

**THE HOLLYWOOD YOUTH NARRATIVE AND THE FAMILY VALUES CAMPAIGN,
1980-1992**

by

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The dissertation seeks to identify and analyze the cultural work performed by the Hollywood youth narrative during the 1980s and early nineties, a period that James Davison Hunter has characterized as a domestic “culture war.” This era of intense ideological confrontation between philosophical agendas loosely defined as “liberal” and “conservative,” increasing social change, and social polarization and gender/sexual orientation backlash began with Ronald Reagan’s landslide victory in 1980 and continued for twelve years through the presidency of George Bush, Sr.

The dissertation examines the Hollywood youth narrative in the context of the family values debate and explicates its role in negotiating and resolving social conflict in a period of intense social change and ideological confrontation. The dissertation theorizes the historic and cultural function of the Hollywood youth narrative in “translating” complex social problems into generational and familial conflicts that can be easily, if superficially, resolved through conventional Hollywood genre narrative structures. In the specific instance of the family values debate during the 1980s and early 1990s, the dissertation analyzes how important low-budget Hollywood youth narratives

both supported and challenged the traditional translation of social conflict into easily resolved generational conflict to reveal the complex social and economic factors behind the “crisis in the American family.”

“The Fifties” played a critical role in debates regarding family life during the Reagan and Bush era. The dissertation explicates and contrasts the definitions of “the Fifties” and the use of 1950s Hollywood film and television materials in the Hollywood youth narrative and Family Values Campaign and demonstrates how young filmmakers used the icons, images and narrative structures of important 1950s Hollywood films to both support and challenge the socially conservative vision of American family life promoted by the Family Values Campaign and its New Right supporters. Through an analysis of Tim Hunter’s River’s Edge and Micheal Lehmann’s Heathers, the dissertation demonstrates how two Hollywood youth narratives of the period reveal the fundamental contradictions between the New Right’s idealized versions of American family values and the values of laissez faire capitalism, the often devastating impact of Reaganomics on the family as a site of social reproduction, and the troubled relationship between youth and consumer culture.

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Introduction

This dissertation identifies and analyzes the cultural work performed by the Hollywood youth narrative during the 1980s and early 1990s, a period that John Davison Hunter has characterized as a domestic "culture war" (42). This era of intense ideological confrontation between philosophical agendas loosely defined as "liberal" and "conservative," increasing social change, social polarization and gender/sexual orientation backlash began with Ronald Reagan's landslide presidential victory in 1980 and continued for 12 years through the presidency of George H. W. Bush. Hunter argues that, because of its function as a critical site for the reproduction of social identity, the American family and "family values" became the center of many of the most heated controversies as Americans debated the legitimacy of different models of family life, gender roles and expectations, models of childrearing, and the socialization and education of American youth (173-195).¹

¹ Stephanie Coontz documents how cycles of "families in crisis" have been regularly experienced throughout American social history, especially in periods of massive social and economic transition. Throughout the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations, a perceived "crisis in the American family" fueled a variety of fierce debates focused on the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, legalized abortion and federally subsidized birth

1. Chapter One: Defining and Theorizing the Hollywood Youth Narrative and the Family Values Campaign

1.1. Defining the Hollywood Youth Narrative

During the 1980s and early 1990s, representations of youth proliferated in American cinema (Shary 8). As Jonathan Bernstein argues, during this era, Hollywood produced a huge archive of films focused on and marketed to youth (47). American filmmakers like John Hughes, Francis Ford Coppola, Amy Heckerling, Michael Lehman, Tim Hunter and John Waters produced coming-of-age films as powerful and compelling as their 1950s counterparts. Many of the most popular Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s directly engaged the debates over changing notions of masculinity, femininity and appropriate family structures generated by the family values debate. Because of its focus on the transition into adulthood with its defined conceptions of gender, race and class, the Hollywood youth narrative offers an important social space where competing definitions of adulthood, masculinity, femininity, sexual orientation and family life could be represented and negotiated. Despite its popularity and proliferation through the 1980s and 1990s, the Hollywood youth narrative has been notoriously difficult for film theorists to define.

Representations of youth have been popular in Hollywood film since the earliest days of silent cinema. Images of youth, poised on the precarious border

between childhood and adulthood, have long captured the imagination of American movie goers. As Kay Sloan observes in The Loud Silents, early silent films portrayed the perils facing youth. For instance, Wages of Sin (1929) and Traffic in Souls (1913), the dramatization of John D. Rockefeller's report on white slavery, depict the problem of prostitution (Sloan 82-84). In fact, Cynthia Lee Efland challenges the prevailing notion among film scholars that the 1950s was the seminal period during which Hollywood first recognized and marketed to a youth audience. In her dissertation on films of the 1920s, Felando argues that whereas the youth films of the 1950s focused largely on male teens, films produced in the 1920s foregrounded femininity via a cycle of "flapper" and "collegiate" movies.

Since the silent era, Hollywood youth narratives have been produced across a wide range of modes of production, distribution and exhibition. This range of industrial and discursive practices has made Hollywood coming-of-age narratives difficult to categorize with any specificity. Hollywood youth narratives have been produced by big Hollywood studios, independent low-budget production houses and exploitation directors. Hollywood youth films have been shown in venues ranging from fancy movie palaces, drive-ins, B-movie theaters, art film houses and at home on VCRs, to the marginalized settings where exploitation films were seen². During the 1980's and 1990s, these films were often

² As defined by Eric Schaefer in the introduction to Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959, the term "exploitation film" refers to a group of extremely low-budget films produced and exhibited outside of the

viewed by teenagers at the local mall multiplex (Shary 8). Throughout American cinema history, the Hollywood youth narrative has been made available to the public through a wide range of distribution networks including the vertically integrated distribution organizations of the big studios, the networks of small independent producers like American International Pictures (AIP), urban based art house theaters and the circuits of distribution established by exploitation filmmakers and distributors.

The narrative and rhetorical structures of the Hollywood youth narratives have also been diverse and complex. Their coming-of-age stories have been told across a wide range of narrative structures including many conventional Hollywood genre formulas: social problem films, comedies, horror films and melodramas. As noted by Steve Neale in Hollywood and Genre, across this generic range, coming-of-age narratives embody a complex range of rhetorical address. Though they often address youth directly through their marketing and narrative strategies, Hollywood youth narratives, until the late 1970s and 1980s when they were produced by young filmmakers just out of film school, have historically been made by adults. The dual nature of Hollywood youth narratives' rhetorical address often registers within the films themselves, as illustrated in Rebel Without A Cause, in the moment when James Dean's mother

Hollywood studio system and its networks of distribution. Exploitation films focused on sensationalized issues -- drug use, abortion, pre-marital sex, and venereal disease -- that could not be addressed in mainstream American cinema.

looks directly into the camera and confronts her adult peers saying, "You worry about your children, you pray for them, you never think that it could happen to you!"

As Neale argues, the Hollywood youth narrative has been difficult for film theorists to analyze because of its intense industrial heterogeneity, its use of diverse narrative formats and generic structures, and its shifting modes of rhetorical address. Since its first appearance, these films have been referred to by many different terms. In Teenagers and Teenpics, Thomas Doherty uses the industrial terms "teen flicks" and "teenpics" to denote low-budget films made expressly for teenage viewers during the 1950s (9). Sam Katzman pioneered the teen flick with low-budget matinee fare during the 1940s (57). With the release of the first rock-and-roll film, Rock Around the Clock (1956), Katzman led the way for a deluge of low-budget rock-and-roll teenpics including Elvis Presley's star vehicle Jailhouse Rock (1957). Doherty classifies the teen flicks of the 1950s into several distinct sub-genres besides the rock-and-roll teen flick: the "dangerous youth" teen flicks like Blackboard Jungle (1955) and High School Confidential (1958); the "horror teenpics" including those directed by Roger Corman for AIP -- She Gods of Shark Reef (1956), Attack of the Crab Monster (1957) and Teenage Cavemen (1958) -- and the "clean teenpics" including Gidget (1959) and Pat Boone's 1957 musical, Bernadine.

Doherty uses the term "cross-over" to specifically describe the series of high-budget, mainstream Hollywood films produced during the 1950s and early

1960s including Peyton Place (1955), Rebel Without a Cause (1955), A Summer Place (1959) and Splendor in the Grass (1961) (53). The cross-over embodied Hollywood's slow recognition of the youth market and the financial power of young audiences by combining young stars like Sandra Dee with adult stars. Cross-overs, like the "adult" melodramas analyzed by Barbara Klinger in her chapter on adult melodrama in Melodrama and Meaning, use a melodramatic narrative (36-51). These films exploited the loosening of censorship codes in the 1950s by addressing serious social issues or "social problems" like pre-marital sexuality in Splendor in the Grass, adultery in A Summer Place, rape in Peyton Place, and juvenile delinquency and alienation in Rebel Without a Cause (36-51). More recently, Jon Lewis and Tim Shary have used the terms "teen film" and "youth film" to identify representations of youth in American cinema.

As a film archive with a complex industrial history and a wide variety of sub-genres, the Hollywood youth narrative has posed problems of definition and has largely resisted theorization. In this dissertation, I use the term Hollywood youth narrative to denote any film that focuses on representations of adolescent youth within a coming-of-age dramatic structure, despite differences in modes of production, distribution, exhibition, narrative and rhetorical address. The term "Hollywood youth narrative" highlights the opposition of youth and adults in a cross-generational coming-of-age conflict and emphasizes the centrality of the coming-of-age dramatic structure in Hollywood representations of youth. The term Hollywood youth narrative includes the categories of the youth film, teen

film, teen flick, teenpic and the cross-over.

Choosing coming-of-age narratives to focus on within even this broad definition is still problematic because the definition of youth itself has been vague and amorphous in both popular and academic literature; at present, the term youth includes young people from twelve years of age through the early twenties. A vast array of names and terms have been used to refer to American youth including minor, ward of the court, adolescent, teenager, bobby soxer, juvenile delinquent, and more recently dude and gangsta. Furthermore, as argued by Tim Shary in Generation Multiplex, the study of youth has cut across many disciplines, sub-disciplines, and professions since adolescence was first introduced as a psychological term by G. Stanley Hall in the early 1900s (19).

Because this dissertation focuses on Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s and seeks to understand the cultural work performed by these films within the context of the larger cultural battle over family values, the project focuses on adolescent youth and emphasizes the high-school experience as a central part of adolescent life. Though, as Shary notes, there was a resurgence of Hollywood youth narratives focused on college-age youth during the late 1980s and 1990s, I have chosen to focus on representations of adolescents because of the role of these youth within families during a period of intense debate about American families (18). Focusing on adolescents highlights the role of the high school as the principal institution of socialization of American youth since World War II and is a recurring setting in the Hollywood youth

narrative.

1.2. The Historical Roots of the American Comprehensive High School in the 1950s

As John Modell argues in Into One's Own, the high school is now such a large and pervasive institution of American life that few people realize that less than 50 years ago, a high-school education was a privilege offered to a very few, very wealthy young Americans (11). In fact, in her history of youth, Teenagers, Grace Palladino argues that the high school as we know it today emerged during the Depression as a way to keep large numbers of unemployed young people out of the workforce where they would compete with adults for precious jobs (17). Progressive educators, deeply influenced the Roosevelt Administration, and played a crucial role in establishing and expanding the idea of a high-school education as a way to train youth for their eventual place in the nation's labor market (Palladino; Modell 121-129). Roosevelt initiated the use of high-school students in several large New Deal Work Programs. Because these work programs required participants to remain in high school as a requirement for employment, the numbers of students attending and graduating from high school during and following the Depression era expanded enormously. (Palladino 44; Modell 121-129). During this critical initial period in the history of the high school, immigrant parents, many of whom did not have high-school educations themselves and did not see high school as valuable or necessary, were persuaded by their children that high school was a

clear and direct route to economic mobility -- better jobs and better lives. The Great Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal were crucial events that established the basic institutional structure and purpose of the American high school and generated America's deep associations between public education and the American democratic dream of economic mobility and equal opportunity for all Americans (Palladino 34-44).

In the affluent post-World War II era, the social role of the American high school grew immensely. Building on the foundation established by progressive educators in the 1930s, educators and government officials sought to coordinate the larger social and economic agendas of the Cold War period with the educational goals and practices of the high school. High schools could play a central role in training workers for an economy shifting from industrial to white-collar work (Palladino 33). But more importantly, high school could inculcate the values and work ethic central to a middle-class society: hard work, discipline, punctuality, frugality, respectability and reliability to mention only a few (Palladino 33). Borrowing the turn-of-the-20th-century term "adolescent" from psychologist G. Stanley Hall, progressive educators generated powerful rationales for expanding the role of high schools as the central institution in socializing youth as productive future members of America's workforce and citizenry (Palladino 33). Within the short span between the Great Depression and the late 1950s, going to high school became the major occupation for the vast majority of America's young people, and "middle-class"

character building became central in the design of the high-school curriculum.

Many of the practices and traditions that we associate most deeply with the American high school developed during this pivotal post-war period and were designed specifically to inculcate the values and work ethic of a capitalist economy and middle-class society. As countless advertisements and Hollywood movies reminded viewers, the family was the most basic American unit of production and consumption. The post-war economy depended on producers, but even more essential were consumers. In the family unit, the roles of producers and consumers were fixed and deeply gendered. Men, whose identity centered ground breadwinning, worked outside the home. Women, whose identity was organized by consumption, worked in the home caring for children and taking care of the house.

High-school curricula reflected the emphasis on consumption and through its many forms of formal and informal training, reinforced and reproduced the gender structures of the Cold War society at large. Young men were encouraged to pursue traditionally "masculine" fields like science and mathematics. Young women were encouraged to pursue softer, more feminine language arts courses. Secretarial courses including typing, shorthand and bookkeeping trained females for their short term stints in the workforce as secretaries and clerks before becoming mothers, wives and homemakers (Palladino 22-23). Sports programs taught young men fair play and competition.

Boys took shop, where they learned masculine skills of home building and car repair. Home economics taught young women how to be good consumers and perform their role as "domestic engineers" in the post-war economy (Palladino 40).

1.3. The High School and the Development of Teen Consumer Culture and Teen Markets

While educators worked to develop high-school curriculums and character-building activities for "adolescents," young people were swiftly shaping a clear identity as a distinctive demographic, cultural group with its own powerful market presence. In fact, Palladino centers her discussion of the evolution of the teenager within the high school. Without the high school, she argues, the demographic and social category of the teenager would never have emerged. She writes:

The evolution of modern teenage culture has as much to do with a changing economy, a national culture of consumption and individualism, and most importantly, the age-graded, adolescent world of high school as it does with inexperience or hostility to adult rule" (Palladino xxii).

Ironically, though educators imagined high school as the place where passive adolescents would be under the safe and caring tutelage of wise and caring adults, high school soon became the center of a burgeoning youth culture with its own rules, rules that were often shocking and alarming to the adults who supervised them. In *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, social historian

Beth Bailey analyzes the deep structural similarities between youth and adult cultures, despite behaviors and appearances that adults deplored as wildly subversive and un-American (25-56).

As Bailey argues in her chapter "The Economics of Dating," the high-school social system, initially developed by teenagers in the 1950s, operates as an important training ground for capitalist society and consumer culture (25-56). Bailey focuses on how the structural changes that generated the emergence of youth as a distinct demographic group revolutionized social relations along a commercial model, and dramatically altered relationships between the sexes. Bailey poses teenage "dating games" as a prime example of social customs that provide practice for the larger capitalist, competitive society. She further argues that from the 1920s through the early 1960s, courting, which had taken place in the private parlors of individual families, became a public and un-chaperoned affair. With this shift, "going out on a date" involved men spending money for food and entertainment. Dating commercialized gender interaction by reproducing the capitalist scarcity/abundance model. Young men competed for dates and the status that a particularly good date offered in the teen hierarchy. In the economic logic of the new dating system, the value of a "date" could be measured by how much money a man spent. Women rewarded men for their expenditures by conferring status and sexual favors. The "dating game," Bailey argues, provided the competitive center to a burgeoning youth culture and its intricate systems of status and popularity. Dating and the larger

popularity competition that it worked to create and reinforce socialized young men and women into the principles of a market society.

The deep influence of capitalism permeated other areas of teen life as well. The formation and evolution of a distinct teen culture in the post-war period extended its influence far outside the purely social arena of high-school life providing the social basis for the growing economic power of America's teens (Doherty 34-35). By the end of the 1950s, America's youth emerged as one of the country's most lucrative markets. Corporate America identified, consolidated, and fed the insatiable teenage appetite for every commodity imaginable: clothes, books, magazines, movies, make-up and more.

1.4. A Review and Critique of the Critical Literature

This dissertation provisionally recognizes the Hollywood youth narrative as a distinct genre for the purpose of analyzing its role in the specific context of the 1980s culture war over family values. Building on previous scholarly work, this dissertation assumes the status of the Hollywood youth narrative as a distinct genre with a variety of important and recognizable sub-genres.

The problem of defining and delineating the Hollywood youth narrative as a subject of critical investigation has been reflected in the scholarly literature on the archive as a whole. Furthermore, until the late 1990s, critical study of Hollywood youth narratives has been scant. In the specific instance of Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s, despite its popularity

and proliferation, little critical work had been done on this important archive until the recent publication of Shary's encyclopedic text, Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema.

Like most other critical work on this topic over the last 30 years, Shary's work offers a generic and thematic approach to the study of Hollywood youth narratives. As a structuralist genre analyst, Shary isolates aesthetic forms from their historical context and function; and in a sociological study of important themes in the Hollywood youth films of the last two decades, Shary explicates how these films "reflect" their social context.

The relatively small number of scholarly investigations of the Hollywood youth narrative over the last three decades demonstrates that the study of the Hollywood youth narrative, like its production, if not neglected, has often been relegated to a variety of intellectual and industrial ghettos. Critical work has focused on four central areas: (1) structuralist genre readings, (2) sociological readings, (3) thematic analyses and (4) the application of literary coming-of-age narrative models that do not recognize or address the Hollywood youth narrative as a cinematic artifact produced within cinematic institutions. Critical study of the Hollywood youth narrative has generated a wealth of information about its filmic conventions, but very little insight into the relationship between the films and their social context, especially during periods of intense ideological confrontation and cultural backlash, like the 1950s and the 1980s. The growing body of literature has advanced the understanding of Hollywood youth

narratives; however, these studies have not addressed the Hollywood youth narrative within its historical and social setting and have not explored its cultural function.

Despite the enormity of the Hollywood youth narrative archive, the first book-length study focused on representations of youth, The J.D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies, was published in 1975 by Mark Thomas McGee and R. J. Robertson. David Considine's The Cinema of Adolescence did not appear until 10 years later in 1985. Thomas Doherty's study, Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s, quickly followed in 1988. Jon Lewis published The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Film and Youth Culture in 1992. Murray Pomerance and John Sakeris edited a collection of essays entitled Pictures of A Generation: The Toronto Papers in 1996, followed by Jonathan Bernstein's Pretty in Pink: The Golden Age of Teenage Movies in 1997. Five years later, Tim Shary published Generation Multiplex. In 2002, Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood, edited by Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance, focused on representations of females and treats the idea of "the girl" as an important thematic. In 2005, Gateward and Pomerance published Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth, a second book that focuses on representations of "the boy" in contemporary Hollywood youth narratives.

A series of important essays have been published, including David White's essay "Kidpix," in Film Comment in 1985, followed by a series of important articles

in film studies literature, most notably Thomas Leitch's "The World According to Teenpix" (1992) and Clark's At a Theatre Near You: The History, Culture and Politics of the Exploitation Film (1995). Essays on the Hollywood youth narrative first began appearing in film genre studies in the late 1990s, including Wheeler Winston Dixon's "Fighting, Violence and Everything, That's Always Cool," in Film Genre 2000. The most comprehensive and challenging of these essays includes Steve Neale's brief chapter on the teenpic in Hollywood and Genre published in 2000. Additional essays on important Hollywood youth narratives, most notably Neale's essay on the teen-slasher film, were published in anthologies, like Planks of Reason, and focused on more recognized genre forms like horror and comedy.³

An overview of the scholarly literature focused on Hollywood youth narratives illustrates the limitations of current critical approaches to the genre. Though they focus on entirely distinct periods in the history of the genre, both

³ The Hollywood youth narrative has also been the subject of several important dissertations since the mid-1990s. These dissertations come from a wide range of academic disciplines including Communications, Educational Psychology, English and Film Studies. Some of the most important of these dissertations include: "Fitting Pretty: Media Construction of Teenage Girls in the 1950s," by Barbara Jean Coleman (1995); "Rebellion and Reconciliation: Social Psychology, Genre, and the Teen Film, 1980-1989," by Christine Karen Reeves (1996); "Searching for the Fountain of Youth: Popular American Cinema in the 1920s," by Cynthia Lee Felando (1996); "The American High School Experience: A Cinematic View from the 1980s," by Maria Moraites (1997); "Here's to You, Mrs. Robinson: Representations of Sexual Initiation in Coming-of-Age Films and How They Limit the Imaginary Domain of Youth," by Bonnie Lee MacDonald (1998); and "Coming-of-Age in American Cinema: Modern Youth Films as Genre," by Matthew Schmidt (2002).

Doherty and Shary rely on a structuralist definition of genre to identify the major conventions of the Hollywood narrative and to divide and catalogue films by sub-genre according to those conventions. For instance, Doherty's Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s focuses on the low-budget 1950s teenpic. While providing valuable historical information about this specific form of Hollywood youth narrative, Doherty analyzes and categorizes films by the sub-genre conventions of the clean teenpic, the dangerous youth teenpic, the horror teenpic and the rock-and-roll musical teenpic, without addressing the relationship between these formal, aesthetic structures and the historical context of the 1950s. Similarly, Shary's encyclopedic survey of Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and 1990s, applies Doherty's structuralist model to representations of youth in the Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and 1990s, but offers no analysis of the endurance of the sub-genres beyond considerations of their thematics. Both of these valuable studies provide a wealth of information about the range of conventions in Hollywood youth narratives in two very different historical periods, but yield little insight into how these films deployed those conventions within the larger social context in which they were produced and consumed.

In an attempt to move beyond purely aesthetic and structuralist generic readings of the Hollywood youth narrative, several scholars have produced sociological studies that use thematic analysis to examine how particular films intersect with the historical context in which they were produced and

consumed. McGee and Robertson's study, The J.D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies, explores the image of the juvenile delinquent in 1950s Hollywood films. For the authors, juvenile delinquency is a thematic in these films that reflects the social conflicts regarding social changes in post-World War II American life. Taking a similar approach in From Romance to Ruin, Lewis reads the Hollywood youth narrative thematically through the lens of the 1950s concept of youth alienation and catalogues the various ways that the Hollywood youth narrative reflects the alienation that youth experienced in the post-World War II era. Lewis's thematic analysis rests on the notion of alienated youth, a complex historical term that he deploys without critical or historical evaluation. Even within his encyclopedic review of the films and sub-genres of the 1980s and 1990s Hollywood youth narrative, Shary offers readings of films that reduce complex narratives to the thematics of sex, science, high-school experience, criminality and romance. In a similar way, Considine's study, The Cinema of Adolescence, explores how important Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s "reflect" post-World War II social conflicts.

Additionally, several recent dissertations have analyzed the Hollywood youth narrative using a literary approach based on a literary model of the coming-of-age narrative structure. This application of a literary model to the study of the Hollywood youth narrative fails to recognize or analyze the critical cinematic tradition of coming-of-age narrative structure in the Hollywood youth narrative. Schmidt's thesis assumes the generic status of the Hollywood youth

narrative based on the literary model of the bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, without ever examining the cinematic development of the coming-of-age narrative or the conventions of the genre identified by Doherty and Shary. Throughout his dissertation, Schmidt's analysis of 1950s and 1980s Hollywood youth narratives suggests that these films should be recognized as a distinct genre based on their use of the classic literary coming-of-age structure and its contemporary literary variants that persist in an aesthetic realm untouched by time and space.

This dissertation seeks to address the methodological limits of current scholarly work on the Hollywood youth narrative by examining the role of these films within the specific context of the Family Values Campaign of the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations. My choice of 1980s and early 1990s Hollywood youth narratives allows me to focus on a longstanding problem within the critical literature on the coming-of-age narrative and, in addition, on a larger conversation within film studies itself regarding the relationship between film texts and social contexts and the efficacy of the critical category of genre within film studies.

1.5. Theorizing the Hollywood Youth Narrative

Through its study of the 1980s and 1990s Hollywood youth narrative, this dissertation seeks to remedy the limitations of current scholarship by theorizing the role of the Hollywood youth narrative in representing and resolving social

conflict during a period of intense social change and dramatic cultural conflict. This dissertation explicates the role of Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s by analyzing its capacity to articulate, define and resolve social conflict during a period of massive ideological confrontation and cultural transformation regarding American family life and its relationship to youth.

To achieve this end, this dissertation theorizes the cultural function of the Hollywood youth narrative by demonstrating its capacity to translate complex social change and social conflict into simple generational conflict. In focusing on the transformation of social conflict into familial conflict, this dissertation builds on the large body of critical literature within film studies devoted to melodrama. As Laura Mulvey argues, melodrama has been "a magnificent obsession" beginning with the birth of film studies as a specific academic discipline in the early 1970s (Bratton, Cook, Gledhill 121-133). Since Thomas Elsaesser's groundbreaking essay, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama" in Imitations of Life, melodrama has engaged and offered film theorists rich opportunities to study the link between films texts and their social and historical context. Some of the most important of these include publications by Byars (1991), Gledhill (1987), Fischer (specifically Imitation of Life, 1991), and Marcia Landy (1991). In her essay "Revisiting Melodrama," Linda Williams argued that the study of film melodrama must be extended to address the critical cultural role of melodrama in American culture as a social mode of knowing and storytelling that powerfully shapes public opinion and perception

(Browne 80-82).

Elsaesser was the first to articulate the way that domestic melodramas displace social conflict onto the domestic. As Landy writes in the introduction to Imitations of Life in reference to Thomas Elsaesser's work:

A major strategy of melodrama resides in its mystification of social class and of political power and powerlessness. Since film texts reveal a tendency to displace historical, political and economic issues onto the private sphere and into psychological conflict, critical analysis seeks to identify how ideological displacement can be exposed in the melodramatic text (22).

Feminist theorists -- specifically Byars, Fischer, Gledhill and Liebman-have worked to track the displacement of larger social conflicts onto the domestic sphere.

John Hill was the first to recognize the importance of melodrama in the study of youth narratives. In his study of British youth narratives of the period following World War II, Sex, Class, and Realism, Hill demonstrates that the melodramatic structure of youth narratives displaces the conflicts, contradictions and tensions of post-war British life into the familial arena (10-11).

My theory of the Hollywood youth narrative builds on Hill's work by defining the specific way that Hollywood youth narratives translate complex social change into familial conflict through its coming-of-age dramatic core. I argue that the coming-of-age dramatic structure allows social change and conflict to be grafted onto the opposing categories of youth and adult. Through this narrative process of redefinition, the Hollywood youth narrative

"translates" complex social change and conflict into cross-generational cultural conflict between youth and adults within the family rather than within the larger social context. Social conflict redefined as easily resolved intergenerational cultural conflict can then simply, if superficially, be resolved through the narrative conventions of Hollywood genre.

My theory of the Hollywood youth narrative rests on a definition of the genre offered by Adrian Martin in his short but provocative 1994 essay, "Teen Movies: The Forgetting of Wisdom" (36). Martin argues that the Hollywood youth narrative can be distinguished from other Hollywood genres through its unique interaction of semantic and syntactic elements (36). Martin's concept of the Hollywood youth narrative builds on Rick Altman's theory of the film musical. Altman distinguishes between the semantic elements of film genres, the discrete parts of a genre including visual images and icons, sound, character types and setting, to name a few, and the syntactic elements of a genre which organize the semantic elements within syntactic structures or narrative forms. The distinction between syntax and semantics structures Altman's analyses of the film musical and is most clearly and simply articulated in his essay "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" (27-41).

Martin argues that film youth narratives in general are unique in that they have an unusually stable set of semantic elements that are deployed across a very wide range of syntactic structures. Martin insists that it is the unusually enduring and recognizable semantic elements within representations of youth in

a wide variety of narrative structures that make youth films identifiable (45). For instance, in the specifically American context of the 1980s, youth narratives span the range of Hollywood genre formats: horror films like Carrie (1976) and John Carpenter's Halloween (1978) and Halloween II (1981); comedies like Peggy Sue Got Married (1986), The Breakfast Club (1985), and Ferris Buehler's Day Off (1986); musicals like Hairspray (1988); and melodramatic social-problem films like Lean On Me (1989) and Stand and Deliver (1988).

Some of the longest-standing semantic elements of Hollywood youth narratives from the 1940s through the present include the following settings, events, characters and visual icons: the high school and the various fixtures of high-school life including gym class and the cafeteria, the senior prom, graduation, and food fights; and stable figures including teachers, students and principal. These semantic elements become familiar and generically identifying elements of the Hollywood youth narrative. The stable semantic elements of the American high school provide the setting for Hollywood youth narratives that use a wide array of syntactic structures as diverse as horror, comedy and melodrama.

I build on Martin's theory by arguing that the Hollywood youth narrative's unique capacity for syntactic diversity makes it unusually supple in representing social conflict as cross-generational change or conflict. Syntactic flexibility offers filmmakers of Hollywood youth narratives a wide range of narrative options for both defining and resolving social conflict that has been redefined

as cultural conflict between youth and adults. Examples of the many narrative options for resolving social conflict redefined as generational conflict include comedy's reconciling marriage that merges social opposition with a new social integration, melodrama's concluding sacrifice of the willing social victim to preserve the status quo and the horror narrative's relentless destruction of the social monster to reaffirm normalcy. I argue that it is the Hollywood youth narrative's ability to translate complex social change into easily definable and resolvable generational conflict that has led theorists including Doherty, Wood, Lewis and Shary to misread the Hollywood youth narrative as simply nostalgic and politically conservative.

My analysis of several Hollywood youth narratives produced during the 1980s demonstrates both the limits and possibilities of Martin's definition of the relationship between semantics and syntax in the Hollywood youth narrative. In fact, it suggests that both syntax and semantic elements undergo transformation in a variety of ways. River's Edge inverts the fundamental syntactic structures at the heart of the dangerous youth sub-genre to deconstruct the idea of youth as social monsters and to illustrate the visual rewriting of the family and community as social wastelands instead of suburban Utopias. Heathers, an innovative syntactic fusion of horror and comedy, deconstructs the teen suicide melodramas of the 1980s so that the high school can be revealed as a training ground in consumer culture, not democracy.

1.6. Defining the Family Values Campaign

This dissertation analyzes the Hollywood youth narrative's role in representing and resolving social conflict within the context of cultural change epitomized by the highly charged debate over "family values." In this dissertation, I distinguish between the larger family values debate and the specific conservative agenda regarding family life espoused by the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations and their New Right supporters. The Family Values Campaign is the title that historian Steven K. Wisendale has retrospectively given the conservative domestic social program promoted by both the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations in his analysis of family policy during the 1980s and early 1990s (257-270). Specifically designed to restore to social dominance a traditional model of nuclear family life and traditional gender roles, the Family Values Campaign embraced a wide range of socially conservative legislative, economic, regulatory and judicial initiatives.

In her discussion of "The Conservative World View," in Suburban Warriors, Lisa McGirr contrasts the fundamental philosophical differences between liberal contemporary American culture and the perspective of the Religious Right. The worldview of the Religious Right is "fundamentally shaped by a faith in an objective moral order ordained by a transcendent moral authority" (McGirr156). In contrast to liberals who emphasize pragmatic rationalism and an inwardly conscious individualism, religious conservatives emphasize timeless truths and the moral principles that underlie them (McGirr 156). Where liberalism

emphasizes relativism, secularism and pragmatism, religious conservatives champion tradition (McGirr 157). For the Religious Right, gender roles are God-given and therefore eternal and not subject to social or historical transformation. Social innovations like recognized gay marriages and two-career families are abhorrent as affronts to timeless and sanctified gender roles for males as the spiritual head and provider for the family and females as nurturing mothers and wives whose lives center on the family home. The home offers the family a sacred sanctuary removed from the corruption of the market place. In fact, the father's role as primary breadwinner serves to protect his wife and children from the hard brutalities of the capitalist marketplace.

With its emphasis on tradition, the Religious Right views the United States as a fundamentally Christian nation and bases its claims that traditional family values are inherently American on a reading of American history (McGirr 156-157). Family life for the Religious Right is based on the Judeo-Christian concepts of creation and covenant. Through the process of reproduction, the family reflects the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The life long commitment between husband and wife and parents and children that grounds the family reflects the covenant between God and his chosen people (Minnery, Stanton 253).

The Religious Right's vision of the Christian Family emphasizes three ideals: marriage, sexuality and parenthood. As Minnery and Stanton argue:

For the Christian, the foundation of the Christian family is marriage, demonstrated by a lifelong, committed relationship between a man and a woman who God joins together and makes one flesh. Husband and wife mutually and selflessly love,

respect, and serve one another before all others. God's ideal in marriage is the great cultural equalizer between men and women, both being created in the very image of God. All other aspects of family life ideally flow from this relationship (254).....Sexuality is both a physical and spiritual activity and bond that should be, in the ideal, expressed in self-giving love, warmth, intimacy, passion, exclusivity, faithfulness, and the creation of new life (255).

From the conservative Christian perspective, parenthood, "the bringing of children into the family by procreation or adoption" extends the love and mystery of the marriage into the world and into the next generation. Father and mother both have unique and necessary roles in raising these mutual children to their full humanity (255).

Because of its emphasis on personal moral development and responsibility, the Religious Right firmly believes that government does not have the primary responsibility for guaranteeing wholesome family life. In fact, religious conservatives believe that the liberal emphasis on sociological explanations and economic problems undermines personal morality and individual responsibility (McGirr 157). The Religious Right sees the root cause of the nation's many ills as a direct result of a decline in morality, religiosity, and righteous living (McGirr 157). Therefore, many social evils—such as alcohol, drugs, gambling or credit-card abuse, pornography, sexual libertinism, spousal or child sexual abuse, easy divorce, abortion on demand — "represent the abandonment of responsibility or the violation of trust by family members, and they seriously impair the ability of family members to function in society"

(Minnery and Stanton 253). Solving the “crisis of the American family” is the job of families themselves and of other private institutions, especially churches.

Through its radical insistence on defining America as a Christian nation, its insistence on fundamentalist Christian versions of marriage and sexuality, its version of capitalism that insistently denies the inter-penetrations of family and the marketplace, and its strong anti-feminist and anti-homosexual agenda, the Family Values Campaign galvanized a wide range of social conflicts and polarized debates on issues from abortion to gay rights that still persist in 2005.

In fact, the results of the 2004 election demonstrate the enormous continuity and coherence over 25 years of the Family Values Campaign (1980-2005). Like Presidents Ronald Reagan and his father George Herbert Bush, President George Walker Bush advances family planning efforts which do not fund abortion and anti-gay measures including the recent effort to pass a Constitutional Amendment confining marriage to heterosexual unions, works to appoint conservative judiciaries with an eye towards the eventual reversal of *Roe vs. Wade*, pushes to replace federal programs with faith-based initiatives and to cut welfare based on family values arguments that link single-parent families and poverty to sexuality outside of the constraints of marriage. While focusing on its emergence and consolidation through the administrations of Reagan and George H. W. Bush, this dissertation acknowledges the enduring and on-going impact of the Family Values Campaign through the present moment. The remarkable consistency of the Religious Right’s family values or

pro-family agenda can be seen in Ronald Sider and Diane Knippers's, Toward and Evangelical Public Policy: Political Strategies for the Health of the Nation, published in 2005. In their article "Family Integrity," Tom Minnery and Glenn Stanton define the current family values platform, a program that looks remarkably like the pro-family platform promoted by the Reverend Jerry Falwell in 1979:

These foundational Christian family values make clear the real-world practices that Christians should universally oppose. All Christians should resist, in terms of public policy and cultural engagement:

- Affirming easy divorce, same-sex marriage and parenting (which rejects the image of God in humanity by rejecting the necessity of male female coupling), or transferring marriage into merely a self-satisfying adult relationship.
- Policies, like tax codes or employment benefits that either penalize the married mother-father-child triad or those that elevate other lesser domestic relationships to equal status with marriage by virtue of the benefits offered. This would include both hetero- and homosexual civil unions.
- Accepting other domestic situations –cohabitation and single parenting by choice—as normal or tolerable parts of community life.
- Policies that tend to normalize the great social divorce between human sexuality and the emotionally and physically protective confines of marriage.
- Affirming situations in which children are abandoned or separated from their biological mothers and fathers due to divorce, same-sex parenting or unwed childbearing.
- The move by some leading family law theorists, along with the American Law Institute, seeking to remove all legal marriage and family categories in favor of recognizing all close personal domestic relationships equally (256).

The idea of a coherent Family Values Campaign or Pro-Family Agenda moved out of evangelical Christian sub-culture and into the mainstream

American public arena when Reverend Jerry Falwell, with the help of Republican strategists Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, Howard Phillips and Ed McAteer, created the Moral Majority in 1979.⁴ Falwell detailed the pro-family agenda of the Moral Majority at length in his 1980 jeremiad, Listen America! and his "I Love America" Crusade where he admonished the nation from the steps of forty four state capitals and advanced an anti-abortion, anti-ERA and pro-family agenda. In Listen America!, Falwell exhorted the nation that only a return to traditional family values could save America from certain disaster:

There is a vicious assault upon the American family. More television programs depict homes of divorced or of single parents than depict the traditional family. Nearly every major family-theme TV program openly justifies divorce, homosexuality, and adultery. Some sociologists believe that the family unit as we know it could disappear by the year 2000. Increased divorce and remarriage have broken family loyalty, unity, and communications. We find increased insecurity in children who are the victims of divorced parents. Many of these children harden themselves to the possibility of genuine love for fear that they will be hurt again. Their insulated lives make them poor candidates for marriage, and many young people have no desire to marry whatsoever. But I believe that most Americans remain deeply committed to the idea of the family as a sacred institution. A minority of people in this country is trying to destroy what is most important to the majority, and the sad fact is that the majority is allowing it to happen. America must arise and accept the challenge of preserving our cherished family heritage (Falwell 121-122).

4. In Not By Politics Alone, Sara Diamond documents that each of these men were already involved in Reagan's presidential bid and was running his own conservative organization: "Viguerie was running a highly successful direct mailing company. Phillips, a recent Jewish convert to Christianity, ran the Conservative Caucus. Weyrich, a devout Catholic, ran the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, which held seminars and conducted fund-raising for right-wing candidates. McAteer had started the Religious Roundtable, to organize prominent televangelists" (Diamond 66).

Among the five deadliest of America's sins including abortion, homosexuality, pornography and secular humanism, Falwell listed the "fractured family" as the most serious (253-254). Falwell warned:

With a skyrocketing divorce rate, the American family may very well be on the verge of extinction in the next twenty years. Even the recent White House Conference on Families has called for an emphasis on diverse family forms (common-law, communal, homosexual, and transsexual 'marriages'). The Bible pattern of the family has been virtually discarded by modern American society. Our movies and magazines have glorified the physical and emotional experience of sex to the point that most Americans do not even consider love to be important anymore. Bent on self-gratification, we have reinterpreted our moral values in light of our immoral life styles. Since the family is the basic unit of society, and since the family is in desperate trouble today, we can conclude that our society itself is in danger of total collapse. We are not moving toward an alternate family life style; we are moving to the brink of destruction (254).

In Not By Politics Alone, Diamond documents that "registering voters for the 1980 presidential election was the primary goal of the Moral Majority" (67). By 1980, Falwell claimed to have registered more than four million new voters through the Moral Majority, though historians and political analysts now claim the number was closer to two million (Diamond 67). Falwell's hour long television program, the Old-Time Gospel Hour, gave the Moral Majority a national pulpit, and other televangelists including Pat Robertson, Jim and Tammy Bakker, and Jimmy Swaggert supported the Moral Majority in their own broadcasts (67). In support of the Moral Majority's efforts to elect Ronald Reagan, Pat Robertson organized the day-long "Washington for Jesus" rally which brought over 200,000 evangelical Christians to Washington, D.C. to "pray

for the salvation of America” and to demonstrate the political commitment of the Religious Right to promoting their pro-family vision of the traditional Christian family life (Diamond 68).

In addition to the presidential campaign, Moral Majority volunteers, organized within evangelical Christian Churches by pastors that coordinated Moral Majority chapters in all fifty states, worked for Congressional Candidates on the clearly defined and consistent set of family values issues including opposition to gay rights ordinances, anti-abortion and anti-pornography legislation, and legislation to halt sex education in public schools and prevent state interference in Christian private schools (67). By 1981, the Moral Majority had more than a million members, spent \$6 million a year on media activities, mostly on the Moral Majority commentary that was broadcast on 300 radio stations daily and the Moral Majority Report, which was sent to 840,000 homes monthly. Within three years of its inception, the Moral Majority had an annual budget of \$10 million (Brown, 157).

In The ‘American Way’: Family and Community in the Shaping of the American Identity, Allan Carlson describes how Reagan made family values and the Christian Right’s pro-family agenda a major part of his 1980s presidential campaign speeches (160). As part of his continued effort to consolidate the union of the Republican party and the growing conservative Christian electorate, Reagan skillfully deployed the rhetoric of family values throughout his tenure as president(Carlson 160). On November 13, 1981, Reagan

proclaimed "National Family Week" (Carlson, 198). Under increasing pressure from the Christian Right who had worked so hard to win him the Presidency, "from 1986 until the end of the Presidency, Reagan spoke regularly about traditional family values" (Carlson 161). In his speech entitled "Remarks to the Student Congress on Evangelism," Reagan used the family as a metaphor for Nation:

The family provides children with a haven of love and security. For parents, it provides a sense of purpose and meaning. When the family is strong, the Nation is strong. When the family is weak, the Nation is weak (Carlson 161).

At an address in Chicago entitled "Remarks at a Luncheon with Community Leaders in Chicago, Illinois," Reagan celebrated the traditional American family with powerful images:

The family is the bedrock of our nation, but it is also the engine that gives our country life.... It's for our families that we must labor, so that we can join together around the dinner table, bring our children up in the right way, care for our parents, and reach out to those less fortunate. It is that power of the family that holds the Nation together, that gives America her conscience, and that serves as the cradle of our country's soul (Carlson 161.)

Thrilled by the prospect of electing the conservative Republican Ronald Reagan to the office of the President in 1980, New Right strategist Paul Viguerie outlined the goals of the Pro-Family Movement in The New Right: We're Ready to Lead. Viguerie reviewed the Religious Right's political strategy to translate their vision of the traditional American family into legislation through the proposed Family Protection Act, which among many other things, would give

tax breaks to families where mothers did not work, ban federal spending on school textbooks that portrayed career women instead of women in their “traditional” social roles as wives and mothers, and would deny Federal education money to states that forbid prayer in public buildings (Viguerie 154-155).

Despite his many moving rhetorical celebrations of traditional family values throughout his presidency, Reagan largely avoided the highly controversial family values issues of abortion and gay rights and focused on promoting his program of tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, increasing military spending and “reducing the size of Big Government” by cutting federal programs. Despite relentless lobbying by the Christian Right, the Reagan administration evaded hot button topics including prayer in the schools, refused to openly and directly push for the reversal of Roe vs. Wade, avoided direct confrontation of gay rights issues, and abandoned support for the Family Protection Act when faced with popular opposition (Wisendale 257-258).

Dismayed by Reagan's emphasis on economic policy and the Cold War rather than their family values agenda, the Evangelical Christians, who had worked so hard to secure Reagan's election, pressured the George H. W. Bush campaign for a more radical and insistent enactment of their conservative social agenda before once again pledging their considerable political organization and support to his campaign. Pat Buchanan's speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention, “This Election is About Who We Are: Taking

Back Our Country," delivered in Houston, Texas on August 17, 1992 in support of the President George H. Bush's run for re-election, marked the continuing alliance of the Republican Party and the Christian Right, and demonstrates the persistence of the Christian Right's commitment to traditional family values:

Yes, we disagreed with President Bush, but we stand with him for the freedom of choice of religious schools. And we stand with him against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women. We stand with President Bush for right-to-life, and for voluntary prayer in our schools. And we stand against putting our wives and daughters and sisters into the combat units of the United States Army. We also stand with President Bush in favor of the right of small towns and communities to control the raw sewage of pornography that so terribly pollutes our popular culture.....

