Poitier ve Anne Francis'in başrollerinde yer aldığı film New York'ta çocuk suçluların yoğun olduğu bir okula yeni atanan öğretmen Richard Dadier ve atandığı okuldaki öğrencileri işlemektedir. Filmde Richard Dadier kararlılıkla okulda öğretmenlere ve öğrencilere zor zamanlar yaşatan öğrencileri dize getirip kazanmaktadır. Yönetmen Richard Brooks filmdeki sahnelerle Amerika Birleşik Devleti eğitim sistemindeki sorunları ve büyüyen çocuk suçları problemini hiçbir şeyi saklamadan işlemek ve bunların izleyiciler tarafından açıkça anlaşılmasını istemiştir.¹⁰²

All That Heaven Allows 1955 tarihli Douglas Sirk filmidir. Filmin başrollerinde Jane Wyman ve Rock Hudson yer almaktadır. Film orta sınıf dul bir ev hanımı olan Cary'nin kendisinden yaşça genç olan bahçıvanı Ron ile olan ilişkisini konu almaktadır. Filmin ana konuları sınıf ve yaş farkı yüzünden Cary'nin ailesi ve çevresi tarafından maruz kaldığı baskı ve Ron ile olan ilişkisini devam ettirme konusundaki istek ve tereddütleri olarak sıralanabilir. 1950'ler Amerika'sının kadınları hapsettiği ev hanımlığı ve annelik altın kafesinde yer alan Cary'nin tamamen kendi hayatını ilgilendiren bir konuda maddi olarak kendisinden bağımsız olan yaşça büyük çocukları ve komşularının ön yargıları yüzünden karar verememesi, 1950'lerin konformite yatkınlığının bir örneği olarak sayılabilir. Bu yatkınlığın filmde en sonunda aşıldığı noktanın Ron'un büyük bir kaza geçirmesi sonucunda gerçekleşmesi, bakıma muhtaç

¹⁰¹Daniel, *Tough as Nails*, 93.

¹⁰²Ibid, 88.

ve Cary'nin evinde Cary'nin hayatına adapte olarak yaşamak durumunda kalması ve Cary'nin fedakâr hemşire/anne rolüne yeniden bürünmesi Douglas Sirk'ün filmlerinde çoğu zaman görülen mutsuz mutlu sonların bir örneğidir.

Bu çalışmada 1950'lerde değişimin en önemli araçlarından olan Müzik başlığı altında Rock and Roll, Rhythm and Blues, Blues ve Country müzik olmak üzere dört farklı müzik türü işlenmiştir. 1950'ler birçok açıdan hızlı değişimlere sahne olmuş ve II. Dünya Savaşından sonra Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki değişim ilerleyen zamanlarda müziğinde geleceğini de değiştirmiştir. 1960'larda Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde büyük etkileri olan Sivil Haklar Hareketleri 1950'lerde köklerini bulmuştur. Önceki dönemlerde mümkün olmamakla beraber, 1950'lerde birçok Afrika kökenli Amerikalı şarkıcı ve grup popüler hale gelmiştir. Aralarında Little Richard, Chuck Berry ve Bo Diddley'nin bulunduğu birçok Afrika kökenli Amerikalı şarkıcı Rock and Roll başta olmak üzere 1950'lerin müzik türlerini şekillendirmiştir.

Rock and Roll 1940 ve 1950'lerde oluşan bir müzik türüdür. Bu müzik türünün kültürel bir fenomen olarak yükselişi bu çalışmadaki *Müzik* bölümünün en önemli noktasını teşkil etmektedir. Rock and Roll'un yükselişi ile 1950'lerdeki Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki ana akım müzik Afrika kökenli Amerikalı sanatçıların müzikleri ile tanışma fırsatı yakalamıştır. Pop, country, gospel ve Rhythm and Blues türlerinin karışımı olarak tanımlanabilecek Rock and Roll 1950'lerin en önemli müzik türüdür. 1955 tarihli *Blackboard Jungle* filminin müzikleri arasında yer alan Bill Haley and His Comets grubunun şarkısı "Rock Around the Clock", Rock and Roll'un gelişimine büyük katkıda bulunmuştur. Sözleri tekrarlanan cümlelerden oluşsa da şarkının hareketli ritmi 1950'lerin gençleri arasında popüler olmasını sağlamıştır.

