

# Contamination and Containment: Representing the Pathologised Other in 1950s American Cinema

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the complex role played by film in the maintenance of an American “self” in opposition to a series of politically and culturally defined pathological “Others” in the 1950s. I reveal how popular imagery and political rhetoric combined to link domestic “deviants” such as juvenile delinquents, homosexuals, domineering or passive mothers and drug addicts with the Communist “Other,” portraying each as essentially pathological, an insidious and sickly threat to the health of the American home and family.

By analysing case-studies within a wide-reaching and inter-connected cold-war media relay, underpinned by archival research that takes in newspaper and magazine journalism, television shows, government documents and medical journals, I uncover the ways in which film helped to maintain the visibility of the disenfranchised, as well contributing to their cultural surveillance and the discursive currency of the “pathological” Other.

My study exposes the politics involved in medically attaching the term “diseased” to pre-existing domestic groups, and demonstrates how a culture maintains its guard against an invisible enemy. My thesis demonstrates that, across genres, American cinema embraced socio-medical tropes and disease metaphors in narratives that aimed to delineate friend from enemy and “self” from “Other” and in this way exposed fears and tensions that simmered beneath the supposedly placid surface of the 1950s.

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## **Introduction**

In 1963, when American sociologist Howard S. Becker published *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, he believed that it had become common practice to view the social “deviant” as a diseased or pathological entity. Becker was able to appreciate that the human organism, when working efficiently and experiencing no discomfort, is understood to be “healthy” and that when it does not work efficiently, a disease is present. However, Becker was keen to highlight that while there is virtually no disagreement over what constitutes a healthy human organism, there is far less agreement on using the notion of pathology to describe analogically those types of behaviours regarded as deviant; people, he claimed do not agree on what constitutes healthy behaviour. This thesis will demonstrate how in the early cold-war United States the U.S. government, and by extension popular culture, nevertheless attempted to forge such an “agreement” by demarcating the normal / self from the deviant / other and equating social dissidence with social pathology.

For example, in 1951, *Newsweek* magazine reviewed a new film, *The Whip Hand*, claiming it to be “fast moving,” and “scarifying.” The reviewer warned readers that the film’s subject, a Communist scheme designed to decimate the United States by releasing microscopic and deadly germs into the water supply, was “close to contemporary history,” and, “even in its most blatantly melodramatic moments,” should not be taken lightly.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the extent to which *The Whip Hand* was viewed as a work of science-fact rather than science-fiction is revealed in a 1950 Civil Defense Administration handbook which, for the first time, included information on germ

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<sup>1</sup> “New Films: The Whip Hand,” *Newsweek* (November 26, 1951), p. 100.

warfare. As relayed to the public through the *New York Times*, the handbook warned that “agents” of contagion “could be used by saboteurs as well as by enemy attackers,” and stressed the importance of the “prompt and complete reporting of disease to the public health authorities.”<sup>2</sup> This now public concern with germ warfare helped foster the mounting connections being made between medicine and politics after the end of the Second World War. It further established the threat of disease and thus shaped the conceptual association of germs, contagion and cold-war politics.

Voice-over narration locates the opening scene of *The Whip Hand* “behind the heavily guarded walls of the Kremlin.” A Soviet officer is seen addressing an audience of officials while moving a pointer across an oversized map of the United States. To the non-Russian speaker, his words, though evidently aggressive, are largely incomprehensible. It is only when the pointer rests momentarily at locations including New York City, Washington DC, Boston and Los Angeles, that the audience can begin to make sense of the scene. Whatever is being discussed implicates the entire country. When the pointer meets its final resting place, highlighting the small Mid-western town of Winnoga in close-up, and the musical score becomes more ominous, the scene shifts to that point.

In Winnoga, the viewer meets vacationing magazine writer Matt Corbin (Elliot Reid). As correspondent for the fictional *American View* magazine, Matt has been stranded in the town during a storm, when he discovers that the fish in the town’s fishing-lake have died of a mysterious virus infecting the water. Sensing a story, Matt (foolishly) decides to stay and investigate. The few remaining characters he meets in the once-popular sporting village, although outwardly “normal,” are, to quote *Newsweek*, “mostly of dangerous aspect.” It soon becomes clear that the circumspect

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<sup>2</sup> Harold B. Hinton, “Critical Target Areas Urged to Speed Civil Defense Plans,” *New York Times* (22 October 1950), p.4.

townsfolk (newcomers, who “bought out” all but one of the town’s citizens five years previously) are protecting a deadly secret.

Matt infiltrates a guarded compound and discovers what appears to be a hospital. White-coated “patients” sit in wheelchairs or writhe in agony on the floor being watched by armed-guards. When Matt is discovered he is shot at and removed. What he has witnessed and will later expose to the world through his magazine is a communist-organised germ factory operating under the direction of a former Nazi scientist, Dr. Wilhelm Bucholtz (Otto Waldis).<sup>3</sup>

Inside the factory, Bucholtz declares that the “receptacle” to be used in the communist “master-plan” has been perfected; a small plastic box to carry germs sufficient to destroy the population of Chicago will be introduced into the water supply. The Nazi-turned-Communist scientist reveals his intention to contaminate the United States with the bubonic plague, declaring “all you Americans are alike, stupid, and guileless...thousands of agents will be ready to strike, supplied with germ cultures I produced here in Winnoga.” The disclosure of a roomful of human guinea-pigs, described by *Newsweek* as “rotting horrors” and “true nightmare material,” reveals the nature of the damage that the successful implementation of this Communist plan could wreak on the United States. Bandaged “volunteers” and “traitors” wearing vacant expressions stumble slowly around a glass prison. Bucholtz makes the Communist

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<sup>3</sup> Bucholtz’s defection to communism would have been of little surprise to audiences. For many Americans, the ideological distinctions between Fascism and Communism were less significant than what they believed to be a shared commitment to totalitarianism, whereby the Soviets inherited the cultural pathology previously attributed to Nazi Germany. In 1947, President Truman claimed that “there isn’t any difference in totalitarian states. I don’t care what you call them, Nazi, Communist or Fascist...” and in 1952, Morris L. Ernst and David Loth, authors of *Report on the American Communist*, would claim that “all mass movements generate in their adherents a readiness to die and a proclivity for united action; all of them, irrespective of the doctrine they preach and the program they project, breed fanaticism, enthusiasm, fervent hope, hatred and intolerance; all of them are capable of releasing a powerful flow of activity in certain departments of life; all of them demand blind faith and single hearted allegiance” (112). There was, however, one crucial difference: Nazis would literally wear their political affiliation on their sleeves. They were immodestly visible. Communists were entirely invisible. Their “fifth-column” activities were deemed far superior. See Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, “Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930’s – 1950’s,” *American Historical Review*, 75 (April 1970), pp. 1046 - 1064.

threat plain: “In the next 48 hours America will sink to its knees...I am benefiting mankind by ridding the world of all the people who stand in the way of communism...disease will spread like wildfire, from one end of the country to the other, infecting, crippling, paralyzing. Communism will rule the world.”

As *The Whip Hand* demonstrates, in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, disease became a potent metaphor by which to dramatise a growing fear of external Soviet penetration and internal cultural subversion and disintegration.<sup>4</sup> Literal and figurative boundaries were erected in order to protect the vitality of the nation, and distinctions between “self” and “other” were, on the one hand, hardened and, on the other, blurred in paranoid fantasies of an invisibly “infected” enemy. The “Other,” like the nefarious population of Winnoga, became indistinguishable from “normal” Americans. *The Whip Hand* makes the paranoid fear of communist infiltration and mass infection both visual and literal.

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A person or a nation’s definition of the Other is integral to an understanding of what constitutes the self. “Othering” is imperative to national identities, where practices such as managing information and erecting structures of social segregation can form and sustain boundaries and national character. “Othering” helps distinguish between home and away, the certain and the uncertain, the healthy and the diseased. It often

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<sup>4</sup> These “fears,” although too fresh to be fully comprehensible, did not go unrecognised at the time. A Chicago reporter was able to capture the national mood when he wrote, “Cold fear is gripping people hereabouts. They don’t talk much about it. But it’s just as real and chilling as the current 11-degree weather. Fear of what? Most people don’t know exactly. It’s not fear of Russia alone. For most think we could rub Joe’s nose in the dirt. It’s not fear of Communism in this country. Few think there are enough Commies here to put it over. It’s not fear of the atom bomb. For most think we still possess a monopoly. But it does seem to be a reluctant conviction that these three relentless forces are prowling the earth and that somehow they are bound to mean trouble for us.” Cited in Eric F. Goldman, *The Crucial Decade – And After: America, 1945-1960* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 78 – 79.

involves the demonisation and dehumanisation of groups, which further justifies attempts to civilise and exploit “inferior” others.

The concept that the self requires an Other in order to define itself is an old one, expressed by writers and thinkers throughout history. German philosopher Hegel was among the first to introduce the concept of the Other in relation to self-consciousness. Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic, in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), describes in narrative form the first encounter between two self-conscious beings who engage in a “struggle to the death” before one enslaves the Other. In Hegel’s narrative, when an “I” meets another “I” it finds its own pre-eminence compromised. The Other is viewed as a threat to the self and self-certainty is shattered. In order to restore a sense of self, they must enter a struggle for dominance and truth and ultimately establish a master-slave relationship.

Hegel’s narrative has been subsequently adopted and expanded and is key to an understanding of the racial / ethnic Other as situated by the colonial gaze, the black Other that in many Western civilisations functions in opposition to the white norm, and the female Other as identified by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949), in which she adapts the Hegelian notion to argue that woman is repeatedly “Otherised” in order to maintain a patriarchal norm. My thesis is concerned with a series of politically and culturally defined Others. In the 1950s, the United States government and popular culture repeatedly demonised the Soviet Communist in order to affirm the American way-of-life as the international norm, this was achieved through the adoption of a medical binary that separated the diseased from the healthy.