My friends, this election is about more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe and what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in this country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America. And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton and Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side (Urofsky and May 28).

This dissertation uses the idea of a Family Values Campaign, provided by the New Right's political strategists themselves, to underscore the remarkable rhetorical consistency, philosophical coherence and political durability of the New Right's social agenda endorsed and enacted by the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations across a wide range of economic, social, judicial and cultural initiatives focused on American family life.

Although it has been publicly understood as a "family policy" agenda, it is far more useful to understand the Family Values Campaign as a durable

rhetorical construct that, despite its inability to enact significant legislation for conservative social change, has proven enormously successful at shifting the terms of public debate far to the right regarding the American family, gender roles and the socialization and education of the young (Wisendale 258-259).

Emphasizing the idea of a coherent "Family Values Campaign" underscores the set of philosophical premises and assumptions about the American family and its relationship to the State that underlies the conservative domestic agenda. Highlighting the Family Values Campaign as a coherent rhetorical structure underscores its strategic goals, reveals the deep fissures in the Republican Party's historic alliance of economic libertarians and social conservatives, and perhaps most importantly underscores the contradictory relationship between the New Right's simultaneous support of socially conservative family values while advocating laissez faire economic policies that undermine economic stability for the vast majority of American families. Viewing the Family Values Campaign as a coherent, if contradictory, rhetorical structure, underscores the symbolic and representational dimensions of the family values debate.

As a fundamental philosophy and political strategy, the Christian Right insists on the family as the ultimate building block of society, a unit that is essential for the survival of contemporary civilization. Thus, the vision of family life embraced by the Christian Right (married, heterosexual, patriarchal, with biological or adopted children) should permeate all activities that socialize the

family including schools, work, politics and entertainment (Frankl 177). In fact, strengthening the Christian family directly supports strengthening America as a nation. The concept and rhetoric of family values is a cornerstone in the larger New Right narrative of America's redemption and return to greatness. In her essay, "Transformation of Televangelism," Razell Frankl explains:

As a unifying political symbol, the family 'stands as a means to recover lost meaning as well as a lost past.' What's more, all other issues can be subsumed under the 'pro-family' label: the teaching of evolution, prayer in the schools, abortion, traditional roles for women, sex and drugs, pornography, and so forth (177).

The New Right's emphasis on family values exploits the family as a rich social and cultural symbol. At the heart of the family values rhetoric, is a life and death battle between good and evil, in which "the Christian Right sees determined enemies of the traditional family at every turn" (177). Even the titles of popular Christian books on traditional family values, Attack on the Family, The Battle for the Family, How to Protect the Family, Rape of a Nation, reflect a grave sense of danger and defensiveness (Frankl, 177).

1.7. Critical Evaluations of the Use of 1950s Film and Television in Hollywood Youth Narratives and the Family Values Campaign

In their engagement with the family values debate, both Hollywood youth narratives and the Family Values Campaign of the period between 1980 and 1992 relied heavily on idealized images of nuclear family life displayed in

American movie theaters and on television during the 1950s. This dissertation explicates and contrasts the use of 1950s film and television in both Hollywood youth narratives and the Family Values Campaign to challenge the assumptions among academic and popular culture analysts that the use of 1950s media materials in both cultural arenas was simply and monolithically conservative and nostalgic.

Thus, this dissertation explores the complexity of the 1950s as a representational idea and figure in the 1980s and early 1990s in two distinct but overlapping cultural arenas. It directly challenges the idea of the use of 1950s film and television material as simply or monolithically conservative by explicating how the 1950s operated within the Hollywood youth narrative as an ideological battleground on which definitions of family life, gender roles and expectations, and the socialization of youth could be confronted. In the specific case of the 1980s and early 1990s Hollywood youth narrative, this dissertation catalogues the ways that these films used the icons, images and generic conventions of important 1950s films to both challenge and support the cultural debate regarding family values in ways that have not been recognized by film theorists.

This dissertation focuses on the Family Values Campaign as a rhetorical construct that employs the cherished images, symbols and icons of American family life from 1950s visual media as its symbolic grounding in the fiercely ideological culture wars of the 1980s and early 1990s. Idealized images of

American nuclear family life displayed in 1950s Hollywood film and on television through popular programs like Leave It To Beaver (1957-1963) and Father Knows Best (1954-1963) were used extensively by the Family Values Campaign during the Reagan and George H. W. Bush years to illustrate and support their conservative social programs and the return to traditional nuclear family life based on traditional family values. These fictionalized and idealized images of white, middle-class, nuclear family life were elevated to "real life" status and deployed as actual historical documents to legitimate the New Right's argument that the social and economic ills confronting the United States during the economic recession of the 1980s could be solved if American families would only return to a traditional nuclear family structure and traditional gender roles.

In contrast to the use of the 1950s by the Family Values Campaign, the use of 1950s media materials in the Hollywood youth narratives of the period has taken two primary expressions. Films like Porky's (1982), Peggy Sue Got Married, and Hairspray literally go back in time to recreate the film's narrative version of the 1950s. Lewis has read such youth narratives as simply nostalgic and therefore conservative. For instance, in his discussion of Peggy Sue Got Married, Lewis reads the film as a mindless return to the 1950s to avoid the complexities of life in the 1980s (132-133). He overlooks the important fact that although Peggy Sue ends up making the same decision to marry her high-school boyfriend, she does so with a completely different awareness, including a sense of her own possibilities and autonomy, and a clearer recognition of her own desires and

sexual fulfillment. When Peggy Sue returns from the 1950s back to her life in the 1980s, she repeats the past but differently--as a free and conscious choice. In his study of the 1980s in Hollywood from Viet Nam to Reagan—and Beyond, Robin Wood confirms Lewis' perspective by offering the simply conservative 1980s Hollywood youth narrative as evidence of the impossibility of an oppositional cinema during the Reagan era (333).

In contrast to the work of Lewis and Wood, this dissertation examines an alternate use of the 1950s in the Hollywood youth narrative. Films like River's Edge and Heathers do not go back to the 1950s, but instead pull the 1950s forward into the 1980s by engaging important 1950s Hollywood films as back texts from which they freely draw visual icons, narrative structures, dialogue and characterizations to confront the assertions and assumptions on both sides of the family values debates. The more subtle discursive engagement with the 1950s embodied by these films has not been recognized or addressed by the limited scholarship on the Hollywood youth narrative. The rare discussions of the use of the 1950s in 1980s Hollywood youth narratives has read the complex ways that these films define and engage the 1950s as a purely aesthetic issue of post-modern style. For instance, in his essay on Rumble Fish (1983), Lewis reads the use of 1950s film material within the context of post-modern film style. Lewis analyzes the resurrection of the 1950s style juvenile delinquent in the film as a purely aesthetic phenomenon that reveals a crisis of adult male authority in the 1980s Hollywood youth narrative. Lewis applies the 1950s concept of alienated

youth to the 1980s without any attention to the massive differences between the 1950s and the 1980s as historical contexts (2).

Most centrally, this dissertation explores the complex and diverse ways that particular Hollywood youth narratives of the period used 1950s Hollywood films to engage the New Right on its own choice of the 1950s as rhetorical terrain. Thus, this dissertation reveals how particular Hollywood youth narratives used the legacy of 1950s Hollywood film, exploited so successfully by the New Right, to explode the basic terms and assumptions of the family values rhetoric in ways that extend far beyond the polarized "cultural" arguments of the left and right, liberals and conservatives. Through their confrontational use of 1950s Hollywood film material, these films reveal the 1950s as an historical construct, and thus undermine the Right's cultural fantasy that there is a stable, idyllic past to which America can easily or simply return.

Most compellingly, the Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s use 1950s Hollywood films to construct a critique of the family's place within the context of Reaganomics and its passionate embrace of laissez faire consumer capitalism. These Hollywood youth narratives confront the illusory separation of the American family from the market place espoused by the New Right, and move the discussion of family values far beyond the polarized sexual and gender politics of the 1980s into a structural analysis of the American family's troubled and troubling relationship to consumer capitalism. This analysis directly challenges the New Right's ideal of the family as a protective sanctuary

removed from the brutalities of the capitalist market place and reveals the intense commercialization of the family and its members.

1.8 Contributions to the Study of the Hollywood Youth Narrative and the Discipline of Film Studies

This dissertation contributes to the discipline of film studies in several important ways.

First, in its efforts to theorize the social function of the Hollywood youth narrative within the conflicted context of the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations, this dissertation moves beyond current work on the topic that has focused almost exclusively on aesthetic, thematic, and generic considerations at the expense of understanding the important cultural work performed by Hollywood youth narratives in a period of dramatic social change and social conflict.

This dissertation's analysis of the cultural function of the Hollywood youth narrative brings the genre directly into the exciting conversation currently underway among film scholars regarding the theorization of genre as a critical category that can support the analysis of film texts in their social contexts. Efforts to re-conceptualize film genre have recently been an important critical focus in film studies by Rick Altman, Nick Browne, Winston Wheeler Dixon, John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, Nick Lacey, and Steve Neale.

Secondly, this dissertation breaks new ground in the discussion of the 1980s

Hollywood youth narrative by examining the textual relationship between the 1980s Hollywood youth narrative and the Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s. Through its exploration of the relationship between the 1980s and 1950s Hollywood youth narratives within the context of the Family values debate, this dissertation brings a historical dimension to the discussion of New Hollywood style. Through its explication of the uses of the 1950s in the 1980s, this dissertation challenges readings of the use of the 1950s within the Hollywood youth narrative as simply nostalgic. Through its study of the rhetorical uses of film and television materials from the 1950s, this dissertation seeks to extend considerations of this instance of intertextuality notions like parody, pastiche, intertextuality and bricolage.

Finally, this dissertation challenges the simple application of literary models to the study of cinema. This dissertation argues that Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s use the coming-of-age dramatic structure in distinct and divergent ways to re-present and resolve social conflict as intergenerational conflict, but also to re-translate simple generational conflict into complex analyses of the social and economic forces behind the cultural "crisis of the American family." This cultural reading of Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s departs dramatically from the use of the coming-of-age structure within literary forms to represent interiorized psychological development.

2. **Chapter Two: Turning Back the Clock: Competing Definitions and Uses of “the Fifties” in the Family Values Campaign and the Hollywood Youth Narrative**

"The past is a screen on which memory projects movies."

From Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan by Edmund Morris (302).

Introduction

This chapter explicates the diverse definitions and uses of “the Fifties” during the 1980s and early 1990s: the emergence of a “Fifties” revival in the popular culture of the 1970s, the transition of this “Fifties” revival into the political narrative of the New Right, and the concurrent preoccupation of Hollywood youth filmmakers during the 1980s and early 1990s with the Hollywood youth narratives, cross-overs and adult melodramas of the 1950s. Throughout Chapter Two, I contrast the representational term “the Fifties” with the actual historical 1950s. I use the term “the Fifties” to indicate a particular representation of the 1950s circulating in American culture in the 1980s and early 1990s. I use the term “the 1950s,” to designate the actual social and historical circumstances of the 1950s. The contrast between these different definitions and uses of the 1950s underscores “the Fifties” as a social construction that is put to diverse uses for a

wide variety of rhetorical purposes, and establishes the context for the following analyses of River's Edge and Heathers. Chapter Two is divided into three sections describing each of the three different uses of "the Fifties" in American culture.

Section One describes "the Fifties" revival that began in the popular culture—music, film, television and the popular press—of the 1970s. The 1970s image of "the Fifties" focused on young Americans and equates an image of adolescence as a period of carefree happiness and innocence, with the innocence of America as a nation before the social and political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. The 1970s image of "the Fifties" evident in the music of Sha Na Na, films like American Graffiti (1973) and Grease (1978), and Garry Marshall's enormously popular television programs Happy Days (1974-1984) and Laverne and Shirley (1976-1983), created their image of 1950s life by focusing on the day-to-day challenges in the lives of middle-class, white, often male teenagers while ignoring the darker aspects of 1950s life including McCarthyism, the Korean War, persistent poverty despite the economic gains of an expanding middle-class, and the emerging Civil Rights movement.

Section Two details how this popular-culture revival of "the Fifties" plays out by the end of the 1970s, shifts into the political discourse of the New Right, and becomes prominent in the rhetoric of the 1980s presidential campaign of Governor Ronald Reagan and the subsequent presidential administrations of Reagan and George H. W. Bush. Section Two builds on the work of Daniel

Marcus, who argues that the New Right uses the popular culture definition of "the Fifties" as a time of youthful innocence to support its master narrative: America was a great and prosperous nation in the 1950s; this prosperity was destroyed by the liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s; and through a return to the values, economic policies and political practices of their version of "the Fifties," America can redeem herself and return to greatness (36-37). Ronald Reagan's persona literally embodied the New Right's image of "the Fifties." The New Right presented the powerful and highly popular images of family life in 1950s television sitcoms like Leave It to Beaver (1957-1963), My Three Sons (1960-1965) and Father Knows Best (1954-1963) through syndication and re-runs on Pat Robertson's Evangelical Christian television network, the Christian Broadcasting Cable television (CBN). CBN presented these 1950s television fictions as actual historical documents and evidence of the success and prosperity of American families during the 1950s. These idealized images of white, middle-class, suburban homes and traditional gender roles, modeled the ideal of the traditional nuclear family life.

Section Three supports Marcus' assertion that resistance to the dominance of the New Right's political uses of the 1950s took place, not in the political arena, but in 1980s popular culture by explicating the diverse uses of the 1950s in the Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s (92). Section Three details the re-emergence of Hollywood youth narratives focused on adolescents during the 1980s and early 1990s, after the genre literally disappeared from film

production between the early 1960s and later 1970s. Section Three argues that there is a critical but unrecognized industrial relationship between the archive of 1950s film and Hollywood youth narratives made during the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations. Young filmmakers including John Hughes, Amy Heckerling, Tim Hunter, John Waters, Michael Lehman, Francis Ford Coppola, among many others, and female producers like Denise DiNovi, worked to "update" the conventions of popular 1950s Hollywood teen flicks and cross-overs like Rebel Without A Cause, Splendor in the Grass and Peyton Place for a new generation of American audiences. Section Three surveys the different appearances of the 1950s and diverse constructions of "the Fifties" in Hollywood youth narratives between 1980 and 1992, in preparation for the discussions of River's Edge and Heathers, and the analyses of how these films both supported and challenged the efforts of the New Right to turn back the clock of American families to the 1950s.

2.1. "The Fifties" in 1970s Popular Culture

The 1970s proved to be a period of difficulties and disillusionments for Americans (Schmidt 13). The 1970s began with the dismal recognition that America was losing a war in Southeast Asia to a small group of Viet Cong. After almost a decade of bitter conflict on the home front, Nixon ended the Viet Nam War in disgrace and trauma. In the wake of rioting after the assassination of

Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, the Civil Rights movement lost its optimism and momentum in its fight for racial equality. OPEC's oil embargos and the Iran hostage situation signaled the loss of American post-war international political power and dominance. Long gas lines visually illustrated the end of post-war prosperity, and the decade was characterized by relentless inflation, high unemployment, and double-digit interest rates (Schmidt, Mark Ray 14).

On the home front, the family and American youth were also perceived to be in crisis. Divorce rates peaked (Schmidt, Mark Ray 14). Inflation pressured many married women with children into the workforce. The second wave of American feminism gained momentum as women battled for economic, cultural and political rights that challenged more traditional patriarchal family structures. The Council on American Families, convened by Carter in the last year of his presidency, ended in a deadlock as conservatives and liberals battled over issues of family definition and public policy (Wisendale 257-270).

As Marcus argues, the longing for simpler times, economic prosperity, defined enemies, clear gender roles and stable families can be seen in the explosion of 1950s nostalgia during the 1970s. From the troubled perspective of the 1970s, the images of happy families in safe suburbs appearing as reruns on television networks contrasted with the harsh realities of the Viet Nam War, sexual and racial conflict, and "stagflation," economic inflation coupled with a growing recession. The images of "the Fifties" promoted by the entertainment media focused on young white men in stable, middle-class families where

gender roles and expectations were clearly defined, the homogenous suburban neighborhoods were safe and free from racial strife and violence, and America's clearly defined Cold War international enemies were far away (Marcus 15-35).

The popular culture revival of "the Fifties" in music, theater, film and television surfaced in the 1970s. The musical group Sha Na Na began playing rock-and-roll hits from the 1950s including The Penguins rendition of "Earth Angel" from 1959, Johnny Mathis' version of "It's Not For Me To Say" recorded in 1957, "Chantilly Lace" by the Big Bopper from 1958, "(The) Great Pretender" recorded by The Platters in 1955, "Wake Up Little Susie" and "Devoted to You," recorded by the Everly Brothers in 1957 and 1958, and Little Richard's versions of "Long Tall Sally" and "Tutti Frutti," recorded in 1956 and 1955 respectively (Larkin 4832). The Broadway play Grease (1972) became a hit, and American Graffiti (1973) followed, which despite its enormous technical innovations, replayed the conservative class and gender politics of mainstream 1950s life. Popular television shows like Happy Days and Laverne and Shirley picked up on the trend.

Marcus argues that during this period, "the Fifties" revival focused on redefining youth as a period of innocence and simplicity before the traumatic political and social events of the 1960s and 1970s (35). The definition of the 1950s, created by the media in their reportage of the 1950s revival in popular music, film and television, focused on youth, largely male and white middle-

class. In this vision of the 1950s, teenagers had nothing to worry about but high-school life, dates and cars. The 1970s popular culture revival defined the 1950s as a time of cultural innocence and simplicity opposed to the adulthood of cultural trauma of the 1960s (17). Through its selective process of defining "The Fifties," the 1950s popular culture revival equated the innocence and simplicity of being a teenager in the 1950s with "the Fifties" as an age of innocence, simplicity, and prosperity for America. The definition of "the Fifties" as a period of innocence, prosperity and family values was the definition that the New Right would appropriate in its use of the 1950s in its political rhetoric during the 1980s.

In the early 1970s, many important films and television programs presented an idealized image of "the Fifties" in comic narratives, or in the case of Elvis, melodramatic narratives, that bordered on camp. Symbols of 1950s films and television, including the juvenile delinquent films were reworked into comic, even campy re-creations of the 1950s such as Henry Winkler's early performances of his role of Fonzie in Happy Days. However, by the end of the 1970s, campy, playful representations of the 1950s shifted into representations that focused on white, middle-class male youth within middle-class families.

"The Fifties" popular-cultural revival began early in 1973 with the return of Elvis Presley to live performances in Las Vegas for the first time since the 1950s. Elvis' Vegas persona or "the old Elvis," a somewhat out-of-shape adult dressed in a white leather body suit studded with rhinestones, offered a camp recreation of the dangerous, virile young rock star of the 1950s. Elvis' early and tragic death

as a result of barbiturate abuse supported melodramatic reading of the great star's life and death.

The return of Elvis sparked an interest in rock and roll of the 1950s and the music of legends Little Richard, Richie Valens, Buddy Holly and Jerry Lee Lewis, a cousin of the evangelist Jimmy Swaggart. The Rolling Stones recorded covers of 1950s rock-and-roll hits originally produced by Chuck Berry ("Around and Around," "Don't Lie To Me," "Carol," "You Can't Catch Me," "Talkin' About You," and "Little Queenie"), The Drifters ("Under the Boardwalk"), Bo Diddley ("Crackin' Up" and "Please Go Home") and Otis Reading ("Pain In My Heart" and "I've Been Loving You Too Long"). The re-appearance of 1950s rock and roll in the music of 1970s performers pushed promoters to create a series of enormously popular "Fifties" revival concerts at Madison Square Garden that were attended by baby boomers and new 1970s teen audiences alike.

Aside from the return of Elvis to Las Vegas, the formation of the musical group Sha Na Na embodied the most important and high-profile event of "the Fifties" musical revival. Sha Na Na spearheaded the return of 1950s rock and roll with a musical repertoire drawn entirely from the 1950s including songs originally recorded by Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, the Shirelles and The Everly Brothers. The group's carefully choreographed stage show included elaborate costumes featuring gold lame, brilliantine cockades and drainpiped hosiery (Larkin 4832). Audiences delighted in Sha Na Na's energetic stage performances of 1950s hits

“Chantilly Lace,” “Earth Angel,” “Long Tall Sally,” “Tutti Frutti,” “Raining in My Heart,” and “Wake Up Little Susie.”

Sha Na Na, first formed in 1969 and became popular in New York City by the early 1970s. The band appeared at Woodstock in 1969 and stole the show. The group’s Woodstock success garnered a role in the film version of Grease (1978) and generated several albums including Rock & Roll Is Here to Stay in 1969, The Night is Still Young in 1972, The Golden Age of Rock and Roll in 1973, Sha Na Na Is Here To Stay in 1975 and Rock and Roll Revival in 1977. The success of Sha Na Na spawned many imitators such as the Darts, Shakin Stevens and the Stray Cats (Larkin 4832). However, Sha Na Na was the most successful musical group that based its act on the music and culture of the 1950s.

Despite their public image as working class kids from Queens, Sha Na Na was composed of a group of classically trained musicians from Columbia University. In interviews with the press, band members attributed their popularity among their young peers to a desire for a simpler, more fun and innocent experience of youth. Without its clean cut representation of the 1950s, Sha Na Na offered a contrast to the youth culture of the 1970s with all of its conflict and agony over the Viet Nam War, drugs, and sex (Marcus 12).

Sha Na Na was of central importance in redefining rock and roll and its relationship to youth culture in the 1970s. Viewed by 1950s parents as a corrupting and demoralizing influence on teenagers, the rock and roll of the 1950s was transformed into a symbol of innocent, carefree fun far removed from

the moral and social complexities facing 1970s youth. In the course of their performances, Sha Na Na also revised the threatening image of the juvenile delinquent embodied in the leather jacketed film images of Marlon Brando in The Wild One (1953) and the delinquent youth in Blackboard Jungle (1955). Through its parodic replaying of the 1950s "dangerous youth" stereotype, Sha Na Na transformed the threatening 1950s juvenile delinquent into the domesticated greaser (Marcus 12).

"The Fifties" revival sparked by Sha Na Na moved into theater with the runaway success and the decade-long run of the musical Grease. A jubilant camp version of the 1950s, Grease originated many of the most important stereotypes of "the Fifties" that have circulated since the 1970s. The musical resurrected the classic oppositions of the good girl and the bad girl, the juvenile delinquent and high-school life. Popular with working-class audiences from the outer boroughs, the musical featured a funny and simplified version of "the Fifties" that offered comic relief from the complications of the 1970s. Like Sha Na Na, the image of "the Fifties" presented in the Broadway version of Grease was campy and parodic.

Hollywood was very slow to pick up on the success of "the Fifties" musical revival. To the enormous surprise of Universal Studio executives who had originally refused to produce the film, American Graffiti (1973) became one of the biggest hits of the 1970s. American Graffiti moved "the Fifties" revival squarely into mainstream popular culture and shifted popular representations

out of the realm of camp. The story, based on George Lucas's teen years in Modesto, California, takes place in 1962, the figurative end of the 1950s when both kids and the country were innocent. The film is set exactly one month before the Cuban missile crisis, a year before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and years before the escalations of the Viet Nam War and the decadent collapse of the youth counter culture into drug addiction and free love. Though the year of the story is 1962, the automobiles and music are clearly from the 1950s. Fin-tailed cars driven by pony-tailed girls and duck-tailed boys spend their nights tooling along the main drag of a small California town accompanied by the sounds of disc jockey Wolfman Jack and 1950s hits on their car radios. As explained by Bob Sullivan, "Lucas captures the innocence of youth, that ephemeral moment when all of the options are still open, before irrevocable choices have been made" (69). Lucas himself has described the film as an elegy for his own teen years in a small California town during the 1950s and his many high-school friends who died in Viet Nam (Sullivan 69).

The film was produced by Francis Ford Coppola for \$700,000 and shot on location in 28 nights. Studio executives were dismayed by the film's four character narrative and cut five minutes before releasing the film. Executives were delighted when the film grossed over \$100 million domestically, received five academy awards, and won the Golden Globe and the New York Film Critics' Awards.

In American Graffiti, Lucas pioneered several important innovations,

including multiple story lines and "the Fifties" rock-and-roll sound track playing on the car radio. Under the direction of supervising cameraman Haskell Wexler, American Graffiti redefined the soft focus romantic nostalgia of films like Summer of 42 (1971) by shooting in grainy Techniscope with what Lucas has called "jukebox lighting," creating a new vision of hard-edged nostalgia.

Yet, despite these technical innovations, American Graffiti replayed the gender stereotypes of 1950s teen flicks and cross-overs, and focused on white, middle-class young males to the exclusion of females and other ethnic and racial minorities. More than any other single pop culture phenomenon, American Graffiti established the vision of "the Fifties" that would dominate the American image of the 1950s.

The enormous success of American Graffiti led directly to the expansion of the 1950s revival on network television, a development that offered an important contrast to the networks' generally liberal programming particularly CBS's All in the Family, M*A*S*H* and The Mary Tyler Moore Show. Happy Days, created by veteran comedy writer Garry Marshall, was based on a pilot produced by Marshall in 1971 entitled New Family in Town. ABC network executives originally rejected the pilot but changed their minds after learning that it had been the inspiration for Lucas's enormously profitable American Graffiti.

A sitcom set in "the Fifties," Happy Days became the cornerstone of ABC's meteoric rise in ratings by the mid-1970s. After a slow start in the early 1970s,

Happy Days broke through to the Nielsen's top 10 in its third 1975-1976 season (McNeil 357). The next year, Happy Days hit the top of the ratings, and spawned the spin-off, Laverne and Shirley. By 1984, Happy Days was the oldest primetime sitcom on the air (McNeil 357).

Set in a Milwaukee suburb during the 1950s, Happy Days focused on the lives of a middle-class nuclear family, the Cunninghams. Ron Howard played the teenage Richie who attended Jefferson High School; Tom Bosley played Richie's father, Howard, who owned a hardware store; Marion Ross played Richie's stay-at-home mother, Marion; Erin Moran played Joanie, Richie's little sister; and Gavan O'Herlihy played Richie's jock older brother Chuck. Richie had a group of close friends including Anson Williams as Warren Potsie Weber his best friend, Donny Most as Ralph Malph, and Henry Winkler as Arthur "Fonzie" Fonzarelli, a cool leather jacketed high-school drop-out who hung out at Arnold's, the local drive-in (McNeil 358).

For 10 years, from 1974 to 1984, Happy Days, a fictionalized image of suburban Milwaukee, brought the 1950s back to America. Happy Days shaped an entire generation's vision of the 1950s which according to the show was a world of drive-ins, leather jackets, cars and motorcycles, and the stable nuclear family at home. This vision of the 1950s left out the worst abuses of the decade including the struggle for Civil Rights, McCarthyism and the Korean War. Although the very first episodes included important elements of life in the 1950s, including rock-and-roll shows, beatniks, Adlai Stevenson's presidential bid and

youth gangs, "the Fifties" quickly became a backdrop to the middle-class family life of the Cunninghams, and the friendships between Richie Cunningham and his friends and the working-class, high-school drop-out, Fonzie.

Happy Days took the domestication of the 1950s juvenile delinquent even further than Sha Na Na even though Henry Winkler's Fonzie was originally conceived as a brooding, restless drop-out, like the prototypes of the 1950s juvenile delinquents played by Marlon Brandon in The Wild One (1953), James Dean in Rebel Without A Cause (1955) and the youth of Blackboard Jungle (1955). In fact, ABC had demanded that Fonzie wear a cloth jacket rather than a threatening leather one, except when actually working on or riding his motorcycle (McNeil 357). Fonzie proved to be such a popular character that ABC decided to expand his role and moved him into the Cunninghams' garage apartment so that his character could be more easily written into the family's domestic life.

While Fonzie the local "hood" first served as a foil for the wholesome Richie Cunningham and his high-school friends, as Happy Days moved into its second and third years, Fonzie's role grew larger and more complex. Fonzie embodied all that middle-class families of the 1950s feared for their own sons and daughters. Yet, despite his anti-authoritarian image, Fonzie, the working class and uneducated leader of the youth pack hanging around Arnold's drive-in, became more accepting of adult authority and was able to reveal his feelings of vulnerability without sacrificing his toughness or coolness (McNeil 357). By the

ending years of Happy Days, Fonzie became more of a father figure to Richie and his friends and began dispensing paternal advice, resolving conflicts and serving as a role model. As McNeil notes, this is a far cry from the sitcoms of the 1950s where only middle-class professional fathers could give advice (358).

For the generation of Viet Nam and Watergate, Happy Days represented a perfect combination of nostalgic reflection on an earlier time when life seemed less difficult, with a strong character that could confront and solve life's problems but still retain his coolness (McNeil 358). Based on the enormous success of Happy Days, Gary Marshall created a spin-off, titled Laverne and Shirley, based on two characters from Happy Days.

ABC's success with Happy Days pushed Garry Marshall to pitch Laverne and Shirley (1976-1983), a show based on the lives of Fonzi's two female best friends. Laverne and Shirley premiered in January, 1976 and immediately captured 47% of America's television viewing audience. Like Happy Days, the show was set in 1950s Milwaukee and featured Laverne DeFazio and Shirley Feeney, played by Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams, single women who were employed as bottle-cappers at "Shotz Brewery."

The two women lived together as roommates in a basement apartment. The shows' comic bits focused on light problems like dumping blind dates or messing up on the Shotz Brewery's assembly line (Martin 1324). Marshall directly credits the groundbreaking 1950s television success I Love Lucy (1951-1967) as the inspiration for Laverne and Shirley. Though both women were single,

Laverne and Shirley, like their 1950s comic I Love Lucy counterparts Lucy and Ethel, relied heavily on slapstick and physical comedy (Martin 1324).

Abundant press coverage reinforced the distilled image of the 1950s created by the popular culture revival. By the end of the 1970s, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando had become the celebrities Americans would associate with the 1950s. These three actors had become important icons of the 1950s and stand in as monuments of the decade in the American cultural imagination: Marilyn Monroe, the doomed sexpot, Marlon Brando in his dangerous "biker" uniform and the eternally troubled James Dean all came to symbolize "rebellious youth."

In a variety of front page stories, Newsweek (Rogers 78-82), Life (Rogers 38-46), Redbook (Fury 60) and the The Atlantic (Shulman 50-55) reported on the phenomena of "the Fifties" revival and played a critical role in producing the narrowed and selective vision of the 1950s that stands in for an enormously complex decade in American history. This image of "the Fifties" with little to no sense of an historical context or chronology of the 1950s, became iconic in itself and the bulwark of the New Right's overarching political argument during the 1980s. The "quality" of family life in the 1950s was not an issue of large concern in the 1970s.

The production of the film version of Grease (1978) marked the end of the 1970s popular-culture "Fifties" revival. Hoping to cash in on the enormous success of the play, the film featured older stars playing high-school-age

characters in a poorly directed and produced version of the play. Despite the performances of John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John, the film was not a big success. As Marcus argues, the popular culture revival of "the Fifties" exhausted itself. The image of "the Fifties" as a period of youthful innocence migrated into the New Right's political discourse was swiftly thrust to national prominence through the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan (60-61).

2.2. "The Fifties" in the Political Discourse of the 1980s

The importance of the idea of "the Fifties" in the political discourse of the New Right during the 1980s and early 1990s cannot be underestimated. To this day, the right-wing talk-radio-show host Mike Savage ritually exhorts his audience at the opening of each show, "In the Savage Nation, the year is always 1959." In contrast to the youth-oriented vision of "the Fifties" circulating in popular culture during the 1970s, "the Fifties," endorsed by the New Right used a very narrow, idealized and fictionalized vision of the 1950s, one expressed in the images of middle-class American nuclear life displayed in 1950s Hollywood film and television. These powerful images illustrated and legitimated the particular white, middle-class, suburban, traditional nuclear family that the New Right endorsed in its vision for American family life in the 1980s and beyond. In fact, the right wing think tank, the Heritage Foundation, openly stated in its 1981 policy statement, *Focus on the Family*, "The Family Values Campaign is a

concerted social, legislative and economic program to turn the clock of American families back to 1954" (Faludi 18).

As argued in Section One, during the 1970s, "the Fifties" revival focused on redefining youth as a period of innocence and simplicity that directly contrasted with the harsh realities of the Viet Nam War, sexual and racial conflict, and economic inflation coupled with a growing recession. The image of the 1950s promoted by the entertainment media focused on young white men in stable, middle-class suburban families where gender roles and expectations were clearly defined, homogenous suburban neighborhoods were safe and free from racial strife and violence, and America's clearly defined Cold War international enemies were far away.

In his chapter, "The Conservative Uses of Nostalgia," Marcus details how the New Right picked up the narrowed vision of "the Fifties" created and celebrated by youth in the 1970s (36). The New Right moved this popular culture vision of "the Fifties" directly into its political discourse where it became a central tool in its rhetorical battle to define the vision and values of conservatism against its arch enemy liberalism. This simple but compelling political narrative capitalized on the already circulating image of "the Fifties" as America's golden age, then defined the 1960s as a period of liberalism that destroyed these values that made that golden age possible, and the 1980s as a period of hope and optimism in which America could redeem itself and be restored to its former greatness by returning to the values and political ideals of the 1950s. This simple

narrative linked the 1950s and the 1980s to create Reagan's optimistic vision of America's future. Marcus argues that Ronald Reagan's success can largely be understood as his ability to "embody" the New Right's definition of the 1950s for Americans through the legacy of his film and television career (60).

Marcus further argues that in the national elections of 1980, 1984 and 1992, the Democrats essentially bought into the conservative image of "the Fifties" promoted by the New Right. As a result, the Democrats literally surrendered the 1950s as a powerful nexus of ideas, images and cultural icons failing to challenge the Republican's narrow version of "the Fifties" and ceding the firm and highly popular ideological and symbolic ground on which the New Right's compellingly simple national narrative was based (58).

In his analyses of the Clinton presidential challenge to George H. W. Bush in 1988, Marcus details how the Democrats finally created a national narrative to compete with the Republicans' (117). In their counter-narrative, the Democrats redefined the 1960s as a period of national and personal idealism personified by the legacy of John F. Kennedy. Marcus details Clinton's adroitness in manipulating the image of JFK and his role as the inheritor of the Kennedy legend and legacy. Clinton used Kennedy's iconic status to redefine America's relationship to its own past in ways that could successfully challenge the New Right's redemptive narrative (117).

2.2.1. The Political Appeal and Impossibility of “the Fifties” for the 1980s

The idealized image of “the Fifties” promoted by the New Right held a great appeal for many Americans in the early 1980s. As Coontz documents, the late 1970s to the early 1990s was a period of enormous social and economic contradictions. Coontz writes:

During this period, per capita income rose, new jobs were created; women and minorities moved into previously segregated professions, the gross national product grew, new technologies spawned consumer booms in personal computers, video cassette players and microwaves. Older Americans entered retirement with more financial security than ever before (256).

Yet, more Americans than ever fell deeper and deeper into poverty. American children growing up in single parent homes were hardest hit, with one out of five American children and one in two African American children growing up in households with incomes below the national poverty level. The number of youth growing up in abject poverty -- 50% below the poverty line -- increased. Working and middle-class families needed two incomes to buy a home and just keep up with the lifestyle of their parents (Coontz 256).

As Coontz documents, a general sense of cultural malaise dominated as Wall Street speculators like Ivan Boesky and Michael Miliken made hundreds of millions of dollars illegally through insider trading. Vicious and fiercely polarized debates about how family life should be structured raged. Political campaigns and debates grew increasingly vicious. As Coontz notes, while students in

countries across the world sacrificed their lives for democratic ideals, Americans became discouraged by political scandals like the S&L banking debacle and the Iran Contra scandal (256).

American youth in particular seemed angry and self-destructive as revealed by declining test scores, growing adolescent violence, high rates of adolescent suicide that made suicide the leading cause of death among teenagers (Coontz 257). Even the wealthiest and most privileged teens, like Jennifer Levin of the Preppie murder case, were deeply involved in recreational drugs, and violent sexuality (Acland 61).

In contrast to the economic and social turmoil of the 1980s, the image of "the Fifties" promoted by the New Right symbolized domestic prosperity and international superiority and dominance. On the domestic front, the New Right's idealized image of "the Fifties" evoked consensus on family life including stable marriages and families, clearly defined gender roles and expectations like the male family breadwinner, the stay-at-home mom, and happy teenagers preoccupied with innocent past times like school dances and fixing cars instead of political protest, drugs, alcohol and pre-marital sex. As Liebman demonstrates in her study, Living Room Lectures, the components of the New Right's dream vision of "the Fifties" appeared daily on television sets in living rooms across America in syndicated re-runs of 1950s sitcoms like Leave It to Beaver, Father Knows Best, Ozzie and Harriet (1952-1966) and The Donna Reed Show (1958-1963). In his discussion of "Family Problems" in Reclaiming Morality in America:

Why Traditional Values Are Collapsing and What You Can Do About It,

conservative social commentator William Murchison refers directly to the sitcoms of the 1950s as the ideal image of family for the 1980s:

America, prior to the 1960s, advertised its wholehearted support of the family in the traditional sense—father, mother and children all living under the same roof (38).....Ah, the old days—the fifties! With theme music blaring behind him, into the house strides Jim Anderson (otherwise known as actor Robert Young). His loving family greets him—wife, two daughters, one son—and in the succeeding thirty minutes, problems at school, problems with playmates and with boyfriends are ventilated and resolved, amid tears and good humor. The family—society’s supreme teaching institution—succeeds once again in the context of network television. However, the televised models of modern families tell us that times and families have changed dramatically in the three decades since “Father Knows Best” went off the air. We have noted already the symptoms of this change: an all-time high level of family breakup, soaring rates of illegitimacy, abortion, deep confusion over sexual roles (167).

In the New Right's version of "the Fifties," every family lived in its own suburban home with a green lawn on a shaded street. Father functioned as the family "breadwinner" and earned enough so that the household can be supported by one income. A 9 am to 5 pm, Monday-through-Friday work week allowed father to relax at home in the evenings during the week and participate in the household on the weekends. Mother found happiness and fulfillment in staying at home to perform her duties as wife and mother in a suburban home with all of the latest appliances and equipment. The home offered a sanctuary from the brutalities and pressures of the workplace, and the separation of work and family was symbolized by the commuter train that took father to work each morning and brought him home each night. The lives of

children revolved around the family, a fact that reinforces the family's central role in socializing boys and girls into traditional gender roles and instilling the values of hard work and honesty. The safe suburban home was part of a larger community where neighbors knew each other. Outsiders were clearly defined and recognizable, like dangerous young hoodlums or juvenile delinquents.

For Coontz, amid massive, "incremental, and largely invisible structural and economic changes in American life during the 1980s," a "crisis in the family" and a "crisis of American youth" became easily definable and resolvable explanations for America's economic, moral, and cultural malaise. Conservative critics like Allan Carlson and William Murchison urged Americans to see that America's economic and social problems stem from a collapse of family stability (Coontz 256). Even more moderate critics like Christopher Lasch blamed working women for growing problems among American youth (256).

Coontz argues that the "crisis in the family became a way of explaining the paradox of poverty amid plenty, alienation in the midst of abundance" (256). In his analysis of the rise of the New Right during the 1980s entitled What's the Matter With Kansas, Thomas Franks argues that the endless culture wars around issues surrounding "the crisis in the American family," and the "crisis of American youth" worked to draw energy and attention away from the massive restructuring of the American economy during the late 1970s and 1980s.

In contrast to the 1980s, the 1950s were a brief period of economic expansion and opportunity for a large portion of Americans. The gender roles

and intergenerational relations that emerged in the 1950s were shaped by anomalous economic and political forces (Coontz 263). Although poverty rates were higher in the 1950s, they were headed downwards as opposed to the 1970s and 1980s when they were headed upwards (Coontz 263). Consistent growth in real income and economic choices fostered a sense of optimism and expanding opportunity that was supported by government programs like the G.I. Bill, home mortgage supports and massive investments in the domestic infrastructure. Coontz documents that between 1949 and 1973, the average American man saw his real wages rise by 110% (Coontz 263). During the 1950s and 1960s, economic growth did not increase inequality, though as Coontz notes, it did little to wipe out already existing inequalities (263). People assumed each generation would live better than the previous one, and even if the rich got richer, through government policies and economic growth, prosperity would trickle down (263).

In the 1980s, however, real wages, especially for private non-supervisory workers, actually lowered. The nation's non-unionized labor force expanded along with a 121% growth in non-voluntary part-time work. In fact, during the 1980s, part-time work became the fastest growing segment of the economy (Coontz 264). Only 22% of part-time workers received health benefits.

The decline in job prospects, real wages and benefits during the 1980s did not prove to be a temporary phenomenon. Economic growth was based largely on financial speculation at the top and the multiplication of low-wage

jobs at the bottom (Coontz 264). Starting in the 1980s, salaries became increasingly polarized. In 1987, after five years of recovery from the 1982 recession, income inequality in the American economy was greater than at the height of the recession and much greater than it was in 1973. In fact the poverty rate was higher than it had been a decade earlier and the poorest 20 % were living on incomes that were lower than those of 1979 (Coontz 264).

Historians including Alan Wolfe demonstrate how the ideal of nuclear family life was based on a large cohort involved in raising families at the same time (Coontz 265-266). Wolfe argues that "gender roles were based less on thought out principals or eternal God given gender identities but on wage, work and housing realities" (Coontz 266). The restructuring of the American economy during the 1980s made it more and more difficult for most Americans to purchase the central image of the American dream, a family home.

As Coontz argues, the idealized image of "the Fifties" nuclear family was based on a unique and temporary conjuncture of economic, social and political factors financed by America's extraordinary competitive advantage at the end of World War II, when European and Asian economies were destroyed. America's privileged economic position sustained both a tremendous expansion and a new honeymoon between management and organized labor. During the 1950s, real wages increased by more than they had in the entire previous half century (266).

2.2.2. Materials and Materials Used to Create the New Right's Definition of "the Fifties"

Where the image of "the Fifties" created in the 1970s circulated in popular culture entertainment including music, television and film, the New Right dispersed its image of "the Fifties" through a range of old and new modes of distribution.

As documented by Michael Rogin and Daniel Marcus, one of the most potent methods included the persona and star text of Ronald Reagan. Reagan's role as host of the General Electric Theatre during the 1950s, memories and re-runs of the Hollywood films in which he performed and news media reports of Reagan's speeches, media reportage on the New Right's political organizations and the opinion pieces and analyses of right-wing-think-tanks like the supported the association of Ronald Reagan with the New Right's idealized vision of "the Fifties."

In Chapter One, "Culture and the Religious Right," in Media, Culture and the Religious Right, Linda Kintz argues that the New Right's ability to define the 1950s and disseminate its critique of 1980s family life can be directly attributed to its unique fusion of religious absolutism and contemporary media sophistication (3). Julia Lesage document in her analysis of "Christian Media," that conservative religious institutions in the United States use all of the modes of media technology available to communicate their messages to a broad spectrum of viewers, listeners and readers (21). Lesage notes the irony that

Christian Right groups are often defined by their resistance to modernism, when in fact, though they still deal with a very narrow range of issues ideologically, in the last several decades, the Religious Right has built up an extensive think tank apparatus to shape public policy and has multiplied the ways that it gets its political message out to the public (21).

In his essay, "Who is Mediating the Storm? Right-Wing Alternative Information Networks," Chip Berlet analyzes the complex and diverse infrastructure conservatives have developed for disseminating the New Right perspective on family values both inside and outside the mainstream media, which they view as hostile to their conservative perspective (21). Berlet writes:

The increased use of electronic alternative media in the 1980s and 1990s involved on-line computer systems, networks, and services; fax networks and trees; shortwave radio programs; networks of small AM radio stations, with syndicated programs distributed by satellite transmissions or even by mailed audiotapes; home satellite dish reception, providing both TV audio/video programs and separate audio programs; local cable television channels, through which nationally produced videos are sometimes aired; and mail-order video and audiotape distributorships (21-22).