Rock and Roll türünün en önemli temsilcileri arasında Elvis Presley ve Pat Boone sayılabilir. Bu iki şarkıcı bir spektrumun iki ucunu temsil etmektedir. Temiz ve masum görünümlü Pat Boone ve çocuk suçlu karakterine yakın, kötü çocuk imajlı Elvis Presley müzik türünün 1950'lerin gençleri arasında yayılmasının önemli sebeplerindedir. Erken dönemdeki Rock and Roll müzik türü genel olarak duygusal ilişkiler, okul

hayatı, arabalar ve moda gibi konuları işlemiş, şarkı sözleri sayesinde dönemin gençlerinin ilgisini çekmiş ve onlara anlaşıldıkları hissini vermiştir. Rock and Roll 1950'lerde Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde sosyal tavırları, giyim tarzlarını ve günlük konuşmaları değiştiren bir akım haline gelmiştir. Bu müzik türü, Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı vatandaşlar ile Beyaz vatandaşları müzik temelinde bir araya getiren ortak bir değer olarak aynı zamanda dönemin konformite alışkanlıklarına ve sosyal normlarına meydan okumuştur. Hem Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı gençler hem de Beyaz gençler Rock and Roll temelinde aynı zevkleri paylaşmıştır. Rock and Roll aynı zamanda Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı azınlık kültürünün birçok noktasının ana akım kültüre entegre olmasına yardımcı olarak insan hakları hareketine de katkı sağlamıştır.

Rock and Roll akımı Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde okullardaki ayrımcılığı kaldırıldığı ve insan hakları akımının başladığı bir dönemde popüler hale gelmiştir. Amerikalı Beyaz gençliğin Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı azınlığın deneyimleri temelinde şekil alan bu müzik türüyle bağlantı kurması, 1950'ler Amerika'sında ırkçı tepkilere yol açmıştır. Söz konusu dönemde bazı kesimler Rock and Roll türünün Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki Beyazlar ve Afrika Kökenli Amerikalılar arasındaki bariyerleri yıkmasından endişe etmiş, diğer kesimler de Rock and Roll türünü ırksal birliktelik ve deneyimleri paylaşmaya aracı olan sosyal bir bağlayıcı olarak görmüştür. Bu durum, Amerika'da gelişen konformiteye meyilli fikirlerin sorgulanışının iyi bir örneği olarak sayılabilir.

Rhythm and Blues 1940'larda Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı topluluklar tarafından üretilen bir müzik türüdür. Bu müzik türü temelini Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların iş şarkıları, dini müzik, Blues gibi geleneksel ve popüler müziklerinden almaktadır. Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, Nashville, Houston, Oakland, Philadelphia ve Detroit Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı popülasyonun yoğun olduğu yerler olarak Rhythm and Blues türünün doğal merkezleridir. Bu müzik türü zamanla değişime uğramış ve 1950'lerin başında Rhythm and Blues, Blues türündeki şarkıları tanımlamak için kullanılmıştır. 1950'lerin ortasında Rhythm and Blues, Rock

and Roll müzik türünün oluşumuna katkıda bulunmuş ve 1950'ler döneminde Soul, Gospel ve Blues türlerinin birleşimi ile ortaya çıkan döneme özgü bir türü ifade etmiştir.¹⁰³ Rhythm and Blues başlarda sadece Afrika kökenli Amerikalı vatandaşlara hitap etse de, 1950'ler ve devamında beyaz genç Amerikalılar da bu müzik türünü ilgi ile takip etmiştir. Daha önceki dönemde beyaz Amerikalılar Rhythm and Blues türünde plakları satın almamış ve kendilerine ait radyo kanallarında bu türde şarkılar çalınmamış olsa da, 1950'lerin başından itibaren Rhythm and Blues türünü keşfeden Beyaz genç Amerikalılar bahse konu plakları satın almaya başlamıştır. Rhythm and Blues türünün 1950'lerde Amerika'daki en büyük etkisi Rock and Roll türüne kapıları açmış olmasıdır. Bu müzik türü ağırlıklı olarak Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı sanatçılar tarafından icra edilmesi ve Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların deneyimleri ve kültürlerini içermesi nedeniyle, bu kültür ile beyaz Amerikalı kültürünün birleşimine katkıda bulunmuştur.