My thesis reveals how popular imagery and political rhetoric combined to link domestic “deviants” such as juvenile delinquents, homosexuals, domineering or passive mothers and drug addicts with the Communist Other, portraying each as an insidious

and sickly threat to the health of the American home and family. I explore how a nation was taught to fear not only an external Soviet enemy but a host of “enemies-within,” groups and individuals who lived outside of proscribed notions of “normality,” regarded with fear and suspicion and deemed detrimental to the “health” of the body politic. Normality was measured in terms of good health. In May of 1955, *Look* magazine, in one of a series of articles aimed at providing answers to questions “every human being has asked,” attempted to answer “What is Normal?” Dr. Lawrence S. Kubie offered readers an analogy; during an epidemic, he claimed, “a cold may be statistically ‘the norm,’ but this does not make a cold normal.”<sup>5</sup> The word “healthy” had become synonymous with “normal.” Deploying archival sources, I examine a cold-war culture of “germaphobia,” in which a lack of health could lead to the label of “abnormal” and to individuals and groups being treated as diseased enemies.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the history of Western medicine, visual representations of disease and suffering have played a crucial role in the definition of the Other. In the early Nineteenth Century, doctors would commission portraits of patients institutionalised for insanity (or “crimes against nature”) in an attempt to construct by documentation a pathological identity. With the advent of photography in the late Nineteenth Century, such patients were routinely pictured facing the camera, displaying the marks of their illness. Such medical photography operated as an extension of the medical gaze, providing the visual examples that formed the basis of a classification system of the diseased and disenfranchised. In this way, the visual representation of disease created a proliferation of pathologically-deviant identities, including the homosexual, the

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Lawrence S. Kubie, “What is Normal?” *Look* (May 3, 1955), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> In *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS*, Cindy Patton argues that contemporary Western societies’ preoccupation with dirt and the fear of germs, although dating back to the late Eighteenth Century with the scientific discovery of microbes, was codified “during the Lysol and plastic-packaged 1950s.” Germs were constructed as “bad guys: foreign, unnegotiable, dangerous,” an attitude that verged on “mass psychosis,” (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), p. 51.

prostitute, the mentally-enfeebled, the drunk and the hysteric, all of whom were witnessed and catalogued by the photograph.<sup>7</sup>

In his 1988 collection of essays, *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, Sanders L. Gilman presents a comprehensive enquiry into the representation of disease and illness in the visual media. His wide-ranging study encompasses illustrations used by the ancient Greeks, medieval paintings and engravings, artistic interpretations of the nineteenth-century Chinese, the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh's depictions of asylums, and more recent images of people with HIV/AIDS.<sup>8</sup> Gilman argues that such images represent society's need to assert control over a chaotic, frightening world. For Gilman, the visual arts provide the perfect landscape onto which to paint a society's fears:

It is the fear of collapse, the sense of dissolution, which contaminates the Western image of all diseases...But the fear we have of our own collapse does not remain internalised. Rather, we project this fear onto the world in order to localize it and, indeed, domesticate it. For once we locate it, the fear of our own collapse is removed. Then it is not we who totter on the brink of collapse, but rather the Other.<sup>9</sup>

Disease, with its seeming randomness, is thus one aspect of the universe that we wish to distance from the self: "those categories of individuals whom we believe (or hope) to

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<sup>7</sup> For more on this, particularly photography's role in the construction of a homosexual, pathological identity, see Stuart Marshall, "Picturing Deviancy" in Tessa Boffin and Sunil Gupta (eds.), *Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1990), pp. 19-36.

<sup>8</sup> Although Gilman limits his study to visual representations of disease and suffering, descriptions of ageing, illness and disease have received attention from western novelists, poets and playwrights for centuries, especially leprosy, the plague, tuberculosis, cancer, syphilis and mental disorders. The function of disease in literary texts has included illness or epidemics as the test of moral fibre of the afflicted individual or society, as a vision of collective disaster, as a metaphor of social or moral decay. For example, see Deborah Lupton, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), pp. 54-56.

<sup>9</sup> Sanders L. Gilman, *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 1.

be at more risk than ourselves.” In this way, as evident in the political and cultural machinations of 1950s America, distinctions are drawn between the “healthy” observer / self, and the sick “patient” / other.

In the post-war United States, fear of the corruption and collapse of society, made vital through socio-medical rhetoric, was projected onto Communism and domestic groups living outside of accepted boundaries of behaviour. It was not only security-state officials who projected these fears; they were also projected through art. For Gilman, the artistic rendering of the sufferer is an image of the disease “anthropomorphized.” These images, he argues, provide the viewer with rigid structures within which to define the boundaries of disease. Such images are presented as a social reality constructed on the basis of specific ideological needs. Thus, upon close inspection, they reveal the extent to which the discourse of power generates images of illness to stigmatise and control.

My thesis moves beyond an analysis of these rigid or static artistic representations of disease to assess the role of film’s incorporation of the moving image and sound, in the process of constructing a “social reality” in direct relation to the “pathological” outsider or “liturgy of Otherness,” to borrow one of Gilman’s terms.<sup>10</sup>

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The 1950s has been examined in a number of political and cultural histories. In the 1970s, Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak would respond to that decade’s cultural prevalence for viewing the 1950s with intense nostalgia with the publication of *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (1975). In an attempt to counteract a misplaced

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<sup>10</sup> Gilman, *Disease and Representation*, p.10.

yearning and reveal a more complex decade, they argue against ignoring the reality of a decade in which critics of the consensus tended to be treated as “psychological deviants suffering from such cliché ills as status anxiety or authoritarian personality.”<sup>11</sup> Miller and Nowak claim to have immersed themselves in the era by reading “thousands” of popular magazines, scholarly journals, highbrow and lowbrow literature, newspapers, comics, pamphlets, government documents, and stayed up all night watching TV reruns of fifties movies and shows. However, despite noble intention and an apparent gluttony of research, in their chapter on film they conclude that “seldom did movies intelligently probe beyond the surface of basic issues.”<sup>12</sup> My thesis reveals this claim to be a fallacy. Whether to the left or the right of the political spectrum, my own archival research reveals that even the most ideologically simplistic movies make up just one part of a vast cross-media relay that, when viewed collectively, reveal a depth of analysis, dialogue and identity negotiation.

Later studies, such as Peter Biskind’s *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (1983) and Martin Halliwell’s *American Culture in the 1950s* (2007), also counteract reductive accounts of 1950s culture. Biskind states that the aim of his study is to use the decade’s films to uncover “another picture of the 1950s...an era of conflict and contradiction.” He is interested in the ways in which films of the 1950s “pitted different ways of being and acting against each other,” and attempts to expose the “cultural combat” that all films were party to.<sup>13</sup> In short, he claims his book to be about politics and film. Biskind is largely successful; his study takes in alien-invasion narratives, social problem films, melodrama and teen-pics to reveal numerous sets of contending political ideologies all vying for cultural /

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1975), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Miller and Nowak, *The Fifties*, p. 337.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), pp. 5-6.

political legitimacy. However, his case studies, whilst well-situated within the political climate of the era, are examined in cultural isolation, and thus fail to acknowledge the interaction and continual dialogue between film and government documents, popular magazine journalism, print news, literature, television shows and pseudo-scientific instructional manuals. Such interaction, as my thesis will demonstrate, sheds new light on the role played by cinema in the formation of national and personal identities in the post-war United States.

Similarly, Halliwell's excellent cultural survey, encompassing fiction and poetry, drama and performance, music and radio, film and television and the visual arts, attempts to recover the richness and diversity of a cold-war decade, the cultural output of which is too often viewed as monolithic and one-dimensional. Halliwell is successful in elucidating a more nuanced notion of 1950s culture than myth and nostalgia have produced. Where my thesis departs from the work of both Biskind and Halliwell is through my engagement with metaphors of disease as being culturally suggestive. The pervasive cold-war rhetoric of contamination is acknowledged in the political background of previous cultural studies, but when the metaphor is traced through popular culture it is generally considered in relation to the alien-invasion narrative. For example, Harry M. Benshoff notes that the invading monsters / aliens of these archetypal narratives were a reflection of "Communist infiltration, wherein a poisonous ideology spreads through small-town USA like a virus, silently turning one's friends and relatives into monsters."<sup>14</sup>

Most recently, Priscilla Wald has charted the conceptual exchange between disease metaphor and 1950s Cold War politics in a chapter of *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (2008). Wald calls for a distinction between

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<sup>14</sup> Harry M. Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 128.

metaphors of an external virology and an internal immunology in a chapter that culminates in an analysis of Jack Finney's 1955 novel *The Body Snatchers* and Don Siegel's 1956 film adaptation *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.<sup>15</sup> Wald highlights how in the face of mass dehumanisation (as a result of alien pod infiltration), the novel's doctor narrator Miles Bennell is quick to diagnose the world's "first contagious neurosis," as a "real epidemic" with panic spreading "like a contagion." Like Benshoff, Wald concludes that in such metaphors readers and viewers were offered "a glimpse into the effects of Communist infiltration on prosperous small-town USA."<sup>16</sup> However, whilst acknowledging that both novel and film were inextricably linked to political metaphors of virology and immunology, and that what set the pod-people apart from other 1950s science-fiction monsters was the invisibility of their infection and their ability to accurately mimic "normality," Wald finds no room in her thesis to investigate the appropriation of these metaphors by the government or popular culture more extensively to demonise "undesirable" domestic groups.