One of the most striking features of the New Right's use of media is that each communication outlet refers to publications or desirable follow-ups for the reader, viewer, listener, or computer user to pursue in some other information medium (Lesage 22). Lesage notes that each Christian Right organization or television program expects to link its audience into another New Right information source or into another media outlet that has the ability to directly shape public policy (22). For instance, when a viewer tunes into Pat Robertson's

The 700 Club, he or she has immediate access to telephone numbers, web site addresses and the large staff of prayer counselors ready to speak personally with the viewer. The intensely organized, coordinated links between New Right media outlets creates a powerful nexus of vertically and horizontally integrated media outlets. In effect, with just a single connection to a New Right media source, a viewer or listener enters a vast, extensive and interconnected conservative media information network. As Lesage explains, "The Religious Right, especially at the elite level of its leadership, makes use of and builds interconnections between media" (33).

The mobilization of New Right think tanks, especially those focused on the socially conservative issue of family values, have proven to be a potent method for disseminating the concept of traditional family values. During the 1980s, New Right activists focused on providing information to support legislators in marketing conservative platforms and programs, and providing New Right organizations with information through multiple and layered media outreach. Think tanks work to produce and market newsworthy information through contacts with a network of conservative scholars and policy experts (Lesage 28). For example, the American Enterprise Institute regularly calls upon neo-conservatives Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Robert Bork, Irving Kristol and Antonin Scalia to write articles and op-ed pieces for its publications, serve as speakers at high profile political events and perform as radio and television guests (Lesage 29). Lesage argues that think tanks "provide a visible gathering of the intellectual

and professional elite and often place people in governmental policy-making positions" (28). The Heritage Foundation provides regular "short papers" that it delivers to staff on Capital Hill, and has built its own television studio in Washington D.C. so that talk show hosts can speak directly to audiences from the nation's capital (28).

Conservative think tanks like the powerful Heritage Foundation, the Free Congress Foundation, parent organization of National Empowerment Television network (NET), emphasize "marketing" socially conservative ideas by using innovative modes of media distribution across a wide range of media formats, especially in the mainstream media (Lesage 27). NET capitalizes on the television production facilities provided to House and Senate members by Congress. Republican Congressional members produce expensive programs at the tax payer's expense and then turn them over to NET free of charge (Lesage 29). During the 1980s, Newt Gingrich produced a weekly hour-long program, Rising Tide, which was then broadcast on NET along with a program produced by the Republican National Convention. Under the direction of long-time New Right strategist, Paul Weyrich, NET offers two distinct forms of television programming: a 24 hour news and information network and a subscription service tailored to the needs of political activists (28). To intensify the lobbying impact of NET on Capitol Hill, Weyrich faxes a summary of NET's broadcasts to over 1,000 conservative talk shows each day (28).

Concerned Women for America (CWA), a 600,000-member organization,

founded and directed by evangelical Christian Beverly LeHaye, uses a variety of media to organize and coordinate the political activities of a national network of Prayer Chapters. Each chapter consists of 50 women: a leader and 7 women who contact other women on a phone chain or send out "fax alerts" to organize Prayer Chapters to support specific Religious Right candidates, legislation, and political events (32). LeHaye builds communication and commitment with her daily half-hour radio program that is broadcast on 40 Christian radio stations nationwide. Lesage notes that LeHaye's radio show always ends with a practical call to action from sending money to a pregnancy center, searching local library shelves to find objectionable books that have been identified on the radio show, and getting listeners out to the polls. The CWA regularly provides well trained and organized female foot soldiers to support the political efforts of the Christian Coalition. In conjunction with the Christian Coalition, CWA organized to nominate Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, and has been able to produce 100,000 petitions, phone calls and e-mails in very short periods of time (Lesage 32).

Rush Limbaugh, Dr. James C. Dobson, and Pat Robertson have proven themselves to be particularly successful at manipulating their chosen media form to achieve media integration. Rush Limbaugh dominated the American political and cultural landscape from beginning in the 1980s and through the 1990s (Land 227). Known primarily through his three-and-a-half hour daily radio programs (the three-hour Rush Limbaugh Show and the half-hour late night TV

show), Limbaugh offers himself as the passionate spokesman for "traditional American values" through a wide array of media forms: radio, television, books, the monthly Limbaugh Newsletter, personal engagements and Internet conference groups. In fact, Limbaugh's first two books, The Way Things Ought To Be and See, I Told You So dominated the New York Times' "Bestseller List" for 28 and 16 weeks, respectively, and sold over 2.5 million copies each (228). Limbaugh has also captured the potential of the Internet by encouraging his radio fan base to organize on the Internet by increasing the range of Limbaugh's ideas through several very active online conference groups (Land 228).

Dr. James C. Dobson's Focus on the Family, a widely syndicated, daily radio program, complements the more politically-oriented thrust of Rush Limbaugh's radio programming. Focus on the Family has one of the largest radio audiences in the United States and is broadcast on 1,450 radio stations each day. Like Limbaugh's call-in format, Dobson promotes listener participation by encouraging letter-writing that Dobson reads on the air. Listeners write over 250,000 letters a month, all of which are answered by Dobson's staff (Lesage 30), Dobson promotes a variety of Christian self-help and family-advice videos on air that he sells through his franchise of Christian bookstores. Dobson's publishing empire, which includes 10 different monthly magazines pitched toward a diverse audience of parents, teens, teachers and New Right political activists, supplements the weekly release of his "Family Issues Alert," a two-page fax sent

to 3,600 subscribers. Through his radio programming, Dobson had an impact on the family values debate across the United States. For example, Dobson's media facilities produced the radio public service announcements for Colorado's anti-homosexual Amendment 2. On air, Dobson regularly uses Focus on the Family to make campaign and public-service announcements in a variety of other states (Lesage 31). Dobson's ministry has been especially adroit at integrating its media operations with Washington D.C. based think tanks to promote an "ideal family" ideology. For example, Dobson partnered with the Washington D.C. based think tank, Family Research Council, created by Gary Bauer, a key player in the Reagan administration (Lesage 31). The Family Research Council conducts research on the ill-effects of single-parenting and out-of-wedlock childrearing to provide legislators with information to support family values legislation like The Family Protection Act of 1981 described in Chapter One of this dissertation. Eventually, Bauer had to separate Focus on the Family from the Family Research Council to protect Dobson's tax-exempt status as an educational organization. However, subscribers to Dobson's magazine Focus on the Family also receive free copies of the Family Research Council's monthly newsletter, Citizen.

Cable television offered the Religious Right the single most important venue for circulating the images and ideas of the Family Values Campaign. Beginning in the late 1960s, Christian evangelicals, including Jerry Falwell, Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart, began purchasing television

stations to produce Christian television programs and talk shows.

Pat Robertson was the first to recognize and exploit satellite with his creation of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), which later became the Family Channel. Robertson experienced a religious conversion while running his own successful electronics company. Convinced that God wanted him to buy a television station to spread the Gospel, Robertson, with only \$70 to his name, purchased the bankrupt UFH station in Portsmouth, Virginia, for \$37,000 and gave the station the call letters WYAH, for Yahweh, translated from Hebrew as "the word of God" (Quicke 1939). The Christian Broadcasting Network or CBN went on air for the first time on October 1, 1961. Robertson held his first telethon on CBN by asking 700 supporters to send \$10 each to help the station's operating budget (Quicke 1939). Based on the success of a second telethon, Robertson launched The 700 Club, a daily broadcast of prayer and ministry that used toll-free 800 numbers to encourage viewers to call in for free advice and prayer (Quicke 1939).

A media genius, Robertson first recognized the enormous potential of an Earth station that could uplink and downlink programs to the local cable operators who were just beginning to exploit cable technology and desperately needed programming (Quicke 1939). Robertson petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), signed an agreement with Scientific Atlanta to purchase CBN's Earth Station, and brought large amounts of time on U.S. domestic satellites (Quicke 1939). The Family Channel was born on April 29,

1977 when CBN, followed the lead of Ted Turner's Cable Network News, and began broadcasting Christian, family values oriented programming 24 hours a day to affiliates all over the United States (Quicke 1939). Within six months, CBN became the largest syndicator of satellite programs in the United States. By October 1979, CBN opened its International Communications Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia and began broadcasting internationally. In 2002, CBN was broadcasting to 180 nations in 71 languages (Quicke 1939). In 1989, Robertson created the Home Enrichment Network through an affiliation of 33 Christian television stations in the United States (1939).

Pat Robertson's The 700 Club is the longest running news talk show on television, and reaches over a million households in American and in 60 other countries daily (Lesage 23). Each episode of the The 700 Club appears with an episode of Newswatch, a news program that is so professional-looking that viewers regularly mistake it for Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN) (23). Robertson regularly invites viewers to call into his massive phone bank at any point during CBN programming to speak and pray with CBN's large staff of prayer counselors (Lesage 25). Viewers are regularly referred to CBN's sophisticated web site, which fulfills Robertson's political ambitions by providing a detailed mailing and email addresses (25). To keep CBN's lucrative mailing list updated, the web site incorporates multiple ways for viewers/users to get "free" material in exchange for their name, mail and email address and phone numbers (Lesage 25). Robertson immediately refers address data to his political group, the

Christian Coalition, currently operated by successor Rob Reed, for soliciting funds to support political campaign funds.

CBN offers a brilliant case study for the critical ways that the Religious Right used new media technologies to promote their socially conservative, family values message using re-broadcasts of 1950s family sitcoms like Leave It To Beaver. The birth and rapid growth of cable during the late 1970s and 1980s made film and television materials from the 1950s extremely valuable. Newly created cable giants purchased film studios for the sole purpose of gaining access to their film and television libraries. While Viacom replayed these family sitcoms with tongue in cheek on Nick at Night, the New Right played reruns of 1950s television shows as straightforward documentary evidence of family life during the 1950s (Marcus 194). A handful of mid-1950s sitcoms dominated Christian television, where they were replayed not as fictions, but actual historical documents, proof that family life was far superior in "the Fifties." Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcast Network in particular played reruns of Leave It To Beaver, Father Knows Best, My Three Sons, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet and The Donna Reed Show to fill out the 24 hours between daily showings of The 700 Club (1965).

The domestic family drama is one of television's most important genres and has been crucial in shaping the idea of family in the nation as a whole. Television historians have argued that television is to, a great extent, a family medium. In the early 1950s, representations of family life were fairly diverse. As

Lucy Fischer has argued in her talk entitled "Jews, the City, and the Media: From Hungry Hearts (1922) to The Goldbergs (1950s)," these programs featured urban living and strong matriarchs. However, starting in the mid-1950s, representations of the family shifted to those which revolve around middle-class families living in suburbia and feature a professional father (doctor, accountant, etc.) and a full-time, stay-at-home mother. Humor is often found in the interrelationships of the family members (Liebman 8).

In her study of the relationship between 1950s television and Hollywood film, Liebman argues that "when television's half-hour comedies are re-examined against this definition—shorn of their laugh tracks and the critical assertion that these programs are indeed "funny"—these series bear the unmistakable generic markers of domestic family melodrama, characterized by the same familial strife and reconciliation that form the foundation of the feature-film domestic melodrama" (5). Liebman argues that before 1954, television's family melodramas could not be categorized as melodramas because they lacked an emphasis on familial love and relationships, moral transgression and lessons learned that was to come with the studio-produced family melodramas of the mid-to-late 1950s (5).

Liebman also argues that the situation comedies that were so popular with the New Right use a melodramatic narrative structure to translate social problems into familial problems. Liebman argues that these programs use men, fathers specifically, as the focus of their dramas. Women are marginalized and

pushed to the background. A sharp distinction exists between the outside world as father's world of commerce and mother's domestic sphere. Most importantly, social problems are defined as domestic problems (5). The interpretation of family life endorsed by these family melodramas is white, middle-class, suburban, patriarchal, anti-feminine and anti-feminine, and encourages socialization in rigid traditional gender roles.

The New Right's return to of an idealized vision of the 1950s nuclear, traditional family extends far beyond the use of 1950s situation comedies/domestic melodramas as a regular part of programming.⁵ Frankl notes that "promoting a pro-family agenda is more complex than just mythologizing the nuclear family" through re-runs of 1950s domestic melodramas (178). In her analysis of Pat Robertson's Family Channel, Frankl demonstrates the multiple ways that Robertson deploys the rhetoric of family values throughout his Family Channel programming. Frankl argues that the emphasis on family as a central organizing concept for programming "coincides with the symbolic manipulation of 'family' by the contemporary conservative social-political movement" (176).

In her analysis of the 700 Club, Frankl argues that Robertson relies on two

⁵ Frankl notes that in the "Report to Stockholders 1994," the quality of the programming on Robertson's Family Channel is an issue of constant concern and attention (178). She writes: "In an effort to clarify its identity, the Family Channel launched an innovative advertising campaign based on the theme...One Channel celebrates the extraordinary power of the family" (Report to Stockholders 1994, 10).

familiar genres, the news program and the domestic or family melodrama to center the show's material "around topics and emotions related to family life" by formatting most of the shows materials around topics related to family life. (176). This emotional link, Frankl claims, integrates viewers into Robertson's televisual community, where the programming demonstrates the role of Robertson himself as all-knowing patriarch and good provider (176). Robertson uses his metaphor of family to "establish a tie to needy viewers, who receive direct counseling and prayer from the 700 Club" (176). Furthermore, the content of the Family Channel, marketed as pure and wholesome traditional family fare, reinforces the idea of the channel as a trust worthy source of education and entertainment, and even a potential electronic babysitter (176).

Frankl argues that Robertson has been a leader in showing how the full range of entertainment media, including music, drama, talk shows and family entertainment programs and specials, can be used to spread the traditional family values message. The Family Channel's stated goal is to provide "high-quality entertainment programming and related products that emphasize traditional values and that can be enjoyed by the entire family (177). Robertson became "a master at imbuing popular culture media forms with the family values ideology in ways that maintain and energize the social movement of the religious right" (177). Early on, Robertson pioneered the strategy of inserting religion into popular and familiar media formats, rather than adapting media formats to religious messages. Robertson also voices the family values ideology

through the news stories that he covers and news specials on specific social problems, like teen suicide, that the New Right has consistently linked to a collapse of traditional family structures.

The content on the Family Channel gradually shifted throughout the 1980s from saving souls to “a focus on social and political concerns such as pro-life messages, abstinence from pre-marital sex, and attacks on homosexuals (177).

Frankl writes:

The Family Channel repackages the Christian Family ideal into daylong ‘quality’ family entertainment. Such entertainment has a strong emotional appeal. Its aim is to enter the heart first and then the mind to form emotional connections and, as the viewers hope, even to shape the viewers’ personalities. Morally, the Family Channel has as its aim reinforcing viewer’s beliefs in the possibility and desirability of a strong family supporting each other in a hostile world. With pro-family values established as its programming measure, the Family Channel is the countervailing entertainment system to both Disney and Nickleodeon, the other family television networks. In effect, Robertson is engaged in popular culture wars, fighting for ‘Christian family values’ and seeking to build young audiences around family messages (176).

Furthermore, Robertson, like many other televangelist enterprises, expresses the family values ideology in the organizational structure of his media empire by employing family members, like his son, Timothy B. Robertson, as president and chief executive officer, and member of the board of directors of the Family Channel. The use of family members is common throughout the media organizations of the Religious Right. For instance, Arvella Schuller, wife of Robert Schuller, is the executive producer of the Hour of Power. Schuller’s sons

and daughters preach and work in Schuller ministries in a variety of ways (179). Robert A. Schuller, Robert Schuller's son, regularly appears on the Hour of Power and is preparing to take his father's place. Richard Roberts, son of Oral Roberts, plans to take his father's place as head of the music ministry of Oral Roberts's Healing Ministry (179). Frankl explains that the family business is a critical part of the Christian Right's moral-political family values message in that "Christian families working together are visual icons, part of the 'system of making meaning' produced by the Christian Right" (179).

2.3. The 1950s in the Hollywood Youth Narrative: A Genre in the Process of Updating Itself

Section Three supports the argument made by Marcus in his chapter entitled "Popular Culture and the Response to Conservative Nostalgia," that resistance to the New Right's conservative use of "the Fifties" centered in popular culture. Marcus writes:

In the political realm, Reagan's opponents were largely unable or unwilling to challenge the conservative narrative on its own historico-mythic terrain. It was left to popular culture to serve as a repository of differing senses of the past, and to at times complicate and resist the conservative narrative . . . (117).

The Hollywood Youth Narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s offered one important, but largely unrecognized, cultural arena of resistance to the New Right's use of "the Fifties" to support its conservative domestic agenda, especially its version of the traditional nuclear family. This section tracks the

unique industrial and cultural relationship between the Hollywood Youth Narratives of the 1980s and the 1950s to argue that young filmmakers like Hunter, Lehmann, Heckerling, and Coppola looked to the Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s in a process of "updating" the genre to appeal to a new generation of audiences. Through this process of updating, these young filmmakers engaged the narrative structures and visual icons of 1950s teen flicks and "cross-overs" like Rebel Without A Cause, Splendor in the Grass, and Peyton Place to redefine coming-of-age as a young American in the period of tumultuous social change following the Civil Rights Movement, the Viet Nam War and the second wave of American feminism.

In his discussion of Hollywood youth narratives in Hollywood and Genre, Steve Neale argues that the Hollywood youth narrative archive can be divided into two periods: a first wave that extends from the late 1940s through the early 1960s, and a second wave that spans from the late 1970s through the mid-1990s. In both of these "waves," the production of Hollywood youth narratives focused on adolescents. In the hiatus between these two waves, Neale argues that Hollywood shifted to producing films focused on college-age students, like Nichols's The Graduate (1967), most likely in an attempt to appeal to the college-age youth movement (120-122).

A variety of historical, economic and social forces supported the resurgence of the Hollywood youth narrative in the 1980s and early 1990s. As Grace Palladino argues, the 1980s marked the population surge known as "the

baby boomlet," as baby boomers themselves began to have children (1). Like teenagers of the 1950s, teenagers of the 1980s were a large and powerful market. The power of the teen market supported a variety of innovations in American media including the birth of MTV and VH1 in 1981 and 1985, respectively. Hollywood responded as well by marketing directly to teen audiences and producing over 2000 Hollywood youth narratives in the 1980s alone (Shary 8).

The process of generic updating at work in the Hollywood youth narratives of the period took place on several levels. In the economically re-structured New Hollywood of the 1980s, opportunities to direct one of a diminishing number of films being produced were hard to come by. Roger Corman's purchase of AIP played a significant role in providing young directors just out of film school access to all parts of the film production process.

Young filmmakers often got their first break at a major studio through an offer to make a low-budget "youth film." During the 1980s, filmmakers, including Coppola, began their big studio careers with youth films. Amy Heckerling, director of Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982), offers an example of a young female filmmaker breaking into the majors with a youth film.

Regardless of the fact that academic film scholars had abandoned auteurism by the 1980s, the cult of the director flourished in Hollywood as a marketing and aesthetic category among both film viewers and filmmakers. Auteurism was fostered by the academic training, as opposed to commercial

training, of America's next generations of directors at the nation's top film schools like USC and NYU. Though they were supposedly making films for teen audiences, these young filmmakers saw themselves as auteurs addressing a far larger audience with important ideas.

As Shary documents, the plot structures of Hollywood youth narratives changed little between the 1950s and the 1980s (8). Doherty organized teen flicks into four dominant sub-genres: horror films, dangerous youth films, clean teenpics and rock-and-roll musicals. 1950s "cross-overs" largely fell into the category of social problem melodramas. During the 1980s, Hollywood youth narratives recycled the generic structures of the 1950s teen flicks and cross-overs in ways that embodied important cultural changes in American life during the 1960s and 1970s.

In the specific case of the dangerous youth narrative, Hollywood youth narratives put young women and African Americans at the center. In his discussion entitled "Tough Girls," Shary documents how the image of young female delinquents developed through the course of the 1980s and early 1990s in films like Foxes (1980), Savage Streets (1984), Scarred (1984) and The Legend of Billie Jean (1985). Similarly, young African-American directors followed Spike Lee's lead in Do the Right Thing (1989) and began to produce films about young black men growing up in the ghetto, including Boyz n the Hood (1991), UP Against the Wall (1991), New Jack City (1991), Hanging with the Homeboys (1991) and Straight Out of Brooklyn (1991).

Directors, including John Carpenter, Wes Craven, and Amy Jones, updated the low-budget horror teenpics genre, perfected by Roger Corman through the intensified violence and sexuality of the slasher film. Slasher films lent themselves to recycling and some of the most memorable, Halloween (1978), Friday the 13th (1980), Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) and Slumber Party Massacre (1982), led to as many as six sequels within the single decade of the 1980s.

The melodramatic structures of the clean teenpic and the Hollywood cross-over were revamped to exploit the loosened censorship codes of the 1980s. Teen sex comedies, like Porky's (1981), Risky Business (1983), Lois¹ It (1982) and The Last American Virgin (1982), celebrated male sexual coming-of-age in comic narratives, as opposed to the moralistic social problem films of the 1950s, like Blue Denim (1957) that reinforced conservative sexual behavior. In place of melodramatic clean teenpics like Where the Boys Are (1960) -- in which good girls were rewarded and bad girls were punished -- films like Little Darlings (1980), Goin' All The Way (1982), and Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982) explored sexuality from a female perspective.

As discussed in Chapter One, many Hollywood youth narratives of the 1980s and early 1990s, like Porky's (1981), Peggy Sue Got Married (1986) and Hairspray (1988), built their narratives around actual filmic returns to the 1950s. However, the more subtle, discursive re-appropriation and re-articulation of the narratives and images of the 1950s by young filmmakers of the 1980s resulted

from industrial forces within Hollywood itself as well as larger cultural issues. As the following analyses demonstrates, young filmmakers used the Hollywood youth narrative as an arena for embracing and contesting, supporting and resisting the efforts of the New Right to contain the meaning of the 1950s in American cultural life during the 1980s.

3. Chapter Three: "Am I Evil?" Youth, Horror, and Monstrosity in River's Edge

Chapter Three centers on Tim Hunter's River's Edge and the social context surrounding the production and reception of the film. The discussion of River's Edge (1986) focuses on the particular role of youth within the Family Values Campaign. It also explores the relationships between Hunter's film and the 1981 rape and murder of 14-year-old Marcy Conrad by Anthony Jacque Broussard in Milpitas, California, the event upon which Hunter based the film, and the media reportage of the murder and the film.

The analysis of River's Edge explores the Family Values Campaign from the perspective of its approach to youth during the Reagan and George Herbert Bush administrations. This chapter analyzes how the trope of youth functioned during the 1980s within the context of a governmentally declared "crisis of youth" articulated by the medical, psychiatric and psychological professions, embraced and illustrated by the mass media, and championed, in particular, by the Reagan administration as a key component of America's War on Drugs.

The investigation of the film's interaction in 1980s American culture is separated into four parts.

Section 3.1 lays out the chapter's theoretical groundwork by situating River's Edge within the second wave of Hollywood youth narratives and as a prime example of the "dangerous youth" sub-genre. Although film theorists

have traditionally read "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narratives as melodramas, when viewed within a larger social and historical matrix, these films also exhibit many of the basic conventions of classic Hollywood horror films.

Section 3.2 analyzes the news coverage of the actual murder in the New York Times as it was reported over a one-year period from November, 1981 through the prosecution and sentencing of Broussard in 1982. I argue that this material follows a classic film horror narrative structure and, in fact, duplicates the longstanding juvenile-delinquent Hollywood youth narrative sub-genre, a cultural narrative that defines delinquent youth as social monsters that must be destroyed to restore social order. Section 3.2 gives the reader a brief overview of the 1980s "youth in crisis" cycle as a crucial social backdrop to the Conrad/Broussard murder and the role the media coverage played in creating the matrix of ideas, images and rhetoric at the heart of the 1980s "youth in crisis" cycle.

Section 3.3 focuses on the syntactic or narrative structure of River's Edge as a deconstruction of the larger cultural reading of youth as social monsters.

Section 3.4 explores the use of powerful semantic elements in River's Edge to create an alternative visual counter narrative to the collapsed youth as monster syntax. Section 3.4 demonstrates how this semantic counter narrative reveals a different monstrosity at the heart of Conrad's murder. Chapter Three concludes with an analysis of the complex ways that River's Edge simultaneously challenges and supports the rhetoric of the Family Values Campaign.

3.1. River's Edge, 1980s Hollywood and the Dangerous Youth Film Sub-Genre

As a young and aspiring Hollywood director in the 1980s, Tim Hunter, son of prominent Hollywood screenwriter Ian McClellan Hunter—who directed many classic Hollywood scripts himself, including A Woman of Distinction (1950) and Roman Holiday (1953)—graduated from the American Film Institute and began looking for work in a reorganized and restructured Hollywood. Hunter joined many of his peers by getting hired as an untried director working in the notorious genre known as the Hollywood youth narrative, a low-budget staple of the big studios or the remaining low-budget B and exploitation film producers.

After a long hiatus in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Hollywood youth narrative had returned, literally, with a vengeance in horror films like The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974), Carrie (1976) and Halloween (1978). The resurgence or second wave of Hollywood youth narratives swiftly blossomed across genres with comedies like American Graffiti (1973), Porky's (1982), Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982), Last American Virgin (1982), Risky Business (1983), Peggy Sue Got Married (1986), Ferris Buehler's Day Off (1986) and Hairspray (1988), and melodramas including Fame (1980), Baby, It's You (1983), Sixteen Candles (1984), The Breakfast Club (1985), and Pretty in Pink (1986).

Like Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Brian De

Palma, John Carpenter and Amy Heckerling in the early and mid-1970s, and Hughes later in the 1980s, Hunter began his career with two Hollywood youth narratives, Tex (1982) and Sylvester (1985), both produced for the family-oriented Disney Company. Through the 1990s, the Hollywood youth narrative continued to flourish as a dominant Hollywood form with big studio and independent films including My Own Private Idaho (1991), Zebra Head (1992), Gas Food Lodging (1992), Dazed and Confused (1993), Welcome to the Doll House (1995), Fun (1994), To Die For (1995) and Clueless (1995).

Hunter won critical recognition for the ways that his Disney Hollywood youth narratives Tex (1982) and Sylvester (1985) trouble the easy narrative reconciliation of youth and adult culture at the heart of many of the most popular Hollywood youth narratives. Disney's family-oriented Hollywood youth narratives in particular follow the narrative format of the traditional 1950s clean teen sub-genre, as Doherty describes in his chapter on the sub-genre (48). Although pitched directly to teen audiences, clean teen Hollywood youth narratives emphasize adult values and ideals and most typically resolve narrative conflict through solutions that satisfy adult perspectives and social mores.

In both Tex (1982) and Sylvester (1985), Hunter reworks the classic clean teen film's associations with adult perspectives and values by taking viewers inside the world of teens to present moral conflicts from a youthful point of view. In River's Edge, Tim Hunter returns to the Hollywood youth narrative format but

from the position of independent director with the freedom to explore and challenge Hollywood's traditional portrayal of deviant and delinquent youth. Perhaps one of the most disturbing Hollywood youth narratives ever committed to screen, River's Edge openly challenges the generic constraints of the traditional Hollywood clean youth narrative with its requisite happy ending and confirmation of adult morality, and shifts Hunter's work into what McGee, Robertson, Doherty, Lewis and Neale have identified as the "dangerous youth," "j.d." or "juvie" Hollywood youth narrative sub-genre.

Surprisingly, it took Hunter more than seven months to find a distributor for his dark look at seriously troubled youth. Island Pictures, hesitant to pitch the film to a regular commercial market, finally released River's Edge as "art house" fare hoping to cash in on the huge success of David Lynch's look at the seedy underbelly of suburban life in Blue Velvet (1986). Produced on the extremely low budget of 1.7 million dollars and shot in less than 30 days, River's Edge grossed more than \$500,000 within a week of its national release at only 93 selected theaters. Although Island Pictures had initially targeted an adult art house audience as its primary market, River's Edge proved especially popular with teenagers who flocked to the film for multiple viewings (Acland 123).

3.1.1. A History of the "Dangerous Youth" Film Narrative Sub-Genre

A Hollywood youth narrative that focuses on criminal and deviant youth, River's Edge fits squarely into the important Hollywood youth narrative sub-genre Doherty has identified as the "dangerous youth," "j.d." or "juvie" Hollywood youth narrative. In his chapter on the Hollywood youth narrative in Hollywood and Genre, Neale emphasizes the equation of delinquent youth with social conflict and trouble, noting that "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narratives often appear in periods of social conflict and turmoil (120-122). As a social historian of American youth and childhood, Robert Mennel documents in Thorns and Thistles: Juvenile Delinquents in the United States 1825-1940, that the idea of "youth in crisis" has been a recurring thematic in American life since the turn of the twentieth century (198). Mennel argues that criminal and delinquent youth have often served as a monstrous other carrying the projections of orderly law abiding citizens—most notably their fear of social chaos and disintegration (198). Poor and urban youth have historically most frequently carried this projection, functioning as social scapegoats (198).

The conflicted relationship between youth and adult cultures at the turn of the century documented by Mennel appears again in Charles Acland's analysis of deviant youth in the 1980s, titled Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Politics of Youth in Crisis. In his study of several "dangerous youth" Hollywood

youth narratives, including Hunter's River's Edge, Acland argues that the unequal power dynamics between youth and adult cultures can be read in the formal structure of the dangerous youth Hollywood youth narrative: "With few exceptions, it is always the case with the "troubled" youth Hollywood youth narrative that the point of view is adult and concerns an adult perception of the lives of the young" (116). Representations of "dangerous youth" are always at some level about the disciplinary gaze of the adult (Acland 18). In fact, a primary narrative goal of dangerous youth Hollywood youth narratives is "to caution" adults about youth and to construct the young as 'that which is watched'" (Acland 116). The adult gaze, Acland argues, "engages the double connotative force of youth: that youth is troubled and needs the knowing guidance of the adult . . . and that youth is troubling, harboring the potential to disrupt the smooth reproductions of real life" (117).

In Hollywood and Genre, Neale traces the trope of youth as threatening social monster in the "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narrative sub-genre as far back as the advent of sound—the mid-1920s and early 1930s. Neale argues that the first film representations of deviant and criminal teens in Hollywood films include Flaming Youth (1923), Dead End (1937) and Wild Boys of the Road (1933). Like the popular 1950s films that followed, these "youth in crisis" films capitalized on sensational news stories of impoverished, urban and largely immigrant youth who were coming to be increasingly defined by an emerging discourse of juvenile delinquency (Neale 120).

Neale argues that two separate post-World War II film cycles provided the foundation for the proliferation of juvenile delinquent or dangerous youth films of the 1950s," films that firmly established the icon of delinquent youth as social monsters. Films made during and immediately after World War II included Where Are Your Children (1944) and I Accuse My Parents (1944) and City Across the River (1949) and Knock On Any Door (1949), respectively. These films created a thematic tradition of juvenile delinquency, juvenile wildness and juvenile crime that shifted from its earlier singular focus on poor and mostly urban and immigrant youth to a post-war boom of middle-class, suburban youth (Neale 120).

Intersecting with the consolidating professions of psychiatry and social work and their medical and psychological discourses of juvenile delinquency, these films provided the foundation for the boom of low-budget teen flicks and the mainstream Hollywood cross-over Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s. Like the earlier juvenile delinquent Hollywood youth narratives, highly sensational crime films and juvenile delinquent films including Teen-Age Crime Wave (1955), Girls in Prison (1956) and Juvenile Jungle (1958), created the popular visual conventions and iconography for more mainstream and popular "dangerous youth" films and even musicals including Jailhouse Rock (1955). Hollywood youth narrative cross-overs of the period, including The Wild One (1953), Rebel Without A Cause (1955), High School Confidential (1958) and Blackboard Jungle (1955), were often marketed as melodramatic social problem films.

Widely popular and now classic 1950s "cross-over" Hollywood youth narratives anchored what has now become two widely accepted social tropes -- deviant youth as a redeemable melodramatic victim of society or deviant youth as dangerous social monster that must be eliminated and destroyed to restore social normalcy. Neale suggests that the idea and image of youth as dangerous, threatening and criminal has continued to color all kinds of films made about teenagers (121).

In this dissertation, I argue that the low-budget teen flicks and mainstream cross-overs of the late 1940s and 1950s are direct predecessors of the second wave of "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narratives produced by young filmmakers during the 1970s, 1980s, and through the mid-1990s. I would further argue that many of the films of the second wave literally rewrite some of the most popular 1950s Hollywood youth narratives to address the challenges to American social identity generated by the Viet Nam War, the struggle for Civil Rights and the Women's Movement.

Some of the most important "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narratives in the second wave include Porky's (1982), Rumble Fish (1983), Lords of Discipline (1983), Baby It's You (1983), River's Edge (1986), Risky Business (1983), Stand and Deliver (1988), Dead Poets Society (1989) and Dangerous Minds (1995). These juvenile delinquent or dangerous youth Hollywood youth narratives continued the tradition of exploring male delinquency and social alienation, a dominant preoccupation of the majority of both low-budget and crossover

"dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narratives of the first wave, but with an eye towards negotiating different models of masculinity following the defeat in the Viet Nam War.

While the focus on white male delinquency is dominant, films like Peggy Sue Got Married (1986), Heathers (1989), Welcome to the Dollhouse (1995), Girls Town (1996), To Die For (1995) and Fun (1994) explore the issue of dangerous and alienated youth focused on a female perspective. Furthermore, films directed by young African American directors like John Singleton, Mario Van Peebles, and Robert and Allen Hughes make race a central issue in "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narratives with like Cooley High (1975), and gangster films including New Jack City (1991), Boys N the Hood (1991), Menace II Society (1993) and Hoop Dreams (1994).

3.1.2. Conventions of the "Dangerous Youth" Hollywood Youth Narrative Sub-Genre

In his chapter entitled "Dangerous Youth," Doherty cites several distinguishing generic features of the juvenile delinquent sub-genre. First, is the presence of troubled or disaffected youth and their requisite antithesis in the form of the police, juvenile court officers and the juvenile judge. A sympathetic and understanding adult, usually a high-school teacher, social worker or juvenile court case worker mediates the opposition between the sanctioned world of adults, which always includes the good teens and the deviant, destructive and

criminal world of the youth (93-98). As Doherty notes, the delinquent behavior of the deviant teens can usually be directly linked to topical issues and news stories as was true with the problem of illegal drag racing in Rebel Without a Cause (87-88).

As mentioned in the discussion of melodrama in Chapter One, Hill argues that the problem of juvenile delinquency is often conflated with other longstanding social conflicts or "problems" that come suddenly and graphically to public attention in a critical moment through some topical, sensational news story, a process analyzed in detail by Doherty (87-88). Hill notes that the troubled youth in a particular dangerous youth Hollywood youth narrative often serves as exemplum for other large and long standing social problems including immigrant and minority poverty, racism, drugs, gangs, changing sexual mores and violence.

Furthermore, Hill suggests that the resolution of the social problem at the heart of the dangerous youth narrative regularly generate solutions that suppress, efface or negate the social conflict or difference that created the social problem in the first place (123). Building on Hill's insight, I argue that a dangerous youth Hollywood youth narrative typically ends in one of two ways. In the first model, a deviant youth is saved and redeemed through a conversion to and subsequent re-integration into proper adult values and mores. The sacrifice of cultural difference to achieve social integration defines the melodramatic solution familiar in the social problem film (123-125). In her

introduction to Imitations of Life, Landy extends Hill's arguments regarding melodrama and the social problem film when she defines melodrama as a narrative structure that emphasizes sacrifice, loss and the continual blocking of desire (22).

However, a second narrative structure often dominates the dangerous youth Hollywood youth narrative tradition or sometimes parallels the classic melodrama structure within a single film. In this second model, the youth must be eliminated or destroyed to pay for social transgressions and to restore order or "normalcy." As Robin Wood argues in "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," a horror film is in fact a narrative in which social order is challenged by a social monster that must be destroyed so that social order can be restored (258). Despite the different outcomes, I would argue via Hill that the very difference or problem at the root of juvenile delinquent behavior that initially created the social problem in the first place, gets erased or eliminated in the process of either narrative resolution.

Blackboard Jungle (1955) offers a good example of both possible narrative resolutions within a single film. Produced and distributed by MGM and written and directed by Richard Brooks from the novel by Evan Hunter, the film featured Glenn Ford playing Richard Dadier, the tough but dedicated teacher who stands up to the gang of switchblade-wielding young thugs, Artie West (Vic Morrow) and Greg Miller (Sidney Pointier), trying to take over North Manual High. Anne Francis plays Anne, Dadier's frightened, young and pregnant wife whose

fear is intensified by her first exposure to inner city life. Dadier teaches not only the students who's in control of the school and how they must behave, but the other more cynical teachers as well including Jim Murdock (Louis Catherine) and Mr. Warneke (John Hoyt). In the process, Joshua Y. Edwards (Richard Kelley), the timid and somewhat effete mathematics teacher, learns what it means to be a real man. Anne Margaret Hayes (Lois Judy Hammond) plays the beautiful young and single female teacher who idealizes her students and overestimates her ability to handle them. Featuring one of the first rock-and-roll hits in a mainstream Hollywood film--"Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and the Comets—the film won four Oscars and boosted record sales of "Rock Around the Clock" to 25 million.

In Blackboard Jungle, the enormous American social problem of racism, signified and embodied by the African-American actor Sidney Poitier as student Greg Miller, gets resolved when Miller turns his back on his gang and joins the high-school Christmas musical where he will perform a Negro spiritual. This narrative, with its classic "unhappy, happy ending" which emphasizes the sacrifice of social difference to achieve a larger social redemption and integration, would typically be read as melodrama.

However, another narrative conflict and resolution parallels Poitier's redemption and re-integration. This narrative, set in motion by the white gang leader Artie West, emphasizes another set of social problems, namely urban poverty, violent criminality and juvenile delinquency symbolized by Artie's

complete rejection of middle-class values and social goals. Artie's character expresses levels of aggression appropriate to a World War II warrior but inappropriate in post-war, peace-time civilian life. In this parallel narrative, Artie West, as the white, working-class juvenile delinquent, poses the most serious threat to adult culture by repeatedly challenging adult propriety and social mores. Artie's hostile and then criminal actions incrementally increase the viewer's fear and horror—first by speaking back to Dadier, next by destroying another teacher's jazz record collection, then by sexually and sadistically harassing Dadier's pregnant wife, and finally by sexually assaulting a single female teacher.

In this competing narrative within the larger story of Blackboard Jungle, Artie is a frightening social monster beyond the rehabilitation of the self-sacrificing and dedicated teachers of the high school. Through the inexorable consequences of his own free will choices, Artie exhausts the best intentions of his teachers, social workers and principals and their selfless dedication to instilling the values of success in the high-school population of poor, urban youth. Extermination offers the only solution to Artie's complete refusal to cooperate with the adults. Thus, as Hill argues, the larger social problems associated with urban life in the 1950s, including urban poverty, a massive shift from blue-collar industrial related work into white collar and bureaucratic employment, conflicts over American male identity and sexuality, growing gang involvement among fifties' youth, violent anti-social behavior as well as criminal sexual predation get

conveniently resolved through the film's narrative conclusion—Artie's death.

Critics, like Doherty, Lewis and Hill have traditionally read the dangerous youth films as melodramas in the social problem vein. From this perspective, the conflicting social values and forms of social expressions symbolized by delinquent youth are "sacrificed" to restore or maintain social order and for the larger good of social integration and harmony. I would argue that when these films are understood within their social and historical context and linked to the larger operant social discourses of "youth in crisis," the Hollywood youth narrative can also be read as classic Hollywood horror film narrative. Furthermore, as is the case in Blackboard Jungle, both melodramatic and horror narratives can exist side by side, paralleling and contrasting the outcomes for different youth and contrasting generic modes of solving the same social problems.

3.1.3. Youth as Social Monsters: Classic Film Horror Conventions and the "Dangerous Youth" Hollywood Youth Narrative Sub-Genre

What are the defining characteristics of a classic film horror narrative? In what ways does a typical "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narrative operate like a classic film horror narrative? Relying on the work of film theorists and historians, like Steve Neale, Robin Wood, David Skal, Bruce Kawin, Rhonda Berenstein, Lucy Fischer, Adam Lowenstein, Vera Dika and Carol Clover, among others, I will outline seven crucial conventions of Hollywood horror film narratives including: (1) the presence of a monster, (2) the monster as the embodiment of

the "return of the repressed," (3) the classic horror narrative or syntactic structure, (4) the circulation of fear and suspense to justify the extermination of the monster, (5) the process of projection as related to larger patterns of social power, (6) the association of gender with the categories of victim and victimizer and (7) a discourse of projection and challenge toward the social, political and economic unconscious.

I will use Blackboard Jungle to illustrate how a classic "dangerous youth" Hollywood youth narrative deploys the standard conventions of a classic horror film despite its usual generic classification and commercial marketing as a melodrama.

3.1.3.1. Classic Film Horror and the Required Presence of a Monster

All horror narratives center on a monster. In fact, the presence of a monster is the single most important requirement for commercial horror genre status. Film theorists including Mark Jankovich and James Twitchell, have spent a great deal of time identifying what various creatures have been defined as monstrous and why. As Adam Lowenstein has argued in unpublished class notes, monsters embody our deepest fears and anxieties. The monster threatens our personal and social senses of safety and security, what we know and value most. As that which is most deeply feared and abhorred, monsters embody all that is other, alternate and usually unknown.

In his study of classic American film horror, The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror, David Skal analyzes the relationship among famous film horror monsters-including Frankenstein (1931), Dracula (1931) and The Wolf Man (1941) -- and critical moments in American history. Skal's study demonstrates how representations of monstrosity have transformed to reflect the continually shifting social concerns of American viewers in specific historical moments since the nineteen twenties. Skal argues that the particular fear expressed through a specific monster at a certain juncture in American social history expresses the social conflicts and anxieties embedded in that social moment. For example, some critics have read the film Frankenstein (1931) as a cautionary tale about the potentially uncontrollable powers of science and technology. Similarly, anxieties and fears about the use of the nuclear bomb and nuclear power can be read into the 1950s science fiction horror movie Them!, (1954) in which radioactive giant ants invade the Los Angeles sewer system. Therefore, what is considered monstrous or other is always undergoing transformation and transition in direct response to larger cultural and historical transformations and transitions.

In Blackboard Jungle, America's delinquent urban youth, represented primarily by Artie West, function as the monstrous other to middle-class adult post-war culture and its shifting definitions of masculinity. As the white gang leader, Artie arouses fear in the adults of the school and community and poses

a serious threat to the adult community of high-school educators, professionals and teachers. Artie's surly demeanor and comments escalate into violent behavior that affronts the 1959 viewers' sense of personal property, social hierarchy, sexual propriety, and personal and social safety and stability. Through his attitude and actions, Artie clearly signals that he is anti-education and thus opposed to the adult middle-class value of upward mobility.

As the youthful gang leader who incites other youth to delinquency, Artie West stands in direct opposition to the democratic adult power structure at the core of the high school creating an alternate social system of chaos, mob thinking, violence and intimidation. In fact, Artie acts much like a dictator ruling his mob through force and by coercing other youths into violent behavior that they actually oppose.

Furthermore, Artie's threatening telephone calls to Dadier's pregnant wife and his sexual assault of the single female teacher offer a frightening, sadistic image of masculine sexuality that directly counters the polite and respectful treatment of women by the other male teachers. In this way, Artie embodies an aberrant vision of post-World War II American masculinity that is anti-female and anti-family, anti-democratic and opposed to the positive upward mobility, social harmony and prosperity that democracy can provide to American youth.

The loud sounds and rhythms of rock and roll that open Blackboard Jungle signal the cultural conflict between youth and adults embodied in the juvenile delinquent Artie West. As Doherty argues, adults correctly read the undeniable

but often white washed association between rock and roll music and African American culture (e.g., the traditions of rhythm and blues and gospel music). In fact, the popularity of rock and roll among American teens incited fear of the demise of white culture to many adults of the period.

3.1.3.2. The Monster and the Return of the Repressed

For Robin Wood, author of the now classic essay "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," a film horror monster embodies "the Return of the Repressed" (164-173).

