



Title: A Comparison of Two Contrasting Film Styles: The Films of Wilder and Bresson

Author: Celeste Alcalay

Abstract:

If one were to search for an answer to the question: What is the role of the viewer in cinema? The French New Wave auteurs, the Neo-realists, Hollywood in the time of its studio system, the German Expressionists, and every cinema in between would have provided a different answer. Some films are meant to entertain, others to frustrate. Two opposite sides of the spectrum: One could create a sense of realism so strong a viewer immerses themselves in a story that they, for the duration of the movie, forget is fictitious, or conversely, one could remind the viewer they are watching a film, prompting them to question and reconsider what it means to watch. Regardless of a filmmaker's intent, films may accomplish one or the other, or a combination of both. In this project, I use two films representative of opposite approaches to filmmaking—Hollywood writer-director Billy Wilder's 1950 film noir *Sunset Boulevard* and independent filmmaker Robert Bresson's 1966 art film *Au Hasard Balthazar*—to explore the relationship between form and content when one is prioritized over the other. I also observe the way those relationships shape and influence a viewer's understanding of the themes present in the two films.