In *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s* (1996), Mark Jancovich begins to move beyond an analysis of the invading pods and blobs of 1950s science fiction to allow that "while the 1950s invasion narratives used the alien invaders as an image of rationalisation and conformity, other horror texts of the period used aliens as an image of difference through which they investigated, problematised and even rejected the notions of 'normality' prevalent in 1950s America."<sup>17</sup> Jancovich calls these "outsider narratives," and I am primarily concerned with the way in which these narratives converge with metaphors of disease. However, I look beyond the well-documented genres of science fiction and horror that are his focus to assess the extent to which the

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<sup>15</sup> This distinction will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Pricilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 192.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 83.

same metaphors infiltrated films not characteristically associated with medical tropes. In this way I expose how they contributed to disenfranchising supposedly undesirable and therefore “infectious” sections of society or renegotiated accepted terms of the normal. Taking into consideration both the well-known and the bizarre, the critically-acclaimed and the notorious, the sensitive and the sensational, my case-studies expose groups and individuals who, although outwardly “normal,” were constructed as Others whose behaviour marked them as “diseased.” Moving beyond both Wald and Jancovich, my study exposes the politics involved in medically attaching the term “diseased” to pre-existing domestic groups, and will explore how the culture maintained its guard against an invisible enemy.

My thesis will demonstrate that across genre boundaries, American cinema embraced socio-medical tropes and disease metaphors in narratives that aimed to delineate friend from enemy and “self” from “Other.” I aim to discover the extent of their role in the maintenance of an American “self” in opposition to a pathologised “Other,” in order to expose some of the fears and tensions that simmered beneath the surface of a supposedly placid decade.<sup>18</sup> It is my contention that these fears were reflected, reproduced and contested across various forms of cold-war culture. I privilege film in this thesis. However, I do not assume that audiences consumed cinema in cultural isolation and I do not ignore other cultural documents. Metaphors of disease were very much a part of 1950s culture outside of Hollywood. An increasing number of medical studies and journals pondered the escalating neurosis and popular magazines

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<sup>18</sup> The term “the placid decade” was first used in the title of Joseph Satin’s *The 1950s: America’s Placid Decade* (1960). It speaks of the extent to which the decade is often retrospectively viewed as an era of unbounded possibility, “the happiest, most stable, most rational period the western world has ever known.” Since 1972, when an issue of *Newsweek* explored the era under the headline “Yearning for the Fifties: The Good Old Days,” and *Life* magazine coined the term “The Nifty Fifties,” the decade has generally been observed through nostalgia-tinted glasses. A popular image of the decade is of a simpler, happier time when Dad went out to work and Mom stayed home to bake, and the newly-purchased television set reassuringly informed viewers that “Father Knows Best.” Such ideals of 1950s identity are not merely a product of contemporary nostalgia. This was a vision of “normality,” of an American way of life, as promoted by advertisement, popular culture and political rhetoric throughout the decade.

and discussion-based television shows would devote time to particular social or cultural “epidemics,” and scandalous gossip magazines speculated as to which celebrities’ bad behaviour could be “infectious.”

My thesis does not follow a strictly chronological overview of the 1950s. I have chosen to open the study in 1947 when journalist Ferdinand Lundberg and psychiatrist Marynia Farnham published *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*. This best-selling polemic attempted to draw millions of women into the post-war political climate of containment by exposing a “ghostly epidemic” akin to the “contagious neurosis” identified in *The Body Snatchers*. Lundberg and Farnham argued that, while women made up the majority, others infected with this debilitating, invisible neurosis, included:

Revolutionists and counterrevolutionists of any and all camps...movers, shakers and agitators...notable behaviour deviants such as criminals high and low, juvenile delinquents, most divorcing persons, the wilfully childless, alcoholics and *revoltees* of the ‘Youth’ movement and the arts...the vaguely ill and uncomfortable...the more or less perturbed shuttling frantically by the hundreds of thousand crystal-ball gazers, tea-leaf readers, psychic pep-dispensers, fortunetellers and inspirational bunko artists...They number the millions.<sup>19</sup>

In this way, my study will begin with women but extend into some of these groups and close in 1962, when President Kennedy called for a White House Conference on Narcotics and Drug Abuse, a move that allowed one expert to confidently announce the “beginnings of wisdom” in the treatment of the socially-disenfranchised. It was a decision that suggested that with sympathy and wisdom those marginalised groups and individuals, previously dismissed by Lundberg and Farnham as carriers of a dangerous infection could be successfully rehabilitated. Each chapter will take a rallying point of

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<sup>19</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York: Universal Library, Grosset & Dunlap, 1947) p. 48.

popular culture, such as *Modern Woman*, as its pivot. Pseudo-scientific texts, which enjoyed enormous influence upon publication, were often reproduced in the popular press and found their way into the national consciousness. *Modern Woman*, Edmund Bergler's *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (1956), Benjamin Fine's *1,000,000 Delinquents* (1955), and Harry J. Anslinger's *The Traffic in Narcotics* (1953) all invoke metaphors of disease in different but related cultural contexts, in the same way that government officials adopted the disease metaphor to demonstrate political threat. Therefore, the films that make up the core of my thesis are situated historically and embedded in a network of socio-cultural discourses.

Recalling Foucault's chapter "Panopticism" from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), my thesis will expose how 1950s politics and popular culture engaged in an open dialogue that aimed to diagnose, isolate and render visible a plethora of social "aberrations." Foucault opens his discussion of Panopticism with a description of the treatment of a seventeenth-century plague victim in which the chaos of his disease was met with order, quarantine and continuous surveillance:

The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding and exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise.<sup>20</sup>

The Panopticon itself was an architectural form designed by nineteenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Bentham envisioned a prison designed so that all occupants remain permanently visible to the guards yet isolated from their fellow

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<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 199.

inmates. The major effect of this design is to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. This thesis argues that in the United States in the 1950s, politics and popular culture combined to form a cultural Panopticon, an inter-connected and wide-reaching media relay that maintained the visibility and cultural surveillance of the socially disenfranchised. Borrowing in this way from Foucault and adapting Steve Neale's definition of "inter-textual" relay (for Neale, inter-textual relay encompassed the discourses of publicity, promotion and reception surrounding film genres), my thesis is underpinned by the interaction of cross-media discourses that serve to illuminate the films and to establish the cultural dimension and discursive currency of the "pathological" other as it was disseminated down from the top levels of U.S. government.<sup>21</sup>

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Post-war, the Soviet Union became much more than a geopolitical adversary in an ideological standoff. The Communist became a politically-defined other. Communist ideology was represented as a threat to all "free" capitalist states and long-established, idealised notions of "American identity" maintained via a series of socially-recognised "differences." William E. Connolly argues that a political identity requires difference in order to be, converting it into otherness in order to "secure its own self-certainty." In this way, he contends:

A powerful identity will strive to constitute a range of differences as *intrinsically* evil, irrational, abnormal, mad, sick, primitive, monstrous, dangerous, or anarchical – as other. It does so in order to secure itself as intrinsically good, coherent,

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<sup>21</sup> Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000).

complete or rational and in order to secure itself from the other that would unravel its self-certainty.<sup>22</sup>

While Connolly's immediate context is the late 1980s and early 1990s, in the 1950s such boundaries were inscribed by outwardly projecting an image of domestic health and harmony whilst simultaneously depicting the Soviet Union in lurid terms.<sup>23</sup> As the nation's adversary, it was characterised as a mortal threat to democratic freedom, a barbarian intent on the destruction of civilisation, a plague upon the liberty of mankind, and a germ infecting the body politic. The United States, in contrast, became the last bastion of freedom, its cleanliness and purity making it susceptible to Soviet "disease." Such rhetoric is an example of what Michael Rogin has termed "political demonology," the calling of attention to the creation of "monsters" as a continuing feature of American politics. In Rogin's thesis, American demonology has form and content and "the demonologist splits the world into two, attributing magical, pervasive power to a conspiratorial center of evil. Fearing chaos and secret penetration, the countersubversive interprets local initiatives as a sign of alien power. Discrete individuals and groups become, in the countersubversive imagination, members of a political body directed by its head."<sup>24</sup> While Rogin's discussion focuses on late cold-war culture under Ronald Reagan, it also serves to elucidate the demonology evident in the early cold-war 1950s.

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<sup>22</sup> William E. Connolly, *Identity / Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 64 - 65.

<sup>23</sup> It is common in Western language to construct meaning by conceptualising "things" in terms of pairs that require one item to be the negation of the other. The most basic of binary oppositions is the notion of self in relation to the rest of the world: me and not-me, and by extension us and not-us. For those "not-me's" who are radically different, this binary can be extended further still to encompass self / same in relation to other. Other binary distinctions often called upon include healthy / sick, sane / crazy, rational / emotional, and good / evil, where the first term in each set is more highly valued. These oppositions help to create meaning not only within the realm of foreign policy but also within more general discourse. Binaries help to exaggerate differences, thereby resisting the possibility of an intermediate position between two poles. See, for example, Frank Constigliola, "The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance," *Diplomatic History* 21 (Spring 1997), pp. 163-84.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. xiii.

On February 22, 1946, George F. Kennan, the American *charge d'affaires* in Moscow sent a 5,540-word cable to the State Department. Now known as the “Long Telegram,” this diplomatic communication provided the opening shot in the Cold War, doing more than any other single document to influence the evolution of post-war United States foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> The “Long Telegram” would translate the often-confusing pattern of Soviet behaviour into an easily digestible, though terrifying, narrative of a “pathologically driven force bent on world domination.”<sup>26</sup> For Kennan, the world was sharply divided along ideological lines, and the Soviet Union was committed “fanatically” to the belief that with the United States there could be no *modus vivendi*, and that the Soviet government believed that it was not only desirable but necessary that the “American way of life” be destroyed. The telegram succeeded in convincing American officials that the Soviet Union was a grotesque force. Kennan claimed that the problem of how to cope with the Soviet force had become the “greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced,” and provided an argument for curtailing negotiations with Moscow and embarking on a policy of “containment.”<sup>27</sup>

“Containment,” which alludes to the control of a viral epidemic, was the foreign policy strategy of the United States in the early years of the Cold War. Primarily utilised as an attempt to stop the “domino effect” of nations moving politically in line with Soviet-based communism, the “containment” policy, first laid out in Kennan’s

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<sup>25</sup> The “Long Telegram” constructed the Soviet threat. Before this no one had yet constructed a persuasive representation of the “Soviet threat.” Soviet behaviour may not have changed, but Kennan profoundly altered the U.S. method of interpreting it. See, for example, Charles E. Nathanson, “The Social Construction of the Soviet Threat: A Study in the Politics of Representation,” *Alternatives* XIII (1988), p. 460.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Constigliola, “Reading for Meaning: Theory, Language and Metaphor,” in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Patterson, eds. *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 298.