Wood bases this insight on Sigmund Freud's classic text, Civilization and Its Discontents, and the complex expansion and development of Freud's social theory by theorists like Theodore Reich and Herbert Marcuse, both of whom worked to integrate Freud's psychoanalytic theories and Marxism. Freud argues that in order for society to work, individuals must repress certain drives and desires to achieve the greater, common good (Civilization and Its Discontents 84,113,145). Wood distinguishes between the ordinary healthy repression that is necessary for a harmonious society and surplus repression or the unnecessary, even arbitrary forms of repression that create the distinctive features of a particular culture (165-172). The socially sanctioned patterns of healthy repression and surplus repression become internalized by community members and eventually are so familiar and assumed that they become unconscious. This

tacit set of rules defining proper behavior form an identifiable paradigm or what we assume as "normalcy" (178).

Patterns of healthy repression and surplus repression define a culture. In "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," Wood highlights several distinctive areas of surplus repression in American culture that he argues have regularly returned in Hollywood films as the return of the social repressed or a monstrous other: the repression of lower class lifestyles and social tastes, alternative ideologies and political systems including Communism and Socialism, and alternative sexual practices including homosexuality and the sexuality of children. Today the monstrous others often take the form of the working class and the poor, troubled and minority youth, and pedophiles and child molesters (166-172).

Implicit in Wood's analysis of the monster as the return of the repressed is a theory of social and community identity based on a process of polarization that pits an "us" against "them." Integrating Marxist and psychoanalytic social theories, Wood defines the monster as a social "Other" that embodies and expresses all of the repressed energies that would threaten the social agreements about what constitutes normalcy. Thus, the confrontation with a monstrous other in a classic Hollywood horror film is actually an unconscious engagement with a repressed and disowned part of self and/or culture. In fact, I take Wood's theory a step further. The "horrific crime" at the center of the horror narrative can be defined as a violation of normalcy that directly confronts

us with "normally" unconscious, repressed material. Thus, we are literally "horrified" when a monster, as the embodiment of the return of the repressed, confronts us with our own unconscious.

Both Wood and Freud emphasize the repression of sexual energy and expression as a necessary part of achieving the social harmony we call civilization. Wood argues that even many "normal" heterosexual desires must be repressed to maintain social stability including sexual activity outside of marriage and promiscuity etc. (Wood 166-167).

Therefore, according to Wood's model, the delinquent youth of Blackboard Jungle are the monstrous others who symbolize the alternative sexualities, politics and social values repressed by the white, male, middle-class adult society. The high school stands as the supreme expression of the alleged democratic ideals of equal opportunity, racial equality and harmony, upward mobility through hard work and personal effort and a version of post-war masculinity that suppresses aggression and subsumes sexuality to guarantee a stable economic future for a nuclear family. As the monstrous other to this post-war, middle-class American ideal, Artie embodies an open refusal to suppress and subsume aggression and sexuality for the supposed personal and social benefits available to a cooperative young American male.

3.1.3.3. Classic Film Horror Narrative Structure

Wood argues that the central narrative structure of any classic American horror film can be reduced to some variation of the following formula: A monster threatens normalcy; a quest begins to find and destroy the threatening monster; the monster is destroyed; normalcy is restored. Although there have been many permutations and possible variations of this simple formula, and a wide and arresting variety of monsters, this simple narrative structure still stands as the basic horror template.

The Artie West subplot of Blackboard Jungle fits the basic horror narrative structure that Wood identifies: A monster threatens normalcy. The monster is destroyed. Normalcy is restored. A "normal" male emulates his adult role model, Dadier, and suppresses his aggression, channels his sexual energy into marriage and family life, submits to the social hierarchy, and embraces the democratic ideals of cooperation and fair play. In doing so, he can advance himself and his family by successfully completing high school and climbing the economic ladder to success.

Furthermore, Dadier's wife will have her baby. The errant single female has been duly chastened through the barely averted sexual assault. Richard Kiley, the effete math teacher has learned what it takes to be a real American male, and the delinquent youth of North Manual High learn what they can achieve by adopting the values and perspectives of wiser and more experienced adults.

3.1.3.4. Classic Film Horror and the Circulation of Fear and Suspense

Implicit in Wood's argument about the structure of horror film narratives and the definition of the monster as the return of the repressed, though never explicitly stated, is an affective process that simultaneously produces and supports the narrative process trajectory. Based on Wood's outline of the horror narrative structure, I would argue that horror narratives simultaneously excite and manipulate our fears so that we are justified in blaming and then destroying the monstrous other.

Within the vast archive of Hollywood film horror, filmmakers have experimented with ways of arousing and patterning fear and suspense through innovations in horror narratives. In his analysis of Val Lewton's films, J. P. Tellote analyzes Lewton's role as a master innovator of suspense in classic Hollywood film horror (13-18). Tellote argues that Lewton played with the opposites of presence and absence—what could be seen on screen and what lay beyond the screen and the spectator's sight. Through a manipulation of sound, light and shadow, Lewton used this unseen but suggested off-screen material to build and intensify horror, fear and suspense (Tellote 21-39).

The advent of the slasher variation of the classic horror film in the 1970s promoted an important shift in the affective patterns of Hollywood horror by openly sexualizing the arousal and patterning of fear and suspense and intensifying terror through graphic depictions of on-screen violence. Where

traditional horror films often implied a direct relationship between violence and sexuality as part of a monstrous threat, Neale argues in "Halloween: Suspense, Aggression and the Look," that the sub-genre identified as the "slasher film" highlighted and even investigated the interaction of sexuality, female victimization and extreme depictions of physical violence (331-345).

The Artie West subplot of Blackboard Jungle fits into affective patterns of classic Hollywood horror, especially more implied depictions of the interaction of fear, suspense and sexuality. The viewer's sense of personal threat escalates relentlessly as the film's narrative structure incrementally builds the fear that will emotionally legitimate Artie's death.

The manipulation of affective tension and suspense in Blackboard Jungle begins with a simple verbal confrontation between Dadier and Artie. The tension rises when Artie dares the class to destroy another teacher's prized jazz record collection. Artie reveals the depths of his monstrosity when he threatens Dadier's defenseless pregnant wife, and endangers the innocent life of her unborn child. At this point, the viewer's fear intensifies, and crosses a threshold that awakens his or her moral indignation and righteous anger, justifying the viewer's growing desire to destroy Artie.

The interplay of sexuality, fear and violence also occurs in Artie's interactions with Miss Hayes. Horrified, the audience watches Artie pull Miss Hayes behind a stack of books in the library after school to rape her. In contrast to a slasher film that would have highlighted the visual representation of Miss

Hayes' attack, a bookshelf blocks the view of the sexual assault in Blackboard Jungle. With this frightening but implied act of violation, the viewer's fear and outrage reached their apex. By this point in the narrative, retaliation is not only justified but absolutely necessary: Artie finally gets what he deserves.

3.1.3.5. Classic Film Horror, Projection and Social Power

Building on Wood's definition of the monster as the return of the personal and social repressed, Bruce Kawin, in "The Mummy's Pool," identifies projection as a central dynamic in the function of horror narratives (8). In his analysis of the film horror audience experience, Kawin argues that we project the disavowed or shadow parts of ourselves and our culture onto a monster so that we never need to own or confront these fears and anxieties as our own. This process of projection is not just an individual viewer's private psychoanalytic process but a far larger social and collective process as well (14-19).

When the historical context behind a particular horror film is carefully examined, Lester Friedman suggests in his essay, "Canyons of Nightmare: The Jewish Horror Film," a horror film offers a political allegory through which the conflicts and power dynamics between social groups in particular historical settings can be read (126-149). Contemporary theorists from Frantz Fanon to Michel Foucault have analyzed the relationship between the ability to project and larger patterns of social power. To project its fears and anxieties onto another group, thus turning that group into a monstrous other, one group must

be socially, politically, and economically dominant. Therefore, through the mechanism of projection, horror narratives make visible larger social power structures in which one social group is dominant, while another is submissive, one is powerful where another is vulnerable. From this perspective, the monstrous other can be read as a social scapegoat who is blamed for larger social "sins"-- conflicts or disruptions that the dominant culture wishes to expiate.

Feelings of fear and righteous vengeance often unconsciously fuel the destruction of a monster, even though a fully conscious intellectual analysis might persuade us that the monster is actually not responsible for the sins for which it is being blamed and then destroyed. By projecting repressed material onto a more vulnerable and powerless other, the status quo or Wood's normalcy is protected and preserved. The process of projection at the heart of horror film narratives allows for a simple explanation of social problems and a convenient and easily implemented solution to those problems through the destruction of the monster.

As the product of a social process of projection, the monster functions much like the victim in a melodrama who is sacrificed to preserve social order and stability. In fact, film horror critic Rhonda Berenstein, author of Attack of the Leading Ladies, has noted the ambivalent feelings that viewers often feel for on-screen monsters like Frankenstein (1931) for whom we simultaneously feel sympathy, pity, even affection, as well as fear, horror, anger and vengeance (7). Berenstein argues that viewers' responses to the monster are far more

complex, and I would argue, slide across audience responses to melodrama and horror.

Kawin's analysis of the role of projection in horror narratives illuminates Blackboard Jungle by providing a framework for understanding the threatening juvenile delinquent that is simultaneously a victimized scapegoat. I would argue that many adult Americans' tensions and fears about the changes in American social life following World War II were projected onto the young, monstrous juvenile delinquents. In an important way, Artie West is a blank screen on which are projected fears about changing standards of masculinity, changing roles for American women, an economy undergoing deep social transformation, social unease about racial integration, etc. The largely unconscious affective process of the Artie West sub-plot of Blackboard Jungle allows for a simple definition of the complex social problems of the immediate post-war era and for a simple solution that leaves the power relationship between adults and youth unchallenged and protected.

3.1.3.6. Gender and Theories of Victimization in Classic Film Horror

Feminist scholars of the horror film have contributed greatly to understanding the relationship between horror narratives and social power by highlighting the interaction between the monster and its prey as a process of victimization. As Berenstein outlines, traditional feminist readings of horror film narratives have revealed the process of victimization in classic film horror as deeply gendered: most often, a female victim submits to her more powerful

male victimizer (45). Feminist scholars of horror film have used Laura Mulvey's definition of "the gaze" as a method to formally identify and track the power-coded interactions between males and females in horror films. Both Carol Clover, in her chapter entitled "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" from Men Women Chainsaws, and Barbara Creed in The Monstrous Feminine, have explored the relationship between the "sadistic" male gaze and female victimization.

On an auditory level, Berenstein has noted that the classic horror scream, the high pitched female screech, has become the standard convention through which female victimization has been registered in traditional horror film narratives. The acoustics of the scream support the idea of female as "archetypal" victim to "archetypal" male oppressor (45). However, Berenstein has also argued, that no simple equation can be made between female as victim and male as victimizer (45). As Fischer and Landy state in their analysis of the slasher film, Eyes of Laura Mars (1978), the relationship between structures of looking, gender identity and identification, and larger social patterns of dominance and submission is far more complicated. Tracking viewer responses through an analysis of publicity materials and horror film advertising, Berenstein argues that there is no guaranteed relationship between a viewer's sexual and gender identity and patterns of viewer identifications (45). Berenstein's work on horror spectatorship suggests that viewer identification is often entirely dislocated from biological sex and social class positioning. Men and women

can identify with male monsters and their female victims; the vulnerable "feminine" role as well as the dominant "masculine" role can be occupied by either males or female spectators (54).

The horror subplot of Blackboard Jungle can be read through traditional gender formulations that support the larger social power relationships between men and women in post-World War II American life. Dadier's wife and the single female teacher can be read as simple victims of the sadistic male, Artie West. The social norms or "normalcy" of the post-war period reinforce this reading of the female as a vulnerable, helpless being who must always be protected by men even in a professional setting where she performs competently.

However, another more complex reading can acknowledge that the youth on whom the adults project the larger social problems of the period on the submissive and powerless victims who occupy the feminine social position of vulnerability despite their gender identities as males. In this reading of Blackboard Jungle, poor and urban youth epitomized by Artie West, occupy the feminine space of victim.

3.1.3.7. The Dual Potential of Classic Horror Narratives to Protect and/or Challenge the Political Unconscious

Wood argues that horror films can be either socially progressive or reactionary and spends a full third of his polemic analyzing the political impact of several important Hollywood horror films of the 1970s and 1980s. Progressive horror narratives encourage the viewer to recognize the relationship between

what they fear and repress and larger processes of social power. Regressive horror films, on the other hand, function to protect the status quo and maintain "normalcy" by encapsulating the fears of the dominant social group in the form of a monster that it can justifiably and righteously destroy.

Based on a synthesis of Wood and Kawin, I would argue that the terms "conscious" and "unconscious" are perhaps more important and useful than "reactionary" and "progressive" when examining how a particular horror film functions in a specific social and historical context.

As Franco Moretti suggests in his chapter "The Dialectic of Fear," horror narratives have the potential to either reveal or obscure what Fredric Jameson has described as the political unconscious in his groundbreaking book, The Political Unconscious. Often, the affective manipulations of a successful horror film direct affect so powerfully and unconsciously that viewers rarely recognize the relationship between fear, repression, projection and the creation of a monstrous other, or the relationship between all three and structures of social power and dominance.

Although camp readings of Blackboard Jungle may have existed at the time of its release, most of the press coverage suggests that viewers were truly frightened and appalled by the horrifying crimes of the monstrous juvenile delinquent, Artie West. In essence, the affective process of the film was so powerful and seductive that most viewers never became conscious of their projections, or of the monster as an emblem of their own repressed fears and

anxieties. Nor did the film signal through its discursive strategies how its horror narrative unconsciously supported the larger cultural relationship and power imbalance between youth and adults in post-World War II American cultural life.

As Thomas Doherty suggests in his reading of the rock-and-roll sub-genre, adult viewers usually felt fully justified by the destruction of the monstrous juvenile delinquent Artie West (63). Through its powerful affective manipulations, Blackboard Jungle functioned to preserve and protect the political unconscious of its adult viewers. Thus, these popular readings of Artie as monster in the adult press performed an essentially conservative function of protecting the power-coded relationship between youth and adult culture, obscuring youth's role as scapegoats for larger, more complex social problems of the post-war era.

Conclusion

As the analysis of Blackboard Jungle suggests, when read within its social and historical context, and understood as part of a larger cycle of youth in crisis, the juvenile delinquent or "dangerous youth" sub-genre of the Hollywood youth narrative employs many of narrative conventions of classic Hollywood film horror -- despite its standard categorization by film theorist and historians as classic Hollywood melodrama.

In the next section, I use the conventions of classic Hollywood horror film narratives to analyze the social context in which River's Edge was produced and consumed to demonstrate how media coverage of the Conrad's murder used a classic horror film narrative structure to tell the murder story to the public.

3.2. The Conrad/Broussard Murder and the 1980s: "Youth in Crisis" Campaign as Social Horror Stories

3.2.1. The Conrad/Broussard Murder as Social Horror Story

On November 24, 1981, a sensational four-sentence Associated Press news brief documented a gruesome reality and horrifying social truth: a young woman's bruised and naked corpse had been discovered beside the Calveras Reservoir outside Milpitas, California. Forensic reports later confirmed that the female victim had been brutally raped and strangled.

Over the next few months, the New York Times reported the undeniable and gruesome facts of the case as they surfaced piece by piece. Anthony Jacques Broussard, 16 years old, a locally renowned stoner and heavy-metal freak, had raped and murdered his girlfriend, Marcy Renee Conrad, 14 years old, and left her naked body along the riverbank while he returned to Milpitas High School and bragged to his friends. More shocking than the murder itself was the astounding fact that Broussard and his circle of male and female high-school friends had repeatedly viewed Conrad's decaying corpse yet never reported her murder to the police (New York Times, November 25, 1981).

The horrific image of a young woman's violently broken body haunted the national press and news media for the next year as adults, police authorities, psychologists, media and social commentators all tried to make sense of a senseless crime (Ebert). The media coverage of the murder deplored the degradation and depravity of America's youth and created a social horror story

in which monstrous youth threatened America's most fundamental moral values. Sergeant Meeker, the Milpitas police authority most centrally involved in Conrad's murder, told reporters he had "never seen a group of people act more callously about death in 15 years of police work" (New York Times November 25, 1981). Editorials and talk shows obsessively explored the teenagers' inability to "feel" the horror of their friend's murder and cast the teen as monsters incapable of simple human bonds and emotions (Ebert). In her book Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society, Tipper Gore argued that the murder sparked endless calls for stricter juvenile law, and Broussard's trial served as an exemplum in state efforts across the country to prosecute juveniles as adults (137). For much of the American public, only exterminating the monstrous youth responsible for Conrad's murder by extending the death penalty to juveniles could provide a suitable resolution to Broussard's crime.

Heavy metal played like a horror soundtrack through the media reportage of Conrad's murder. Heavy metal's deep associations with Satanism, sadism and nihilistic violence underscored the horrific nature of the murder and the equation of the youth with social monstrosity. Broussard's deep involvement with heavy metal, his particular fondness for Metallica, Anthrax and some of the other more extreme forms of thrash heavy metal, helped to reinvigorate political debates about violence in American media and music. In fact, in her efforts to ban violent music lyrics, Tipper Gore referred directly to the murder and the Congressional Hearings dedicated to creating a censorship rating system for the

music industry (182).

The news media largely overlooked and ignored Broussard's racial identity as an African American male in discussions of the murder. In an early special report on the murder entitled "Youth's Silence on Murder Victim Leaves a California Town Baffled," Wayne King noted the significant presence of minorities among Broussard's classmates. King wrote:

Milpitas High, a 12-year old school in a quiet residential neighborhood, is a well-integrated campus, according to James Brennan, the assistant principal (New York Times December 14, 1981).

Later in the article Brennan continued, explaining that approximately 40% of Milpitas High students were minorities including Samoans, Filipinos, blacks, Mexican-Americans, Cambodians and Vietnamese. Despite the fact that Broussard was black and most of the students who went to see the body as well as the victim were white, the assistant principal insisted that race was not an issue in the murder. Throughout the media reportage of the event and in Hunter's version of the murder, River's Edge, Broussard's status as a drug user, truant, juvenile delinquent and heavy metal fan entirely eclipsed his racial status as a young black male, despite Wayne King's report on the racial dimensions of the murder and the student body at Milpitas High. Hunter's film version, in which Broussard was played by a white male in what appears to be an all-white high school, reinforced the popular but mistaken assumption that Broussard was white.

From late November 1981 through the summer of 1982, the New York

Times regularly reported on Marcy Conrad's murder. In the following section, I analyze the reportage of the Conrad/Broussard murder and trial to demonstrate how it implicitly deployed the classic film horror conventions outlined in section 3.1 to tell a real life social horror story. In telling the Conrad/Broussard murder as a social horror story in the tradition of the "dangerous youth" sub-genre, I argue that the delinquent and deviant youth responsible for Conrad's murder became monstrous social others whose extermination could restore America to social normalcy. By re-activating a long standing association of criminalized youth with social monstrosity, the reportage created convenient scapegoats, a simple explanation, and, most importantly, an efficient and easily implemented solution for a horrifying social epidemic of sexualized violence in American culture at large.

In Section 3.2.2, I outline the media phenomena Charles Acland has analyzed as a 1980s cycle of "youth in crisis," one of a series of recurring cycles of "youth in crisis" that occurred in American life since World War II. I argue that the coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder in 1981 became a key story in a matrix of images, rhetoric and ideas at the heart of the 1980s youth in crisis cycle that established segments of American youth as scapegoats for a wide range of social problems, most notably an epidemic of hard drug use among adults. Using the work of sociologist Michael Males in The Scapegoat Generation: The War Against Adolescents, I argue that the discursive pattern of defining youth as social scapegoats and monstrous others found in the media coverage of events

like the Conrad/Broussard murder, had a direct impact on public policy regarding America's youth, especially some of the most punitive approaches, including the death sentence for juvenile offenders and the incarceration of juveniles in adult prison populations (124-125).

3.2.2. Broussard and the Milpitas Youth as the Monstrous Other

In the classic Hollywood horror film, a monster embodies what we fear—all that threatens what we know and hold dearest. As David Skal argues in The Monster Show, the fear embodied in the monster can be directly linked to the immediate social context at a particular historical moment (15-23).

The group of teens from Milpitas involved in Conrad's murder embodied and expressed some of the deepest fears of adults—the media's stereotyped version of heavy-metal sub-culture—viewed as outsiders to normal American society (Males 124-125). In fact, the association of Broussard and his friends with heavy metal served as a social shorthand that simply and easily equated the youth with stereotypes including violent anti-social behavior, extreme sexual deviance (e.g. sadism and masochism) and highly taboo forms of religious expression including ritual black magic and Satanism.

As documented by Deena Weinstein in Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology, heavy metal and its various forms, including Broussard's preferred thrash metal, grew out of acid rock—a harder, louder and less melodic version of the rock and roll popular in the late 1970s. Weinstein notes the appeal of heavy metal to

males and the virtual absence of females from heavy metal fandom and performance groups (11-21). Characterized by thunderous sound, pounding rhythms, ecstatic guitar solos, anti-social lyrics, horror iconography and dress heavy metal proved most popular among poor and working class, white male teens like Broussard and his peers. Several music critics including Gross, Halfin, Harrington and Klemm emphasize that the sheer and overwhelming acoustic power of heavy metal's distinctively thunderous physical sound and rhythm lay at the center of its powerful appeal to the increasingly powerless sons of dispossessed of working-class families who suffered most during America's massive process of de-industrialization during the late 1970s and 1980s.

Though predominantly white and male, heavy-metal fans reject "normal," white, middle-class and mainstream values of economic, social and educational success to celebrate their status as losers (Weinstein 102-116). With little access to political, economic or social power and the typically middle-class avenues to upward mobility, heavy-metal fans create fleeting and vicarious experiences of power through the overpowering sound and rhythms of their favorite heavy-metal bands (Weinstein 213-217). Weinstein argues that heavy metal concerts function much like religious ceremonies using ritual, elaborate spectacle and a liberal indulgence in marijuana, alcohol and harder drugs including cocaine and acid to create islands of social pleasure and power to young white males, mostly teenagers, whose futures looked more and more bleak as the 1980s unfolded (231-232).

Broussard's identity as a locally renowned heavy-metal fan, drug user, and chronic truant reinforced his status as a social deviant and outsider who rejected basic standards of adult normalcy of middle-class Milpitas, California (New York Times December 14, 1981). The copious use of drugs and alcohol among metal fans amplified adults fear and directly pointed to their preference for hedonism rather than hard work. Broussard's association with heavy metal also linked him to deeply repressed and regulated sexual and religious behaviors. As Weinstein documents, popular heavy metal songs feature horrific tableaux of sexually tortured females, highlighting copious blood and gore, graphic depictions of gruesome physical violence with an emphasis on suicide and sexually deviant behavior including incest, rape, sodomy, sadomasochism and Satanic sex rituals (258-263).⁶

Cultural conservatives accused heavy metal bands of fostering deviant sexual behavior and perversion (258). The song "Eat Me Alive" by Judas Priest was referred to several times as an ode to oral sex in the Senate Record Labeling Hearings or the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) hearings held in Washington D. C. during September 1985 (258). Metallica's popular song,

⁶ Throughout the following analysis of the cultural debate over heavy metal, I use lyrics from the River's Edge soundtrack to illustrate statements made about heavy metal by the Religious Right. Jurgen Knieper, the film's composer, incorporated songs from Broussard's favorite heavy metal groups including Slayer, Fates Warning, Agent Orange and Burning Spear into the film's soundtrack. When available, the complete lyrics of these songs are listed in Appendix A. I have also cited the lyrics of Metallica, another one of Broussard's favorite heavy metal groups, whose songs were not included in Knieper's soundtrack.

"Ain't My Bitch," offered a prime example of the violently anti-female language featured in heavy metal:

Outta my way, outta my day
Outta your mind and into mine
Into no one, into no one
Into your step but outta time
Head strong, what's wrong?
I've already heard this song
Before....you arrived
But now its time
To kiss your ass good-by
Draggin me down, why you around
So useless
It ain't my fall, it ain't my call, it ain't my bitch.

One of the PMRC's most important consultants, Dr. Joe Stuessy, a professor of music from San Antonio, testified that heavy metal music projects sexual promiscuity and perversion including homosexuality, bisexuality, sadomasochism and necrophilia (258). For example, Metallica's song, "The Unforgiven II," describes the murder of the singer's lover as they lay together in bed:

Come Lay beside me, this won't hurt, I swear
She love me not, she loves me still, but she'll never love again
She lays beside me, but she'll be there when I'm gone
Black hearts scarring darker still, yes, she'll be there when I'm gone
Yes, she'll be there when I'm gone
Dead sure she'll be there....

The song "Captors of Sin" by Slayer describes a fusion of sexuality and Satanic ritual:

Harlots of Hell Spread Your Wings
As I Penetrate Your Soul
Feel The Fire Shoot Through My Body
As I Slip Into Your Throne

Cast Aside, Do As You Will
I Care Not How You Plead
Satan's Own Child Stalks The Earth
Born From My Demon Seed

Hot Wings of Hell Burn In My Wake
Death Is What You Pray Behold
Captor of Sin

Heavy metal's public association with intense violence, the victimization of females through deviant sexual practices, dove-tailed easily with the public's horror at the brutal sexuality made obvious by Conrad's corpse (Males 124-125).

Most disturbing however, was the popular equation of heavy metal with black magic and Satanism, especially highly popular bands like Black Sabbath and Judas Priest (Weinstein 258). In "Kyrie Eleison by Fates Warning, the lyricist uses a variety of Christian images and symbols:

Never thought my time was coming
Wasn't in my dreams
Twice I visioned I was falling down,
Down to the ground, I screamed out loud
Woke on a cloud.
Never really was a holy man though
I understand the father, son and Holy Ghost
He's the one that scares me most
Ashes to rain you feel no pain.

Hell fire burns my conscience. My mind explodes
Spine is severed, blood runs cold, confess the
Deepest of sin, envision a king
With a white violin.
Crucifix hung above my death bed begins
To bleed.
Imagination, lunacy, has he come to hear my plea,
Grant absolution, condone my sin.
The lady in black I ask what you see
A glimpse of glass what good
Fortune for me.

The lady in black said your lifeline is dammed.
The tarot of death she held in her hand.

Kyrie Eleison Christe Eleison Kyrie Eleison Christe
Eleison

Segments of my life flash through my mind
Things never seen.
It must be fate warning me for now.
The walls are closing in. Rosary in Hand,
Lost grain of sand.
Here I go I start to fall again.

Try to scream I'm mute it is the
End of my last fall.
To the land of nevermore
Shatter the glass I woke on the floor.

The equation of heavy metal and Satanism, Weinstein argues, is sustained by literal readings of the figurative language of heavy metal songs, like those readings popularized by Tipper Gore (Weinstein 138, 226, 251- 258). Fundamentalist Christians in particular were horrified by heavy metal's appropriation of Christian imagery and symbols, most notably of Satan, Hell, and The Books of Revelation's coming Apocalypse (261). In fact, one of Metallica's earliest songs, "The Four Horsemen," from their album Kill 'Em All, uses the Book of Revelations as its inspiration and describes the four horsemen who ride off in four different directions to spread word of the end of the world:

The Four Horsemen are drawing nearer
On the leather steeds they ride
They have come to take your life
On through the Dead of Night
With the Four Horsemen Ride
Or Choose Your Fate and Die....

Like many heavy metal groups, Slayer used Hell as a frequent setting and

Satan as a central character. In "Evil Has No Boundaries," the singer describes the band's emergence from the pit of Hell:

Blasting Our Way Through the Boundaries of Hell
No One Can Stop Us Tonight
We Take On The World With Hatred Inside
Mayhem The Reason We Fight
Surviving The Slaughter And Killing We've Lost
Then We Return From the Dead
Attacking Once More Now With Twice As Much Strength
We Conquer Then Move On Ahead.

Evil
My Word Defy
Evil
Has No Disguise
Evil
Will Take Your Soul
Evil
My Wrath Unfolds

Satan Our Master In Evil Mayhem
Guides With Every First Step
Our Axes Are Growing With Power and Fury
Soon There'll Be Nothingless Left
Midnight Has Come And The Leathers Strapped On
Evil Is At Our Command
We Clash With God's Angel and Conquer New Souls
Consuming All That We Can

Evil
My Word Defy
Evil
Has No Disguise
Evil
Will Take Your Soul
Evil
My Wrath Unfolds

Fundamentalists, defined by the literal hermeneutic they apply to biblical

texts and regularly apply to other cultural texts, saw heavy metal's figurative use of Christian symbols as pure blasphemy (262). The associations between heavy metal and Satanism ignited the rancor of the growing Religious Right. In sermons on cable television, popular evangelicals like Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Robertson interpreted the violent lyrics and frenzied ritual performances of heavy metal concerts as Satanic form of deviant religious worship and precursors to a coming Apocalypse (Harding 126-128).

As serious heavy-metal fans, Broussard and his friends proved easy targets for social demonization by the highly politicized Religious Right that regularly cast the youth as embodiments of the Anti-Christ, and demonic disciples of Satan, the Prince of Darkness.

3.2.3. The Return of the Repressed

As Robin Wood argues, the monster symbolizes the return of the repressed or all that is suppressed within a society to create self and group identity we call normalcy. As the return of the repressed, the monster's horrific act directly confronts the community with the most suppressed and taboo material in the social, political and economic unconscious.

Broussard's associations with heavy metal and the media's incessant links between the murder and larger political debates about heavy metal's role in corrupting America's youth cast even more sinister overtones and a darker spin on the murder. The nakedness of Conrad's corpse underscored the

interrelationship of sexuality and violence raising questions of sadism and necrophilia. The repeated viewings of the body by Broussard and his classmates put into plain sight often denied and suppressed realities including America's thriving mass market for pornography, child pornography, snuff film and S&M subculture (Males 125). The taboo sexual overtones and associations evoked by the graphic reportage of the murder aroused the horror of the general public and supported the portrayal of Broussard and his friends as heinous monsters incapable of redemption. As monstrous others, the youth themselves became the return of the repressed, emblems of St. Paul's principalities of evil, always ready to erupt in everyday life, and against which all good Americans must be ever vigilant.

3.2.4. Conrad as Female Victim and Traditional Horror Gender Roles

As Berenstein argues regarding classic horror film narratives, the roles of the predatory monster and his victim have traditionally been deeply gendered with males playing the sadistic, victimizing monster and females the vulnerable victim.

The idea and image of Conrad's naked body, her young, even tender age of 14, the interlacing of rape and murder by strangulation, and the final callous disposal and display of her naked body beside the Calaveras Reservoir, fit perfectly into long-standing horror conventions of helpless young female victimized by an older, more powerful sadistic male. The simple understanding

of Broussard as sadistic male monster and Conrad as vulnerable and helpless female victim raised intense feelings of sympathy that masked any salacious interest in the sexual nature of Conrad's murder and fueled the righteous, moral anger and indignation of adults calling for Broussard's extermination through the death penalty. Furthermore, this simple understanding of victim and victimizer severed the exploration of more complex understandings and explanations of the murder and its relationship to the community at large. In contrast to the media reportage, Hunter's film version attempts to explicate the more complex issues behind Conrad's murder.

3.2.5. The Murder Investigation and Trial as Horror Narratives Fueled by Escalating Fear and Anger

As explicated by Robin Wood, classic horror film narratives function much like social rituals in which a monster threatens normality. This horror narrative structure is supported by an escalating pattern of fear and suspense that shifts into righteous anger that justifies and fuels the ultimate destruction of the monster and the grateful return to normalcy. Using the New York Times coverage as baseline, I argue that the arc of the Conrad/Broussard news coverage follows Wood's film horror narrative structure.

The Milpitas horror story begins when everyday normalcy shatters with the appearance of Conrad's naked corpse along the river on November 5, 1981, awakening fear and dread among local residents. An Associated Press news

brief printed in the New York Times on November 25, 1981, stated that Sergeant Gary Meeker of the Milpitas sheriff's office verified that an auto assembly worker first informed police of Conrad's murder by reporting rumors that he had heard about a dead body near the Calveras Reservoir. Subsequent AP reports claimed that a high-school student at Milpitas High had boasted of the murder, loaded other young people into his pickup, and drove them into the hills to look at the body. Several of Conrad's other classmates, hearing of "the body in the hills," went on their own in groups, on several different occasions to look at the corpse (New York Times November 25, 1981). Reportedly shocked by the youths' failure to report the murder, initial police reports contributed to the local community's fear and confusion by falsely claiming that several of the youth had stoned Conrad's body (New York Times November 25, 1981).

The desperate search for a monster immediately follows the shattering of normalcy. Fear fuels the anger and rage that drive the determined search to find and destroy the threatening monster. In the days after police had recovered Conrad's body, outraged Milpitas residents, unaware that Broussard had already been arrested on his way home after showing Conrad's corpse to a group of friends, initiated a citizen's search for the perpetrator, openly speculating to the national press who the killer might be and initiating what later proved to be a series of false accusations and arrests (New York Times December 3, 1981). Within a few days, Milpitas police arrested Kirk Rasmussen on suspicion of murder, and for witnessing and failing to report Conrad's murder

(New York Times December 14, 1981). A few days later, Mark Fowlkes, age 17, Broussard's best friend and former boyfriend of the victim, was charged with being an accessory based on statements he had given to the police in earlier interrogations (New York Times December 3, 1981).

During the intensive manhunt for Conrad's killer, reporters, police, school professionals, the judiciary and the teens themselves struggled to separate truth from hearsay. Both the teen participants and observers of the murder found themselves suspended in an ambiguous and shadowy periphery between empirical fact and social illusion that heightened the tension, and confusion and intensified growing fear and alarm. Interviews with the principal and head librarian at Milpitas High suggested that many of the teens that had viewed the body had been unable to accept the reality of Conrad's death. Several teens reported to school officials that they had believed the "corpse" was actually a mannequin and the entire episode a sick joke by Broussard (New York Times December 14, 1981).

The series of false accusations and arrests further raised the anxiety and suspense of local community members who feared for their safety while the uncharged monster still lurked in the neighborhood. The inability of police to clearly identify Conrad's killer frustrated local residents who could not rest or relax while the killer still roamed their streets (New York Times December 14, 1981). Finally, on December 14, 1981, more than a month after the discovery of Conrad's corpse, Anthony Jacques Broussard was officially charged with

Conrad's murder (New York Times December 14, 1981).

Once the monster has been identified, the next important stage of the classic horror film narrative settles on destroying the monster so that normalcy can be restored. The escalation of media coverage across the nation fueled the outrage of local, state and national residents who began arguing for the death penalty for Broussard and his peers. As early as 1971, following the lead of Nelson Rockefeller in New York, California legislators, led by Ronald Reagan, Governor of California, had dismantled state legislation protecting youthful offenders so that juveniles could be tried, sentenced, and punished as adults (Males 129).

The intensity of fear and anger voiced within Milpitas and across the country often overrode more thoughtful considerations and reconsiderations that might have challenged the strong emotional impetus to destroy the demonized Broussard. In fact, the community's intensity of feeling led Broussard's attorney to request that his trial be moved north to San Jose (New York Times January 21, 1982). On January 28, 1982, the New York Times reported that Mark Fowles, a key suspect, was released following a closed juvenile hearing during which his accessory charge was dismissed due to a lack of evidence. Juvenile Court Judge Thomas C. Hastings then denied appeals to prosecute Kirk Rasmussen as a juvenile. Hastings ruled Rasmussen guilty of helping Broussard to conceal Conrad's body, despite Rasmussen's sworn testimony that he was not trying to conceal the murder but covering the body with dry leaves and a plastic garbage bag because he was embarrassed by Conrad's nakedness

(New York Times January 28, 1982).

Broussard's trial extended over six months, finally ending on July 21, 1982 when he plead guilty to a single charge of first degree murder in the commission of a felony, rape. Once he was clearly and legally certified as the monster responsible for the horror of Conrad's murder, the move to eliminate Broussard was underway, despite compelling evidence and expert testimony complicating his involvement in the murder. This expert testimony included an intensive ninety day psychiatric evaluation that diagnosed Broussard as a chronic paranoid schizophrenic with transient organic brain disease caused by extended drug abuse (New York Times July 21, 1982).

The public's nightmare, the social horror story and Broussard's trial officially ended on December 5, 1982 when San Jose District Judge John A. Flaherty sentenced Broussard, ordered to stand trial as an adult, to 25 years to life in prison (New York Times December 5, 1982).

Under California law in 1981, an adult charged with a first-degree murder charge would have faced execution (New York Times December 5, 1982). However, changes in lower-California state courts at the time of the trial voided such sentences for defendants under the age of 18, literally saving Broussard's young life in the face of enormous political pressure for a death sentence (New York Times, December 5, 1982).

Ironically, in the months and years following the case, the Milpitas community, overwhelmed by the intense media scrutiny generated by the local

and national press, felt like scapegoats themselves. The Milpitas Chamber of Commerce worked to suppress all associations of Conrad's murder with the city (Abramson 25). Although Hunter scheduled a preview of River's Edge for the local community in Milpitas before the film's national release, the town council passed an ordinance forbidding the exhibition of the film anywhere within the city limits. Hunter himself was vilified in the press for his sympathetic portrayal of the youth involved in the murder (Abramson 25).

3.2.6. Projection of the Return of the Repressed onto the Youth

As Friedman argues, horror narratives center on a process of projection in which the fear and anxieties of a more powerful, dominant social group get projected on a more vulnerable, less socially, politically or economically powerful and therefore submissive social group.

The coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder case did more than place the blame for the horrific crime on the youth. The youth's immersion in heavy-metal culture provided a simple and immediate shorthand to explain the horrifying intersection of violence and sexuality at the core of Conrad's murder, and the appalling reality of her naked corpse left along the riverbank. The group's links to heavy metal and its popular association with sadism, extreme sexual deviance and Satanism put the youth in a realm far beyond all moral norms and thus offered a plausible explanation of the fact that so many clearly "sick" teens viewed Conrad's naked body but never reported her murder to the

police.

The empirical facts, however, undermine this simple and seemingly plausible explanation of Conrad's murder. As Mike Males demonstrates in The Scapegoat Generation, although the media often used high profile and sensational murder cases like Conrad's to deplore high rates of violence and extreme sexual violence among teens, youth to youth crimes were at an all-time low at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s (Males 116). However, levels of violent abuse of youths by adults (Males 116), sexual abuse of youth by adults and violent sexual abuse of youth by adults were rising so rapidly that the rates were approaching epidemic proportions (Males 56).

Ironically, while the press used Conrad's murder to deplore an epidemic of sexual violence among delinquent teens, a more statistically correct picture of the facts at the time of Conrad's murder would have depicted an adult male sexually and or physically abusing a younger female (Males 56).

The process of projection at the heart of the social horror story of Conrad's murder enabled adults to project the reality of a growing, large scale social problem of violent physical and sexual abuse onto the Milpitas teens. Whether actual levels of abuse or levels of reporting abuse had grown, by projecting the reality of adult sexual violence on the less powerful youth, heavy-metal teens, and adults could conveniently evade their responsibility, despite growing statistical evidence to the contrary.

3.2.7. The Conservative Agenda and the Preservation of the Political, Social and Economic Unconscious

Telling the Conrad/Broussard murder as a real life horror story protected and preserved the power dynamic between a generally wealthier adult culture and the far more socially, politically and economically vulnerable youth in the specific context of the 1980s. In the next section, I argue that the same process of social projection and scapegoating at the heart of the Conrad/Broussard murder as social horror story can be found in the larger 1980s cycle of "youth in crisis" in which the coverage of the murder played an important part. As Acland documents, social horror stories like that of the Conrad/Broussard murder reinforced the power dynamics in the social relationship between youth and adult cultures. By blaming youth for an epidemic of drug use among adults, the images and rhetoric of the 1980s youth in crisis campaign, set youth up as social scapegoats, despite compelling evidence of declining drug use among America's young. Most importantly, the massive and largely unconscious process of projecting and blaming youth during the 1980s "youth in crisis" campaign rationalized massive changes in public policy. In fact, the discursive structure implicit in the matrix of youth as monster social horror story, directly shaped and supported the Reagan administration's massive shift toward more punitive approaches to youth policy in general and juvenile justice in particular (Males 156).

3.2.8. The 1980s Youth in Crisis Campaign and Youth as Social Scapegoats in Reagan's War on Drugs

Throughout the 1980s, the murder of Marcy Conrad by Jacques Anthony Broussard on November 25, 1981, served as an important emblem of American youth gone wildly and violently out of control. In fact, among his analyses of print, television and film representations of 1980s "youth in crisis," Acland identifies Hunter's portrayal of the Conrad/Broussard 1981 murder in River's Edge as one of the most important representations of "dangerous youth" of the decade.

The undeniable and gruesome fact of Conrad's naked corpse put the long popular concept of "alienated youth" into crisis. Originated by psychologist G. Stanley Hall in the 1920s and popularized by sociologist like Erik Erickson and Bruno Bettelheim in the 1950s, the idea of "alienated youth" had operated culturally as a euphemism for criminal, delinquent, and "wayward" youth and as an explanation for youthful deviance from "normal" social values and mores. As a social idea, "alienated youth" had marked deviance yet, held open the space for social rehabilitation. A long history of juvenile justice public policy and treatment for youthful offenders grew directly out of the fundamentally hopeful vision of "alienated youth."

For many Americans, the monstrosity of Broussard's actions and the depravity of the youth who silently witnessed and never spoke of the murder challenged the fundamentally hopeful idea of alienated youth. Broussard and his peers seemed to operate from an unfathomably cold, detached, even

deadened place far beyond the "normal" angst, alienation and social isolation of America's unruly teenagers. Media commentators repeatedly marked the youth's status far outside accepted social norms by emphasizing that none of the many teens who viewed Conrad's naked body came forward to report the murder to the proper authorities.

In time, the Conrad/Broussard murder became part of a larger matrix of sensational media images based on real life murders involving teenagers. Acland analyzes several of the period's highest profile murder cases involving teen offenders, including the murderous teen mistress and adolescent girlfriend of Jerry Buttafuoco, Amy Fischer (123). Like the Conrad/Broussard coverage, many of these stories depicted youth as social monsters violating the most cherished of American values.

Acland notes that the 1980s cycle of "youth in crisis" differs from a similar crisis during the 1950s. During the 1950s, youth in crisis expanded from poor, urban and most often minority youth to suburban youth like James Dean in Rebel Without A Cause (1955). During the 1980s, the idea of youth in crisis, also regularly focused on the sons and daughters of the nation's most affluent families, as was the case in "The Preppy Murder of Jennifer Levin" by her elite prep school classmate Robert Chambers (Acland 62). By the 1980s, even the sons of daughters of America's business elite were not immune to the epidemic of youthful fury and violence.

Several scholars have recently documented and analyzed the historical

roots of the 1980s cycle of media images portraying "youth in crisis." Foremost is Mike Males' in-depth study of social policy and American youth during the 1980s. Males meticulously traces the origins of the 1980s crisis back to the late 1960s when a fledgling American medical insurance industry, saddled with thousands of empty beds resulting from hospital over-expansion, targeted children of parents with generous insurance coverage as an enormously profitable untapped revenue source (Males 247).

Males argues that the medical and psychiatric establishments had a great deal to gain by initiating a litany of adolescent specific medial and psychiatric disorders (Males 243-247). In A Doctor of Their Own: The History of Adolescent Medicine, Heather Munro Prescott documents the expansion of medicine into adolescence and the proliferation of adolescent medical, psychiatric and psychological disorders in the post-World War II decades (123).

By the late 1970s, American psychologists declared an epidemic of teen depression, and by 1986, the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Suicide Surveillance study stated that youth suicide had "increased dramatically" (Males 237). By 1989, a full-blown epidemic of teen suicide was underway (235). By the end of the 1980s, law-enforcement officials declared a massive upsurge in juvenile crime, especially violent assault and youth-on-youth violent crime and homicide (Males 105). Based on escalating rates of juvenile crime and detention, juvenile justice experts predicted a crisis in the juvenile justice system (131).

The Conrad/Broussard murder embodied the extreme edge of media representations of America's troubled youth, but depictions in the media portrayed a wide range of serious social problems confronting America's youth. News, magazine and television stories declared that mentally, physically, socially and academically, American teens were in big trouble. High-school drop-out rates and teen pregnancy rates soared leading to a future of single motherhood and poverty for many teens (Males 65). Pre-marital sex, teenage pregnancy rates and AIDS infection among teens were on the rise (Males 53). Rising homicide rates among teens were deplored (68). Frightening stories of teen drug use found their way to the evening news along with reports of escalating gang activity among urban minority youths who were often pictured as machine-gun wielding, crack-selling, gang bangers (Males 105).