Blues türünün kökenleri Afrika kökenli Amerikalı kölelerin tarlalarda birlikte çalışırken söyledikleri dini şarkılar ve iş şarkılarından gelmektedir.¹⁰⁴ Bu türün temel müzikal öğeleri Afrika kıtasında bulunabilir. Blues türünün orijinal hali Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların dini gelenekleri ile yakından ilişkilendirilmektedir. Alt türleri Blues Rock, Electric Blues ve Country Blues gibi türleri içermektedir. 1920'lerde Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Güney kesiminden şehir merkezlere göç etmesiyle sonradan gelen nesiller yeni bir müzik anlayışı oluşmuştur. Zamanla Blues, Rhythm and Blues, Gospel ve Jazz ile entegre hale gelmiştir. 1950'lerde Blues, Rock and Roll ve Rhythm and Blues gibi Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki müzik anlayışını etkilemiştir. Chuck Berry ve Bo Diddley gibi Blues sanatçıları Chicago şehrindeki müzik tarzından etkilenmiş ve Blues tarzının melankolik

¹⁰³Ripani, *The New Blue Music*, 5.

¹⁰⁴Wald, *The Blues*, 12.

yapısından farklı hareketli bir müzik türü yaratmıştır. Chicago tarzı Blues türünün en önemli temsilcisi Muddy Waters olarak bilinmektedir.

Blues da tıpkı Rhythm and Blues gibi Rock and Roll türünün gelişimine katkı sağlamıştır. Rock and Roll türünden daha derin ve gelişmiş bir müzik türü olan Blues, Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların müzik geleneklerinin Beyaz dinleyici tarafından daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlamıştır. Blues ve genel olarak Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların müzik anlayışı, konformite yerine bireysellik ve hislere bağlılık olarak bilinmektedir ve bu tür sanatçıların verecekleri mesajları içtenlik kullanarak dinleyicilerine ulaştırabileceklerinin iyi bir örneğidir. Rock and Roll ile beyaz kültürün içinde yer bulma imkânı kazanan Afrika Kökenli Amerikalıların kültürü açısından Rock and Roll türüne zemin yaratan Blues ve Rhythm and Blues türleri, 1950'lerdeki konformite yanılığısından sıyrılmak konusunda önem arz etmektedir. Bu türler konformiteye Afrika Kökenli Amerikalı bireylerin tarihi deneyimleri ve kültürlerini Beyaz kültürünün içinde yer yaratmaları sayesinde meydan okumuştur.

Country Müzik, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Güney kesiminde gelişen bir müzik türü olarak bilinmektedir. Geleneksel bir müzik türü olarak daha önceden oluşmuş olsa da Country Müzik gerçek bir müzik türü olarak 1920'lerde piyasaya sunulmuştur. Bu müzik türü banjo, armonika ve keman ile çalınan basit duygusal şarkı formları ve dans melodilerinden oluşmuştur. Country Müzik 1940'larda Hillbilly Müziği olarak popüler olmuş ve daha sonra popüler Batı müziği arasında yer almıştır. 1950'lerin en popüler Country Müzik sanatçıları arasında Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Tex Ritter, Hank Williams, Tennessee Ernie Ford ve Kitty Wells sayılabilir.

B. THESIS PERMISSON FORM

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Bölümü / Department : Latin ve Kuzey Amerika Çalışmaları / Latin and North American Studies

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English): 1950S IN AMERICA: MYTHS AND TRUTH

TEZİN TÜRÜ/ DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans/ Master Doktora / PhD

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