<sup>27</sup> Kennan himself described the reaction to this telegram as “nothing less than sensational.” Even President Truman read it and “the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. James Forrestal, had it reproduced and evidently made it required reading for hundreds, if not thousands, of higher officers in the armed services.” George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), pp. 294-295.

supposedly confidential “Long Telegram,” and made public with the anonymous publication of “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” in *Foreign Affairs*, stipulated that “the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russia’s expansive tendencies.” The Soviet Union was to be regarded as “a rival, not a partner, in the political arena.” Containment would “confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.” In this way Soviet-American relations were described as “a test of the over-all worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction, the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.”<sup>28</sup>

Kennan’s “containment” thesis became government policy when on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1947, President Truman addressed Congress in a speech subsequently known as the “Truman Doctrine.” The speech was devised to convince Congress to support sending 400 million dollars in military and economic assistance to Greece and Turkey, reportedly in imminent danger from Soviet pressure, and to prompt the American people into accepting the responsibilities of world leadership.

Truman claimed that, as the world’s most rich and powerful nation, it “must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.” Truman established a binary of totalitarianism versus “the free world.” He defined the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union as a political system of majority will and “free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression,” against a system founded

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<sup>28</sup> X (George F. Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25 (July 1947), pp. 566-582.

on minority will and “terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedom.”<sup>29</sup> As Assistant Secretary William D. Clayton observed in a memo dated March 5, 1947, “the United States will not take world leadership effectively unless the people of the United States are shocked into doing so.” Unsurprisingly, Clayton advised that a vivid exposé of the Communist threat would make this ideology visible. Similarly, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, the Republican head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, suggested the President “scare the hell out of the country” in order to win support for his programme.<sup>30</sup> Truman made it clear that America had little choice but to follow in the path he set forth:

The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world – and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.<sup>31</sup>

Truman’s ideological stance was necessarily dualistic, opposing the good “we” to the evil “they” and proclaiming that he who is not with me is against me. Congress would respond to Truman’s speech by granting his request for aid.

In the wake of a successful Soviet test of an atomic bomb in August 1949, any remaining sense of U.S. invulnerability was significantly damaged. In April 1950, President Truman’s National Security Council was presented with a document known

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<sup>29</sup> “The Truman Doctrine” in Eugene T. Rossides, *The Truman Doctrine of Aid to Greece: A Fifty-Year Retrospective* (New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1998) pp. 187-188

<sup>30</sup> Both cited in Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security 1946-1948* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp.88-9.

<sup>31</sup> . “The Truman Doctrine” in Rossides, *The Truman Doctrine*, pp. 187-8. For further discussion see Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 295-302.

as NSC-68 which was endorsed by Truman in September of that year. In stressing the urgency of addressing the Communist threat, it called for a significant military build-up. Like Kennan's "Long Telegram," NSC-68 was quick to dichotomise the disparate ideological centres, declaring there to be "a basic conflict between the idea of freedom under a government of laws and the idea of slavery under the grim oligarchy of the Kremlin." This document played on the theme of Manichaeian ideological opposites. Significantly in this context, for a top-secret document that would not be declassified until 1977, NSC-68 relied heavily on the use of highly emotive and figurative language. It conjured up an ideal American identity, cast it against a demonised version of the Soviet other, and dramatised the dichotomies in a set of powerful rhetorical symbols. Accordingly, the world's two greatest powers were placed "at opposite poles."<sup>32</sup>

NSC-68 asserted that the design of those who controlled the Soviet Union and what it claimed was an international Communist movement called for "the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world and their replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin." As if the threat of total domination and control by a foreign agency did not promote fear enough in the reader, it was now feasible to state that "with the development of increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction, every individual faces the ever-present possibility of annihilation should the conflict enter the phase of total war." Thus, with the "real" threat of "total annihilation," few could deny that, as the authors declared, "the Cold War is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world" is at stake. The

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.r-three.com/NSC-68.html> (accessed 31.03.09).

conclusion was that there was little choice but for the United States to vastly increase its military capabilities and pursue a policy of “containment.”<sup>33</sup>

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Making Kennan’s treatise a political reality amounted to the federal endorsement of disease metaphors as a controlling binary; “containment” as a political strategy was buttressed by metaphors of disease. It was repeatedly suggested that the country had to confront and contain the invisible “germs” of a foreign power. In 1948, for example, Eric Johnston, head of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), declared:

The fascist-minded under various labels...the pathetic and despicable stooges for foreign dictatorships [are] all of them excrescences. As long as the American body politic retains its democratic health, it can resist them as steadily as the human body resists germs. Such minor successes as these people have scored in recent years were symptoms of our social and political ills and will be wiped out in the period of restored vitality which we have now entered.<sup>34</sup>

Metaphors like those Johnston deploys here were omnipresent in political and cultural discourse in the 1950s. Speaking of one thing in terms of another became the norm rather than the exception in rhetoric. The disease metaphor was employed as an epistemological device, not merely because of its appeal to fear and dramatic effect but also because it served to conceptualise the world in terms of health and illness, defining

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.r-three.com/NSC-68.html> (accessed 31.03.09).

<sup>34</sup> Eric Johnston, cited in Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.177.

notions of a bio-determined reality. These metaphors served to visualise and internalise what a good, healthy person, family or group ought to be, contrasting the ideal against a diseased opposite. The more vivid the disease metaphor used, the more marked the feelings and the connotations of the metaphor. Metaphorical representations are not politically neutral. As the policy of “containment” affirms, metaphors of disease are commonly appropriated during ideological struggles, acting as a linguistic device to persuade the acceptance of one belief over another. Therefore, socio-medical tropes featured prominently in United States policy toward the Soviet Union and acted as a device that would locate and control boundaries overseas and at home. As Susan Sontag contends in *Illness as Metaphor*:

Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, pollution, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Then, in the name of the disease (that is, using a metaphor), that horror is imposed on other things. Something is said to be disease-like, meaning that it is disgusting or ugly.<sup>35</sup>

Opposing binary categories of health and disease would set apart a vital and vigorous “free” world from a diseased “slave” world. When George F. Kennan’s “Long Telegram” was leaked to the press in 1946, a map with the legend “Communist Contagion” accompanied *Time* magazine’s report. The map claimed Iran, Turkey and Manchuria were “infected,” whilst Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Afghanistan, and India were

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<sup>35</sup> Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Picador USA, 1990), p.58. Sontag published two influential essays which consider metaphors of disease and illness and their use in making moral judgements about the sufferer, with particular focus on cancer and tuberculosis and later HIV/AIDS. She was among the first modern critics to argue that disease is rendered meaningful through the use of metaphor, drawing upon an understanding of metaphor as a vital epistemological device by which the world is organised.

dangerously “exposed.”<sup>36</sup> Many Americans, including Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover, would use metaphors of disease to describe and proscribe the Communist threat. In 1947, Secretary of State Dean Acheson told President Truman that:

Like apples in a barrel *infected* by one *rotten* one, the *corruption* of Greece would *infect* Iran and all to the east. It would also carry *infection* to Africa through Asia Minor and Egypt, and to Europe through Italy and France.<sup>37</sup> [Emphasis added].

Thus, Acheson suggested that Communism, like a virus, was able to imperceptibly infect individuals and nations and could spread exponentially. Indeed, anti-communism grew just when an understanding of viral mechanisms was beginning to infiltrate the mainstream press. In a 1954 speech on the “protection of freedom” Herbert Hoover decried the “socialist virus and poison gas generated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.” He denounced the “bloody virus” of Communism which he claimed was “rotting the souls of two-fifths of mankind,” and he spoke of America’s need for “immunity.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, just as it was understood that a virus could threaten the cohesion and harmony of the body, Communism was said to affect the very architecture and functionality of a democratic society.

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<sup>36</sup> Robert T. Elson, *The World of Time Inc.* Vol. 2 (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 161-162.

<sup>37</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), p. 219. The implicit metaphors of “growth” adopted by Acheson here are intentionally negative. Growth is traditionally understood as a positive. However, when growth metaphors cohere with metaphors of disease, the underlying suggestion is that Communism is a cancer, or in Kennan’s words, a “malignant parasite.” The prevailing image of cancer is one in which the body is overtaken and consumed by an alien invader, and is thus a durable metaphorical vessel for paranoia. For Sontag, cancer as metaphor conjures an unending Orwellian nightmare of foreign intrusion and an unsuspected terror that overruns, controls, consumes, and destroys – all with the compliance of the host. “The controlling metaphors in descriptions of cancer are...drawn from...the language of warfare...Thus, cancer cells do not simply multiply; they are invasive...Cancer cells “colonize” from the original tumor to far sites in the body, first setting up tiny outposts whose presence is assumed, though they cannot be detected. Sontag exposes how the language used to describe cancer evokes “unregulated, abnormal, incoherent growth.” Cancer cells, being those that have “shed the mechanism which restrains growth,” are said to act without inhibition, continuing to grow and extrude in a “chaotic” fashion, destroying the body’s normal cells, architecture, and functions.