Against the backdrop of the media's sensational coverage of America's youth out of control, in 1984, the Reagan Administration officially declared their own American Youth in Crisis campaign as part of its "War on Drugs" and its "Partnership for a Drug Free America" (Males 179-180). As Acland documents in his chapter, "Youth in Crisis," the media capitalized on and intensified the poor prognoses for youth offered by the medical/psychiatric communities and politicians, and regularly featured stories deploring high drop-out rates, violence in the schools, adolescent drug use, teen pregnancy, teen promiscuity and an AIDS epidemic among American teenagers (Males 117).

Both Males and Acland suggest that the Reagan Administration's

aggressive emphasis on the problems of America's troubled teens served to distract attention from more pressing economic and political problems (Males 171). Males offers a reading of the Youth in Crisis campaign as an ingenious rhetorical strategy for deflecting anxieties about America's sinking economy due to growing global competition, changing gender roles and family structures and perhaps most significantly, America's serious and growing adult drug problem (171).

Males argues that the Youth in Crisis campaign must be directly linked to Reagan's War on Drugs campaign, symbolized by Nancy Reagan's much parodied recommendations to "Just Say No." As Males amply documents in his chapter "Doped on Drugs," Reagan's War on Drugs focused on teens as the source of America's serious and exponentially growing and destructive drug use. Males notes the irony of targeting drug use among the young, whose drug use during the late 1970s and early 1980s at the initiation of the campaign had been steadily dropping (162). On the other hand, adult rates of drug abuse, especially for adults between the ages of 35 and 45, were rising rapidly, fueling the growing epidemic of the more expensive street drugs, including cocaine and heroin (Males 172). Reagan's War on Drugs campaign created and disseminated a vast social illusion that America's burgeoning drug problem was at core a youth problem (172). Like the Reagan Administration's use of abstinence as an official response to rising rates of teen pregnancy, Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" anti-drug campaign did nothing to address and correct

the massive systemic problems behind rising rates of drug use during the 1980s.

The Reagan Administration's "Just Say No" youth-in-drug-crisis campaign, with its alleged drug epidemic among America's youth, rationalized and subsidized a massive philosophical shift in the relationship between American youth, the law, and approaches to identifying and treating juvenile delinquents (Males 130). Along with severe cuts to youth programs, funding was funneled from youth support and prevention programs to the juvenile justice system which subsidized a massive expansion in juvenile correction and detention centers (130). With the increase in youth surveillance, youthful arrests escalated, particularly among minority males and poor whites (178). Males documents the sharp rise in arrests of these same teenagers, despite statistical evidence that drug use was expanding most rapidly among young- and middle-aged adults (178).

Furthermore, as punishment for drug crimes lengthened due to the War on Drugs, longer and more severe mandatory prison sentences for adults provided a critical foundation for punishing youthful offenders more severely. Revisions of state laws for juveniles, particularly in key states like New York, California, Texas and Florida, pioneered longer sentences for youth, trying and convicting juvenile offenders as adults, placing youthful offenders in adult prison populations and applying the death penalty in capital murder cases (130).

Males emphasizes the great irony of the 1980s Youth in Crisis campaign. Just when the Reagan Administration was gearing up for its War on Drugs,

sociologists had been noting significant drops in destructive youthful behavior, youth delinquency, and serious juvenile crime (162). Statisticians began noting these trends in the late 1970s and marked their continuity through the early- and mid-1980s (162). Declines in youth crime and delinquency extended across a wide variety of activities, stretching from the fully criminal (armed robbery, violent assault, homicide and rape) to the socially undesirable (teen pregnancy and gang affiliation). In longitudinal studies conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics between 1970 and 1990, statisticians noted significant drops in youthful drug use, drug arrest, gang violence and juvenile crime in general (162).

Although several explanations of this drop were given at the time, Males argues that sociologists generally agreed that at least some of the success in reducing juvenile crime could be directly attributed to several federally-funded initiatives dating back to the 1960s (162). Some of these programs, including Job Corps and Supplemental Education Grants to Low-Income Families, had focused specifically on providing positive alternatives to drug use and gang culture—job training, summer work programs and educational funding (162).

Males argues that the Youth in Crisis Campaign swiftly became a self-fulfilling prophecy (288). By the end of the 1980s and Reagan's tenure as President, the positive changes and trends in juvenile behavior documented by sociologists had been reversed. As a direct result of policy pushed by the youth-targeting War on Drugs, by the end of the 1980s, America's youth truly were in

deep trouble (288).

The most disturbing dimension of changing juvenile crime patterns noted by statisticians at the end of the 1980s was a startling upsurge in violent crime, assault, and homicide among juveniles, a trend that Males links to the use of underage youth by adults in drug trafficking (163). Ironically, most of these crimes were youth-on-youth and could be directly related to gang and drug activity fueled by adult America's appetite for cocaine, heroin and crack (162-178). Males also links the surge in violent crime to rapid expansion of poverty among the young resulting directly from the economic policies that cut aid and opportunity to youth and their families to support a massive expansion of juvenile detention centers and prisons where teens, tried and sentenced as adults, would serve their terms in adult prison populations (177-178).

In the preceding analysis, I argued that classic film horror syntax structured the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder and the larger discourse of "youth in crisis" circulating in the media at the time of the murder. The next sections offer a close reading of River's Edge. Tim Hunter's retelling of the Conrad/Broussard murder. I argue that River's Edge directly confronts the longstanding and often implicit association of youth with cultural monstrosity that I have documented in the coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder and the youth in crisis campaign.

Section 3.3 analyses the syntactic inversion of the youth as monster narrative implicit in the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder. River's

Edge surfaces and challenges the social horror story syntax implicit in the media coverage of Conrad's murder and the larger youth in crisis media cycle, opening the possibility for a more complex understanding of other monstrosities at the heart of Conrad's murder.

3.3. Deconstructing Youth as Social Monster to Redefine Social Monstrosity

3.3.1. Horror Syntactic Inversion and the Deconstruction of Youth As Social Monster

Hunter completed River's Edge in 1986, a full five years after Conrad's murder in Milpitas in 1981. Violent rejection characterized initial responses to the film: critics at the Telluride Film Festival, where River's Edge (1986) premiered, walked out on the film outraged by its refusal to condemn Broussard and his peers. Even slightly more positive reviews of the film from Pauline Kael to Vincent Canby (23), noted the film's refusal to climax in the Hollywood youth narrative's traditional reaffirmation of adult, middle-class values. Despite initially negative critical reviews, River's Edge went on to win several prestigious awards, including The Independent Spirit Award for Best Director (1987) and Best Young Actor for Joshua John Miller (1987). In interviews, Hunter publicly credits screenwriter Neal Jimenez, from whose script Hunter shot directly without a single revision, for the film's critical success.

In his screenplay version of Conrad's murder, Jimenez tells the "real story" of the Conrad/Broussard murder through a fictional format that recognizes and subverts the classic film horror conventions implicit in the media coverage of the

event. Even the film's title, River's Edge evokes the vast archive of Hollywood horror with a reference to the classic horror film Frankenstein (1931) and the river's edge where Frankenstein's monster and the young girl playfully toss flowers into the water followed by the horrifying moments when we see the monster staggering in the shallows, with the girl, now dead, in his arms. Jimenez treats the Milpitas murder material, which would ordinarily take the form of a documentary or even a docudrama, as a feature, with the news story and the enormous media coverage it provoked as a back text to the fictionalized account of the real story. In telling the "real story" of Conrad's murder in a fictional format, Jimenez places River's Edge in a venerable tradition of important crime-based films including Compulsion (1959), In Cold Blood (1967) and Bonnie and Clyde (1967).

In this way, River's Edge complicates issues of realist representation and highlights the role fictional structures play in our experience of "reality" and the important, though often implicit, structure commercial generic forms give to the media narrations of "real life" events. The generic shift of River's Edge from the expected documentary or docudrama to a fictional feature format underscores the function of generic narrative structures, like the youth as monster horror story, as interpretive strategies that are essential in creating socially shared meaning and experience. The play between real and unreal, structured into the spectators experience by the interaction between the back text of the murder coverage and Hunter's fictional re-telling, surfaces the contradictions between

the media story and the re-visioning of the murder in River's Edge, opening a space for viewers to re-examine and reconsider the youth as monster structure of the media reportage.

Produced by Sarah Pillsbury and Midge Sanford, River's Edge was released in 1987. The fictional retelling of the 1981 Conrad/Broussard murder in Milpitas, California, opens with parallel images of murder along a riverbank. A young boy, Tim (Joshua John Miller) throws a doll off a bridge as he watches an older teen, Samson (Daniel Roebuck), sit beside the naked corpse of Jamie (Danyi Deats), the girlfriend he has just raped and strangled. Samson screams, almost jubilantly, from a riverbank.

Paralleling the story line of Rob Reiner's Stand By Me (1986) but with a completely different tone, the dramatic conflict of River's Edge begins when Samson takes his group of friends to the riverbank to view Jamie's naked corpse. Tensions rise as the group struggles over how to respond. Layne (Crispen Miller) wants the group to join together and enlist the assistance of their fugitive friend, Feck (Dennis Miller), to help Samson skip town and avoid prosecution. Matt (Keanu Reeves) feels torn between loyalty to his friends and a sense of moral responsibility to report Jamie's murder to the police. Mike (Phil Brock) refuses Layne's plan by simply ignoring Jamie's murder, while the only females in the group, Clarissa (Ione Skye) and Maggie (Roxanna Zal), make a single abortive attempt to contact the authorities.

The conflict between the teens comes to its dramatic climax when Matt

goes to the police to report Jamie's murder, leading to the recovery of Jamie's corpse and initiating a manhunt for Samson and the teens involved. Matt's little brother Tim (Joshua John Miller), enraged by Matt's betrayal of the group, steals a gun from Feck and begins stalking his own brother to avenge Matt's betrayal of Samson. The adults, including Matt's mother (Constance Forslund) and her boyfriend Jim (Leo Rossi), classmates, teachers, and the police (James Terry)--overworked, overwhelmed and preoccupied--struggle angrily to understand and explain what has happened. Feck, who has taken Samson into hiding, realizes the hopelessness of Samson's situation and shoots him in the head.

The film ends when the police finally find the teens who have gathered at the river to argue over what to do next. Tim tries to shoot Matt, but Matt stops him and finally accepts his little brother into the group of older teens. Layne makes one last desperate attempt to hold the group together, but the problem of Jamie's murder transfers into the hands of proper adult authorities when the police finally arrive and take the teens into custody.

For the first time in River's Edge, the worlds of teens and adults intersect. Adults and teens symbolically reintegrate with the unification of the entire community at Jamie's funeral.

3.3.2. River's Edge and the Inversion of Classic Film Horror Conventions to Deconstruct Youth as Social Monsters

In River's Edge, Hunter reverses the dominance of the adult perspective found in the media reportage of Conrad's murder challenging the adult perception of Broussard and his peers as the monstrous other. As he did in his Hollywood youth narratives for Disney, Hunter takes viewers inside the "frightening" heavy-metal world of deviant youth, focusing almost entirely on Samson and his group of friends. Except for the small appearances that adults make at the edge of their lives, the teens operate in an entirely self-focused and isolated world largely free from adult intervention and interaction. Through this strategic syntactic inversion, the teens become known and understood, not feared and dreaded as the monstrous other to adult culture. The youths' decisions to hide Jamie's murder may not be logical or rational. They are, however, understandable or at least coherent when viewed from within the context of the youths' lived experience.

The film's strategy of going inside the teens' world also breaks down the youth as social monster syntactic structure by showing that the teens are not just a monolithic, heavy-metal cult, but a group of friends, many of whom have grown up together, with a complex set of alliances and wide variety of points of view and perspectives. As viewers, we are able to see the reasons behind their different responses and reactions, and their conflicting strategies for resolving Jamie's murder.

Regardless of the differences among them, each turns to television detective shows like Starsky and Hutch (1975-1979) and Mission Impossible (1966-1973) and made-for-television movies like the tragic life story of Brian Piccolo, Brian's Song (1971), to find an explanation for Jamie's death and to offer useful advice and direction on how to respond. Yet, none of the media scenarios make sense, offer relevant insight or useful direction about what to do next. Clarissa puzzles over why she cried at the movie Brian's Song but feels numb in the face of the murder of her best friend, Jamie. Layne, fueled by a steady diet of pot and speed, sees the situation as an episode of Starsky and Hutch, a thrilling if dangerous adventure where the group of friends can solidify their commitment to each other by funding Samson and helping him escape. Matt, suspicious of Layne's motivations, but still devoted to him, chooses to remain silent out of loyalty to his friends, despite his personal conviction that the group should turn Samson in. Samson is so deadened that he can't articulate, even to himself, why he strangled Jamie beyond explaining, "She was talking shit." Samson fears he will upset his elderly Aunt if he turns himself into the police. Clarissa and Maggie, afraid that they might be Samson's next rape and murder victim, only get as far as telephoning the authorities before hanging up the phone when confronted with the nameless voice on the other end of the line.

Contrary to their menacing depictions in the media, the teens in River's Edge appear more isolated, inept and lost than menacing. The ludicrous gap between the fantasy scenarios of television action shows and melodramas, and

the gruesome reality of Jamie's murder immobilizes each teen from one degree to another. As we learn more about each character and his or her specific motivations and limitations, we understand the teens' inability to come forward to the police. Through the inversion of the horror syntax of the youth as monster social narrative, viewers gain a better understanding of the reasons why each of the youth made the choice to isolate themselves from the adults who could have helped them. As a result, fear of the monstrous youth shifts to sympathy. If their actions are not logical, they are at least explicable.

By normalizing the monstrous youth, River's Edge inverts the traditional opposition of normalcy and abnormalcy at the heart of the horror film syntactic structure. In fact, through the course of the film, the abnormal becomes normal and the normal becomes abnormal. In complete contradiction to the larger "delinquent youth as social monster" back text, the adults, not the teens, appear profoundly socially lost and alienated from their assigned social roles as parents.

The parents of River's Edge, barely surviving themselves, offer little to no supervision or support to their children. Instead, viewers regularly see the teens mothering or fathering their parents. Viewers see the most of Mart's home, a place where he spends little time-except to shower, change clothes and refresh his stash of marijuana by sneaking pot from his mother. There are three children in the house, Matt, Tim, his little brother, and his little sister. Their father has left; his mother works at a local hospital. The rent on the dilapidated house is paid by his mother's live-in boyfriend Jim. Regularly left at home alone, the boys' little

sister answers the telephone and patiently explains to the caller, "My mommy's at work. Tim's not home. Jim is at the bar. I don't have a daddy."

The two boys and Jim fight constantly. Tension mounts as the police investigate the teens as suspects in Jamie's murder, and the verbal and physical violence between Matt and his mother's boyfriend escalates. "All you do is fuck my mother and eat her food. Motherfucker. Food-eater," taunts Matt to Jim. As verbal and physical blows fly, Tim's mother sobs, "I want out of this mother bullshit. You're all mistakes anyway. I'm going to leave you all just like your father did." Playing the role of a parent to a lost and alienated adult, Tim comforts his mother.

The violence and chaos at Tim's house is matched by Tony's Dad who either sits soundlessly in a darkened living room watching television or waits for the teens, hidden behind the living room curtains with a shot gun. Like Tim,

Samson takes care of his guardian Auntie to whom he reads bedtime stories, including those of Dr. Seuss.

The cold invisibility of Clarissa's and Layne's home lives, on the other hand, contrasts with the violent and chaotic home lives of the other teens. Clarissa leaves the house at odd hours of the night without any questions from her parents. "Clarissa, is that you?" Her mother calls from her darkened bedroom, not bothering to get up to ask why her daughter wanders in and out of the house in the middle of the night. Layne's parents are so incidental to his life that they never appear in the film at all.

Except for Clarissa's history teacher, there is little to no interaction between the teens and the adults at their high school. Clarissa has a big crush on her history teacher who regularly and passionately lectures his students about the Viet Nam war protests of the 1960s and constantly berates the teens for their social and political apathy and alienation. Ironically, the history teacher's obsession with past leaves him entirely isolated from the present historical moment and alienated from the present realities of his students' lives.

The ex-biker, recluse and fugitive from the law, Feck, fills the void left by absent minded, overwhelmed and preoccupied adults. On the lam since murdering his girlfriend a decade before, Feck becomes the teens' surrogate father. As the single most reliable available adult in the film, Feck provides shelter, advice, protection from the police and a regular supply of home-grown marijuana.

The police complete the picture of adult alienation from youth as they begin their investigation of Jamie's murder. A series of false accusations and false arrests expose their complete incomprehension of the teens' circumstances and motives. Pushing for a confession that would easily resolve the case, the chief detective accuses Tim with one salacious and incorrect hypothesis of the murder after another.

Without the clear and definitive opposition of normal and abnormal provided by traditional horror film syntax, there can be no monstrous threat to normalcy. The dramatic core of the classic horror syntax in which the monster

must be identified and destroyed, derails and collapses. An analysis of the teens' responses to Jamie's murder shifts the burden of monstrosity from kids back to adults: absent, over-worked and defeated parents, abusive cops, deluded teachers celebrating their self-promoting 1960s politics. Yet, without the polarization of normal and abnormal, River's Edge never blames or demonizes anyone. Even Feck, a potentially monstrous, one-legged paranoid murderer becomes sympathetic through his relationship with the teens, his dialogue and Hopper's complex performance.

Ultimately, River's Edge becomes a horror story devoid of apparent or obvious monsters. In contrast to the youth as social monster horror syntactic format of the Broussard trial and murder, Jimenez creates an inverted, anti-horror horror syntactic structure for River's Edge that departs from the specific, empirical facts of Broussard's case but speaks a deeper social truth that challenges the idealized vision of American family life promoted by the New Right's Family Values Campaign.

On the verge of either getting out of town or being captured by the police, the young murderer, Samson, and his father surrogate, the adult killer, Feck, hide out besides the river and discuss their opposing rationales for killing their girlfriends. Samson describes his numbness and how strangling Jamie made him feel explaining, "She was dead there in front of me and I felt so fucking alive." When asked by Feck if he had a motive, Samson shrugs, "You do shit and then you die."

In contrast, Feck killed his girlfriend because he couldn't control her. "I had to show her who was boss, man," Feck explains. "I killed a girl, it was no accident. Put a gun to the back of her head and blew her brains right out the front. I was in love." In response, Samson adds, "I strangled mine." Feck continues asking Samson, "Did you love her?" Samson responds, "She was okay."

Horrified by Samson's complete lack of affect and passion, Feck, the single, caring adult in Samson's life chooses what could be considered the most compassionate and nurturing act—releasing Samson from the meaningless of his life by shooting him in the head. Later, in police custody, Feck weeps for Samson. "There was no hope for him. There's no hope at all. He didn't love her. He didn't feel a thing. I at least loved her, man. I cared for her." Feck apologizes for his tears to the arresting officers. "Hey, give me some space, man. I lost a very good friend today."

As River's Edge concludes, the reversal of adult normalcy and youth abnormalcy through horror syntax inversion comes to a climax. Feck's final conversation reveals the profound abnormalcy of adult logic and redefines the horrific at the center of Jamie's murder. For Feck, Samson is abnormal because he lacks passion and feeling. Samson killed out of emptiness, meaninglessness and an overwhelming sense of detachment. In direct opposition to Feck, who killed because he felt too much, Samson killed because he felt too little.

In a wonderfully ironic mirror to the moral indignation of the adult media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, the obviously demented Feck

becomes the adult moral barometer of River's Edge and the arbitrator of Samson's fate. The meaninglessness, emptiness and numbness of Samson's murder horrifies Feck because it challenges a fundamental social norm—the complete domination of a female by a male can be justified and understood as an overabundance of attachment, feeling and affect. Feck kills his girlfriend because she challenges his domination and control, rationalizing his violence by the intensity of his love. In Feck's moral universe, normalcy embraces several contradictions and a set of horrific social realities: It is normal to destroy what you love and loving a woman can be equated with violent domination.

The inversion of normalcy and abnormalcy that transforms the definition of the horrific in the River's Edge continues through the film's final moments. All of the teens, dressed in poorly fitting clothes and looking uncomfortable, gather at church for Jamie's funeral. For the first time, we as viewers see Jamie's body prepared for a proper burial, fully clothed in a frilly white dress and lying in a white coffin. Despite the efforts to restore the external appearance of normalcy, this image of Jamie looks as uncomfortable and ill-fitting as the teens' church clothes and the cheery white dress on the corpse that once lay decomposing by the river. In the end, the eerily familiar and recurrent image of Jamie's naked corpse dominates as the film's central image—a ghost that haunts and undermines the proper funeral as the symbolic return to normalcy and the socially acceptable resolution of Jamie's horrific rape and murder.

In section 3.1, I argue that an affective pattern of rising fear and anger

supports and animates the basic horror narrative syntax outlined by Wood. Similarly, escalating fear, suspense and anger fueled and drove the unfolding social horror story of the Conrad/Broussard murder.

In River's Edge, however, the inversion of normal and abnormal and the resulting collapse of the horror narrative syntactic structure derails the traditional horror patterning of fear and suspense that fuels the escalation of fear and righteous anger. River's Edge places Conrad's naked and decomposing corpse, the alleged product of the monstrous youth's alienation and a central and recurring image in the film, at the opening of the film's narrative. The appearance of the dead female body, "normally" the product of a horror narrative is the narrative beginning of River's Edge. This narrative strategy rearranges the viewer's relationship to the visceral experience of fear, suspense and the release of that fear and suspense. In a reversal of standard horror narrative syntax, Jamie's naked corpse becomes the film's point of departure, beginning investigation and ground of exploration.

Just as fear of the monstrous youth is replaced with understanding through the syntactic inversion of normal and abnormal, the fear and suspense generated by waiting for the monster to strike gets replaced by a sober exploration of why the teens acted the way they did when confronted with Jamie's corpse. The typically unconscious pattern of escalating fear and suspense supported by wondering where and when the victimizer will conquer his victim never awakens. As viewers, River's Edge pushes us to ask why the

monster attacks—not when or how. Thoughtful examination replaces the emotional process of excoriation. With its persistent and recurring presence, Jamie's naked and slowly decomposing body becomes an object of meditation and contemplation—an end in itself that must be reckoned with and accounted for on its own terms.

By inverting the classic horror narrative syntax and the affective processes that drive and fuel it, River's Edge shifts the identity of the Monsters as the Return of the Repressed from the teens to Jamie's regularly appearing defiled and rotting corpse. Jamie's recurrent presence, despite her off-screen murder in the beginning moments of the film, and her restless search for a proper burial and final resting place, transform her corpse into a ghost that embodies the true "return of the repressed" in the anti-horror horror story of River's Edge.

Like the monster in a recurring nightmare that captures our attention through its insistence, Jamie's corpse undermines our ability to simply repress and deny its reality and the brutal intersections of sexuality, femininity and violence that her corpse embodies. Jamie's corpse relentlessly confronts the viewer with the horrific entanglements of sexuality and violence, revealing deeply taboo sexual practices including necrophilia, child pornography, snuff and sadomasochism as the true return of the repressed of Jamie's murder. Though the media coverage of Conrad's murder simply locates these deviant practices in the world of the teens, in truth, they are as much a part of the world of adults, as evidenced by the burgeoning porn and S & M industries. Through the

tangible, physical actuality of Jamie's bruised and naked body, we are pressed, along with the group of teens, to explore a suppressed reality we would much prefer to elude and escape—the simultaneously alluring and brutal sexuality of Jamie's corpse—a sexuality so deeply meshed with violence and victimization that it culminates in death, not life.

The coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder exploited the strong emotions attached to traditional patterns of victimization in classic film horror in which female victims submit to victimization by male victimizers.

River's Edge, however, complicates the simple opposition of victim and victimizer in classic formulations of victimization and challenges the traditional gender assignments of female victim to male victimizer.

Samson's scream at the beginning of the film inverts the usual auditory mark of classic horror victimization as defined by Berenstein. At the film's opening, Samson sits beside the girlfriend he has just murdered. His scream, part jubilation, part desperation, part fear replaces the classic female scream of the Hollywood horror victim. Samson's scream, so rich and full with competing and conflicting emotional content, becomes multivalent, even unreadable, compared to the singularly defined and controlled meaning of the scream made by the classic female horror film victim.

Later, sitting beside the river with Feck, Samson admits that while he was strangling her, Jamie "never made a sound, not even a whimper." Instead, Samson's scream replaces Jamie's unarticulated scream, complicating and

undermining the simple stereotyped opposition of victim and victimizer, challenging the simple equation of young male as monstrous victimizer to helpless female victim. The reversal of auditory horror patterns confronts us with several questions: In what way does the victimizer Samson also function as a victim? Do we need a more complex understanding of the role of gender in victimization to explain Samson's scream?

In traditional film horror syntax, the viewer's role as the witness who can identify with either the victim or the victimizer typically remains unconscious, fuels the patterned escalation of fear and anger that justifies the destruction of the monster. In River's Edge, the repeated appearances of Conrad's naked corpse, repulsive yet strangely alluring, confront viewers with their own role as voyeurs and witnesses. Rather than being pulled along unconsciously in a generically patterned arousal of fear that justifies our righteous anger, the recurring image of Jamie's naked corpse evokes complex and contradictory feelings of arousal and repulsion, pleasure and disgust, titillation and horror. Jamie's corpse functions much like a mirror reflecting back the viewer's gaze thus challenging the traditional unconscious manipulation, even exploitation of the spectator's unconscious emotions. The visual structures evident in horror narratives pleasure readers in unconscious ways that support the viewer's ability to evade responsibility for their pleasure. How do we reckon our feelings of arousal with our feelings of visual pleasure and repulsion? With whom do we identify and how does sexual arousal complicate and even undermine our

identifications with either victim or victimizer?

Kawin identifies the process of projection at the heart of horror syntactic structure and the relationship between projection and larger patterns of social power. He encourages horror film viewers to pull back and own the anxieties and fears they project onto the more vulnerable and powerless monstrous other. The media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder blamed the Milpitas teens, as a way to avoid confronting adults' problems—for the documented and rapid rise of sexualized violence in the adult population during the 1980s--despite statistical evidence that demonstrated a decrease in violent criminality among juveniles (Males 48, 56).

In River's Edge, the collapse of the classic horror syntax, the inversion of normal and abnormal and the affect that supports that horror structure, undermines the process of projection on and scapegoating of the teens at the center of the media reportage of the Conrad murder. Both the adults and youth of River's Edge struggle to make sense of a senseless crime. Traditional answers and the generic formulas popular on television don't work to explain the horror of Jamie's sexually brutal murder. Neither teens nor adults can find a story that can reconcile the contradiction between their real experience and the culturally available structures of meaning.

The dialogue of River's Edge reveals the absurdity of the cultural clichés circulating in the media. Throughout the film, the teens mimic the tired truisms they have obviously heard from their parents and adult social commentators.

Layne muses to Matt, "This is like some fucking movie! Friends since second grade, fucking like THIS (crosses fingers), and then one of them gets in potentially big trouble, and now we've gotta deal with it; we've got to test our loyalty against ALL odds! It's kind of exciting. I feel like Chuck Norris, y'know?"

Sounding like a New Right family values proponent himself, Layne regularly chastens the other teens for their apathetic response to Samson's predicament. "No fucking values, man. That's what's wrong with America," he exclaims. "It's people like you that are sending this country down the tubes man. No sense of pride, no sense of loyalty, no sense of nothing man."

At the end of the film, the teens even parody the youth as monster narrative. Walking along the river, Clarissa remarks to Tony, "I hear they're having an open-casket funeral for Jamie. I think that's in bad taste." Tony responds, "It is in bad taste. This whole episode is in bad taste. You young people are a disgrace to the human race. To all living things, to plants even! You shouldn't be seen in the same room with a cactus."

Like the teens and adults of River's Edge viewers also confront the uncomfortable, horrifying facts of Jamie's corpse. Through its collapse of the facile youth as monster syntax implicit in the coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, River's Edge returns the projection back to its adult owners forcing them to ask how they have played a part of the horrifying confluence of femininity, sexuality and violence embodied and expressed by Jamie's body.

As Wood and Moretti have argued, horror film narratives have a powerful

dual capacity to both reveal and/or protect the political unconscious. The Conrad/Broussard social horror story protected adults from recognizing, taking on responsibility or culpability for their role in the horror of the crime, leaving the play of power between youth and adults unconscious and unchallenged. By inverting the syntactic structure and the patterns of fear and suspense that typically support the classic horror film narrative, River's Edge challenges the equation of youth and social monstrosity. The inversion of classic horror conventions leads us from blaming and scapegoating the youth to a sympathetic exploration of why the event occurred. If Samson and his friends are not the monsters at the heart of Conrad's murder, then who or what is?

3.4. Syntactic Inversion and the Redefinition of Semantic Elements of River's Edge

Like the heavy metal music that was “deplored on all fronts,” Hunter's sympathetic portrayal of the teens responsible for Conrad's murder in River's Edge enraged residents of Milpitas and liberal and conservative social commentators alike (Weinstein 249). In fact, I would argue that the vehemence of the attack on Hunter and River's Edge underscores the enormous cultural investments made in the youth as monster narrative.

In this section, I analyze four semantic elements in River's Edge to demonstrate how they recreate the historical, economic and social context behind the murder. These elements include: (1) the visual portrayal of the mise-

en-scene, especially the physical and social landscapes; (2) the extensive use of behavioral repetition, doubling and visual mirroring; (3) the role of Conrad's naked corpse as a the film's non-narrative structural principle and organizing image; and (4) the function of the soundtrack in redefining the social meaning of heavy metal.

I argue that these semantic elements articulate an alternative, social horror story to the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder. This counter horror narrative points to a different monster in place of the teens as monster—interlocking social systems of victimization that endlessly produce and reproduce victims and victimizers.

3.4.1. Physical and Social Landscapes as Visual Metaphors

The media's youth as monster horror narrative de-contextualized the social and historical circumstances surrounding the Conrad/Broussard murder by repressing and ignoring the specific social and economic circumstances surrounding Broussard, Conrad and their heavy-metal clique.

Several critics have noted the unusual depiction of the mise-en-scene in River's Edge (1986). Some, for example, including Acland, read the stylistic treatment of the physical and social landscapes as simply "depressing." Acland writes:

The cinematography emphasizes gray and blue, giving a cloudy and slightly depressing ambience to the proceedings. This washed-out look, and the downplay of the potentially

gorgeous environs of the Sierra Nevadas, makes for a very drab and oppressive setting, and in the end, provides unique visual rendering of the vacancy and affectlessness of the community (124).

More than being simply depressing, I would argue that Fredrick Elmes' cinematography uses an expressionist approach to filmic style that transforms the mise-en-scene into a visual metaphor that speaks a long history of social, economic and sexual exploitation. The physical and social landscapes of River's Edge silently reveal the context that produced Jamie's murder and mutely speak the unspoken. Like the teens that witnessed Jamie's rape and murder but could not come forward to speak about it, the mise-en-scene functions visually as a silent witness to a brutal devastation that has not been consciously recognized and thus remains untold.

The metaphorical treatment of the mise-en-scene to reveal normally invisible realities has a long tradition within world film. Expression, a film style popular in Germany during the Weimar period, uses visual distortion—usually harsh elongated shadows, extreme and unusual camera angles, and light—to reveal the invisible psychological realities of a film's characters (Elssaeser 425). As J. D. Barlow argues in German Expressionist Film, expressionism has been associated with the film horror genre since its inception (36). In the introduction to his analysis of the film The Cabinet of Dr. Caliaari (1920), Mike Budd documents that film historians often refer to that film as a definitive and classic example of expressionism as a filmic style. During the 1930s and 1940s, several

German émigré directors who had pioneered expressionist approaches to film and theater incorporated expressionism into their Hollywood films, particularly several horror classics (36).

Elmes' approach to the mise-en-scene of River's Edge can be read as part of this larger visual tradition in the history of Hollywood horror. In River's Edge, however, Elmes manipulates and distorts the visual surface of the mise-en-scene to express unspoken social, economic and historical realities—Jameson's "political unconscious"—rather than the inner psychological realities of the film's central characters. While classic expressionist filmmakers often used artificial sets, Elmes moves expressionism onto location and into the representation of an actual physical landscape. By manipulating light and color, Elmes distorts the visual surface of the natural mise-en-scene to create the film's "dream-like" appearance that suitably both suggests and expresses the alternate social nightmare repressed in the back text of Conrad's murder. Through this distortion, the film's ravaged landscape becomes a potent symbol of a repressed social, political and economic history of exploitation—the essential context for understanding how and why the murder occurred.

Elmes used a variety of techniques—lenses, filters, camera speeds, film stock, and long shots, long takes of the environs—to create the misty, dreamlike colors of the "washed out" world of River's Edge. The film's physical and social landscapes depict a wasteland in which the environment, the economy and the people, have been decimated leaving a city barren of any culture except

for television sets flickering in empty living rooms and a lone convenience store.

The physical landscape where the teens live has been violently denuded, stripped of vegetation, leaving only the barren brown soil exposed. Samson leads his friends through acres of tree stumps and second growth meadows to show them Jamie's corpse lying along a riverbank. Matt's dilapidated family home, perched on the edge of an eroded hillside, could slide off the stripped incline at any moment. The economic base of the town looks similarly stripped, reduced to a small convenience store, a hardware store and a gun shop.

The social lives of the town's inhabitants match the physical depiction of a wasteland. Acland notes the teens' drab costuming, stretched out t-shirts, faded flannel shirts and worn jeans (124). With nothing to do, the kids hang out on the high-school steps, skip class to smoke pot, wander aimlessly along the river, or wait like predators inside the convenience store for the perfect moment to steal beer. Popping pills as he drives, Layne literally speeds across the ravaged landscape in a broken down car as he listens to the harsh and discordant sounds of heavy metal. Tim and his best friend entertain themselves on the dirt-packed front lawn by shooting crabs trapped in a bucket while Tim's little sister plays funeral for her murdered doll.

Matt's collapsing family home, sitting precariously on a muddy precipice, appropriately houses one of the film's many fractured families plagued by financial insecurity, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. In this familial wasteland, absent fathers, abandoned children, unemployed and

underemployed boyfriends, and impoverished single mothers struggle for subsistence.

Hardly the monsters who destroyed the place, the youth literally "speeding" across this devastated landscape in junked cars are survivors seeking solace and a way to endure. What social, economic, and historical forces produced this devastation?

In producing River's Edge, Hunter shifted the film from its "real" setting of Milpitas, California to the Northern Oregon and Washington State border. Milpitas, a major car-manufacturing center through the early 1970s, suffered serious economic devastation during the de-industrialization of the 1980s when most of the city's car manufacturers closed down. Hunter moved the film's setting to locations in the Sierra Nevadas and the Oregon/Washington state border, part of the largest old growth forest in the entire world. In this region of the Pacific Northwest, the single most productive and heavily harvested timber area in the continental United States, logging has been the major industry and an economic mainstay for over a century.

From the early 1960s through the late 1980s, multinational companies, including Sierra-Pacific, Wascaco, St. Regis, Champion International, Weyerhaeuser, Scott Paper and International Paper, decimated 98% of the available forest by clearcutting, producing one of the greatest environmental, economic and social disasters in American history (Page 43). The relationship of economic victimization between multinational timber companies and the

inhabitants of the region transformed economically self-sustaining rural logging communities into the most seriously oppressed and exploited workers in the entire United States (Page 43). In Elmes' expressionist depiction of the mise-en-scene, the history of the Pacific Northwest timber industry becomes visible in the film's devastated physical and social landscapes.

The practice of clearcutting stripped forest tracts of all visible life, leaving only barren soil and forest debris. Immediately following a defoliating process using highly toxic chemicals, usually Agent Orange, loggers wielded high-powered industrial chainsaws to fell everything in a designated area. Timber roads cut into the forest facilitated bulldozers that removed choice pieces of timber leaving behind a tide of destroyed vegetation, timber and gouged top soil. Months later, teams of bulldozers removed the remaining discarded timber and vegetation. Forest areas, previously immensely rich and complex ecosystems were replanted with single species creating uniform tree farms that could be more easily harvested in the future but which proved highly vulnerable to disease (Fritz 8-10).

Environmentally, clearcutting destroyed not just the forest, but the under forest or next generation of trees, eliminating the ability of the forest's ecosystem to restore itself. Wildlife dependent on the forest for sustenance was systematically destroyed (Fritz 20). Without vegetation to hold it in place, top soil washed into streams and rivers destroying aquatic life and fish stocks (Fritz 26). In time, acres of ungrounded and contaminated soil inched down barren

mountainsides, creating life-threatening mud slides and avalanches (Fritz 23). Defoliants poisoned rivers and contaminated water sources down to the water table (Page 43).

Economically, long-standing rural communities were reduced to "industrial sites" for extracting and processing lumber as inexpensively as possible. Clearcutting swiftly transformed small, rural timber communities into wood colonies in which resources are extracted quickly, sold far below their value to the community for short term corporate profit, leaving the forest devastated for centuries to come and the community with no present or future means of economic survival (Page 421). Local communities depended on the Forest Service to collect taxes from the sale of their local timber reserves. Under the Reagan Administration, the Forest Service cut corporate taxes by radically undervaluing timber sources and transferring the cost of cleanup and reforestation after the clearcuts to local communities. These new policies decimated the revenues of local communities that depended on timber sales for municipal budgets (Page 42). As a result, rural Northwest logging communities had some of the lowest tax bases in the country. Without a viable revenue source, schools closed and cut programs, emergency services were eliminated, roads, sewers and other basic infrastructures could not be built or maintained (Page 42).

Socially, industrial forestry and its practice of clearcutting transformed the legendary Northwest lumberjack into one of the most oppressed workers in the

entire United States (Page 44). During the Reagan era, leveraged buyouts severely undervalued the assets of the small lumber mills so they could be bought at bargain-basement prices by conglomerates (Lansky 49). Most of the small lumber mills had offered steady, full-time employment to loggers in the Pacific Northwest, and paid health insurance and other benefits. The multinationals followed the example of agribusiness conglomerates that used seasonal farm workers in place of full-time employees. The multinationals shifted to paying lumberjacks by the harvested log as independent contractors or piecemeal workers who no longer had access to state run unemployment programs, retirement packages, or Workman's Compensation (Lansky 49). The new financial arrangement cut average annual salaries drastically and resulted in annual earnings for loggers far below the federal minimum wage and poverty level (Lansky 49).

As "independent" contractors, loggers were no longer protected by federal and state health and safety laws (Lansky 49). By the end of the 1980s, logging became the single-most hazardous occupation in the United States, equaling the long-time leaders of mining and agriculture (Page 40; Lansky 49). Regularly so maimed or crippled by work-related incidents, loggers typically did not retire, but ended their careers in an industry with the highest disability rate of any occupation in America (Lansky 49). By the end of the 1980s, loggers had the highest death rate of all workers in the United States (Lansky 49). Efforts by loggers to unionize met with stiff opposition by the multinationals (Page 41).

As each timber source was systematically devoured, the multinationals evacuated a particular Northwest operation, leaving the region economically devastated. Even as the multinationals collected record profits, unemployment rates soared in former logging communities, at rates worse than many inner-city ghettos and even some of the poorest Native American reservations (Page 41; Lansky 49). Under the enormous economic pressures, rates of divorce, domestic violence, alcoholism and drug use soared (Page 43). The saturation of logging regions with herbicides, particularly Agent Orange, poisoned local residents so severely that cancer rates and birth abnormalities became some of the highest in the nation (Page 43).

Elmes' moody, expressionist portrayal of mise-en-scene creates a visual dreamscape that simultaneously evokes and integrates several of the film's different layers and back texts so they echo against each other. The multiple contexts evoked by the landscape in turn bespeak multiple levels of victimization. Like a dream symbol, the physical and social landscapes reveal the unspoken social nightmare at the heart of Conrad/Jamie rape and murder. The shift of geographic location from California to Oregon timber territories links the film's visible portrayal of economic devastation and exploitation in the Pacific Northwest directly to the larger social back text of Conrad's murder, and to the economic devastation of Milpitas during the 1980s.

The proud and economically independent lumberjacks Ken Kesey described in his novel Sometimes a Great Notion became some of the most

exploited and economically vulnerable men in the continental United States, barely able to support themselves and their families in a region with little economic opportunity. Like the loggers of the Pacific Northwest, the inhabitants of River's Edge, the absent and surrogate fathers, the single mothers and their fatherless sons and daughters haunt the decimated physical landscape. All are economic victims occupying the typically feminine space of vulnerability in a larger economic structure of dominance and submission, colonizers and colonized, masters and slaves, the powerful and powerless, so fully exploited by the exploiter that there is no viable hope of survival for the future.

3.4.2. Repetitive Action, Doubling, and Mirroring

By de-contextualizing the circumstances surrounding Conrad's murder, the media coverage suppressed the links between the murder and the larger social and historical circumstances in which it took place. As a result, a demonized heavy metal sub-culture stood as the single clear and dominant link between delinquent youth, sexual deviance and homicide.

The use of behavioral repetition, doubling and mirroring in River's Edge highlights the relationships between larger economic patterns of victimization and sexual relationships between males and females. The violent domination of males in the larger economic system is literally mirrored and doubled in their social and sexual relationships with females. In a macabre reversal, the males who occupy the feminized space of exploitation and vulnerability in the

economic arena become the victimizers in the social and sexual arena by dominating, exploiting and overpowering females. Furthermore, a complex web of watching and witnessing serves as the mechanism through which the social patterns of victimization reproduce across the film's male generations, creating a social network that Acland has described as "a bizarre multi-generational community of psychotics and misogynists" (128).

In his analysis of River's Edge, Acland notes the film's process of doubling and mirroring (125). In fact, the film opens with parallel murders, one actual and the other symbolic. Tim watches from a bridge as Samson strangles Jamie and then screams from beside the riverbank. Tim mirrors Samson as he decapitates his little sister's doll and throws "the corpse" into the river. The film's conclusion echoes its opening as Matt discovers Feck's substitute girlfriend, his cherished inflatable sex toy doll Ellie, discarded in the tangled debris along the river, much like Jamie's corpse at the opening of the film.

The entire non-narrative fabric of River's Edge revolves around replays of female rape and murder, both actual and symbolic. Matt later recovers the doll and his little sister has a funeral for it in which she lovingly buries its tattered remains. Tim swiftly disinters, mutilates and "murders" the doll once again, leaving his little sister weeping, "But Mommy, he's still killing her." Feck, who murdered his girlfriend 20 years ago, replaces her with a blow-up sex doll, who, like Jamie, Samson molests, and which the group of teens later finds abandoned along the riverbank. The back text of the actual Conrad murder surfaces as Matt berates

his little brother for destroying his sister's doll and then, exactly like Broussard, bragging about it to his friends, saying to Tim, "You are stupid enough to pull a stunt like that, then to go and brag about it." Samson listens as Feck describes how he murdered his girlfriend. Feck watches as Samson sexually abuses Ellie.

Intermittently, the strangely serene image of Jamie's decaying corpse arrests the film's action for a moment. The film even ends with Jamie's corpse in its white coffin--a final image that closes a dense fabric of replays and re-enactments of real and simulated rapes and murders of real and symbolic females.

This process of behavioral repetition, the multiple repeats and replays of rapes and murders (both literal and figurative of real and symbolic females), continues throughout the film forming a self-enclosed and self reflexive web of repetitive, even obsessive action that reinforces the film's unspoken but visible counter horror narrative. The "real" unspoken social nightmare of River's Edge consists of multiple levels of interacting, uninterrupted, and inescapable repetitions of victimization from which none of the film's characters can escape.

This unending social nightmare, inverts traditional classic film horror syntactic conventions in which the monster rarely actually dies at the end of a horror movie, but threatens viewers with its possible return. In the unspoken visual horror story of River's Edge, it is the victim that never truly dies, and like Jamie's corpse, haunts the film's narrative.