<sup>38</sup> Hoover cited in Wald, *Contagious: Cultures*, p. 179.

Fittingly, the reigning image-system for all diseases in Western culture is that of warfare. Doctors and cultural commentators alike speak of how a disease “strikes” or “attacks.” The virus is said to “invade” and cancers “spread,” spurring the body’s “defences” into action. We speak of “struggle” and “resistance,” the “fight” for one’s life; how certain diseases are “detected,” “killed off” and “defeated.” Therefore, images of violence and warfare are used to connect disease with “the greatest evils and atrocities of the Twentieth Century: fascism, Stalinism, even the holocaust.”<sup>39</sup> Military-medical discourse constructs and emboldens binary oppositions between the “normal” and the “pathological.” In this way, disease metaphors reflect wider societal divisions, anxieties and concerns. They represent the body as a nation state vulnerable to attack by a foreign invader. The ideological work performed by this imagery validates xenophobia and justifies the intervention of the state in the everyday lives of its citizens, granting power to agencies of social control in the interests of maintaining public health. They serve to ensure that shared fictions become “fact” and that the world could not, and should not, be perceived otherwise.

During the 1950s, disease metaphors provided the American populace with easily recognisable images with which to comprehend the growing sense of an external Soviet threat:

Metaphors are reference points that serve as mental “lighthouses” in our navigation through life. They condense manifold ideas and fantasies around a very few symbols. They highlight dominant cultural values. Metaphors greatly simplify explanatory and decision making processes, reducing complexity and ambiguity to consistent images. Projecting our metaphors upon the world, we experience the world as though the metaphors were really “out there.” We then use them to

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<sup>39</sup> Scott L. Montgomery, “Codes and Combat in Biomedical Discourse,” *Science as Culture* (1991, Vol. 2.3) p. 349.

confirm our assumptions about the world. With our metaphors we increase in confidence and decrease in accuracy.<sup>40</sup>

The close unity of figurative and literal language in early cold-war foreign policy documents allowed for disease metaphors to be made literal so that Communism was not *like* a disease, it *was* a disease. In a 1954 poll, a New Jersey housewife was able to appreciate exactly the nature of the threat posed by Communism, when she declared, “It’s a germ. It can spread. Communists are a danger when they talk to ignorant people. Ignorant people can be used by Communists to get more converts. I think ignorant people are most likely to become Communists.”<sup>41</sup> Communism *was* a communicable disease, and people ignorant of this fact were prone to infection.

To view a nation as diseased is to personify that nation, invoking the metaphor of the body politic. Within this metaphor, individual societies or the world community are viewed as a functioning human body. The body is a model which can be substituted for any bounded system, whereby the boundaries of the body can represent any boundaries that are deemed to be either precarious or threatened. As a complex structure, the different parts of the body provide a plethora of symbols that can be related to other complex structures.<sup>42</sup> Thus, like the human body, the body politic can be viewed as either sick or healthy. Hans J. Morgenthau, political theorist and consultant to George Kennan’s Policy Planning Staff, adopts this metaphor when discussing national stability in his 1948 book *Politics Among Nations*:

While the human body changes in the process of growth, the equilibrium persists as long as the changes occurring ...do not disturb the body’s stability...When, however, the body suffers a

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<sup>40</sup> Howard F. Stein, *American Medicine as Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Noted in Samuel A. Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties: A Cross-section of the Nation Speaks Its Mind* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), p. 162.

<sup>42</sup> See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), p.116.

wound or loss of one of its organs through outside interference, or experiences a malignant growth or a pathological transformation of one of its organs, the equilibrium is disturbed.<sup>43</sup>

Morgenthau argued that equilibrium and balance within the body was equally as necessary within the world community. He claimed that balance of “elements” or nations was necessary for a peaceful world community to exist. Without a state of equilibrium among nations, “one element will gain ascendancy over the others, encroach upon their interests and rights, and may ultimately destroy them.”<sup>44</sup> In this way, the body politic metaphor allows for the representation of threats to the social “body” in terms originally associated with threats to the physiological body.

In conventional Western discourse a person is composed of body and mind, both of which can be conceived as sick or healthy. In his “Long Telegram,” Kennan would describe the Soviet worldview as “neurotic,” the State as “mentally sick.” In order to fully understand the danger the Soviet Union posed, Kennan claimed it should be studied “with the same courage, detachment, objectivity, and the same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with which the doctor studies an unruly and unreasonable individual.”<sup>45</sup> His language coded Soviet policy as sick and American policy as healthy, thus undermining the idea of Soviet policy as an expression of legitimate national interests. Such discourse elevates both Kennan and his audience to a position of authority; it is “us” rather than “they” who are sane, “we” who hold the authoritative gaze of the physician while the Soviets are “neurotic” patients.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau (1948), *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, fifth edition, 1973), p.168.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Sontag makes similar claims when she states that “Modern disease metaphors specify an ideal of society’s well being, analogised to physical health...Illness comes from imbalance. Treatment is aimed at restoring the right balance – in political terms, the right hierarchy.” Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, p.76.

<sup>45</sup> George F. Kennan, cited in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p.62.

<sup>46</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 84.

However, being human, doctors are themselves not impervious to corruption or moral decay. Within cold-war pseudo-medical discourse weak persons or weak nations were open to “infection” by invasive parasites or cancers; stronger organisms were less susceptible. Thus, Kennan was able to claim that “much depends on the health and vigor of our own society. World Communism...feeds only on diseased tissue.” Similarly, in 1946, future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, writing a two-part article entitled “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and What to do About It” for *Life* magazine, claimed that the United States needed “an affirmative demonstration that our society of freedom still has the qualities needed for survival,” and that it was “not spiritual lowland, easily submerged, but highland that most of all, provides the spiritual, intellectual and economic conditions all men want.”<sup>47</sup> The “germs” of Communism were only dangerous when the resistance of America as body politic was weakened by social “irregularities.” With a strong immune system – an organised society – the germs would be unable to take hold and the body politic would remain in rude health. Thus, only a strong and united America would resist the germs of communism.

For the sake of survival, it was argued that America needed to become physically, mentally and morally powerful. Soviet success would be the result of a breakdown in the cohesion, vigour and firmness of the Western World. Thus, Kennan’s thesis was as much a theory of domestic reform as foreign policy. There are two meanings of

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<sup>47</sup> John Foster Dulles, “Thoughts on Soviet Foreign Policy and What to do About it,” *Life*, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1946, p.120. John Foster Dulles would serve as Secretary of State under President Eisenhower. He claimed that the most “significant” demonstration that could be made to display the nation’s health and vigour should be made at a “religious level.” He claimed, “if a society ceases to be a religious society or if it falls under atheistic leadership...then it is both logical and practical to treat human freedoms like the freedoms of wild animals and to suppress those freedoms so that men, like domesticated animals, will be more amenable and more secure...Rededication to the faith of our fathers is thus, above all, what is needed to make apparent the futility of any world program based on the suppression of human freedom.” Dulles set apart a country of devout faith and freedoms against a Godless nation of domesticated animals. Whilst Dulles was serving as Secretary of State, a bill was passed that introduced the term “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance. Without this term it was deemed that the pledge could apply to any nation; with this term the pledge was deemed to more accurately reflect the spirit and way of life of the United States as opposed to the Godless Soviet Union.

containment, one which speaks to an external threat outside the social body and a further meaning which addresses the domestic contents of the social body, a threat internal to the host which must be eliminated, “contained” or domesticated.

One could not be certain where an “outbreak” of subversion would occur, only that it would. Kennan had claimed that the Soviet view of the West was that it bore within itself the “germs of creeping disease,” and that a capitalist society is “destined to be wracked with growing internal convulsions until it is given final *coup de grace* by rising power of socialism.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the propensity to treat the Soviet Union as a diseased “other” was extended to identify and negate suspicious individuals and domestic groups deemed to exist somehow outside the hegemonic construction of normality. Kennan’s containment thesis was made relevant to domestic politics and as Andrew Ross notes, it anticipated “the Red Scare that generated hysteria about “aliens, bugs, pods, microbes, germs and other demonologies of the Other that pervaded the culture and politics of the fifties.”<sup>49</sup> Disease imagery and metaphors of the body politic were harnessed to express concern for social order; every form of domestic deviation could be considered a sickness. As political theorist David Campbell has since noted:

The principal impetus behind the location of threats in the external realm comes from the fact that the sovereign domain, for all its identification as a well-ordered and rational entity, is as much a site of ambiguity and indeterminacy as the anarchic realm it is distinguished from....One might suggest it is the extent to which we want to organize the environment – the extent to which we want to purify *our* domain – that determines how likely it is that we represent danger in terms of dirt or disease.<sup>50</sup> (Emphasis added).

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<sup>48</sup> Kennan, cited in Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Ross, “Containing Culture in the Cold War,” in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 47.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security*, pp. 81, 63.

Campbell limits his study to an understanding of U.S. foreign policy, ignoring the extent to which metaphors of disease became a powerful domestic political tool used in an attempt to create an imagined community of perfection through language and images that would resonate through popular culture. In this context, such metaphors were employed to bolster internal rather than external borders and eradicate domestic ambiguity (i.e. the context for this dissertation).

Endeavouring to prevent the spread of the invisible, ideological pathogen of communism meant not only confronting and curtailing an aggressive Soviet nation overseas, but pinpointing and eliminating domestic communists and further targets deemed in any way to be subversive, dirty or sick. Indeed, as J. Edgar Hoover warned, Communists deemed it necessary that non-communist ranks be “infiltrated, penetrated, and subverted.” The ultimate aim of the Communist Party was the “establishment of a Soviet America” and as such, Communists were employing various tactics and devising methods to “inject themselves into various phases of American life.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, it was argued, the infected were a threat to a mythical American way-of-life. As Daryl Ogden rightly observes, the newly established rhetoric of immunology, as exemplified by the publication of Frank Fenner and Frank McFarlane Burnet’s *The Production of Antibodies* (1949), was redolent with “the terms of anti-communist, anti-homosexual political discourses of the post-World War II era.” Fenner and Burnet’s research, for the first time, proposed a theory of how the human body’s immunological apparatus distinguished “self” from “nonself.” They claimed that so-called normal cells possessed something called a “self-marker” that marked the cell as a non-threatening part of the

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<sup>51</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1958), pp. 191-92. In the same text, Hoover warned that communists were infiltrating non-communist organisations and creating communist fronts. Labour Unions were particularly vulnerable: “A front is an organization which the communists openly or secretly control. The communists realize that they are not welcome in American society. Party influence, therefore, is transmitted, time after time, by a belt of concealed members, sympathizers, and dupes” (228).

self. For Ogden this was a “perfect metaphor” for how the American body politic operated as a “large scale human immune system, placing under surveillance and effectively eliminating citizens suspected of foreign sympathies that might weaken internal American resolve to fend off the debilitating disease of communism.”<sup>52</sup> Ogden argues for a distinction between the rhetoric of virology and immunology, where “virologists postulated the existence of powerful viruses, dangerous enemies beyond the body’s borders, capable of violating those borders under favorable circumstances” and immunologists “warned healthy and sick Americans alike of formidable enemies within the body that appeared – like communist sympathizers and homosexuals – to constitute the Self, but were, in fact, the Other...Immunology was predicated on the fear of disloyalty and subversion within the body (politic) itself.”<sup>53</sup> Following Ogden’s distinction, then, it is with the rhetoric of immunology that I concern myself in this thesis. As opposed to virology that employed tropes of hot warfare to describe the actions of external enemy viruses, immunology posits a different set of metaphors that paralleled many early cold-war fears of subversion from within. Immunology contends that sickness comes from within and can be attributed to an individual’s weakened immune system. These individuals appeared to constitute the self but were, in fact, Other. Therefore, by invoking the metaphor of the body politic Edmund Bergler could draw “homosexual battle lines,” and Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham create the “blueprints” for mass societal rehabilitation. Similarly, Benjamin Fine would call for a “crusade” against juvenile delinquency.

In this way, Cold War security culture at home was made parallel to the Government’s new foreign policy. On March 21, 1947, just nine days after delivering his “Truman Doctrine” speech, the President announced the establishment of a new

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<sup>52</sup> Daryl Ogden, “Cold War Science and the Body Politic: An Immuno / Virological Approach to *Angels in America*,” *Literature and Medicine* 19.2 (2000), p. 245-46.

<sup>53</sup> Ogden, “Cold War Science,” p. 248.

government loyalty programme. Based on a report of the Temporary Commission on Loyalty, devised by the House Civil Service Subcommittee, the Federal Employee Loyalty Program was developed on the premise that Communism was now a domestic as well as a foreign menace, and that the employment of disloyal or subversive persons presented “more than a speculative threat” to the government; it was “a problem of such importance that it must be dealt with vigorously and effectively.”<sup>54</sup> The President’s plan involved an unprecedentedly broad programme of background investigations and screening procedures for all incumbent and prospective employees. It was a form of containment; Truman extended the definition of what it was to be a “red.” Disloyalty was defined not only as committing subversive activities but having suspect associations.<sup>55</sup> Historians Hinds and Windt note that “such loose language opened the proverbial Pandora’s box for investigation. It lifted people out of time, out of history.”<sup>56</sup> One no longer had to behave suspiciously to become a suspect; one could be guilty merely by association. In fact, as Jacqueline Foertsch claims, the Loyalty Program introduced the idea that one “could be and not be a communist at the same time, that one could ‘contract’ the ideology without even knowing it.” In such an environment:

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<sup>54</sup> Commission report cited in Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America from 1870 to Present* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978), p. 299.

<sup>55</sup> It has been argued that the announcement of Truman’s Loyalty Order (or Executive Order 9835), marked the beginning of “McCarthyism.” The programme set the tone and paved the way for the anti-communism hysteria that gripped the nation from 1947. The order itself allowed the F.B.I. to run name checks on two-million federal employees and full field investigations if any derogatory information was uncovered. The results of these investigations were disseminated to 150 loyalty boards, and an employee could be fired if “reasonable doubt” existed in regard to their loyalty. Disloyalty was defined by five sweeping categories. These were: 1. sabotage, espionage, spying or the advocacy thereof; 2. treason, sedition or the advocacy thereof; 3. intentional, unauthorised disclosure of confidential information; 4. advocacy of the violent overthrow of the U.S. government; 5. membership in, affiliation with or sympathetic association with any organisation labelled as totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive. For further research see Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security 1946-1948* (New York: Knopf, 1972), pp. 115-34.

<sup>56</sup> Lynn Boyd Hinds and Theodore Otto Windt Jr., *The Cold War as Rhetoric: The Beginnings 1945-1950* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 168.

The difficulty in identifying actual disloyalists and keeping accurate records of their activity incited fears of widespread “contamination,” a red “plague” to match the horrors of its biological predecessors throughout the centuries – if not in terms of human casualties, at least in terms of its presumed debilitation of society.<sup>57</sup>

Metaphors of disease would slowly gestate, first infiltrating foreign and then domestic politics, before permeating all platforms of U.S. popular culture. For example, Security State scientists would endeavour to create a “clean” hydrogen bomb in opposition to the “dirty” Soviet bomb. Government agencies such as the F.B.I. sought to “cleanse” the body politic of communists and radicals. Military authorities and Government officials would seek to eradicate gay men and lesbians from armed service and government office. Chemical corporations such as Du Pont would seek to produce ever-stronger pesticides to destroy unseen microbes and insects. Physicians were pursuing a “magic bullet” that could cure sexually-transmitted diseases. Corporate presidents and advertising agencies would employ disease metaphors in their attempts to build a consumer-oriented society, with an advertisement for Scot Tissue Towels asking the pertinent question, “Is Your Washroom breeding Bolsheviks?” Filmmakers, psychiatrists, psychologists, educators and journalists were using the external Soviet threat as a means of enabling Americans to assimilate rather than question societal “norms.”

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Metaphors of disease and illness were adopted in the early years of the Cold War in the hope that they might create a binary cultural framework with little room for ambiguity

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<sup>57</sup> Jacqueline Foertsch, *Enemies Within: The Cold War and the AIDS Crisis in Literature, Film and Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 19.

and uncertainty. The threat that this communist “virus” posed allowed American officials to ostracise domestic groups who failed to embrace cultural orthodoxy. Disease metaphors acted as a distancing mechanism which allowed those who employed it to reject, demonise, and objectify individuals and groups deemed to inhabit the “other” side. In *American Medicine as Culture* (1990), Howard F. Stein observes that the “consequences of medicalization...can be devastating to those who bear their brunt, just as they appear to be healing to those who purchase their integrity at the expense of others...Whole categories of people are depersonalized, stripped of their humanity.”<sup>58</sup> Deciding who fell into such categories involved a myriad of groups and individuals, including President Truman’s Loyalty Board, Hoover’s F.B.I., the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), and Senator Joseph McCarthy’s Permanent Senate Subcommittee on Government Operations. Dissenting or merely non-conforming domestic groups were linked with a cancer, which if “allowed to grow...affects the vitals of the organism in such a way that its removal is a critical and sometimes fatal operation;” eradication of “undesirables” became a patriotic necessity.<sup>59</sup> As Susan Sontag outlines in *Illness as Metaphor*, cancer metaphors are easily adapted to represent an invisible, internal threat to the body politic. Cancer, she argues, “was never viewed other than as a scourge; it was metaphorically, the barbarian within.” She argues it is the “disease of the Other,” it is metaphorically linked to the disease of communism in that it is viewed as “an invasion of “alien” or “mutant” cells.” With hindsight Sontag is able to claim that cancer metaphors worked specifically in a paranoid context “for those who need to turn campaigns into crusades,” as in their application during the political fever of the Cold War.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Stein, *American Medicine as Culture*, p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Barslaag, “Slick Tricks of the Commies,” *American Legion Magazine* (February, 1947), p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, pp. 61-86.

American citizens were expected to toe the line and live within proscribed boundaries of “identity.” Any evidence of “abnormality” or moral degeneracy would have been viewed as a threat to the “health” of the body politic. As psychiatrist Thomas Szasz recognised in *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961), the concept of illness was initially composed of only a few items, all sharing the common feature of reference to a state of disordered structure or function of the human body as a physiological machine. However, with “increasing zeal” physicians and especially psychiatrists began to call illness anything in which they could detect a sign of “malfunctioning” based on “no matter what norm.” Hence, as Szasz noted, by 1961:

Agoraphobia is an illness because one should not be afraid of open spaces. Homosexuality is an illness because heterosexuality is the social norm. Divorce is illness because it signals failure of marriage. Crime, art, undesired political leadership, participation in social affairs, or withdrawal from such participation –all these and many more have said to be signs of mental illness.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1950s it became legitimate to claim that women who worked outside of the home or openly embraced their sexuality outside of marriage, homosexual males and lesbians, drug addicts and juvenile delinquents were all displaying the symptoms of a disease. Their “illness” would rhetorically associate them with the “diseased” communist other; they were an “enemy within,” a pernicious threat to the vitality and character of a nation. In the new national security state, personal behaviour had become a decisive weapon in the fight against communism and medical metaphors situated the source of contagion within the infected individual, thus obscuring the initial politically motivated judgement.

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1961), pp. 44-45.