Most importantly, this web of repetition, mirroring and doubling illustrates

how social behavior reproduces within River's Edge. The cycle of violent domination and submission at the heart of Jamie's murder, powerfully symbolized by the physical and social landscapes, repeats over and over through acts of visual and verbal witnessing. Younger boys like Tim watch and repeat the behavior of older boys like Samson. Young men like Samson watch and repeat the behavior of older men like Feck and Tony's father. Like the image of Jim chasing Matt, who chases his younger brother Tim, each generation follows the next in a backward, dehumanizing spiral of violence and victimization. In an unconscious, uninterrupted and even obsessively repetitive cycle of victimization expressed by the repetitions of rape and murder, the male victims of the economic arena became the male victimizers of the social, sexual arena.

3.4.3. Jamie's Corpse as Main Character, Narrative Center and Organizing Image

In the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, the mental image of Conrad's bruised and naked corpse, callously discarded by Broussard and repeatedly viewed but never spoken of by his group of friends, ignited the moral indignation of adults and fueled the campaign to destroy the monstrous youth who violated normal codes of human decency. Moral outrage overrode any public consideration of the links between the murder and the rising rates of physical and sexual abuse of young females by adult men, and America's

growing appetites for violent pornography, increasingly popular sexual images of children, escalating rates of child prostitution and sado/masochistic subcultures.

In River's Edge, the troubling image of Jamie's naked corpse functions as the central image and organizing principle of the film's silent counter narrative. As the embodiment of the return of the social, economic and political repressed, Jamie's body comes to function as visual center, organizing semantic and central character of River's Edge and the key image in an alternate unconscious social horror narrative. Recurring images of the corpse define a counter narrative, a syntactical structure that is composed of the repeated semantic image of Jamie's body. As an alternative unspoken narrative, it functions more like a dream—a recurring nightmare whose hidden meaning must be brought to consciousness and full awareness to be resolved.

This counter-horror story almost reads like a macabre black comedy—a corpse in search of a proper burial. River's Edge opens with the image of the corpse, and we, like the youth, witness it along the river in advancing stages of decomposition. Viewers watch the group of teens gather to see the physical results of Jamie's murder. We watch Layne roll Jamie's corpse into the river, and then watch the intricate web of reenactments of Jamie's murder as Tim repeatedly kills and dismembers his little sister's doll, Feck tells the story of murdering his girlfriend and Samson molests Feck's girlfriend replacement, inflatable sex doll Ellie. Jamie's murder, potently symbolized by her corpse, is

constantly evoked, doubled and mirrored.

In opposition to the simplistic youth as monster social horror story of the Conrad/Broussard news coverage, the troubling image of Jamie's naked and decaying corpse provokes speculation, and invites inquiry, accumulating and deepening social meaning as the narrative of River's Edge unfolds. As the film's central semantic image and icon, Jamie's corpse functions as question, cipher, confrontation, and finally as a monument to our unacknowledged and unexpressed grief.

Question

In the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, Marcy's young and bruised body stood as the solid and irrefutable physical evidence—beyond question or reproof—of Broussard and his peers' monstrosity. In River's Edge, the recurring, troubling and disturbing reappearance of Jamie's decaying corpse undermines and unsettles the easy explanations and solutions of the media's social horror story. Like a recurring nightmare, Jamie's body refuses "proper" burial and insistently resists moving beyond our sight, forcing the viewer to confront the deeper questions of why and how that would contextualize her rape and murder. Because it has appeared at the beginning rather than the end of the horror narrative, Jamie's body, repeatedly viewed from a post-cathartic, emotionally and physically spent perspective, becomes a visual icon or fetish to which we and the youth of the film repeatedly return to search for social meaning beyond empty cultural clichés.

Cipher

In the Conrad/Broussard murder story, Conrad's corpse fueled and justified intense feelings of fear, anger and rage that legitimated the destruction of the monstrous Broussard and his peers. In River's Edge, the eerily silent corpse positioned at the beginning of the narrative collapses this affective cycle of classic film horror. The serene, even peaceful image of Jamie's decaying body invites quiet contemplation and reflection beyond the intense and unconscious emotional manipulations of the classic horror film. The collapse of affect opens the possibility for a cooler weighing of alternatives and considerations that were blocked in Broussard's trial. In River's Edge, Jamie's corpse becomes a cipher whose meaning lies beyond the tired stereotypes and clichés of "normal" social explanations like the youth as monster story.

Confrontation

In the media coverage of the murder, Conrad's callously stripped and abandoned corpse, the demonstrable evidence of Broussard's monstrosity, anchored the larger social process of projection. The self-righteous process of blaming the "sick" and "deviant" youth allowed the associations between Conrad's corpse and the larger social patterns of sexual violation, sexual abuse and exploitation and pornography in the adult culture to be suppressed, ignored and denied. As part of its process of scapegoating, the media coverage demonized Broussard's circle of friends as social and sexual deviants because they failed to function as responsible citizens by refusing to serve as

legal witnesses and report Conrad's death. In River's Edge, the insistent and troubling reappearance of Jamie's corpse challenges this process of projection by confronting viewers with their own complex sexual feelings and roles as voyeurs—witnesses to a crime they have not committed but in which they are now deeply complicit because of their watching.

The affective patterns of the slasher horror sub-genre are especially significant here. As Steve Neale has argued, slasher films typically exploit the disjuncture between camera angle, the look, point of view and the viewer's pattern and choice of identification to sexualize fear and suspense. Like the slasher film, the relentless and recurring focus on Jamie's naked and decomposing corpse in River's Edge confronts viewers with the implications of their own intensely sexualized gaze, surfacing deeply repressed awareness of how violence, sexuality and femininity interlace. Jamie's beautiful but horrific young body mirrors our own contradictory feelings of repulsion and sexual arousal, forcing us to engage the troubling and nauseating intimations of necrophilia as we admire her eerily beautiful, sensuous body as bruised and decaying corpse.

Thus, River's Edge confronts us with our own role as witnesses and the responsibility we bear for the stories we choose to tell. Like the teens of *Milpitas* and River's Edge, we too are witnesses to a murder that we did not commit. In what ways have we refused to step forward as witnesses ourselves? How do our own unconscious, repressed and contradictory sexual sensations in viewing

Conrad's body complicate and undermine the process of projection at the core of the youth as monster social horror story? How is our witnessing of the fictionalized and simulated murder different than the witnessing of Conrad's corpse by her classmates? In contrast to the youth that did report Jamie's murder, how might we step forward?

Monument

In the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, fear, righteous anger and blame dominated the narrative process of identifying and destroying Broussard as young social monster. These powerful emotions overrode more sober and thoughtful considerations of the murder, including how and why such a horrifying and ultimately tragic event could occur, and suppressing grief and sorrow for both victim and victimizer whose young lives ended so tragically.

Within the larger context of social, sexual and economic victimization, Jamie's decaying corpse, lying beside the toxic river amid the remains of the clearcut forest, is the natural extension of the savaged physical and social landscapes. Through its eerily serene yet dominating presence, the decaying female body—with its alabaster skin and vacant stare—becomes an object of visual meditation: a monument that visually recalls the millions of murdered female bodies littering American media history and silently commemorates the deep interdependence of femininity, sexuality and violence in American popular culture (e.g. nightly news reports, horror and slasher films, video arcades, and a burgeoning pornography industry). In River's Edge, the haunting

image of Jamie's corpse stands as a monument to accumulated and unacknowledged grief, and to unconscious and unspoken sorrow for layers of destruction that we can barely recognize, let alone mourn.

3.4.4. Soundtrack

In the media coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, the teens' immersion in heavy-metal music and sub-culture provided convenient social shorthand that easily linked and explained the horrifying convergence of violence, sexuality and femininity expressed by Conrad's brutal rape and murder and embodied in her discarded corpse. In River's Edge, the renowned German composer Jurgen Knieper creates a unique and disturbing soundtrack that weaves classic film horror music with the sound of some of heavy metal's most extreme "death metal" practitioners, including Slayer, Fates Warning, Burning Spear and Agent Orange.

Knieper's interweaving of horror and heavy metal music underscores a reading of heavy-metal sound and lyrics offered by Deena Weinstein in her cultural sociology of heavy metal. Weinstein makes a strong case that heavy-metal lyrics should be read figuratively (252-254). Weinstein argues that heavy metal uses horror images and iconography to articulate and protest the horrific social and economic circumstances in which dispossessed white, male youth find themselves and over which they are powerless victims (254).

In River's Edge, Knieper integrates heavy metal and horror music, challenging the literal reading of heavy metal as proof of Broussard's deviance

and depravity. Instead, heavy metal functions as the figurative expression of the horrific reality of interlocking and self-replicating systems of victimization in which the teens of River's Edge find themselves. The lyrics of Slayer's "Tormentor" express thematic in heavy metal:

Afraid To Walk The Streets
In The Coldness All Alone
The Blackness Of The Night
Engulfs Your Flesh And Bones
Hoping For Relief From
The Fear Your Feel Inside
Losing All Perspective Of Reality Of Night

Running From The Shadows
Blinded By The Fear
The Horror Of Nightfall
Is Ever So Near
I Slowly Surround You
As Terror Sets In
Are You Afraid Of The Night

I See Fright In Your Eyes

As You Turn And Run

But Is Your Mind Playing Tricks

On a Body So Very Young

Feeling As If No One Cares
The Fear Runs Down Your Spine
But I Know I'll Never Rest
Until I Know You're Mine

Running From The Shadows
Blinded By The Fear
The Horror Of Nightfall
Is Ever So Near
I Slowly Surround You
As Terror Sets In

Are You Afraid Of The Night

Weinstein notes in her discussion of heavy metal that themes of chaos and social disintegration are common. Chaos can refer to the absence or destruction of relationships, various forms of anomaly, conflict, violence, death, and in the case of River's Edge, the death of a previously vibrant community through economic and social collapse (38). Heavy metal emphasizes chaos as a form of negation through its images of death, Satanism, sexual aberration, dismemberment, and the grotesque (38). Weinstein writes:

Respectable society tries to repress chaos. Heavy metal brings images of chaos to the fore-front, empowering them with its vitalizing sound. It stands against the pleasing illusions of normality, conjuring the powers of the underworld by making them submit to the order of music, if nothing else (38).

Heavy metal draws heavily from popular culture expressions of horror and gothic (40). The horror stories of Edgar Allen Poe, teen horror films, like Friday the 13th, the fantasy of H.P. Lovecraft, and J.R.R. Tolkien has inspired heavy metal song writers (40). Ironically, however, heavy metal's major source for its imagery and rhetoric of chaos is religion, particularly the Judeo-Christian tradition (39). As mentioned in the earlier discussion of heavy meal and the Religious Right, "The Book of Revelations," with its uniquely apocalyptic vision has nurtured the creative visions of heavy metal bands including Iron Maiden's hit "Number of the Beast." Heavy metal bands draw from religious terminology for their names (Grim Reaper, Armored Saint, Black Sabbath and Judith Priest),

and album titles (Sacred Heart by Dio, Sin After Sin by Judas Priest, and Heaven and Hell by Black Sabbath) (39). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the devil frequently appears in heavy metal lyrics and serves as a short hand for the power of chaos and social disorder (41). Hell serves as both the home of Satan and a metaphor for worldly chaos and disorder in songs like "Running With The Devil" by Van Halen, "Saints in Hell" by Judas Priest and "Highway to Hell" and "Sin City" by AC/DC (41).

Speed or thrash metal, a particular favorite of Broussard's, favors a more explicit style and tends to describe, in bleak and concrete terms, the very real horrors of everyday life including "the isolation and alienation of individuals, the corruption of those in power and the horrors done by one group of humans to another as well as the destruction of the environment" (50). Using horror and gothic imagery, Slayer's "Die By the Sword," describes victimized children in an apocalyptic landscape:

Live By The Sword and Help Contain
The Helpless Minds Of You All
Die By My Hand In Pools of Blood
Clutch Yourself As You Fall
Mindless, Tyrannie, Forgotten Victims
Children Slaughtered In Vain
Raping the Maids, In Which They Serve
Only The Words of The Lord Satan
Watches All Of Us Smiles As Some Do His Bidding
Try to Escape The Grasp Of My Hand
And Your Life Will No Longer Exist
Hear Our Cry, Save Us From
The Hell In Which We Live

We Turn Our Heads Toward The Sky
And Listen For The Steel

Die By The Sword Die By The Sword

Watch As Flowers Decay On Cryptic Life That Died

The Wisdom of Wizards Is Only A Neutered Lie

Black Knights of Hells Domain Walk Upon Us

Dead Satan Sips Upon The Blood In Which He Feeds

The names of thrash metal groups embody the style's distinctive aesthetic with names like Anthrax, Nuclear Assault, Slayer, Megadeth, Flotsam and Jetsam, Violence, Sacred Reich, Suicidal Tendencies, Annihilator and Agent Orange (50).

This chapter's title "Am I Evil?" comes from a song of the same name recorded and performed by the heavy-metal group Metallica. Originally written and performed by heavy-metal initiators, Metallica's 1980 recording of "Diamond Head" became an underground hit among heavy-metal fans including Broussard and his peers. Like Hunter's film, Metallica's youth anthem "Am I Evil?" challenges the equation of delinquent youth and social monstrosity at the heart of larger cultural narratives that all too often unconsciously shape the social perceptions of America's youth.

Conclusion

By the end of River's Edge three narrative structures and their varying conclusions exist side by side: the social text of youth as monster evident in the media reportage, the film's narrative collapse and derailing of that youth as monster story, and the unspoken social nightmare surrounding Jamie's corpse, expressed visually through the mise-en-scene, repetitive action, the soundtrack and the repeating image of Jamie's corpse.

In the social story, Broussard will spend his spared young life in an adult prison with no hope of parole; in the film's central narrative, Matt's murder by his younger brother gets averted and the cycle of violence ends in the social inclusion of community; in the unspoken social nightmare, Jamie's once naked body rests uneasily in her frilly dress and white coffin, an embodiment of the repressed waiting to return. Hope and hopelessness, truth and denial, rage, fear and grief-multiple ways of making social meaning-exist side by side in a social field filled with competing and even contradicting emotional and narrative possibilities and the social choices they represent.

Through its brutal confrontation of the impact of Reaganomics on the family and community life, River's Edge offers a radical critique of the idealized vision of family life offered the New Right's Family Values Campaign. The film directly confronts, challenges and ultimately collapses the illusion that family life can offer a safe haven or sanctuary from the brutalities of unrestrained consumer capitalism.

In the alternate social nightmare created by the semantic elements of River's Edge, Jamie's naked and decaying corpse becomes the film's central character in a ravaged social and physical landscape that mutely witnesses the political, social and historical unconscious—a pattern of social interaction based on victimization that produces and reproduces an endlessly repeating cycle: victims who become victimizers and victimizers who in turn become victims. Exploited males occupying the feminine social space of vulnerability in the economic arena, repeat the unconscious patterns of victimization in the social and sexual arena as they become the victimizers of vulnerable females. Exploited adults, victims of larger social and economic forces unconsciously victimize their children. Children, like the isolated teens of River's Edge, themselves victims of unconscious exploitation and neglect, repeat the patterns of victimization when some, like Samson, repeat the pattern of victimization they have witnessed and become victimizers.

Watching, with all its juridical relations to the legal act of witnessing, provides the unconscious medium for circulating and duplicating the process of victimization, ensuring the continuation of cyclical victimization by guaranteeing another generation of victims and victimizers. Within a social web of obsessive and unconscious patterns of victimization, sexuality ends in death, not life, and no healthy social reproduction can take place. Healthy social reproduction, symbolized by the protection of the under forest by the forest, has been clearcut. Jamie's decaying corpse, discarded beside the toxic river and

haunted by the ghost of the clear-cut forest, silently witnesses the social truth behind Broussard's brutal rape and murder of Marcy Conrad in 1981: In a social structure where victimization serves as the dominant mode of social intercourse, any real hope for the future has been destroyed.

Yet, in subtle ways, River's Edge undercuts its own radical critique by returning to the melodrama that it worked so hard to escape. The youth, dressed in ill-fitting formal clothes, gather in the small community church for Jamie's long delayed funeral services. Jamie's once naked and decaying body, covered now in a pretty white dress, rests uneasily in her white coffin.

If the bulk of River's Edge literally consumes itself with deconstructing the youth as social monster story, the film's ending recuperates the very melodrama from which it sought to escape. Samson has been killed by Feck, the wayward youth have been reconnected to the supervision of adult society, and taken away from the scene of Samson's murder along the riverbank, in the back of a police car. The battle between Matt and his little brother has been reconciled. Social order has been restored, the social deviant has been eliminated, and the youth have been reintegrated.

The film ends with a fragile note of hope that seems to negate a desire to read the conclusion of River's Edge as the horrific return of Wood's normality. Is the conclusion of River's Edge the classic "unhappy, happy ending" in which one life is sacrificed to preserve a social order, which Robert Lang has argued, we all recognize and accept as deeply flawed, but one to which we must reconcile

ourselves (17)? Or, does the film's ending underscore the ways that melodrama and horror produce and reproduce each other through an interlocking expression of Brook's "moral occult?" In the complete collapse of the horror narrative, does melodrama rise again with its compromised personal and social hopes and dreams, like a phoenix, from the ashes of horror's annihilation?

4. Chapter Four: From Proms to Bombs:

Rewriting Rebel Without A Cause to Reveal the Role of High School in Consumer Culture, Or, How I Came to Love High School Even Though My Boyfriend Tried to Blow It Up

Introduction

The following discussion of Heathers focuses on the issue of teen suicide, especially the "cluster" or group suicides that were a sensationalized part of the television news during the Reagan and Bush, Sr. administrations and their Youth in Crisis Campaign. Chapter Four is organized as follows:

Section 4.1 explicates the conflict between democratic values and consumer culture that animates Heathers. The film locates this conflict within the high school which serves as a metaphor for American society at large. Section 4.1 explores terrorism as the primary response of alienated youth to the irreconcilable conflict between democracy and the values of consumer culture.

Section 4.2 situates Heathers within the larger family values debate regarding apparent increases in teenage suicides and adolescent mental health disorders. Section 4.2 reviews the literature on the apparent alarming explosion of teen suicides and sensational reportage of teen suicide clusters and

demonstrates how the teen suicide stories were reported as social melodramas.

Section 4.3 explores the issue of teen suicide and self-destructiveness in the Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s. It focuses on Rebel Without A Cause (1955) as a domestic melodrama that translates the complex social problems behind adolescent self-destructiveness into familial problems, specifically a generational conflict between fathers and their children, most importantly, sons. The analysis of Rebel Without A Cause emphasizes its status as an iconic male melodrama that marginalizes and blames females for the problems between fathers and sons.

Section 4.4 briefly reviews the production history of Heathers to demonstrate the impact of Reaganomics on the production of low-budget Hollywood youth narratives. It explains how a controversial film like Heathers, which directly confronts the issue of teen suicide, could have been produced in a conservative Hollywood that was increasingly fixated on blockbusters.

Section 4.5 offers a reading of Heathers as a re-writing of Rebel Without A Cause from a feminist perspective. It focuses on the syntactic innovations at work in Heathers. Where River's Edge emphasizes the horror narrative that parallels the melodramatic narrative in Blackboard Jungle, the following analysis of Heathers tracks the displacement of melodrama with black comedy, a comic syntactic structure fused with a horror narrative's focus on the monster. Veronica, the film's female hero, must overcome the monstrous Heathers and J.D. to transform Westerberg High School from a cruel and competitive

consumerist hell into a new democratic society. By rewriting the male melodrama narrative at the heart of Rebel Without A Cause as black comedy, Heathers reveals the complex social problems behind the apparent epidemic of teen suicide. Through its process of syntactic rewriting, Heathers redefines the major semantic images of 1950s suburban family life used by the Family Values Campaign.

Section 4.6 explores how these syntactic innovations generate semantic re-definitions that challenge the New Right's melodramatic treatment of teen suicide. Through its syntactic rewriting of melodrama as black comedy, Heathers reveals the harshly competitive, consumerism-focused character of 1980s American life as the complex source behind the phenomena of teen suicide. As a result of this rewriting, Heathers redefine the semantics of the female, the high school, the idyllic suburban community, the all-knowing parents, high school teachers and administrators. While River's Edge contemplates the image of Jamie's resilient body, Heathers explores how a female might become autonomous and self-directed, with a voice to speak her own experience, and in the process, transform the high school from a capitalist consumer hell to a feminist democracy.

4.1. Heathers, High School and the Conflict Between Democratic Values and Consumer Culture

"People will look at the ashes of Westerberg and say, now there's a school that self-destructed, not because society didn't care, but because the school was society."

J.D. from Heathers

"Dear Diary, My teenage angst bullshit now has a body count."

Veronica from Heathers

Heathers is the Jack Kevorkian of teenage angst movies."

"Mr. Cranky Rates the Movies"

Released in 1989, Heathers was directed by Michael Lehmann, produced by Denise DiNovi, and distributed by New World Entertainment, which by the time the film hit theatres, was in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. In her online review, Rita Kempley, a staff writer for the Washington Post declared: "Heathers is not Pretty in Pink, all pompous and puppy love, but bodacious in black, chalkboard noir, the dark side of the wonder years. A cracked satire of the teen film genre, it's as slangy, raunchy and gutsy as a prom date with Carrie." Heathers is the blackest of black comedies, a bitter satire of the John Hughes high school Hollywood youth narrative The Breakfast Club (1986) and a direct confrontation of the idealized melodramatic media stories about teen suicide victims circulating during the Reagan and Bush, Sr. administrations.

Heathers revolutionized the low-budget Hollywood youth narrative with its pioneering dialogue by screenwriter Daniel Waters and went on to become a cult hit. "Caught somewhere between the numbing amorality of River's Edge

and the heartfelt sap of John Hughes, Heathers tackles the thornier topic of teen suicide" (Kempley). Dresson Howe offered the following cautionary note to viewers: "Heathers, a stiletto-sharp comedy about getting ahead in high school at any price—even murder—makes insidious jokes about teenage suicide and pokes fun at jocks, princesses, geeks, homosexuals and fat people" (Dresson). The film tracks the story of a teen suicide cluster, a string of suicides among adolescents in the same vicinity.

Daniel Waters' screenplay offers a send-up of teen suicide that strips it of any melodrama, glamour or nobility. When Lehmann and Waters took the off-beat, low-budget Heathers to the U.S. Film Festival, Heathers quickly became the most controversial film since The Last Temptation of Christ (1988). "The standard angry response," said Lehmann, "is that teenage suicide is not a fitting subject for comedy. Which is true to some degree, but we are not really making fun of teenage suicide. I think the movie does have a moral point of view, it does take a stance, it condones neither murder nor suicide, and it's so clearly in the realm of absurd comedy, irony, and satire" (Pond 38).

The story takes place at Westerberg High School in the affluent suburb of Sherwood, Ohio. Veronica (Winona Ryder) is working her way into the most popular group in school, the Heathers: Heather #1, Heather Chandler (Kim Walker), Heather #2, Heather Duke (Shannen Doherty) and Heather #3, Heather McNamara (Lisanne Falk). The wealthy, popular and impeccably dressed Heathers cruelly rule the school with the support of the jock football players Kurt

and Ram. The Heathers, teenage dictators, dominate Westerberg by intimidating, terrorizing and humiliating less popular students like Betty Finn and Martha Dunnstock, while Kurt and Ram exploit female students sexually and beat up on their geeky classmates.

Jason Dean or J.D. (Christian Slater) is the new student at school who challenges Westerberg's brutal social order. He ignores the Heathers' lunchtime poll and fires a loaded pistol in the cafeteria when harassed by Ram and Kurt. Drawn by J.D.'s cool sexiness, Veronica becomes his girlfriend and the two pronounce guerilla warfare against the popular Heathers and the jocks.

When Heather #1 humiliates Veronica because she throws up at a University party, Veronica plots a childish revenge by urging Heather to drink a glass of orange juice with a glob of phlegm in it. J.D. fills the glass with disinfectant and kills Heather #1. To disguise their crime, Veronica writes a heart wrenching suicide note that turns the monstrous and victimizing Heather #1 into a melodramatic victim that everyone has misunderstood. When Ram and Kurt humiliate Veronica on a date, Veronica and J.D. plot revenge which once again turns murderous when J.D. substitutes real bullets for blanks. Veronica writes a suicide notes that turns the double-murder into a repressed, homosexual lovers' suicide pact.

The homicides disguised as suicides inspire a teen suicide cluster. Following the death of Heathers #1 and #2 and the football players, Ram and Kurt, Heather Chandler, Heather #3 contemplates suicide. Martha Dunnstock,

the school scapegoat, pins a suicide note to her sweatshirt and walks in front of a truck.

To Veronica's dismay, the Heathers' "suicides" do not transform her high school into a democracy. Instead, suicide becomes a local media phenomena, and the best way for Westerberg students and teachers to guarantee their fifteen minutes of fame. Westerberg High becomes the teenage suicide capital of America where suicide is the "in" thing. Led by the English teacher, Ms. Pauline Fleming, the entire school launches a campaign to stop teen suicide under the banner, "Teen Suicide: Just Don't Do It." Teen suicide swiftly becomes a hot commercial commodity, fueling talk shows and network news. Teen suicide, with buttons, t-shirts, records and relentless media time, becomes the center of Miss Fleming's "Let's Get Happy" media campaign. In a direct reference to Nancy Reagan's teen anti-drug affirmation, the song "Teen Suicide, Don't Do It" becomes a Top-40 radio hit, and the theme for the Westerberg High School prom. Veronica watches with alarm as the "suicides" turn the vicious Heathers and idiot jocks, Kurt and Ram, into martyrs. She writes in her diary, "Suicide gave Heather depth, Kurt a soul, and Ram a brain. I don't know what it's given me, but I have no control over myself when I am with J.D. Are we going to prom or to hell?"

J.D.'s homicidal mania escalates, and he arranges the "suicide" of Heather #2. When Veronica challenges him, "You're not a rebel, you're a psychotic," J.D. attempts to murder her, but Veronica escapes by faking her own hanging.

Veronica learns of J.D.'s Eric Harris and Dylan Kleibold's Columbine High-like mass suicide plot to blow up Westerberg. Veronica finds J.D. in the school basement. As a pep rally proceeds overhead, Veronica kills J.D., just moments before he can blow up the school.

The film ends with a bedraggled but heroic Veronica taking the red headband from Heather #3 and putting it in her own hair as a symbol of a New World Order. Veronica seeks out Martha Dunnstock, asks her to be her prom date declaring, "There is a new sheriff in town."

Heathers centers on a dramatic and irreconcilable conflict between democratic values and consumer culture. Heathers locates this irreconcilable conflict within the heart of the American high school. On one hand, the high school serves as an icon of American democracy and longing for social justice and equality, one place in American life where every young citizen can access equal opportunity and upward mobility. On the other hand, as documented by Beth Bailey in From Front Porch to Back Seat, the cultural life of high school operates as the central training ground in the ruthlessly competitive values and viciously hierarchical social structure of American capitalism. Through a series of homologies, Westerberg High School becomes a metaphor for American life and culture during the Reagan and George Herbert Bush administrations. The conflict between democratic values and the social brutalities of 1980s consumer culture resides not just at the heart of the high school experience, but at the heart of 1980s American life. Heathers makes the relationship between high

school society and real society, obvious and explicit. As Jason explains to Veronica as he prepares to blow up Westerberg High, "High School IS society!"

The film focuses on two important settings: the small-town of Sherwood, Ohio and the local public high school fondly known as Westerberg High. In America Dark Comedy: Beyond Satire, Wes Gehring emphasizes the importance of the town's name, Sherwood as a choice of the film's setting. In 1919, Sherwood Anderson wrote Winesburg, Ohio, a collection of short stories that revealed the ugly underside of small-town, middle-America. Anderson's work initiated a literary movement referred to as "the revolt from the village." Heathers exploits the literary reference to Sherwood, Ohio, and Sherwood Anderson's devastating social satires. The Sherwood, Ohio of Heathers is not a quaint middle-American small town or "village" but a wealthy suburb where the town center has been replaced by strip malls and a 7-11 where Veronica and J.D. nourish themselves with corn nuts and slushies.

Edgar Lee Master's Spoon River Anthology (1915) precipitated the "revolt from the village" movement. Publishing in the late 1910s and 1920s, the revolt writers focused on small-town hypocrisy and emptiness in an all-out "attack on middle-class civilization" (Gehring 105). According to literary critic Carl Van Doren, the revolt from the village movement reacted to a half-century of American naive literature that celebrated "the delicate merits of small-town living with sentimental affection" (Gehrig 105). The revolt literature re-interpreted America's affection for the village community to show how attitudes toward the

institution of small-town life soured. In Winesburg, Ohio, Anderson built on Master's critique by writing about village "grotesques" who were so repressed they could not grasp the truth of their circumstances, and as a result of their distorting narrow-mindedness, became increasingly isolated and unable to communicate (Gehring 105-106).

The Heathers stand as a contemporary adaptation of Anderson's emphasis on character "grotesques" whose distorted perceptions keep them from recognizing the corruption and hypocrisy of American life embodied in the Westerberg High School experience. The film's sardonic spoof of small-town community life extends to Westerberg High and analyzes the corruption and hypocrisy at the heart of high school life. From the first shots, the Heathers narrative establishes the relationship between the clearly de-lineated social roles of small-town life and the elaborate and highly stratified social world of high school. Heathers pays homage to representations of high school by making tensions and conflicts between social groups its main focus. In the early lunchtime poll montage scene, the film displays the gallery of expected high school stereotypes: popular but bitchy girls, dumb jocks, geeks, nice-but-boring girls, nerdy brains, even an overly emotional English teacher.

Heathers repeatedly reflects on the competitive, market-driven social organization of Westerberg High. The emphasis on consumerism is so intense that Westerberg High might as well be Westerberg Mall. In her diary, Veronica describes her school friends as "Diet Coke heads and Swatch dogs." Throughout

the film, the camera pays loving attention to the material details of teen life—hair ribbons, colored tights, shoes, dresses, suits and such other teen paraphernalia as key chains and name plates like the one Heather #1 keeps in her locker. For students of Westerberg High, life revolves around shopping at The Gap, hanging out at the mall and appearing at social functions in expensive attire. Worst of all, the commercialization and consumerism that defines Westerberg extends to the youths themselves who have become commodities to be consumed by adult American culture through Ms. Fleming's "Be Happy" teen suicide prevention campaign. Jason explains to Veronica, "Don't you understand, the American public will eat up any sordid facts the media serves up about its youth."

4.1.1. American Consumerism During the 1980s and early 1990s

4.1.2.

The American mall is the cathedral of postwar culture, the Garden of Eden in a box (27).

From The Malling of America by William Severini Kowinski

The obsession with consumerism in Heathers directly expresses the obsession with consumption at the heart of the Reagan era. Ronald Reagan's extraordinarily lavish Inaugural festivities in January 1981 set the standard for conspicuous consumption through the 1980s and early 1990s. The Reagan administration spent over \$11 million on the pomp and circumstance of the inaugural, and soon First Lady Nancy Reagan was directing massive White House renovations and ordering "everyday" china for the First Family that cost

more than \$200,000. Reagan's inaugural spending lead directly into massive federal spending, and by the end of Reagan's presidency in 1988, this spending resulted in a federal deficit that was more than double the deficits created by all previous presidents combined (Bondi 314). While David Stockman preached welfare cuts, Reagan unveiled a plan in 1982 to increase defense spending by \$1.2 trillion over five years. A significant portion of this \$1.2 trillion was earmarked for Reagan's controversial Star Wars program (Bondi 305). The combination of federal spending and massive tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and corporations eventually shifted the United States from the largest lender nation to the largest debtor nation in the world by the end of Reagan's second term (Bondi 304).

Following the President's lead, Americans adopted the dictum "shop until you drop" and began a decade-long shopping spree (Bondi 383). During the 1980s, shopping became American's favorite leisure time activity. In a five-year period at mid-decade, 91 million households purchased 62 million microwaves, 63 million VCRs, 57 million washers and dryers, 88 million cars and light trucks, 105 million television sets, 31 million cordless phones, and 30 million answering machines (Bondi 385). Americans engaged in the biggest spending-spree since the boom that followed World War II, prompting actress Elizabeth Ashley to declare that "money is the long hair of the eighties," and journalist Tom Wolfe to refer to Americans in the 1980s as "the splurge generation." While Madonna

sang, "We are living in a material world, and I am a material girl," the character Gordon Gekko in the movie Wall Street simply stated "Greed is good."

Malcom Forbes, multi-millionaire and publisher of Forbes magazine defined the money and consumption-crazed Reagan era when he declared, "He who dies with the most toys wins" (Bondi 384). "Reaganomics" the popular name for the "New Federalism," Reagan's economic program of free-markets, de-regulation, de-unionization and federal spending coupled with tax cuts, made the 1980s at time of multi-billion dollar mergers and leveraged buyouts supported by financial innovations like junk bonds. In the popular culture of the 1980s and early 1990s, the rich achieved celebrity status including the multimillion dollar entrepreneurs Steve Jobs of Apple Computers, real estate mogul Donald Trump, Wall Street financiers Ivan Boesky and Michael Miliken, and the prime-time television millionaires of Dynasty, Dallas and The Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous. Middle-class Americans celebrated "the Greening of America" by reading a host of new financial magazines including Money and making financial planning and investment a popular culture craze (Bondi 384). In a period of non-stop spending, Vincent Van Gogh's *Irises* sold for 53.9 million, and Molly Ringwald, teen star made \$1 million a film (Bondi 384).

Baby boomers and their teenage children in particular became serious consumers and financed the bulk of purchases at the nation's malls, restaurants and entertainment outlets. "Boomers," a market of at least 70 million consumers, sparked the expansion and sophistication of consumer research as

marketers worked feverishly to capitalize on their spending habits. In a 1984 article in Fortune magazine entitled "What Will Baby-Boomers Buy Next?"

Geoffrey Colvin explained:

Marketers have never faced a brighter opportunity than the coming of age of the baby boom. With the oldest boomers now approaching 40 and the youngest just leaving college, the generation is entering its prime years of earning--and spending. For the next 20 to 40 years, as the baby-boomers progress through their big-buying decades, they will wield unprecedented economic power. The boomers are a mouthwatering market because there are so many of them.....nearly a third of the population. They're also maturing into the most affluent generation that the U.S. has ever seen. Not only will they be rich, but boomers will also spend a greater portion of their wealth than any previous generation. It all adds up to the hugest consumer market ever (28).

The baby boom market supported the development of new shopping outlets including the phenomenon of television shopping on channels such as the Home Shopping Network and the QVC network. The home-shopping industry grew from sales of \$1 million in 1982 to sale of \$1.4 billion in 1989 (Bondi 385).

Credit card fueled the explosion in television shopping and consumer debt:

By the mid-1980s, the average credit card holder carried seven cards; the number of Mastercard and Visa charge cards held by American consumers was estimated to be 124 million (Bondi 385).

In Women Who Shop Too Much: Overcoming the Urge to Splurge, a book published at the end of the 1980s, Carol Wesson created the term "shopaholics" to define Americans, especially women, caught in a cycle of uncontrolled spending and consumption.

Riding the tidal wave of consumerism, shopping malls, which arose in suburban communities in the 1970s, continued to expand throughout the 1980s and “expanded their reach into small towns and cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Philadelphia and Saint Louis” (Bondi 385). Surveys showed that American’s were spending more time in malls than anywhere except home, job and school. In fact, Americans made 7 billion trips in and out of shopping malls during the 1980s (Bondi 385). In his history of the shopping mall, The Malling of America, William Severini Kowinski argued that shopping malls were “psychological bomb shelters,” that offered Americans a safe and enclosed haven removed from the America’s real world terrors of war, poverty, murder and pollution.

For teenagers in particular, the mall proved to be an important institution during the 1980s and 1990s. Kowinski writes:

The mall is a common experience for the majority of American youth...Teenagers in America now spend more time in the mall than anywhere else but home and school...Mall time is the result of two-paycheck and single-parent households, and the lack of viable alternatives (349-350).

According to Kowinski, mall developers were enormously surprised by the presence of large numbers of teenagers in their malls everyday. The International Council of Shopping Centers commissioned a study and eventually published a guide for mall managers to deal with the teen invasion. According to the study, teenagers go to malls because they are bored and have nowhere else to go (Kowinski 350). High numbers of teenagers in the country’s malls lead

to the installation of video game arcades and movie theatres to keep teens occupied (Kowinski 350). The study also discovered that teenagers in suburban malls fight, drink, litter and walk more than any other consumers but also presented less overall problems than any other group (Kowinski 350). In fact, the guide concluded that mall management should not just tolerate, but even encourage a teenager presence because teenagers share the same values as the shopping management: consumption (Kowinski 350).

Kowinski argued that for teenagers the mall became a “university of suburban materialism, where Valley Girls and Boys from coast to coast are educated in consumption” (351). Mall kids are already “preprogrammed to be consumers,” he argues, and “the mall can put the finishing touches to them as hard-core consumers just like everybody else” (350). At the mall, “adolescents find little that challenges the assumption that the goal of life is to make money and buy products” (350). Kowinski continues, “shopping has become a survival skill and there is certainly no better place to learn it than at the mall, where its importance is powerfully reinforced and certainly never questioned” (351). In fact:

The mall is just an extension of...those large suburban schools—only there’s Karmelkorn instead of chem lab, the ice rink instead of gym: It’s high school without the impertinence of class (353).

4.1.3. Competing Solutions to the Conflict Between Democratic and Consumer Culture

The theme of consumerism pervades Heathers and the hydra-headed "Heathers" function as the ultimate consumer and consumable embody the worst aspects of consumer capitalism. The film's dramatic opposition rests on the competing solutions offered by J.D. and Veronica to the conflict between consumer and democratic culture at the heart of Westerberg High School.

As the ultimate consumer/consumable and dictator of Westerberg's consumer society, Heather #1 explains her popularity in entirely utilitarian terms to Veronica: "Everybody wants me as a friend or a fuck." When Veronica and Jason meet in the convenience store, she explains that although she doesn't like her friends very much, they have an important job being popular. The Heathers rule Westerberg ruthlessly, enforcing a strict hierarchy of social haves and have nots. The montage scene of the film explicates the many different social groups in the school that serves as a microcosm of society. To maintain their power, the Heathers treat the dweebs like doormats and "wipe their feet on the fat and unfashionable" (Kempley).

Veronica longs for a "kinder, gentler" Westerberg, a high school without the rat race of being popular and viciously competitive social order, a "nice place" where everyone is treated well. Veronica laments in her diary: "Tomorrow, I'll be kissing her aerobicized ass, but tonight, let me dream of a world without Heather, a world where I am free." Trapped in her job of being the fourth most

popular girl in Westerberg after the three Heathers, Veronica misses her childhood best friend, Betty Finn.

J.D. or Jason Dean, juvenile delinquent and prototype of James Dean, and the embodiment of a true rebel without a cause, wears a black leather jacket and rides a motorcycle. Like the parents of James Dean's Jim Stark in Rebel Without A Cause, J.D.'s parents have been forced to move repeatedly because of J.D.'s criminal behavior. However, in contrast, J.D.'s crimes are not low-level brushes with the law. He has learned a few tricks from his father who runs a demolition business and regularly blows up buildings with people still inside them, including Jason's mother.

Jason's solution to the irreconcilable conflict between democratic values and the values of consumer culture is terrorism—enacted through a string of homicides and a suicide bomb attempt that threatens to destroy the entire school. The embodiment of terrorism and the ultimate rebel without a cause, for J. D., complete destruction and annihilation is the only solution to the conflict expressed by Westerberg's cruel social hierarchy. Through its darkly comic connection of teen alienation and terrorism, Heathers, released in 1989, prophesied the events at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 in Littleton, Colorado when Eric Harris and Dylan Kleibold took automatic weapons and an arsenal of pipe bombs into their high school and killed twelve classmates and a teacher before killing themselves (VanZandt). One year before, on May 21, 1998, Kip Kinkel murdered his own parents and proceeded to his high school

where he opened fire in the cafeteria, killing two students and wounding 22. Less than 10 days after the Columbine shootings, T.J. Solomon, a 15 year old from Conyers, Georgia, opened fire on his classmates and wounded six. Since 1996, there have been 14 suicide/homicide school shootings resulting in the death of over 110 students, teachers, and administrators (VanZandt). The most recent instance of a school shooting took place on March 22, 2005 in Red Lake, Minnesota where 17 year old Jeff Weise killed a security guard, a teacher, and 5 students and wounded 15 other students before killing himself (VanZandt). Almost a decade before the Columbine shootings, J.D. captured the now horrifyingly familiar teen rebel as the shotgun-bearing homicidal, suicide bomber intent on destroying an entire school. In his updating of the 1950s rebel, Jason moves far beyond the teenage angst and alienation of James Dean in Rebel Without A Cause.

Most importantly, J.D. embodies the slippage between melodrama and horror evident in the analysis of Blackboard Jungle in Chapter Three. As high school terrorist, J.D. is simultaneously the victimizer social monster of classic film horror and the ultimate melodramatic social victim who is willing to sacrifice his life to fulfill his apocalyptic social vision. The image of the teen rebel as terrorist contains the slippages between melodrama and horror syntactic and semantics elements central to the figure of J.D. J.D., the suicidal/homicidal terrorist, duplicates the continual slippages between homicides and suicides in the Heathers narrative. As the homicidal/suicidal social victim/victimizer, J.D. the

teen terrorist, symbolizes and integrates the interactions between horror and melodrama in the Hollywood youth narrative generally.

Veronica, however has a different vision for resolving the irreconcilable conflict between democracy and consumer culture. Throughout the entire film, Veronica serves as Jason's unwitting partner in changing the school's power structure through terrorism. Until the last quarter of the film, Veronica plays the traditional role of a passive, gullible female. But at the climax, Veronica reverses this traditional pattern, opposes Jason's nihilistic vision and argues for a re-visionary form of social change—reorganizing the high school power structure from within so that underdogs like Martha "Dumptruck" Dunnstock and Betty Finn can be accepted. Instead of saving the school hierarchy and all that it represents by sacrificing the nerds and geeks (or the blacks and women), Veronica produces a feminist rewriting.

By the end of the film, Veronica creates a new democratic society in Westerberg High. Visual references to the western, first introduced at the beginning of the film when Veronica swings through saloon doors into Westerberg's cafeteria, transform Veronica from the victim of the Heathers into a classic western hero working within a society oblivious to the perils it faces, a female John Wayne restores the democratic values of respect for the law and social justice. Heathers radically rewrites the standard western plot by placing a woman in the central role. Like the western hero, Veronica works alone to protect the community.

4.2. Heathers, the Family Values Campaign and the Teen Suicide Epidemic: Social Melodrama Versus Social Satire

The incidence of adolescent suicide has increased dramatically over the last twenty years. It is estimated that no less than 300,000 young people will attempt to kill themselves this year. More than 6,000 will succeed. What has caused this suicide epidemic? Why do so many want to end their lives? There are various factors that may contribute to the problem. Lack of a solid family unit, lack of clear-cut goals, lack of self-esteem, lack of (or bad) role models, a breakdown of communication between peers and parents are just a few of the burdens with which today's youth may be faced. Add to this the increase in domestic violence, the ever-increasing divorce rate and the destruction of the family unit and it is not hard to understand why life today may be exceedingly hard for young people to handle.

From the introduction to The Cruellest Death: The Enigma of Adolescent Suicide by David Lester

As suggested by the quotation above, the irreverent treatment of suicide and teen suicide clusters in Lehmann's Heathers was both produced and consumed within the alarmist reactions to and treatment of teen suicide promoted by the New Right's Family Values and Youth in Crisis Campaigns. For the New Right, the reasons for the teen suicide epidemic can be located in the "breakdown" and "destruction of the family unit" due to increasing divorce rates, lack of communication and domestic violence. The crisis of teen suicide supported the larger idea of the American family in crisis and overlapped with a larger cultural debate about teen suicide that was already raging in the popular media. The idea of a teen suicide epidemic and hysteria over media reportage

about teen suicide clusters and group suicides provided major support for the Reagan and Bush, Sr. administration's "Youth in Crisis Campaign," and linked the teen suicide epidemic to a collapse of family values.