However, the strict self / other dichotomy which emerged in the post-war United States, failed to ease a rising tension. Boundary lines between the American “self” and the “diseased” other resulted in further paranoia and a fear of being labelled “different.”<sup>62</sup> The employment of socio-medical discourse facilitated paranoia. Disease metaphors often rendered difference invisible. Appearances had become deceptive; cleanliness / health and dirtiness / disease were now perceptible only on a microscopic level. “Otherness” had become a viral attribute without visible symptoms with the ability to disregard socio-cultural boundaries. Socio-medical rhetoric created a pathological other who might initially look like everyone else but who, due to some “deviant” behaviour, could be identified as different and labelled diseased. In cold-war rhetoric, military and medical experts became key to containment:

One deadly germ or one fatal strain of a virus can incapacitate and eventually kill an entire body. Infected people need to be operated upon or isolated and confined. Healthy people need to be inoculated...Since the germs or viruses are invisible to the naked and untrained eye, expert physicians must be consulted to diagnose symptoms that may indicate certain people have the disease or have been infected. Such experts are trusted as they provide the necessary therapy, painful though it may be, to cure the disease or contain its spread.<sup>63</sup>

One such “expert,” Attorney General J. Howard McGrath, warned the American populace that communists were everywhere, “in factories, offices, butcher shops, on

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<sup>62</sup> Such a situation calls to mind the paradoxical element in the relation of identity to difference as identified by William E. Connolly, whereby society cannot dispense with personal and collective identities but “the multiple drives to stamp truth upon those identities function to convert differences into otherness and otherness into scapegoats created and maintained to secure the appearance of a true identity. To possess a true identity is to be false to difference, while to be true to difference is to sacrifice the promise of a true identity.” Intensified pressures for consensual unity ironically produce more fragmentation and uncertainty. Connolly, *Identity | Difference*, pp. 67, 172.

<sup>63</sup> Hinds and Windt, Jr., *The Cold War as Rhetoric*, pp. 11. In the later cold-war context, Foertsch claims “the depth of hysteria generating postmodern plague is determined by the condition of the *barrier* perceived to separate healthy from contagious, patriot from traitor, straight from queer: the more difficult we feel this barrier is to locate, erect, or maintain, the more virulent the reaction against those suspected of belonging on the other side.” *Enemies Within*, p. 27.

street corners, in private business, and each carries within himself the germs of death for society.” As late as 1958, J. Edgar Hoover would continue to warn that the “Communist Party, USA, works day and night to further the communist plot in America. Virtually invisible to the non-communist eye, unhampered by time, distance, and legality, this Bolshevik transmission is in progress.” Hoover warned that communists were “ordinary-looking people, like your seatmate on the bus or a clerk in one of your neighborhood stores.” The number of “concealed” communists was apparently high. Some, he claimed, were concealed from the Communist Party membership, and “a few are so deeply hidden that only top leaders know their identity.” Communism was exerted through the “communist device of mind control.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, Communists, and fellow dissenters were a “zombified” force seemingly indistinguishable from the loyal American.

In 1952, with the publication of the results of their sociological survey entitled *Report on the American Communist* (an exposé combining the 1950s obsession with communism and communists with the trend for quantifying sociological phenomenon), Morris L. Ernst and David Loth declared that the Communist Party was “heavily populated with the handicapped – some of them physically, but more of them psychologically to the point that might be called emotionally crippling.” Ernst and Loth asserted that the Communist Party included “physically unattractive...emotionally unstable members.” Although purportedly writing their study of the domestic American communist so as to remove fear by demonstrating that communists could be rehabilitated, Ernst and Loth could only succeed in exacerbating fear of an invisible,

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<sup>64</sup> Hoover, *Masters of Deceit*, p. 81. It is interesting that Hoover published this so late in the 1950s. The “Red Scare” supposedly reached a peak around 1954, dying down as McCarthy’s political clout came to an end. However, *Masters of Deceit* highlights the extent to which the Communist “issue” remained a tangible “fear.” Indeed, Hoover claimed that America could not “afford the luxury of waiting for communism to run its course like other oppressive dictatorships. The weapons of communism are still formidable. They become more effective when we lower our guard and when we become lax in strengthening our democratic institutions in perfecting the American Dream.” (333).

pathological subversion when they dismissed popular communist stereotypes that had previously provided the American populace with discernible images, and when they suggested that the emotionally unstable were, by some “psychological gymnastics,” convinced that the “welfare of mankind” was linked to Soviet success. According to the authors, emotional “cripples,” whose outward appearance often betrayed their inner politics, were worse than a member of the Ku Klux Klan, for the Klansman “at least supports the cotton industry by using a goodly amount of cloth to preserve his secret.”<sup>65</sup>

In an environment of such ludicrous suspicion, uncovering duplicity became too big a job for the federal government alone. Whilst expunging communists from Hollywood, labour unions and universities created headlines for congressmen, spying on the neighbours was advocated as a patriotic pastime for “regular” citizens. In his melodramatically-written *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America* (1958), which draws on F.B.I. case files, J. Edgar Hoover warned his readers that the American communist was trained, disciplined, dedicated, and fanatical twenty-four hours round the clock, sinking to depths of “depravity, hate and inhuman venom.” To combat this, in a chapter entitled “What Can You Do?” Hoover advised:

We need the help of *all* loyal Americans...Don't think one must have evidence establishing the identity of a spy, the hide-

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<sup>65</sup> Morris L. Ernst and David Loth, *Report on the American Communist* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1952), p. 1, 127, 113. Ernst and Loth list these stereotypes as the foreign bearded man with an “inbred hatred of American institutions and concealing a bomb,” the immigrant “who has not been well assimilated and fails to understand his new country,” the psychopathic traitor “a composite figure drawn from the more lurid witnesses in spy trials and the investigations conducted by right-wing anti-Communists with social pink eye,” and, coming “closest to hitting the mark,” the “long haired intellectual who lives in a world of books and talk but never did an honest day's work with his hands.” Ernst and Loth attribute a supposed rise in young communists to the attitude and action of the parent. Just as the domineering mother or ineffectual father could “infect” their son with the pathogen of homosexuality, so too they could “infect” their child with communism. According to the authors, most of the former communists to whom they spoke “have had a succession of disappointments in their families. They have not had sympathetic parents or they have not had parents at all...they have been lonely children very often and the Communist youth movement gave them a sense of belonging, an illusion of popularity which marked the high point of their lives.” When parents did learn about their child's communist tendencies, “the horrid fact was concealed if possible, much as an earlier generation sought to conceal evidence of insanity in a child.” (92).

out of an underground Party leader, or the location of stolen blueprints before he can report information. Many cases start with very small clues, a scrap of paper, an abandoned passport. Then bit by bit, the entire picture is developed by investigation.<sup>66</sup>

While middle-class perceptions of loyalty were construed as the neighbours' ability to "keep up with the Joneses," a commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy could best be displayed by an adherence to the doctrine of a consumer society. As suburban developer William J. Levitt claimed in 1948, "no man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist."<sup>67</sup>

Ironically, once purchased, the suburban home became a metaphorical "closet," a private sanctum where behaviours and personalities could develop – free from the gaze of the security state and one's own neighbours. The home could "contain" tensions between social norms and individual rebelliousness, and between loyalty and subversion. Across a range of cultural texts the family home became a site where family "anomalies" or embarrassments such as insanity, homosexuality, alcoholism, adultery, divorce and cancer might be hidden.<sup>68</sup> Thus, despite overt displays of consumer satisfaction, in a paranoid cultural climate "ordinary" people found themselves confronting the situation that psychologist Joel Kovel described, where "social bonds decompose and paranoid relations replace them."<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, individual and collective identities, far from being galvanised, collapsed.

This social complex is attested to by a study conducted in 1954. Samuel A. Stouffer, then Director of the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard University, initiated a survey of more than 6000 men and women from across the country and all

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<sup>66</sup> Hoover, *Masters of Deceit*, pp. 309 – 311.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 231.

<sup>68</sup> See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

<sup>69</sup> Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America* (London: Cassel, 1997), p. 187.

walks of life. The results of the inquiry were published under the title *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties: A Cross-section of the Nation Speaks its Mind*, and it revealed that a “large” number of those interviewed (the majority of whom appear to be housewives) were worried about “*the danger of Americans today becoming converts to Communism or Communist ideas.*” Apparently, respondents feared the “perils of subversion of our youth in schools and colleges and of adults such as workers in factories, Negroes, and other minority groups, government employees, etc.” Published responses include:

They’re creeping in places and poisoning the minds of young people in education with things contrary to the Bible. – *Housewife*, Indiana.

Communists get children into cellars, educating them in warfare, and training them to go into secret places. – *Housewife*, Massachusetts.

They’re in our books, our movies, much more enmeshed in the life of the country than people realize. They started years ago – look at your I.W.W.’s and so on – one tiny facet. Education and identification is the only way to clear this thing, to bring it out into the open. – *Housewife*, Connecticut.<sup>70</sup>

Indicating a moral panic, the implication was now that communists and those whose non-conformity threatened the moral “norm,” thereby risking national health, were “everywhere.” It was widely asserted that communists, and fellow “undesirables,” could be found in all walks of life, in schools, on cinema screens, in books and, according to at least one Massachusetts housewife, hiding in cellars, their contagiousness undetectable.

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<sup>70</sup> Samuel A. Stouffer (1955), *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties: A Cross-section of the Nation Speaks Its Mind* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), pp. 160-163.

The Connecticut housewife who claimed that she saw communists in the movies was not alone in such a conviction. In 1947, the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (MPA) invited the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to Hollywood.<sup>71</sup> HUAC, sensing an opportunity for publicity, accepted the invitation and arrived in Hollywood to expose cinematic communism.