The controversy created by the treatment of suicide in Heathers makes visible one of the most important ways that the New Right "read" the terrorism among youth generated by the irreconcilable contradiction between the democratic ideals espoused by the high school and the values and goals of consumer culture. As demonstrated by the reportage that follows, the New Right read the epidemic as social melodrama including many of the syntactic and semantic elements of melodrama established in the discussion of Blackboard Jungle in Chapter Three.

For instance, crisis follows upon crisis as the numbers of young suicide victims reported in the media mount generating intense emotion, sorrow, grief, guilt and even hysteria. The youthful suicide victim gives his or her own life as the ultimate sacrifice, a sacrifice that reminds remaining family, community members and society at large about the importance of family values, social connections and togetherness. Cadres of mediating figures, medical and psychological specialists including psychiatrists, social workers, therapists, teen suicide prevention specialists and grief counselors, chart the progress of the ongoing epidemic and help friends and family members explain, accommodate and accept the "unhappy, happy ending" of a specific teenager's life in suicide. The teen suicide melodrama operates like the melodramatic "musical turned

inside out" and performs the supreme deferral and blockage of the desire for connection and communication between parents and their alienated teenagers. The act of suicide itself can be read as a final, desperate attempt to communicate the incommunicable, youth's ultimate mute expression of rage, alienation, despair and hopelessness.

The following discussion explicates the statistical basis of teen suicide and teen suicide clusters during the 1980s, reviews the media coverage that fueled and reinforced perceptions of an epidemic and reviews the evidence that counters assertions of a teen suicide epidemic during the period. This material provides the back drop against which the black social satire of teen suicide in Heathers can be read.

4.2.1. A Brief History of Teen Suicide

The study of adolescent suicide and adolescent mental health issues is a fairly recent phenomenon. The concept of adolescent suicide only reaches back to the 1950s when child psychiatric researchers from the National Institute of Mental Health, Leon Cytryn and Donald K. McKnew, Jr, first noted that chronically ill and hospitalized children often exhibit symptoms of classical adult depression. In 1950, the adolescent suicide rate was reported as 4.5 per 10,000. An epidemiological study during the 1950s of a child population identified depression in less than 1% of youngsters (Curran 13).

During the 1960s, the youth suicide rate began its decades-long ascent.

In the 1970s, psychiatric researchers observed that depressed children present different symptoms than depressed adults, and Cytryn and McKnew suggest three distinct types of depression in youth: acute, chronic and masked (Curran 13). In 1970, Andre Haim and Jerry Jacobs both published texts entitled Adolescent Suicide. These texts initiated an expanded national focus on issues of adolescent mental health and youth suicide supported by the work of First Lady Rosalyn Carter. Margaret Hyde and Elizabeth Held followed with Suicide: The Hidden Epidemic.

In 1974, David Phillips published a groundbreaking article in the American Sociological Review that suggested that suicidal behavior could be contagious. Phillips used front-page newspaper coverage of celebrity suicides to demonstrate that suicide rates rose nationally within seven to ten days of a celebrity suicide. The rise in the suicide rate was greater the longer the coverage and higher in the regions where the suicide coverage occurred, and higher where the stimulus suicide and the person copying the suicide were similar (Maris 3080). In a long series of similar studies, Phillips argued that the suicide contagion effect was especially powerful for teenagers (Maris 3080). By the late 1970s, researchers began to sound the note of alarm concerning rising rates of adolescent suicide. Phillips ideas about suicide contagion dominated the study and treatment of suicide for adolescents throughout the 1980s (Maris 3080).

The reported youth suicide rate continued to climb throughout the 1980s,

and childhood depression was officially recognized for the first time when the prestigious Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders (DSMIII) defined depression in children and youth as a distinct disorder (Curran 13). The steady rise in reported committed and attempted suicides among adolescents, combined with intensive media coverage of the teen suicide epidemic and teen suicide clusters, encouraged a national response (Curran 13). The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice called a congressional hearing in September 1984 to determine what action the federal government should take to stop the rapid rise in adolescent suicide (Curran 13). The field of adolescent suicide exploded as research projects on teen suicide were given top priority by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta (Curran 13). Bringing together representatives from each of the fifty states, the federal government created the National Committee on Youth Suicide to serve as a clearing house for the growing research and information on youth suicide, to "focus public attention on the issue, push for federal legislation to fund research, to compile accurate, up-to-date national statistics on youth suicide and provide research on existing suicide prevention programs" (Curran 13).

Several states had already moved to address the teen suicide epidemic in advance of the slow-moving federal government. California and Florida led the way. In 1983, California created the first state-funded pilot program to prevent teen suicide. The California law provided for parent education, teacher

training and a curricular offering in the secondary school of 5 hours per year on the topic of suicide prevention (Guetzloe 11). The enormity of the problem prompted the legislatures of New Jersey, Louisiana and Wisconsin to follow with mandates to establish suicide prevention programs in the schools. Louisiana initiated a suicide prevention module and mandated that all students receive teen suicide prevention training in their tenth grade health classes (Guetzloe 11).

In 1984, Florida passed the most comprehensive law, The Florida Youth Emotional Development and Suicide Prevention Act, which legally required cooperation between the Departments of Health and Rehabilitative Services, Law Enforcement and Education in a state-wide plan for preventing teen suicide. Florida's legislation promoted district plans by local Departments of Health and Rehabilitation that required training for all secondary school teachers in recognizing the signs of severe emotional distress and designing appropriate interventions, included information on positive emotional development in the 9th and 10th grade curriculums, established an inter-program task force to assist in implementing the state-wide suicide prevention program and developed training materials for adults to use with students (Guetzloe 11).

Where there were no state guidelines, communities and school districts created their own programs. These districts included Bergen County, NJ, Dayton, OH, Denver, CO, Fairfax, VA, Houston, TX, Ithaca, NY, Minneapolis, MN, and Salt Lake City, UT (Guetzloe 11). In 1986, Congress considered the Youth

Suicide Prevention Act, which would have authorized the Secretary of Education to make grants to local agencies and non-profit organizations for suicide prevention programs. Instead, lawmakers rolled funding into a general program of state block grants.

Between 1993 and 1994, federal statistics on youth suicide rates peaked for various populations, reaching 11.1 per 100,000 before beginning to decline. This decline was coincident with drug maker Eli Lilly's introduction of Prozac, a powerful antidepressant with few side-effects compared to earlier drugs. The nation shifted toward treating adolescent depression with psychiatric drugs in an effort to prevent adolescent suicides. In 1994, the Food and Drug Administration addressed concerns that untested drugs were being given to children and adolescents by requiring labeling for all drug products that might be prescribed to children "off-label" or for uses not originally intended. In 1997, Congress passed a resolution recognizing suicide as a national problem. Concerns about teen suicide and violence crystallized on April 20, 1999 when Eric Harris and Dylan Kleibold commandeered Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado and murdered 12 students and a teacher before killing themselves.

As the nation's public health monitor, the Centers for Disease Control promoted, contracted and conducted much of the research on adolescent suicide during the 1980s and 1990s. Under the leadership of Dr. David Brent, the University of Pittsburgh's Western Psychiatric Hospital (WPIC) has been one of the

important research sites on adolescent suicide in the United States. In fact, beginning in 1986, Western Psychiatric Hospital has hosted annual national adolescent suicide conferences and has produced many of the training materials used by professional across the nation. Since the 1986 publication of a report by the National Academy of Science's Committee on Trauma Research, the CDC has been responsible for creating a preventive strategy for both unintentional and intentional injuries. As part of the charge given to it by Congress, the CDC has helped to articulate the goals and objectives of the nation's adolescent suicide public policy. During Reagan's second term in office, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Margaret Heckler established the Task Force on Youth Suicide to integrate and synthesize available knowledge and recommend strategies in both public and private sectors, for the prevention of youth suicide. Work groups commissioned papers and held national conferences throughout 1986. The final set of recommendations and supporting papers were finally published as a four-volume report in January, 1989.

In 1991, the CDC published its "Year of 2000 National Health Objectives to Reduce Violence and Abusive Behavior," in which it clearly stated its goal of reversing the rising trend of suicidal deaths among 15 to 19 year olds. The Task Force made 33 recommendations in six broad categories: data development, research into risk factors, intervention effectiveness evaluation, increased support for suicide prevention services, public information and education, and

broadening the involvement of both the public and private sectors in the preventions of youth suicides (Berman and Jobes 229-230).

As Acland notes in his analysis of youth in crisis during the 1980s, the media played a critical role in promoting and popularizing the teen suicide epidemic.⁷ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, documentaries, docudramas, made-for-television movies, films and other media materials featured the teen suicide epidemic. ABC produced the television movie, Surviving, which paralleled the documentary ABC Notebook: Teen Suicide which both examined the pressures and stresses facing teenagers that researches linked with the teen suicide epidemic. ABC also produced In Loveland: A Study of Teenage Suicide which examined the suicide of Mark Cada in Loveland, Colorado. Patty Duke narrated the story of three suicidal teenagers for CBS in the televised documentary, Urgent Message. Walt Disney produced the twenty minute film, Before Its Too Late, which aimed to teach parents and their children how to spot suicidal behavior and what to do about it. Films and programs about teen suicide airing on the major networks were augmented by a wide array of media materials created by educational, neighborhood and adolescent psychiatric treatment centers including Cry For Help from Hospital and Community Psychiatric Services; But Jack Was A Good Driver and Suicide: The Teenage Crisis, both produced by McGraw-Hill Films; Getting Through the Bad Times, But He Was Only Seventeen: The Death of A Friend, Preventing Teen Suicide: You

⁷ Specific release dates are unavailable for the following list of films and media materials.

Can Help and Did Jenny Have to Die, all produced by Sunburst Communications; Everything to Live For, Amy and the Angel, Hear Me Cry, A Last Cry For Help and Suicide: The Warning Signs, all produced and distributed by Coronet/ MTI Teleprograms; and Too Sad To Live, produced by the Massachusetts Committee for Children and Youth.⁸

The teen suicide epidemic also became an important issue in both fiction and non-fiction book sales. Some of the most popular titles include Craig and Joan: Two Lives For Peace by E. Asinof, J. Guest's Ordinary People, I Never Promised You A Rose Garden, by H. Green, The Owl's Song by J. Hale, Sylvia Plath's, The Bell Jar, S. Oneal's The Language of Goldfish, My Son, My Son, by I. Bolton, and J. E Mack and H. Hickler's publication of the diary of a young female suicide victim, Vivienne: The Life and Suicide of An Adolescent Girl.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, experts debated the reasons behind the teen suicide epidemic. New Right think tanks, organizations and pundits, took up the issue with particular vigor. Fran McGovern wrote a long piece entitled "Children in the Abyss," for The American Legion, a popular conservative magazine, in April 1991. In December 1993, Phyllis Schlafley wrote a highly influential article denouncing suicide prevention programs entitled, "Suicide Courses Are Dangerous to Our Children," for the Conservative Chronicle. In their article, "The Declining Well-Being of American Adolescents," for New Right

⁸ A complete listing of media materials focused on adolescent suicides is available in Suicidal Youth: School-Based Intervention and Prevention in sections Resource A and Resources B (201-323).

publication, The Public Interest, Winter 1986 issue, Peter Ulhenber and David Eggebeen argued that the suicidal behavior of adolescents had increased over the last two decades in direct response to escalating rates of divorce, female participation in the labor force and the failure of adults to communicate personal values and commitments (25-38). In an editorial titled "Suicides Blamed on Music's Satanic Spell," published by Christianity Today, the main periodical of evangelical conservative Christians, the writer argued that heavy metal rock bands and their corporate sponsors, most notably CBS Records, placed teens under a "Satanic spell." Bands like Judas Priest, "brainwash" young people into killing their families and themselves (53).

Throughout the 1980s, the Reverend Jerry Falwell regularly pontificated on the relationship between teen suicide and the moral decay of American society, especially the breakdown of the family. In a widely published sermon entitled, "The Spiritual Renaissance in America," given in 1986 at Temple Baptist Church. Reverend Falwell began by quoting Mark 10:14, explaining, "Jesus says, "Suffer," allow, "the little children to come unto me." Why? Because "for such is the kingdom of God." There is a global war in progress tonight against the little children. A global war against the little children."

Falwell opened the body of his sermon with a catalogue of contemporary worldly sins and Satanic designs. Falwell focused on the problem of teen suicide as one of the most serious.

Then we look at teenage suicide, teenage suicide in this country.....The sadistic music, the heavy metal, you know,

parents would be shocked if they knew the words, the lyrics, of the songs their children listen to. And, and I, as pastor of 22,000 people, have preached many a funeral of a young person who committed suicide and almost always while listening over and over again to a recording. These music merchants have gotten into the basest of situations. And thank God for the congressional wives in Washington who started a campaign against it. The minds of the little children are captured, usually the drugs and the music world all are merged, and that little life, a part of the satanic design to destroy our little children.....There is parental neglect. And then the secularist instruction and amoral instruction....(Harding 159-160).

An historian of the American family, who was regularly featured in article and conferences sponsored by the Heritage Foundation and the Family Research Council, Allan Carlson linked the teen suicide epidemic to the New Right's "crisis in the American family." In his discussion of the causes of teen suicide in *Suicide: Opposing Viewpoints*, Carlson relies on the research of Calvin Fredrick, who claimed that "the primary underlying cause of the rising suicide rates among American youth seems to be the breakdown of the nuclear family unit" (Carlson 110). Although a causal relationship between divorce and suicide cannot be proven, Fredrick argued, a correlation does exist: while 50% of American marriages end in divorce, 70 % of adolescents who attempt suicide come from divorced families (Carlson 112).

Using the work of George Howe Colt in *The Enigma of Suicide*, Carlson argues that a direct relationship can be established between tripling divorce and adolescent suicide rates (112). Carlson uses Emile Durkheim's examination of the social roots of suicidal behavior in *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* to build the foundations of his argument. In *Suicide*, Durkheim focused on the social

rather than the individual causes of suicide and argued that patterns of suicide could not be entirely explained solely in terms of individual psychological pathology (Johnson 319). Durkheim demonstrated that suicide rates needed to be considered within their social context, most importantly within an analysis of varying degrees of social connectedness or disconnectedness, which Durkheim defined as anomie. In his systematic analysis of empirical data on suicide rates available at the turn in Europe at the end of the 1800s, Durkheim predicted that Protestants would have higher rates of suicide than Catholics since Protestant culture emphasizes personal autonomy, independence and achievement over the Catholic emphasis on group identity and social support and cohesion (Johnson 319).

In a serious misrepresentation of Durkheim's use of two religious denominations to illustrate a contrast of social experiences, Carlson argues that Durkheim's Catholic/Protestant example demonstrates that only the meaning provided by religious belief and commitment provides the social structure and support that can prevent people from committing suicide (111). Despite Durkheim's status as a non-believer, Carlson uses Durkheim's Catholic/Protestant example to argue that only the institutions of family and religion can give Americans the strong social identity and social cohesion that supports individuals so that they can successfully confront life's material and existential challenges (111). In his treatise on the cause of teen suicide Carlson writes:

Religion assuages all manner of human disappointments.
Suffering is more readily endured if eternal salvation and

heavenly glory are offered as a reward for those who persevere. Belief that God is watching and cares about human suffering has a similar impact. Religious communities generate real concern among their members for those who are suffering. The Bible offers solid role models, such as Job, for those who remain steadfast in suffering. Belief in Satan galvanizes individuals into common action against a shared enemy. Belief in a responsive God and the power of prayer also has measurable results (112).

For Carlson, the solution to teen suicide, like the solution to the vast majority of the nation's problems, "is the recovery of those two institutions which restrain and channel the individual toward life, virtue and community -- religion and the family" (113). Carlson argues that religion and family are not "mere options for this nation; they are necessities if the American public is going to survive and prosper" (113). Americans cannot look to the government to solve the heartbreakingly destructive problem of suicidal youth. Only a sincere and devoted return to God will result in the stronger families that will support and nurture troubled youth so that adolescent suicide rates will abate (113).

Dr. James Dobson, founder of the Focus on the Family and host of the popular radio program by the same name, also emphasizes the role of religion and family cohesion in the prevention of teen suicide. In a column entitled "Depression and Suicide," published by Dobson's Focus on the Family, Roberto Rivera describes the root causes of teen suicide explaining:

Although medical and personal factors get the lion's share of attention in cases of suicide, cultural factors are not faultless. Nihilism – which Thomas Hibbs of Boston College describes as "spiritual impoverishment" and "shrunken aspirations" – has come to characterize American life over the past 50 years. To put it plainly, today's Americans, in particular the young, have more difficulty in identifying something that provides purpose

and meaning to their lives.....Additionally, the institutions that traditionally transmitted "meaning" such as church and family, have less influence than they did 50 years ago. Our popular culture, whose influence has increased as church and family have seen their influence wane, is as Hibbs writes....steeped in nihilism.....Life can appear to be totally trivial and superficial.

4.2.2. Anatomy of an Epidemic: Rising Teen Suicide Rates and Suicide Clusters

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the statistical evidence generated by the American Psychological Association and the Center for Disease Control supported growing alarm about an epidemic of teen suicide. In 1986, the Centers for Disease Control issued a report, "Youth Suicide Surveillance," stating that 15-24 year old Americans represent a "high risk group for suicide" (Males 237).

The overall suicide rate for adult Americans had remained stable for the second half of the twentieth century. Suicide is the ninth leading cause of death among American adults (Cole 1113). However, suicide rates among adolescents have risen dramatically among adolescents since 1950 with the adolescent suicide rate tripling. Adolescents committed 17.4% of all suicides in the United States (Cole 1113). By the 1980s, suicide had become the third leading cause of death among American adolescents occurring at a rate of 10.8 % in 15 to 19-year-olds. Suicide rates are much lower for 10 to 14- year-olds with a rate of 1.7% (Brent 619). As discussed in the section above, by 1992, suicide had become the leading cause of death, above homicide, among adolescents. On average, during the 1980s and early 1990s, 14 teenagers

committed suicides every day.

Extensive research, much of it conducted at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's Western Psychiatric Institute, suggested that adolescent suicide rates are significantly shaped by gender, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Brent 619). Since the 1950s, the suicide gap between adolescent males and females had been widening (Canetta 649). At the height of the epidemic, the suicide completion rate was about five times higher in males than in females, while the rate of attempted suicide was two to three times higher for females than males (Canetta 648). Completed suicide was more prevalent among males possibly because of their tendency to use more lethal methods in suicide attempts (Brent 619). Approximately 50 per cent of adolescent males who complete a suicide used firearms (Cole 1114). Native Americans and Whites had the highest adolescent suicide rates. Suicide rates among African American males increased dramatically during the 1980s, and approached 80% of the white male suicide rate (Brent 619). Sexual abuse has emerged as a key factor in gay male suicide attempts (Canetta 652).

In the United States firearms have been the most common method of suicide followed by hanging, carbon monoxide poisoning and jumping from heights. Adolescents living in a home with access to a loaded gun have a higher risk of suicide, even without other determining factors for suicide. Suicide attempters most often use the methods of overdosing and wrist slashing (Brent 619).

The search for causes of adolescent suicidal behavior has spanned many fields of research. Risk factors include: possible genetic markers, national unemployment rates, parental education and income, childhood adversities, mental disorders, physical and sexual abuse, and cognitive style, a history of family depression, substance abuse, coping skills and exposure to suicide models (Canetta 651). Both attempted and completed suicides are usually precipitated by crises including interpersonal conflict and loss, family discord, physical or sexual abuse, and impending legal or disciplinary actions (Brent 619).

Research conducted at Western Psychiatric Institute has been used to support the argument that most adolescent suicide attempters do not actually want to die (Brent 619). Research indicates that most often, adolescent suicide attempters want to escape unbearable pain and circumstances, gain attention and influence the decisions of others, and communicate intense feelings of anger and love (Brent 619). The majority of adolescents who successfully complete a suicide attempt are intoxicated or under the influence of drugs at the time of death. Only the most serious of suicide attempters leave suicide notes (Brent 619).

4.2.3. Teen Suicide Clusters and Teen Suicide Contagion

The most striking feature of teen suicide media reportage during the 1980s and early 1990s involved the issue of suicide clusters, suicide imitations and group suicides. Spectacular and highly publicized suicide "clusters" among

adolescents in various parts of the United States from Leominster, Massachusetts, a town of 35, 000 where at least six teenagers died by suicide over two years, to suicide clusters in Clear Lake and Plano, Texas, and Westchester, New York provided powerful support for the theory of teen suicide "contagion" (Curran 107).

One of the most disturbing cases of suicide "contagion" took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1984, when a group of five teens initiated a suicide cluster, and sparked a series of reciprocal threats at their local high school. As in the coverage of the Conrad/Broussard murder, the media reportage linked the suicides to the teens' love of heavy metal music, and use of alcohol, speed and LSD, leaving out the facts that all of the youth came from stable, two-parent families from an affluent suburb, and that the group leader's father was a Lutheran minister (Lester 68). The "cluster" unfolded over the course of several months and began with the suicides of two males in the group who took 22 hits of LSD before handcuffing themselves together and jumping off a cliff into a quarry (Lester 67). The three other members of the group were the first to find the boys' bodies. Six weeks later, one female in the group attempted suicide by an overdose of pills. Two months later, she ended her life by shooting herself in the chest (Lester 71). The other two students of the group, one male and one female, though severely traumatized, survived.

In an essay entitled "Over the Edge," published in The Philadelphia Magazine in October 1984, writer S. Fried documents how the suicides of the

group generated a great deal of suicidal acting-out by other students in the local high school. A young female student attempted suicide by overdosing on Tylenol (Lester 70). On her return to school, the student found a full bottle of Tylenol in her locker with a note saying, "Do It Right Next Time" (Lester 71). One of the surviving members of the group and the girlfriend of one of the boys who killed himself, found a letter taped to her locker stating, "You killed him" (Lester 71).

In his study of teen suicide, The Cruellest Death: The Enigma of Adolescent Suicide, David Lester documents how the media focused on teenage suicide clusters during the 1980s, largely because of the false belief that suicide clusters do not occur among adults, when in fact, they occur with equal regularity among adults and adolescents (Lester 65). David Curran argues in Adolescent Suicide Behavior that the concept of contagion creates a sense of "indiscriminate alarm for parents of adolescents." The concept of contagion reduces "the importance of readiness and predisposing factors for adolescent suicide." Curran states: "One does not catch suicidal behavior as one catches a cold. Unlike colds and the flu, suicidal behavior, while familiar to most adolescents, harms very few" (108-109). Fear of contagion and the idea of a mysterious and frightening teen suicide epidemic seemed to gain energy and authenticity from the unfolding AIDS crisis, which the Reagan Administration continually referred to as the "gay cancer epidemic" until 1986. In his chapter on the teen suicide epidemic in The Scapegoat Generation, Males also cites

studies by Columbia and Emory University researchers that cluster or contagion suicides account for only 1 -5% of all teenage suicides (241).

4.2.4. The Debate over the Teen Suicide Epidemic and New Methods of Suicide Reporting

Males argues that the sharp rise in teen suicide rates "largely boils down to changes in the classification of firearms deaths among teenage boys" (234). Males documents that prior to the 1960s, less than 20% of firearm deaths among teenage boys were declared as suicides (234). By 1986, 75% of male adolescent firearm deaths were ruled suicides (234). Males demonstrates that "this shift in firearms death classifications among boys accounts for a full three-fourths of the purported rise in teen suicide" (234). Males also notes that it has become regular practice for psychiatric lobbies and agencies, competing for government grants and contracts, to lump the much higher suicide rates of 20-24-year-olds with those of teenagers. Lumping produces the alarming totals of 5,000 to 6,000 adolescent suicides per year, the statistic that was most often reported in the media during the years between the 1980s and 1992 (Males 238).

Males argues that the source for the apparent teen suicide epidemic can be tracked to hospital overbuilding and the need to find a new market for hospital services, especially upper and middle-income youth, whose families could afford expensive treatments for their children. As discussed in Chapter Three, hospitals had massively over-built during the 1950s and 1960s and could

not reach occupancy. Children of parents with insurance became prime targets for expensive psychiatric treatment that hospitals could bill to insurance companies. The "teen suicide epidemic" promoted the idea of American adolescents at risk for suicide due to an alarming increase in diagnoses of serious psychiatric disorders. According to Males, a 1989 Duke University Study found that 5.2 % of all American youth were diagnosed with conduct disorder (CD) and 6.6% of youth were diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), as both were defined in the DSM III, creating an estimated number of American youth with these disorders at 7.5 million with projected treatment costs of over \$225 billion per year (247).

Males argues that a two-tier treatment system for juvenile delinquency emerged during the 1980s. Low-income teens were prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated in juvenile detention centers. Middle-class and affluent teenagers were diagnosed with a variety of psychiatric disorders, usually conduct disorder (CD) or oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), and court ordered to extended and expensive psychiatric hospital stays. As early as 1985, a House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families found that juvenile admissions to private psychiatric hospitals rose from 10, 764 in 1980 to 48,375 in 1984 (Males 248). The number of youth confined to locked psychiatric wards rose from 6,452 in 1970, to 16,735 in 1980, to over 36, 000 by 1986 (Males 248). Nearly all were committed under the catch-all phrases of CD, ODD or adolescent adjustment disorder (248).

As suggested by the quotation introducing Section Two, the irreverent treatment of suicide and teen suicide clusters in Lehmann's Heathers was both produced and read within alarmist reactions to and treatment of teen suicide and adolescent psychiatric disorders promoted by the New Right's Family Values and Youth in Crisis Campaigns as noted in the description of the New Right's response to the epidemic in the preceding section. Narrating the teen suicide epidemic as melodrama allows the problem to be defined in terms of a "crisis in the family," and not a deeper structural and economic conflict between the competing values of consumerism and democracy.

Heathers lampoons the hysteric focus on teen suicide clusters and emotional alarm generated by the teen suicide crisis at Westerberg High. Pauline Fleming, the English teacher advancing the "Be Happy" suicide prevention program, offers a workshop for Westerberg students to help them to deal with the "suicides" of their classmates. Ms. Fleming explains, "I think this is a good opportunity to share....the feelings that the suicide has spurred in all of us. Now who would like to begin?" A female stoner responds, "I heard it was really gnarly. She sucked down a bowl of multi-purpose deodorizing disinfectant, and then SMASH." Ms. Fleming reprimands the student, "Now Tracey, let's not rehash the coroner's report. Let's talk emotion." Instead of overwhelming grief and sorrow at learning the news of the football players' suicides, a student jubilantly informs Veronica, "Hey, did you hear? School's cancelled today because Kurt and Ram killed themselves in a repressed homosexual suicide pact!" Heather

Duke excitedly exclaims, "No way!!" Similarly, Heather Duke informs Veronica that the Heathers were "doing Chinese food at the food fair, when it comes over the radio that Martha Dumptruck tried to buy the farm!" When asked what she is doing after the funeral of Heather #1, Veronica muses, "I don't know, mourning. Maybe watch some TV."

In direct opposition to the social melodrama generated by the teen suicide epidemic, Heathers satirizes adult concern for the teen suicide victims and works to foreground the complex social and economic forces behind the "epidemic." Confronted by a teenager contemplating teen suicide, Ms. Fleming cautions, "We should talk. Whether or not to kill yourself is one of the most important decisions that a teenager can make." J.D. makes clear to Veronica that teen suicide victims are the ultimate commercial venture for adult's culture that turns them into commodities to be broadcast, marketed, advertised and sold. Teen suicide becomes a massive hit and profit opportunity generating buttons, records, t-shirts and a top 40 radio hit.

4.3. Rebel Without A Cause, Male Melodrama and the Marginalized and Maligned Female

4.3.1. Teen Suicide and the Hollywood Youth Narrative

The narrative of Rebel Without A Cause, based on a book entitled, Rebel Without A Cause: The Hypnoanalysis of a Criminal Psychopath, was published in 1944 by Robert Lindner, a medical doctor specializing in the psychiatric treatment of adolescents. The book offers a case study of a young juvenile delinquent who was treated at the University of Chicago Hospital during the 1940s as the disciplines of adolescent medicine, psychiatry and social work were professionalizing. The book's title attracted Nicholas Ray who alerted the studio executives at Warner Brothers that optioned the book.

The film's focus on the self-destructive behavior of teenagers exploited a series of sensational articles on drag racing (Lewis 36). Ironically, James Dean died when he crashed his Porsche, speeding and intoxicated, on September 9, 1955, less than a month before the film's release. With its sensational tagline, "Teenage Terror Torn from Today's Headlines," Rebel Without A Cause, along with The Wild One and Blackboard Jungle, fanned fears among 1950s adults that an epidemic of juvenile delinquency was underway among middle-class, suburban teenagers. An advertising poster described the film as the story of "The Bad Boy From A Good Family." Unlike many of the "j.d." films of the period, Rebel Without A Cause was revolutionary in the direct way that it took America's adults to task

for the self-destructiveness of their teenagers.

Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s through the 1980s, did not generally directly confront the issue of teen suicide until the late 1990s when films like The Suicide Virgins (1999) were released. In the 1950s especially, teen suicide gets displaced onto risky, illegal and dangerous youthful behaviors like drag racing, playing chicken, rumbles and switchblade fights. The explanation for the self-destructive behavior of lower class youth was more frequently defined as juvenile delinquency, while middle and upper-class youth were more likely to be "alienated."

4.3.2. Rebel Without A Cause: Production Notes

Ray's first attempt at the dangerous youth sub-genre, Knock On Any Door (1949), starred Humphrey Bogart as an attorney who had worked his way out of the ghetto. Bogart represents a young juvenile delinquent, Nick Romano, who killed a police officer during an armed robbery. Bogart's character heroically tries to convince the jury that delinquency stems from poverty: knock on any door in a ghetto and a jury will find a juvenile delinquent like Romano. When his defense fails, Bogart's client is sentenced to the electric chair. In contrast, Rebel Without A Cause moves from the historic association of juvenile delinquency with poor, urban youth to an exploration of juvenile delinquency and adolescent self-destructiveness among 1950s suburban youth.

Rebel Without A Cause builds around the performances of three young

actors. James Dean plays Jim Stark, the film's central protagonist, Natalie Wood plays his next-door neighbor, Judy, in her first adult role and Sal Mineo plays the troubled adolescent Plato. Like most Hollywood youth narrative cross-overs of the 1950s, the film teams young stars with adults. Jim Backus plays Jim's father and Ann Doran plays Jim's mother. Corey Allen (Buzz) and William Hopper play the group of switch-blade wielding suburban hoodlums that torment Jim. Produced by David Weisbart, the film was released by Warner Brothers on October 27, 1955. Rebel Without A Cause was filmed at a variety of locations around Los Angeles including Santa Monica High School, Griffith Park Observatory, Irving Boulevard, mid-town Los Angeles and Mendocino, California.

Rebel Without A Cause was originally shot in black and white, but studio executives were so impressed when they saw the first three days of daily rushes that they increased the film's budget to re-shoot in color. Ray fought with studio executives to cast James Dean and Natalie Wood as the young protagonists in place of the studio's first picks of Tab Hunter and Jayne Mansfield.

4.3.3. The Iconic Status of Rebel Without A Cause

As Marjorie Baumgarten argues in the Austin Chronicle:

It's been 40 years since James Dean essayed his quintessential role as a troubled American teen and, along with co-stars Natalie Wood and Sale Mineo, established an iconography of adolescence whose potency extends into the present.

Ray's support of method acting and bold use of color and composition in Rebel Without A Cause established him as one of Hollywood's most important directors. Much of the film, including the drag racing scene, was shot at night. Ray's studies of the individual "stuck in a lonely place," inspired the French New Wave and led Francois Truffaut to affectionately refer to him as "the poet of nightfall" (Andrews 2). James Dean made only three major films before his untimely death at the age of 24. Dean's powerful and emotionally intense performance as Jim Stark established him as the icon of "alienated" American youth.

Chosen by the American Film Institute as one of the best 100 films of all time, Rebel Without A Cause established many important visual images, ideas and powerful icons of 1950s life. Rebel Without A Cause established the most important semantic icons of the Hollywood youth narrative including those that were resurrected during the 1970s in American Graffiti, Happy Days and the stage and screen versions of Grease. These semantic elements include the large comprehensive high school as the defining backdrop of American adolescent life and culture, the troubled youth or juvenile delinquent in his standard uniform of blue jeans, white t-shirts and black leather jacket, drag

racing and switch blades fights as emblems of youthful self-destructiveness, the community hang out, the well-meaning and concerned parents, and the wise detective that serves as a bridge between the alienated youth and their parents.

4.3.4. Rebel Without A Cause And Male Melodrama

As a classic Hollywood cross-over melodrama, Rebel Without A Cause uses a melodramatic syntactic structure to translate complex social conflicts and social change into familial conflict. As a popular Hollywood youth narrative, the familial conflicts portrayed in Rebel Without A Cause are specifically cross-generational conflicts between fathers and their sons, and fathers and their daughters. Youthful self-destructiveness, Buzz's "accidental" death drag racing, is blamed on family dynamics, particularly the inability of parents to communicate with their troubled teenagers. All three of the film's young protagonists search for love and understanding from their families, most importantly, for a connection and communication with a father-figure.

Rebel Without A Cause takes place over a 24 hour period, starting on Easter night in the police station, and ending the next night as police surround the three principles in an abandoned mansion, not far from the Griffith Park Observatory. The film opens with a masterpiece of cutting and composition, in which Ray, through an extended cross-cut sequence, introduces the film's driving themes and characters. The sequence portrays the film's three main characters each of whom has been brought into the local police precinct for

an assortment of illegal behaviors. As Ben Stephens suggests in his review of the DVD release of Rebel Without A Cause, Ray creates a visual sense of simultaneous isolation and unspoken, almost conspiratorial solidarity among the three young characters by placing them in the same shot but separated by a pane of glass. Ray reinforces the opposition between adults and youth by rarely photographing them together in a single shot.

Jim has been picked up for public drunkenness. When his parents finally arrive to get him, Jim's domineering mother and mother-in-law continually belittle and emasculate his weak and submissive father. The continual fighting is "tearing" Jim apart. Judy, out wandering the streets after curfew, has been mistaken for a prostitute and is brought to the station house. Judy's parents have no idea how to communicate with their growing daughter, and her father, uncomfortable with her emerging sexuality, withdraws, distances from her and calls her a tramp. Plato has been brought to the police station by his family's housekeeper, his primary caretaker, after using his mother's gun to kill a litter of puppies because his mother never came home to celebrate his birthday. The film's narrative links the delinquent behavior of all of the young protagonists to the failure of their parents to communicate in any meaningful way with their children.

The film is set in a Southern California suburb during the 1950s. The Stark Family has just moved, again, to a community outside of Los Angeles. In fact, Jim and his family have moved several times because of Jim's minor scrapes

with the law and fights with other students. At his new high school, Jim tries to fit in but ends up in a switch blade fight with Buzz and his gang at the Observatory. Buzz challenges Jim to a game of drag racing, a "chickie run" on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The reckless chickie run becomes an "accidental" suicide when Buzz's jacket catches on the door handle at the last minute. Buzz drives over the cliff to his death.

In the aftermath of Buzz's death, Judy and Jim become close. Buzz's gang seeks retribution for his death, and Jim, Judy and Plato hide out in an abandoned mansion where they form an imaginary and ideal surrogate family. Playacting at the bottom of the mansion's drained swimming pool, this imaginary family; with Jim as father, Judy as mother, and Plato as child, provides the three youth with the love, understanding and connection each craves.

In pursuit of Jim's gang, the police mistakenly kill Plato. The last scene of the film reveals a new understanding between Jim and his father who comforts Jim by reassuring him that he did all that a man could do. From now on they will face the world together as father and son. The film ends with the integration of the once alienated Jim and Judy, now a united couple, into adult society. With the new understanding of their parents, the couple can go on to create their own lives.

Rebel Without A Cause demonstrates many of the essential elements of classic 1950s domestic melodramas. The narrative tracks the continual deferral and blockage of the young protagonists who repeatedly seek connection and

communication with their parents but are continually denied and frustrated. The film ends with the requisite "unhappy, happy ending:" the young couple has been brought together, but their good friend Plato has been killed and their dreams of a different life sacrificed. As Hill argues in reference to the post-war British youth film, the sacrifice of difference is the price that must be paid for the integration of the youth into adult society.

The issue of youthful alienation is central to the melodramatic translation of social problems into familial and then generational problems. Just as Hunter's deconstruction of the youth as monster narrative in River's Edge demonstrates, it is the adults and not the youth that are alienated. Rebel Without a Cause shifts the burden of adult alienation onto the film's young protagonists. The scenes in the Griffith Planetarium suggest a series of displacements that shift the sense of dislocation and alienation among adults onto youth and from youth into fruitless social violence and self destructive behavior. In Suburban Warriors, McGirr describes the deep sense of social alienation among migrants to southern California in the period following World War II (241-247). McGirr describes the intense sense of isolation and social dislocation experienced by the many Americans who left their homes and families in small mid-western communities to take lucrative jobs in the defense industry in what would become the vast suburbs burgeoning outside of Los Angeles and elsewhere in southern California (241).

During the class trip to Griffith Planetarium, these intense feelings of social

dislocation and social alienation are expressed by the planetarium narrator who speaks about the meaningless of existence when perceived from the perspective of the cosmos. The social alienation of adults in California's newly built suburbs detailed by McGirr becomes an existential, cosmic alienation, which in turn, becomes the alienation of affluent suburban youth who presumably have no "cause" for rebellion. The teenage gang members of Rebel Without A Cause express their alienation through violent anti-social and self destructive behavior like the senseless knife fight in the Planetarium parking lot. In contrast, the film's three protagonists express their alienation through varieties of emotionally self destructive behaviors generated by parental failure to listen to their troubled children: loneliness, a lack of love, the inability to fit in with their peers due to parental conflicts at home, identity crisis and a lack of communication with the adults in their lives.

4.3.5. Rebel Without A Cause and the Marginalized and Maligned Female

As a male melodrama that focuses on conflicts and failures of communication between fathers and their sons and daughters, Rebel Without A Cause, like many of the 1950s television "melodramas" running on the Christian Broadcast Network during the Reagan and Herbert W. Bush administrations, put males at the center of the narrative and focused on issues of patriarchy. In his discussion of Dean's performance in Masked Men, Steve Cohan emphasizes the importance of young male stars during the 1950s. The space of the boy offered

a liminal representational space where competing definitions of masculinity could be represented and negotiated (252-254). Like many of the films that Cohan discusses, Rebel Without A Cause explores Jim's difficult transition into adult masculinity as a result of his troubled relationship with his father. In fact, Jim regularly overcompensates for his father's refusal to stand up to his mother by being oversensitive about being called a chicken and getting into trouble with Buzz because he has to prove his masculinity in light of his father's failure. The difficulty that Jim experiences with his own masculine identity is directly linked with his father's difficulty in standing up to his domineering wife and mother-in-law, and his frequent emasculation is symbolized by his appearance in his wife's apron.

Rebel Without A Cause focuses on troubled masculinity as a way of representing post-war conflicts and tensions. Larger social conflicts are translated into familial problems. Conflicts in the relationship between the male characters and their fathers, both present and absent, dominate Rebel Without A Cause. As Liebman argues in her discussion of the 1950s domestic melodrama in Living Room Lectures, Rebel Without a Cause follows the pattern of domestic melodramas of the 1950s by focusing on the role of the father within the family while marginalizing and trivializing the presence and importance of women. Despite her important role as one of the film's alienated and angry youth, the narrative emphasizes Judy's relationship with her male co-star. Furthermore, the film appears to blame the failure of fathers on domineering and emasculating

mothers.

In the following sections, I argue that Heathers uses Rebel Without A Cause as a critical backtext. In fact, Heathers rewrites Rebel Without A Cause as the feminist manifesto, "Rebel With A Cause." By rewriting the melodramatic syntax of the film, a syntax that translates complex social problems into cross-generational problems, Heathers re-appropriates, re-contextualizes and redefines the key male-oriented semantics on which the Family Values Campaign relies for its idealized vision of family life.

4.4. Heathers' Production History: Reaganomics and the New Hollywood

Michael Lehmann's first commercial film and hugely successful cult classic Heathers almost wasn't made. Major studios saw the satiric treatment of suicide as box office poison. "Breathtakingly perverse," according to Bill Warren, the dialogue, including Heather Chandler's annoyed quip to Veronica, "Well fuck me gently with a chain saw, do I look like Mother Theresa?" pushed the Hollywood youth narrative in a far different direction than that of the updated "clean teen" films of John Hughes. Ironically, the production and distribution of Heathers, with its acerbic attack on the melodramatic treatment of the teen suicide epidemic endorsed by the Family Values Campaign, was made possible by the New Right's warm embrace of free-market, laissez-faire capitalism.

The film originated with a 300-page script written by first time screenwriter

Daniel Waters, a 23-year-old video store clerk who had recently moved to California. In the original draft, Waters has said, Veronica was a female Travis Bickle, the brutally violent and mentally unstable Vietnam vet in Taxi Driver (1976), blowing up herself and the school at the end of the movie and then attending a prom in heaven with all of the dead characters coming back to life (Pond 38).

Through mutual friends, Waters' script was passed along to Michael Lehmann, a recent graduate of University of Southern California's film school who had landed a job at Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Studio. With Lehmann's help, Waters trimmed and softened the script, and his agent sent the revised script to every studio in Hollywood (Kaylin 140).

Waters' agent offered the script to Canadian producer Denise DiNovi, an ardent feminist who had a knack for handling oddball scripts. According to DiNovi, everybody loved the script but nobody wanted to take the chance on producing it. Though the script had fans among young executives all over Hollywood, they all claimed, "We really couldn't make this movie" (Pond 38). Ironically, Disney, a studio synonymous with clean-cut, family entertainment, showed the most sustained interest but finally rejected Heathers.

DiNovi turned to the second tier, smaller studios and New World Entertainment expressed interest. Waters, Lehmann and DiNovi convinced New World Entertainment executives, New York entertainment lawyers Larry Kupin and Harry Evans Sloane that the film could be made quickly and inexpensively.

DiNovi convinced Kupin and Sloane that Lehmann could pull off the project by offering as evidence Lehman's USC thesis, a parody of the standard USC final project, a Lucas/Spielberg spin-off entitled Beaver Gets a Boner (Kaylin 142).

4.4.1. The New Hollywood and Reaganomics

Throughout the 1980s, Hollywood filmmaking, the major industry in Reagan's virtual hometown, re-fashioned itself after Wall Street finance firms by adopting the new economic maneuvers of Reagan's deregulated banking and brokerage markets. In 1983, Kupin and Sloane purchased Roger Corman's New World Pictures at a bargain basement price of \$12 million and soon became the leader in the Hollywood move toward "creative financing" which included raising film project capital through junk bonds, leveraged buyouts and hostile take-overs. Sloan and Kupin became notorious throughout the industry for gobbling up family-owned small television stations and production studios with junk bond financing. Under great pressure to repay junk bonds at high interest rates, studio executives at New World crunched production schedules, instituted harsh, clock punching procedures at odds with Hollywood traditions, and took a top role over directors and producers in production and casting decisions. In an article entitled "New World Entertainment, Ltd," Sloan summarized his movie making aspirations: "I don't want to be famous, I don't want to make great art. I just want to be anonymous and very rich" (Business Week 109).

Kupin and Sloan began their assault on Hollywood in 1978, when they

joined the legions of young California attorneys who left their jobs to form entertainment law firms. Within a year of founding the firm, however, both men had become frustrated by the way that major studios rejected worthy commercial projects anchored to their clients or frittered away video and foreign rights. Tentatively, they decided to branch out with their own studio (Kaylin 144).

In 1979, Kupin and Sloan formed Zephyr Productions and one year later they made their first film On the Right Track, which starred their client child star, Gary Coleman, and cost about \$3 million to make and grossed \$17 million. But the attorneys soon ran into trouble when the studios spurned a distribution deal for their second film, Jimmy the Kid (1983). As Sloan reported to Business Week, "They weren't interested in the kind of movies we were making. They just weren't blockbusters" ("New World Entertainment, Ltd" 109).

As they searched for a distributor, Kupin and Sloan realized that all of the mergers and acquisitions in Reagan's de-regulated Hollywood had created an enormous vacuum in the distribution system for B films. Only one remained standing, Roger Corman's New World Pictures, the king of teen exploitation flicks for decades. With its network of 14 branch outlets that distributed films to theatres, New World Pictures had built up a reliable wholesaling operation for grade B films, essentially the only B distributor left in the country. It was, in the popular terms of Reaganomics, a classically undervalued company with a lock on its market (Kaylin 146).

Surprisingly, when Corman began shopping the studio to investors in 1982, no one was interested. Kupin and Sloan, who eventually distributed Jimmy the Kid (1983) through New World Pictures, realized its unique value and with \$2 million of their own money and \$10 million in bank loans, they snapped up New World Pictures.

The change in management style under Kupin and Sloan was sharp and severe. Corman had been a penny-pinching but ultimately benign "Godfather," and Kupin and Sloan soon "supplanted this with a cool and reasoned targeted approach: Crank up the output, attract strong managers and keep costs low while tightly controlling distribution" (Kaylin 145).

Kupin and Sloane revolutionized how business was being done in Hollywood during the 1980s. Major studios such as Paramount and Universal regularly spent upward of \$20 million apiece on a half-dozen films per year. Wedded to the star system and their expensive back lots, the major studios gambled on the fickle behavior of audiences at the box office to produce a blockbuster or two that would balance the books for the year (Kaylin 146).

By contrast, New World avoided the high price tag of major stars, had no master contracts with unions, kept its overhead low by owning no Hollywood real estate and supported a payroll of just 300 corporate employees. New World churned out more than 25 releases a year, none of them costing more than \$5 million each. In some cases, pages of scripts were literally ripped out during filming to bring New World productions in under budget. Only a handful of films

Sloane and Kupin released ever lost money, totaling about \$3 million in all.

As discussed in Chapter Two, two important developments during the late 1980s also contributed mightily to New World's early success. First, the pay services on cable began noticing that the big hits, already overexposed in the theaters, often had less appeal than B-grade genre flicks that viewers felt they had "discovered" on the schedule. Second, teens began forming a critical mass around the home VCR, and New World's roster of monsters mixed with prom queens appealed to the youth market (Kaylin 147).

Kupin and Sloane relentlessly transformed New World into the undisputed leader in low-budget exploitation flicks for teens (Kaylin 148). New World's steady growth and ability to collect the lucrative video profits won the company rave reviews on Wall Street. Dennis Forst, an entertainment analyst with Seidler-Amdec Securities in Los Angeles told Business Week, "Kupin and Sloan found their niche, insulated themselves well and stuck to the plan. Wall Street likes the fact that they're caught up in the numbers of the business, not the glamour" ("New World Entertainment, Ltd. 109). Kupin and Sloan took the company public in October 1985 at \$7.50 per share and by January 1986 the stock had climbed to \$18.50 (109).

4.4.2. Heathers and New World

New World's contract with DiNovi as producer and Lehmann as director, demanded a thinned-down Heathers script and offered an extraordinarily bare-bones budget of \$3 million. The leads were given to two young, and at the time, no-name actors, Wynona Ryder and Christian Slater. However, most difficult condition of all was New World's strict production environment.

Yet despite the difficult restrictions, the young producer DiNovi, the inexperienced director Lehmann and the first-time writer Waters, found they shared a sensibility and vision. "One side of us is kind of pretentious", says Waters. "And the other side is always willing to undercut the seriousness of the thing for a good cheap laugh." They also kept trimming the script by lightening the tone and eliminating things like the heavenly prom. "We were worried," says Waters, "that if I said, 'I can't cut this,' the powers that be would suddenly stop and say, 'What is this movie that we are making? Stop it!' We figured, if we can get fifty percent of the script on the screen, we'll have a very subversive movie" (Pond 38).

Once Heathers was finished, Lehmann and Waters screened it for all the studios that had turned it down. Although New World had difficulty initially deciding how to market Heathers, it immediately became a big seller. The production team was invited to Cannes. The film was awarded several prizes including the 1990 Edgar Allen Poe Award for Best Motion Picture and the Independent Spirit Award to Lehmann as director and DiNovi as producer. Upon

its release in 1989, Heathers was uniformly praised. Newsweek Magazine exclaimed, "As black as pitch, this twisted comedy of high school horrors is a work of genuine audacity." Variety claimed that "Daniel Waters' enormously clever screenplay blazes a trail of originality through the dead wood of the teen comedy genre." The Nation said, "The film lets you fulfill one of the core fantasies of adolescence: seeing all the popular kids in their graves." The Chicago Tribune likened the Winona Ryder and Christian Slater characters to high school versions of the leads in Bonnie and Clyde (Gehring 105).

4.5. **Heathers and the Displacement of Melodrama with Black Comedy to Represent the Female**

From the start, Heathers marks Rebel Without A Cause as an important cinematic reference in its exploration of self-destructive youth. The names and looks of the two young Heathers starring characters, Veronica Sawyer and Jason Dean, immediately recall the real-life teen stars of Rebel Without A Cause, Natalie Wood and James Dean. Like his namesake, Jason Dean is an alienated youth who points out the materialism and hypocrisy of his parents' generation. But Christian Slater's James Dean role takes self-destructive teen alienation in a different direction, acts of terrorism that unite the poles of homicide and suicide. In an over-the-top parody of the original rebel, Jason isn't content to change society, he wants to destroy it. Wynona Ryder, as Veronica Sawyer, made a

career of playing the young ingénue, and in Heathers, her dark hair and slight build evoke a strong visual reference to Natalie Wood. Unlike Wood's character, Veronica takes on James Dean's role of the masculine young rebel who both saves and transforms her Westerberg High. In homage to the original Hollywood youth narrative, Veronica becomes a "Rebel With A Cause." Unlike her male counterparts who dissipate their frustrations in fruitless rebellion, Veronica offers a constructive feminist re-vision of her Westerberg High.

As discussed in the previous section, Rebel Without A Cause, marginalizes and maligns the feminine. Heathers displaces the melodramatic syntactic structure at the heart of Rebel Without A Cause with black comedy, a fusion of comedy and horror. Dislodged from their mooring in the male melodrama, important icons of the 1950s Hollywood youth narrative can be re-contextualized and redefined. Through its black comic re-narration, Heathers redefines the marginalized female as the heroine, redefines the high school, not as a cradle of democracy but as the brutally competitive training ground for consumer society; football players and cheerleaders as bullies, not model students; the idyllic suburban community as barren strip malls and convenience stores; and the all knowing and well intentioned parents, teachers and administrators as "idiots" and self-promoting teen exploiters. In the context of the teen suicide epidemic promoted by the Family Values Campaign, the complex pressures of consumer society where every student is a consumer/consumable makes teen life a living hell in which suicide appear as an attractive alternative.

4.5.1. Heathers As Black Comedy: Comic Syntax with Monster Blocks

In Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage, Stanley Cavell defines the basic syntactic structure of Hollywood romantic comedy, a generic form that Cavell argues has its roots as far back as Shakespearean romantic comedy (1). Cavell builds on the definition of romantic comedy first offered by Northrup Frye in An Anatomy of Criticism. Frye distinguishes between Old and New Comedy. Both forms of comedy show a young man and a young woman overcoming social and individual obstacles or "comic blocks" to come together in the end of the comedy. Both comedies end in a marriage, marked by festivities, often a dance. The comic marriage symbolizes the reconciliation of conflicting social or personal forces. For Frye, romantic comedy celebrates the possibility of social change and transformation. In the process of confronting and overcoming the comic obstacles and blocks, the hero transforms an Old Society bound by a "ritual obsession" and blinded by illusion, into a New Society defined by freedom and truth (231).

For Frye, New Comedy emphasizes the obstacles and blocks presented by an older man to a young man. Old comedy, in contrast, emphasizes a female heroine, often masquerading as a boy, who must undergo a transformation or restoration to access the key to successfully resolving the central dramatic conflict of the plot (232).

In The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter, a study of women in comic film and television from Mae West to Roseanne Arnold,

Kathleen Rowe analyzes how an unruly woman uses humor and excess to undermine patriarchal norms and authority (19-21). Rowe examines the evolution of romantic film comedy from the studio period through the eighties, demonstrating how comedic actresses from Marilyn Monroe (183-190), Barbara Stanwyck (156-161) and Katharine Hepburn (147-156) provided an important "empowered" image of women that directly challenged the vision of the victimized heroine of many popular Hollywood melodramas (110-115).

Through a black comic syntax, Veronica overcomes several monstrous blocks including the three Heathers and J. D. In conquering these horrific obstacles, Veronica transforms the Old Society of Westerberg High into a New Society. The New Society of Westerberg High shifts from a consumption obsessed dictatorship based on the ruthlessly materialistic and competitive values of laissez-faire capitalism to a feminist democracy based on the premises of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" for everyone.

Throughout Heathers, the viewer slides between comedy and horror. Gruesome murders and the bloody struggle between Veronica and Jason in the basement beneath the pep rally subvert the viewer's expectations of comedy. The deeply sardonic plot twists and black humor that characterize Heathers rely on the fusion of comic and horror syntactic elements at the heart of black comedy.

The comic blocks confronting Veronica are monsters: the hydra-headed Heathers and the diabolically appealing and homicidal Jason or J. D. The

discussion of River's Edge in Chapter Three established many of the most important film horror semantics and the basic syntactic structure of classic film horror including Robin Wood's basic horror narrative structure: A monster threatens normality; the monster is destroyed; normality returns. As emblems of monstrosity, the Heathers embody the unacknowledged relationship between consumer capitalism and the high school. J.D. embodies the terrorism that is the natural response to the irreconcilable conflict between the expressed goals of high school as preparation for life in democratic culture and the actual operation of the high school as the training ground for consumer culture.

Heathers uses a variety of classic film horror and slasher conventions to reinforce the horrific or black dimensions of its comic rewriting of Rebel Without A Cause. Unexpected violence disrupts the viewer's expectations of an idyllic high school and a happy ending. Both visually and aurally, the violent segments of the film signal the slasher film. The viewer finds herself/himself in this generic formula unexpectedly. The horror plot begins innocently enough when Jason substitutes liquid Drano for Veronica's mug of orange juice and milk with a glob of phlegm in it. A juvenile joke suddenly escalates into murder and Veronica ruefully jokes that now her SAT scores must be sent to San Quentin instead of Stanford. The trivial treatment of the murder gets reinforced through the sound track and camera work, neither of which departs from the conventional teen flick stylistics that preceded it. But with the murder of two football players, the style shifts into standard slasher stylistics and sound track including jarring,

irregular camera motion, darkened lighting and a synthesized version of the theme from Psycho (1960).

The film's horror/slasher stylistics grow more intense through the end of the film, revealing Jason as a homicidal maniac trying to blow up the entire school. Placing the horror narrative within viewer expectations of a lighthearted parody of the teen film reinforces a sense of unreality and the surreal. Recalling conventions of horror/slasher films, the viewer anticipates a female victim. But Lehmann reworks the plotline so that Veronica entirely subverts the role of powerless victim. After participating in two murders, Veronica realizes that Jason plans to make her his next victim. Veronica not only defends and saves herself, but defends and saves the school as well. Jason, the homicidal maniac kills himself.

4.6. Semantic Redefinition Through Syntactic

Through the process of its black comic narrative revision, Heathers lampoons every aspect of the New Right's Family Values Campaign and its idealized, melodramatic dream of "the Fifties" nuclear, suburban family life. By the end of Heathers, the teen suicide epidemic has been redefined. Teen suicide can no longer be explained by the melodramatic narrative of the New Right that simply reduces the problem to familial conflicts or adolescent psychological and psychiatric disturbances. Heathers argues that the self-destructiveness of youth is a logical reaction to the "alienation" of being

reduced to the dual social identities of consumer and consumable. The film redefines the 1980s teen suicide epidemic as an expression of larger, complex social and economic issues: a systemic and irreconcilable conflict between the ideals of democracy and the values and imperatives of consumer capitalism. Westerbrook High, perhaps more accurately defined as Westerbrook Mall, embodies this social conflict.

Terrorism, an act of destruction that fuses homicide and suicide, results directly from this systemic conflict. In place of the sympathetic and appealingly alienated James Dean of the 1950s version of Rebel Without A Cause, Jason Dean, terrorist not rebel, has no desire to integrate into adult the middle-class society that he wishes destroy. The well-to-do suburb of Sherwood, Ohio is reduced to a blatantly commercial suburban strip mall void of a middle-American Main Street with friendly family-owned stores and locally owned and operated business. Heathers replaces melodrama's wise and helpful mediating figures, like the sympathetic detective of Rebel Without A Cause, with leering young policemen, youth-exploiting teachers like Ms. Fleming and the cynical principal and administration of Westerberg High.

In the idealized vision of family life offered by the New Right's Family Values Campaign, the family offers youth its primary sources of adolescent identity, meaning, sustenance and socialization. In contrast, the competitive, materialistic and consumption-driven high school and peer group play the critical role in Veronica's life. Veronica runs in and out of her family's home with

the refrain, "Gotta motor" grabbing a handful of crackers and pate on her way out the door. When Veronica and her Dad interact, their conversation is always the same: Veronica's Dad ritually inquires, "Will someone tell me why I smoke these damm things?" Veronica always responds, "Because you're an idiot." "Oh, yeah, that's it," Dad admits. Veronica regularly reminds her father, "Dad, you're an idiot." Obviously, father does not know best. When Veronica challenges the power dynamics between adults and youth she explains to her parents, "All we want is to be treated like human beings, not experimented on like guinea pigs, or patronized like bunny rabbits." But her father cannot understand what she is talking about, and remarks inanely, "I don't patronize bunny rabbits."

Heathers even lampoons the evangelical religiosity of the New Right's fundamentalist version of Christianity. Father Ripper, (a possible pun on rip-off and Jack the Ripper) played by a Jimmy Swaggart look-alike, presides over the funerals of each of Westerberg's "suicide" victims. Like Swaggart's famously tearful jeremiads, Father Ripper's sermons are overly emotional. Father Ripper admonishes his young audience, "We must pray that the other teenagers of Sherwood, Ohio know the name of that righteous dude who can solve their problems: It's Jesus Christ, and He's in the Book!" The film playfully mocks the open and virulent homophobia of the New Right's Christian Coalition and evangelical ministry. At his son's funeral, Kurt's Dad cries out, "My son's a homosexual, and I love him. I love my dead gay son." J.D. snidely remarks to Veronica, "I wonder how he'd react if his son had a limp wrist with a pulse."

However, the single most important semantic revision of Heathers centers on the figure of the female. In contrast to the syntactic structure of Rebel Without A Cause that marginalizes females, Heathers subverts traditionally passive and male focused versions of femininity. Through its sardonic mix of straight horror and comedy, Heathers challenges viewers to re-examine and revise the very concepts of female identity and power popularized by Hollywood's generic formulas. In fact, throughout the Heathers narrative, Veronica literally inserts herself into the center of important genres that would ordinarily have a male as the narrative center.

The film's structure breaks down into two parts: a prologue and the central narrative. The prologue introduces the Heathers and establishes, through sound and image, how viewers should "read" the body of the film. The prologue introduces the visual hyperbole that signals the conflict between expectations and reality, and alerts the viewer to the irony in what follows. Through its carefully constructed elements, the prologue signals the viewer to recognize the hyper-real verging into surreal style of the film as a sardonic satire of the New Right's Family Values Campaign and its saccharine images of the All-American family and the stereotypical versions of femininity upon which these mythological versions of family rest.

4.6.1. The Prologue and the Redefinition of the Feminine

The radical re-visioning of the feminine begins with the very first sounds and images of Heathers. The prologue's opening images immediately evoke traditional stereotypes of female beauty: the camera slowly pans across three attractive young women sitting in a beautiful garden, sipping tea and chatting. Bright green grass, pretty flowers and brilliant sunshine evoke stereotypical associations: women as delicate blossoms, manifesting Nature's glory. Directly behind the women are statues of Greek goddesses, classical symbols of the highest standards of female beauty and refinement.

Upon prolonged inspection, however, the grass appears too perfectly green. The scene soon seems suspiciously artificial. The hyper-green grass signals the reader that something is amiss. Abruptly the illusion of traditional female beauty and gentility shatters as the trio aggressively marches across the garden enclosure, crushing the delicate flowers beneath their feet. They play croquet, a suitably refined and feminine pastime and a direct reference to the sweet and innocent Alice of Alice in Wonderland. Like Alice, the viewer soon realizes that appearances are not what they seem. Instead of a refined game of social manners, we see a savage competition between three women literally trying to take each others heads off. Garbed in 1980s power suits, the women look more like good-old-boys conducting business on the fairways. As male corporate executives traditionally play golf to organize deals and settle scores,

the women use croquet to define the power hierarchy in the deadly serious business of high school popularity. This language and behavior, hardly sweet, goddess-like, or even civil, subverts our expectations of traditional femininity. Serene, Hollywood fantasies of genteel femininity are shattered when we hear the harsh conversation among the three Heathers. Heather #1's caustic comments in the prologue become increasingly crude and stereotypically masculine throughout the film with comments like, "Haul your ass into the cafeteria, pronto," "Why are you pulling my dick, Veronica?" and with a direct reference to Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974), the line, "Fuck me gently with a chainsaw, do I look like Mother Theresa"

The dissolution of the feminine ideal culminates near the end of the prologue sequence. While Heather #1 concentrates on annihilating her opponents, Heather #3 is absorbed by reading the familiar classic, Moby Dick, required reading in junior and senior high American Literature classes. Considering the masculinity displayed by the Heathers, Lehmann may be stroking the diminutive of Richard (as he does throughout the film). This reference to a classic novel of male obsession, adds ironic depth and seriousness to the women's ersatz masculinity as they struggle for power. As Susan Weiner has noted in her essay, "Melville at the Movies: New Images of Moby Dick," this first parallel between Heather Duke and the evil white whale plays continually through the film. Later in the film, J.D. will quote Moby Dick equating himself with Captain Ahab and will use Heather #2's marked up copy

of the book to compose a suicide note.

"Que Sera, Sera" the song that opens and closes the film and plays background for the entire prologue sequence, reinforces the visual challenges to traditional Hollywood versions of femininity. Even before the garden sequence begins, the saccharine sounds of "Que Sera, Sera" play against the New World Pictures corporate logo underscoring the dichotomy between the feminine words of the song and the brutal male world of corporate power and aggression.

Alfred Hitchcock first used the song in his remake of The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956). Hitchcock's film focuses on an American doctor and his family vacationing in Marrakech. They become involved in a complicated international plot including kidnapping and murder. While Doris Day sings "Que Sera, Sera," Jimmy Stewart, playing the doctor, tries to rescue his abducted son. Doris Day went on to popularize "Que Sera, Sera" as the theme song to her television show, forging a strong cultural connection between the song and the blond actress who embodied the Pollyanna, girl-next-door female stereotype. The Heathers version of the song by a radical lesbian songstress, Syd Straw, with a serious feminist cult following, turns Doris Day's anthem (I'm happy and carefree because I am being kept by a rich man) into a series of ironic questions about the eighties post-feminist movement. "When I was just a little girl, I asked my mother, what will I be? Will I be pretty, will I be rich? Here's what she said to me..." Introduced by a parodically sweet instrumental, the singer ironically

underscores the question of female identity: "Who will I be?" As the chorus insists, "Whatever will be, will be." In other words, a woman must stand passively before the problem of identity, for she is powerless to define herself. As the song clearly details, she will be defined by what she wears, by the wealth provided by a man.

The song amplifies, on an auditory level, the problems of female power and identity presented by the croquet game. In shot #10, the game's climax, the viewer suddenly recognizes that all three young women have the name Heather, calling to mind the film's puzzling title, Heathers. The name Heather, like Brittany and Tiffany, was an immensely popular and stylish girl's name during the 1980s. What do we make of this important moment and the idea that each of the women is not Heather, but an interchangeable object in a category, an endlessly reproducible Barbie-doll-like commodity, a Heather? This revelation in the middle of the croquet game suggests that in 1987, the height of the Family Values Campaign and a time when women have supposedly achieved personal and economic equality, they have instead lost their identities and the power to define themselves. Like the three Heathers aping a male system of power and hierarchy by playing a game of croquet, women have become exactly like their male counterparts playing golf and hacking out corporate deals. Instead of producing a new model of femininity that allows women to be powerful and vocal, they replicate the worst attributes of male dominance. The three Heathers do not really exist as women at all; they are trapped in a twilight

zone, or as Heather #1 despairs in Veronica's dream later in the film, women exist in "limbo" between traditional Fifties femininity and females in male drag.

The problem of identity, or more precisely non-identity, reverberates on another level of the film. The bulk of the narrative focuses on the Heathers in a high school setting where being a Heather is the apex position in the social hierarchy—the most fearfully popular and powerful person in the school. A precise social role of the late Reagan era, the Heathers are not specific individuals but emblems of female teenagers in late Eighties suburban mall culture. Since the category exists within a larger social structure, it is endlessly replaceable; there is always another young woman to play the role, to fit the category of Heather. As Jason points out to Veronica, "You kill one and another Heather simply takes her place." To emerge as an individual in this system is to exist beyond the realms of the social paradigms that define high school culture. Standing out and being an individual disrupts the social system in the same way that speaking out as an actual woman disrupts the gender system that confines female identity between the poles of passive little girl or aggressive female-in-drag.

Through the narrative, disrupting gender evolves into disrupting the social hierarchy in other ways including race. The radical lesbian singing "Que Sera, Sera" at the beginning of the film challenges the version of feminine identity offered by the song. By the end of the film, Sly and the Family Stone reclaim "Que Sera, Sera," rewriting the song to embody Sly's standard live-and-let-live,

"different strokes for different folks" message during the civil rights and black power struggle of the late Sixties and early Seventies. Throughout Heathers, these multiple levels of meaning parallel and reinforce each other: disturbing the gender system parallels disturbing the racial hierarchy.

"Que Sera, Sera" ends and the final shots of the prologue sequence focus on the disturbing and startling image of Veronica's head sticking up from the ground. She addresses the camera directly—"Dear Diary," initiating a voice-over that shifts the prologue into the main storyline. The disembodied woman's head reverberates on several symbolic levels. In its simplest literal form, Veronica's head becomes a target in the Heathers' croquet game. Veronica must be knocked senseless, for her vision threatens the power hierarchy represented by the three Heathers. On a larger cultural level, the close-up of the head, an image of a bodiless female, radically disrupts the Hollywood custom of depicting women as bodily objects of voyeurism and sexual display. The image also recalls Homer's epic, The Iliad, and the legend of the Medusa's head. If a man glimpses this head, his heart turns to stone. In our culture, and in the context of the Fifties stereotype of femininity, a woman confronting her audience, speaking directly to the camera, and taking command of the Hollywood narrative is indeed a horrifying thought. Through this action, Veronica breaks the silence that has both created and reinforced women's passivity and powerlessness. The body becomes a head with a mind expressing itself. By transforming the head on display into a voice, and the powerful narrator of the

story, *Heathers* subverts the traditional Hollywood narrative in its most fundamental form. Shots #20 to #30 initiate the central narrative and introduce the parodic form that embodies the remainder of the film. The image framed in Shot #20 immediately shifts us into the film's main setting, Westerberg High. On its simplest level, the image depicts an ordinary high school. Visual conventions made familiar in hundreds of low budget high school Hollywood youth narratives come into focus: students pushing each other into crowded hallways, and up congested staircases, a young woman holding her books, the sound of lockers slamming, and the overwhelming noise of students shouting back and forth to one another. The slower-than-life camera speed and soundtrack, however, undercut the reality of this ordinary scene and reinforce the surreal elements introduced by the prologue. The slow-motion camera distances the viewer just enough to allow ordinary high school activities to become an object of detached meditation, while eerie, breathy elements of the soundtrack reinforce the sense of distanced reflection on the conventions of high school life.

Shot #20 onward, the talking head continues, linking the image of a young woman coming down the hallway (to whom we are later introduced to as Veronica) with the narrative this young woman composes in her diary. Although the camera follows the standard Hollywood pattern of shifting point-of-view shots and countershots throughout the film, the voice-over firmly anchors the narrative in Veronica's female perspective. Throughout *Heathers*, the viewer continues to evaluate the action from her point of view. As a symbol, the diary

operates in at least two interesting ways. First, the diary recalls another cliché of female adolescence by reminding us of the popular lock-and-key diaries of teenybopper girls and the juvenile activity of keeping a "secret" diary. Additionally, the diary recalls the more sober historical fact that so much of women's actual history has been recorded in diaries that were long forgotten, suppressed or ignored. Interestingly, Veronica always wears a monocle when writing in her diary- As a powerful masculine symbol, the monocle recalls Prussian generals who have lost an eye in war or a duel. In cinema history, the monocle recalls Erich Von Stroheim, and has imperial, aristocratic and even European aura. In both cases, the monocle calls attention to the camera's eye, and in Laura Mulvey's terms, the possessor of the gaze (37). Veronica's monocle suggests a new perspective of singular power and focus: her growing awareness, and radical re-visioning of her circumstances. Veronica has usurped the masculine gaze, replacing a masculine camera eye with a feminist vision and voice. Together, the female voice over, diary and monocle reinforce the idea of a radical re-seeing from a feminist perspective.

Under the credits following the prologue (Shots #20 to #30), the viewer begins to see how the narrative and stylistic issues established in the prologue play out in the main body of the film. The sequence establishes the story's central conflict—Veronica's ambivalence about achieving popularity by becoming part of the all-powerful Heathers clique. She has been rudely interrupted by Heathers #2 and #3 who explain that Heather #1 has

commanded that she come to the cafeteria to help with her lunchtime poll. In this sequence, the camera consistently looks sharply down at Veronica and sharply up at the two Heathers standing beside her. These severely angled camera shots reinforce the notion of Westerberg's social hierarchy and Veronica's subservience in the battle for popularity and social power. The final shots of this sequence initiate the process of generic parody that will continue throughout the rest of the film. Films that get parodied, have been traditionally associated with a peculiarly American brand of macho masculinity, and typically depict women as helpless victims. For instance, in Shot #30, one of the longest takes in the opening sequence, Veronica, with Heathers #2 and #3 make a dramatic entry into the cafeteria by pushing open the swinging cafeteria doors. This visual reference immediately recalls a staple of the western, the tense moment when the hero enters the saloon to confront the villain.

The rewriting of the feminine in Heathers concludes with a return to the western. Veronica takes Heather #1's red hair band from Heather #3 and puts it on her own head. When Heather #3 protests, Veronica explains, "Well, Heather, there's a new sheriff in town." Thus, Heathers ends with the celebratory marriage and symbolic social reconciliation of Veronica and Martha Dunnstock. Veronica's vision of a democratic Westerberg High triumphs over J.D.'s attempts to destroy the high school, and in the process of destroy himself.

The Heathers narrative tracks Veronica's process of learning how to create this democratic society. Plunged into new narratives, the Heathers, Kurt and

Ram, and Westerberg High are opened to the possibility of re-interpretation and new meanings. Through her suicide note, Veronica redefines Heather #1 so that the cruel victimizer becomes the victim. By renaming Kurt and Ram as secret lovers in a "society that could not understand our forbidden love" Veronica redefines the dumb jocks, the ultimate Westerberg insiders, as sensitive exiles.

Like Hunter and Lehmann, Veronica re-appropriates, re-contextualizes and re-names to create a different story with a radically different outcome. Through her creative suicide notes, Veronica rejects the unhappy, happy ending of the 1950s melodrama Rebel Without A Cause and transforms Westerberg High from a capitalist dictatorship ruled by the Heathers into the high school that Veronica always hoped it could be, and defies the destructive homicidal/suicidal solution offered by J.D.

Tracking Veronica's process takes us beyond Adrian Martin's opposition of syntax and semantics in the Hollywood youth narrative to the issue of stylistics. As Linda Hutcheon argues in a Theory of Parody, "the power of parody as social criticism has been ignored because of its reputation as light, juvenile fun" (Hutcheon 17). Heathers is parody with a purpose. Hutcheon defines parody as "repetition with a critical difference." Repeating a familiar form with a difference reveals the contradictions and limits of the original discourse. Although critics may often mistake parody for uncritical, unconscious imitation, Hutcheon argues that parody is always freighted with at least implicit critique. She explains irony's Greek root, "eiron," suggests both dissimulation and interrogation (53).

Irony allows imitation to serve as a metaphor or trope, and requires the reader to construct a second meaning, context, or discourse which the parodist plays against the first. Through textual clues and inferences in surface statements, the reader supplements the "foreground" of the text by acknowledging the "background " meaning, discourse, or context. Repetition and differences created by the contrast dramatizes and underscores the "besides" and "against" movements that characterize parody as a critical form. The parodic gesture embodies the turning back and pointing back to a text or set of texts. These background texts—in the case of Heathers the familiar Hollywood genre called the teen flick—becomes the background against which the present text is measured and understood. For Hutcheon, irony serves as the main rhetorical mechanism for the parodic ability to activate a reader's awareness of critical difference.

Hutcheon's theory of parody describes the process of "interrogating" the past that is at work in Heathers.

Conclusion

Film critics including Elizabeth Traube in Dreaming Identities: Class, Gender and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies and Sarah Harwood in Family Fictions, have read representations of the family in 1980s Hollywood cinema as straightforwardly conservative (Harwood 26, Traube 120). Both Traube and Harwood confirm the central argument of Faludi's Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women: media images produced during the 1980s and early 1990s often fueled a backlash against the achievements made by women through the second wave of American feminism.

In the specific instance of Hollywood youth narratives, Wood and Lewis have also read the Hollywood youth narrative as conservative, especially films like Peggy Sue Got Married and The Outsiders, that, like the New Right, used fictionalized versions of family life in the 1950s to support the perception of a "crisis in the American family" and a loss of family values in the 1980s and early 1990s.

In her analysis of the enduring success of the New Right over the last 30 years, Lisa McGirr argues that the Left has seriously misunderstood the nature of American conservative culture (147). Misread as an intellectually backward, simplistic return to the past, McGirr argues that the success of the New Right's conservative program rests on its highly adaptive and creative fusion of

preservation and innovation (147-149).

Stephanie Coontz affirms McGirr's reading of conservatism as the successful union of both preservation and innovation in her analysis of the American family over the last century. Coontz argues that the success of the New Right's family and youth in crisis rhetoric centers on the fact that the conservative version of the "traditional American family" resurrects the idea of the traditional family but shears it of most of its tradition including its extended family kinship system, emphasis on economic sustenance through shared labor, its patriarchal hierarchy in which women and children often functioned as second-class citizens (256).

Mc Girr argues that the vision of the idealized 1950s nuclear family that fueled the Family Values Campaign during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H. Bush fused preservation and innovation as well. The vision of family at the heart of the New Right's Pro-Family Agenda merging the idea of the traditional patriarchal Christian family with the changing demographic, economic and social realities of life in the 1980s.

As demonstrated by the analyses of River's Edge and Heathers, Adrian Martin's theory of the unusual generic structure of Hollywood youth narratives, reveals the complex, subtle and largely unrecognized engagement of 1980s Hollywood youth narratives with Hollywood films of the 1950s. In their engagement with two powerful Hollywood youth narratives of the 1950s, Blackboard Jungle and Rebel Without A Cause, both Hunter in River's Edge and

Lehmann in Heathers use a strategy of preservation and innovation, similar to the strategy used by the New Right in the Family Values Campaign. Like the suicide notes written by Veronica, both River's Edge and Heathers re-contextualize the important images and icons deployed by the New Right in alternative narratives that force reconsiderations and redefinitions of those images, challenging the confined vision of family promoted by the New Right.

Despite the fierce polarization that characterizes the relationship between liberals and conservatives on both sides of the family values debate over the last twenty-five years, opponents have more in common than they might want to admit.

In the case of the preceding study, both the Religious Right and the two young Hollywood filmmakers agree that the American family is in crisis. As discussed in Chapter One, Jerry Falwell sees the "fractured" American family on the brink of extinction. In his apocalyptic vision, Falwell sees the family shattered by divorce and adultery and threatened by a variety of social sins including feminism, homosexuality, pornography and secular humanism. In a surprisingly similar way, Tim Hunter's River's Edge offers an apocalyptic vision of the American family. Like the dilapidated houses on the edge of the clearcut mountainside, the broken families of the film are collapsing under the weight of multiple social, psychological and economic burdens.

Despite their shared appraisal that the American family is most certainly in crisis, the Religious Right and Hunter and Lehmann vehemently disagree about

the causes of that crisis. For the Religious Right, the crisis results from moral failure. For the two filmmakers, the crisis is structural and systemic. Perhaps the recognition of the surprising common ground within what has been a ferociously embattled conflict can provide the basis for more productive dialogue in the future.

APPENDIX A

THE SOUNDTRACK OF RIVER'S EDGE

"Kyrie Eleison" by Fates Warning

"Captor of Sin" by Slayer

"Tormentor" by Slayer

"Evil Has No Boundaries" by Slayer

"Die By The Sword" by Slayer

"Lethal Tendencies" by Hallow's Eve

"Let Me Know" by Wipers

"Fire in the Rain" by Agent Orange

"Happy Days" by Burning Spear

"Let's Go, Let's Go, Let's Go" by Hank Ballard

"I'm Gonna Miss You" by Hank Ballard

SOUNDTRACK LYRICS (WHERE AVAILABLE)

"Kyrie Eleison" by Fates Warning

Never thought my time was coming
Wasn't in my dreams
Twice I visioned I was falling down,
Down to the ground, I screamed out loud
Woke on a cloud.

Never really was a holy man though
I understand the father, son and Holy Ghost
He's the one that scares me most
Ashes to rain you feel no pain.

Hell fire burns my conscience. My mind explodes
Spine is severed, blood runs cold, confess the
Deepest of sin, envision a king
With a white violin.
Crucifix hung above my death bed begins
To bleed.
Imagination, lunacy, has he come to hear my plea,
Grant absolution, condone my sin.

The lady in black I ask what you see
A glimpse of glass what good
Fortune for me.
The lady in black said your lifeline is dammed.
The tarot of death she held in her hand.

Kyrie Eleison Christe Eleison Kyrie Eleison Christe Eleison
Segments of my life flash through my mind
Things never seen.
It must be fate warning me for now.
The walls are closing in. Rosary in Hand,
Lost grain of sand.
Here I go I start to fall again.
Try to scream I'm mute it is the
End of my last fall.
To the land of nevermore
Shatter the glass I woke on the floor.

"Evil Has No Boundaries" by Slayer

Blasting Our Way Through the Boundaries of Hell
No One Can Stop Us Tonight
We Take On The World With Hatred Inside
Mayhem The Reason We Fight
Surviving The Slaughter And Killing We've Lost
Then We Return From the Dead
Attacking Once More Now With Twice As Much Strength
We Conquer Then Move On Ahead.

Evil
My Word Defy
Evil
Has No Disguise
Evil
Will Take Your Soul
Evil

My Wrath Unfolds
Satan Our Master In Evil Mayhem
Guides With Every First Step
Our Axes Are Growing With Power and Fury
Soon There'll Be Nothingless Left
Midnight Has Come And The Leathers Strapped On
Evil Is At Our Command
We Clash With God's Angel and Conquer New Souls
Consuming All That We Can

Evil
My Word Defy
Evil
Has No Disguise
Evil
Will Take Your Soul
Evil
My Wrath Unfolds

"Die By the Sword" by Slayer

Live By The Sword and Help Contain The Helpless Minds Of You All Die By
My Hand In Pools of Blood Clutch Yourself As You Fall Mindless, Tyrannie,
Forgotten Victims Children Slaughtered In Vain Raping the Maids, In Which
They Serve Only The Words of The Lord Satan Watches All Of Us Smiles As
Some Do His Bidding

Try to Escape The Grasp Of My Hand

And Your Life Will No Longer Exist

Hear Our Cry, Save Us From

The Hell In Which We Live

We Turn Our Heads Toward The Sky

And Listen For The Steel

Die By The Sword Die By The Sword

Watch As Flowers Decay On Cryptic Life That Died The Wisdom of Wizards
Is Only A Neutered Lie Black Knights of Hells Domain Walk Upon Us Dead
Satan Sips Upon The Blood In Which He Feeds

"Tormentor" by Slayer

Afraid To Walk The Streets In The Coldness All Alone The Blackness Of The
Night Engulfs Your Flesh And Bones Hoping For Relief From The Fear Your
Feel Inside Losing All Perspective Of Reality Of Night

Running From The Shadows
Blinded By The Fear
The Horror Of Nightfall
Is Ever So Near
I Slowly Surround You
As Terror Sets In
Are You Afraid Of The Night

I See Fright In Your Eyes As You Turn And Run But Is Your Mind Playing Tricks
On a Body So Very Young Feeling As If No One Cares
The Fear Runs Down Your Spine But I Know I'll Never Rest Until I Know You're
Mine

Running From The Shadows
Blinded By The Fear
The Horror Of Nightfall
Is Ever So Near
I Slowly Surround You
As Terror Sets In
Are You Afraid Of The Night

"Captors Of Sin" by Slayer

Harlots of Hell Spread Your Wings
As I Penetrate Your Soul
Feel The Fire Shoot Through Your Body
As I Slip Into Your Throne
Cast Aside, Do As You Will
I Care Not How You Plead
Satan's Own Child Now Stalks The Earth
Born From My Demon Sin

Hot Wings of Hell Burn In My Wake Death Is What You Pray
Behold Captor of Sin

Infernal Slaves of Manipulation
Captive of My Vice
Abandon God The Helpless One
To Relieve You Of Your Plight
Subversive Action Will Not Help
It Will Strengthen Me
I See Your Decline Your Every Move
Death Your Final Plea

Hot Wings of Hell Burn In My Wake Death Is What Your Pray
Behold Captor of Sin

Your Skin Turns To Leather
I Ignite Your Timid Blood You Feel My Lethal Touch As I Grasp Your Weary
Soul I'll Take You Down Into The Fire

APPENDIX B

Working Filmography

Title	Year	Director
A		
The Accused	1988	Jonathan Kaplan
American Graffiti	1973	George Lucas
Attack of the Crab Monster	1957	Roger Corman
B		
Baby It's You	1983	John Sayles
Badlands	1974	Terrance Mallick
Beach Blanket Bingo	1964	William Asher
Beach Party	1963	William Asher
Bernadine	1957	Henry Levin
Beverly Hills 90210	1988	Darren Star
Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure	1989	Stephen Herek
Billy Jack	1971	T.C. Frank
Blackboard Jungle	1955	Richard Brooks
Blast Off Girls	1967	Herschell Gordon Lewis
Blue Denim	1957	Philip Dunne
Blue Velvet	1986	David Lynch
Boys Don't Cry	1999	Kimberly Pierce
Boyz N the Hood	1991	John Singleton
The Breakfast Club	1985	John Hughes
Brian's Song	1975	Buzz Kulik (TV)
C		
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari	1920	Robert Wiene
Carrie	1976	Brian De Palma
City Across the River	1949	Maxwell Shane
Clueless	1995	Amy Heckerling
Cooley High	1975	Michael Schultz

D

Dangerous Minds	1995	John N. Smith
Daniel	1983	Sidney Lumet
Dazed and Confused	1993	Richard Linklater
Dead End	1937	William Wyler
Dead Poets Society	1989	Peter Weir
Diner	1982	Barry Levinson
Do the Right Thing	1989	Spike Lee
Don't Look and It Won't Hurt	1992	Allison Anders
Dracula	1931	Tod Browning

E

East of Eden	1954	Elia Kazan
Eyes of Laura Mars	1978	Irvin Kershner

F

Fame	1980	Alan Parker
Fast Times at Ridgemont High	1982	Amy Heckerling
Ferris Buehler's Day Off	1986	John Hughes
Flaming Youth	1923	John Francis Dillon
Foxes	1980	Adrian Lyne
Frankenstein	1931	James Whale
Friday the 13 th	1980	John Carl Buechler
Fun	1994	Rafal Zielinski

G

Gas, Food, Lodging	1992	Allison Anders
Gidget	1959	Paul Wendkos
Girl, Interrupted	1999	James Mangold
Girls in Prison	1956	Edward L. Cahn
Girls Town	1996	Jim McKay
Goin' All the Way	1982	Robert Freedman
The Graduate	1967	Mike Nichols
Grease	1978	Randal Kleiser

H

Hairspray	1988	John Waters
Halloween	1978	John Carpenter
Halloween II	1981	John Carpenter
Hanging with the Homeboys	1991	Joseph Vasquez

Heathers	1989	Michael Lehmann
High Noon	1952	Fred Zinnemann
High School	1969	Fredrick Wiseman
High School Confidential	1958	Jack Arnold
Hoop Dreams	1994	Steve James
I		
I Accuse My Parents	1944	Sam Newfield
J		
Jailhouse Rock	1957	Richard Thorpe
Jimmy the Kid	1983	Gary Nelson
Just For the Hell of It	1968	Herschell Gordon Lewis
Juvenile Jungle	1958	William Witney
K		
Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari	1920	Robert Wiene
Kids	1995	Larry Clarke
King Creole	1958	Michael Curtiz
Knock On Any Door	1949	Nicholas Ray
L		
La Bamba	1987	Luis Valdez
Last American Virgin	1982	Boaz Davidson
Lean On Me	1989	John G. Avidsen
Legend of Billie Jean	1985	Matthew Robbins
Little Darlings	1980	Ronald F. Maxwell
Lords of Discipline	1983	Franc Roddam
Losin' It	1982	Curtis Hanson
M		
Man in the Gray Flannel Suit	1955	Nunnally Johnson
Man Who Knew Too Much	1934, 1956	Alfred Hitchcock
Menace II Society	1993	Allen & Robert Hughes
My Own Private Idaho	1991	Gus Van Sant
N		
New Family in Town	1971	Garry Marshall
New Jack City	1991	Mario Van Peebles

New Jersey Drive	1995	Nick Gomez
Nightmare on Elm Street	1984	Wes Craven
Nowhere	1997	Peter Moleveld
O		
Ordinary People	1980	Robert Redford
P		
Peggy Sue Got Married	1986	Francis Ford Coppola
Peyton Place	1955	Mark Robson
Porky's	1982	Bob Clarke
Pretty in Pink	1986	John Hughes
Psycho	1960	Alfred Hitchcock
R		
Rebel Without A Cause	1955	Nicholas Ray
Repo Man	1984	Alex Cox
Risky Business	1983	Paul Brickman
River's Edge	1986	Tim Hunter
Rock and Roll High School	1979	Alan Arkush
Rock Around the Clock	1956	Fred F. Sears
Rumble Fish	1983	Francis Ford Coppola
Rushmore	1998	Wes Anderson
S		
Savage Streets	1984	Danny Steinmann
Scarred	1984	Unknown
She Gods of Shark Reef	1956	Roger Corman
Sixteen Candles	1984	John Hughes
Some Kind of Wonderful	1987	Howard Deutch
Slumber Party Massacre	1982	Amy Holden Jones
Sometimes a Great Nation	1971	Paul Newman
Splendor in the Grass	1961	Elia Kazan
Stand and Deliver	1988	Ramon Menendez
Straight Out of Brooklyn	1991	Matty Rich
The Suicide Virgins	1999	Sofia Coppola
Summer of '42	1971	Robert Mulligan
A Summer Place	1959	Delmer Daves
Sylvester	1985	Tim Hunter

T

Taboo	2002	Max Makowski
Teen Age Cavemen	1958	Roger Corman
Teen-Age Crime Wave	1955	Fred F. Sears
Tex	1982	Tim Hunter
Texas Chainsaw Massacre	1974	Tobe Hooper
To Die For	1995	Gus Van Sant
Totally F***ed Up	1993	Gregg Araki
Traffic in Souls	1913	Goerge Loane Tucker

U

Up Against the Wall	1991	Ron O'Neal
Up the Down Staircase	1967	Robert Mulligan

V

The Virgin Suicides	1999	Sofia Coppola
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W

Wages of Sin	1929	Oscar Micheaux
Wall Street	1987	Oliver Stone
Welcome to the Doll House	1995	Todd Solondz
West Side Story	1961	Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins
Where Are Your Children?	1944	William Nigh
Where the Boys Are	1960	Henry Levin
Wild Boys of the Road	1933	William A. Wellman
Wild in the Streets	1968	Barry Shear
The Wild One	1953	Laszlo Benedek
The Wolf Man	1941	George Waggner
A Woman of Distinction	1950	Ian McClellan Hunter

Y

Youth Astray	1928	Unknown
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Z

Zebra Head	1992	Oliver Stone
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