HUAC held nine days of hearings into alleged communist propaganda in the Hollywood motion picture industry which began on October 20, 1947.<sup>72</sup> The Committee intended to “cleanse” the nation by “purifying” cinema screens. HUAC and the MPA worked under the assumption that just one communist at work in Hollywood threatened to “infect” the entire organisation. Thus, any witness deemed to be “unfriendly,” refusing to answer questions by invoking their First Amendment rights, would need to be isolated, examined and quarantined. A group known and promoted as

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<sup>71</sup> The MPA was a passionately anti-communist organisation of politically-conservative movie workers who wanted to defend the movie industry against communist infiltration. The group was established in 1944, to vanquish “the growing impression that this industry is made up of, and dominated by, Communists, radicals, and crackpots.” It served as a body of supporters within the film industry that were willing to testify publicly against supposed communists in front of HUAC. The Alliance’s Statement of Principles maintained that “anyone who is not FIGHTING Communism is HELPING Communism.” The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was an investigative committee of the United States House of Representatives. It is often referred to, as it is here, as the House Un-American Activities Committee. HUAC became a standing (permanent) committee in 1946. The committee of nine representatives investigated suspected threats of subversion or propaganda. Under this mandate, the committee focused its investigations on real and suspected communists in positions of influence in American society.

<sup>72</sup> This was the first of two HUAC Hollywood invasions. HUAC would return to Hollywood in the spring of 1951. HUAC’s position had been strengthened by a series of national and international incidents, such as the conviction of Alger Hiss, the fall of China to the communists, and a successful atomic test by the Soviet Union. This second offensive operated in much the same way as the first; however, the committee also broadened its scope. The committee were well aware of the possible communist infiltration of the television industry, noting that it could have “a tremendous emotional impact upon the [viewing] audience...Because of the vast new potentialities of television it seems logical that Hollywood motion pictures will in the future be presented on a large scale to television audiences. The committee hopes that its investigation of Hollywood will have a far reaching effect and prevent a large-scale future Communist infiltration of the television industry.” Indeed, this time no branch of the entertainment industry was to avoid HUAC; radio, theatre, and music, as well as film and television, would receive coverage. For more, see “The Devastation: HUAC Returns to Hollywood, 1951-53” in Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930 - 1960* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press / Doubleday, 1980), pp. 361-397.

the “Hollywood Ten,” which included eminent screen-writers such as Dalton Trumbo and Edward Dmytryk, would, by refusing to answer questions, eventually serve prison sentences for “contempt.”

The questions for HUAC were simple. Despite all the built-in safeguards by which the movie studios ensured the “formulaic” and “ideological” homogeneity of its film output, was it nonetheless possible for a radical writer to create a screenplay that could change or enlighten the viewers’ understanding of some crucial social, political or economic issue? Could a Hollywood writer actually create a script with the ability to undermine the prevailing social consciousness and cohesion of the United States?<sup>73</sup> In their report published in 1951, the committee answered these questions in the affirmative, claiming to be “less interested in a film that has a Communist context, where a few hundred people will come and see it,” and more concerned with “an ordinary John-and-Mary picture where there is only a drop of progressive thought in it.”<sup>74</sup>

This conclusion can be seen as a direct result of the campaigning of Hollywood screenwriter, novelist and self-appointed cold-war crusader Ayn Rand. Rand, a Cold Warrior, aimed not only to eliminate subversive themes but to consciously promote a positive vision of a homogenous American way of life: a consumer democracy. Her pamphlet, *Screen Guide for Americans*, was distributed by the Motion Picture Alliance and appeared on the front page of the entertainment section of the *New York Times*, Rand’s influence over the Committee is evident in her claim that:

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<sup>73</sup> See also Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, pp. 254-324, and Edward L. Barret, Jr., *The Tenney Committee* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1951), pp. 200, 208-9.

<sup>74</sup> Report cited in Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 131. This was obviously a concern for Lela Rogers, mother of Ginger, who criticised the film *Tender Comrade*, written by “Hollywood Ten” member Dalton Trumbo, which had originally required Ginger to speak the “Red” line “share and share alike, that’s democracy.”

The purpose of the communists in Hollywood is **not** the production of political movies openly advocating Communism. Their purpose is **to corrupt our moral premises by corrupting non-political movies** – by introducing small, casual bits of propaganda into innocent stories – thus making people absorb the basic premises of Collectivism **by indirection and implication.**<sup>75</sup> (Emphasis in original).

In addition to the long-established Production Code, Russian-born Rand provided a 13-point checklist for moviemakers.<sup>76</sup> The list was devised under the premise that communist propaganda was evident in many films. In her analysis, it was the avowed purpose of communists to insert propaganda but it could even be created unknowingly by “innocent men...loyal Americans who deplore the spread of Communism and wonder why it is spreading.” This propaganda, consisting of a “constant stream of hints, lines, touches and suggestions” was, she argued, “battering” the American movie-going populace. Rand, like all cold-war crusaders, saw the world as torn by a great political issue: a choice between Americanism and Totalitarianism. The America Rand wished to protect was distinctly corporate. In Rand’s estimation, therefore, it was un-American to “smear” the free enterprise system, the industrialist, the independent man, American political institutions and national ideas of wealth and success. It was similarly un-American to glorify the collective, and any reference to “the common man” (a “communist slogan”) was strictly prohibited.<sup>77</sup> Failing to comprehend the irony

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<sup>75</sup> Ayn Rand, *Screen Guide for Americans* (Beverly Hills, CA: The Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, 1950), p.1.

<sup>76</sup> The Production Code was a set of industry guidelines governing the production of American motion pictures. The code was adopted in 1930 by the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association and was enforced in 1934. It was ultimately abandoned in favour of a ratings system in 1967. The code forbade, amongst other things, the depiction of illegal drug use, adultery, the glorification of crime and criminals, the ridicule of religion, homosexuality, even “excessive lustful kissing.” Ayn Rand’s further 13 points consisted of: 1. Don’t take politics lightly, 2. Don’t smear the free enterprise system, 3. Don’t smear industrialists, 4. Don’t smear wealth, 5. Don’t smear the profit motive, 6. Don’t smear success, 7. Don’t glorify failure, 8. Don’t glorify depravity, 9. Don’t deify “the common man,” 10. Don’t glorify the collective, 11. Don’t smear an independent man, 12. Don’t use current events carelessly, and 13. Don’t smear American political institutions.

<sup>77</sup> As historian Henry Steele Commager observed in the 1960s, the “new loyalty” was, above all else, conformity: “It is the uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of America as it is – the political institutions, the social relationships, the economic practices...It regards as particularly heinous any

of her comments, published as they were in an era of “encouraged” conformity, Rand claimed:

In the American doctrine, no man is **common**. Every man’s personality is unique – and it is respected as such. He may have qualities which he shares with others: but his virtue is not gauged by how much he resembles others – **that** is the Communist doctrine: his virtue is gauged by his personal distinction, great or small...America is the land of the **uncommon man**.<sup>78</sup>

Although at first the industry was eloquently indignant over the invasion of private rights, resistance soon faltered. In the face of much scrutiny, on November 26, 1947 Hollywood announced a new industry-wide hiring policy in the “Waldorf Declaration.” Hollywood’s biggest hitters declared that they would no longer employ anyone considered politically dangerous. Fifty leading motion picture executives held a secret two-day meeting at the Waldorf Astoria and upon its conclusion, lent their support to HUAC, declaring:

We will forthwith discharge or suspend without compensation those in our employ and we will not re-employ any of the ten until such time as he is acquitted or has purged himself of contempt and declares under oath that he is not a communist...We will not knowingly employ a Communist or member of a party or group which advocates the overthrow of the Government by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods...<sup>79</sup>

“Blacklisting” was a response to the charges of subversion brought to Hollywood by HUAC, and despite attacks on its legality the blacklist would remain a fact of

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challenge to what is called “the system of private enterprise,” identifying that system with Americanism. It regards America as a finished product, perfect and complete.” Henry Steele Commager, *Freedom and Order* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1966), pp. 141-42.

<sup>78</sup> Rand, *Screen Guide for Americans*, p. 7. Rand furthers this irony when she later states, “**Don’t** fall for such drivel as “I don’t wanna be dif’reent – I wanna be just like everybody else.” You’ve heard this one in endless variations. If ever there was an un-American attitude, this is it. America is the country where every man wants to be **different** – and most men succeed at it.” (p. 8).

<sup>79</sup> John Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting* (New York: Fund for the Republic, 1956), pp. 21-23.

Hollywood life into the 1960s. Even at the time, many considered the practice of “blacklisting” to be a form of censorship inherent in dictatorship and anathema to democracy, ironically more a custom of the communist other from which the government were so keen to distance themselves. As early as 1964 in *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor*, Murray Schumach wrote:

When the blacklist has been discarded – as it must, inevitably – it may seem strange that there ever was such a thing in our democratic nation. How did it happen, in a country where men and women cast secret ballots and do not hesitate to criticize their most important officials, that this instrument of dictatorship prevailed?<sup>80</sup>

Similar blacklists were instituted in the television and radio industries in 1950 following the publication of *Red Channels*, a listing of over one hundred popular entertainers and their supposed left-wing affiliations. These blacklists reflected directly the HUAC philosophy that the presence of every individual communist, fellow traveller and former communist who would not purge himself was “intolerable” and that the “just fate” of every such “creature” was to be “exposed in his community, routed from his job and driven into exile.”<sup>81</sup> Such a stringent position, advocating the social and cultural quarantine of any individual with views antithetical to the majority, encouraged Academy Award-winning film director Lewis Milestone, reversing the prevalent use of

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<sup>80</sup> Murray Scumach, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor: The Story of Movie and Television Censorship* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), p. 121. Schumach claimed that the blacklist was “the most shameful illustration of artistic cowardice...a creature of Hollywood’s terror of pressure groups at its worst.” (119). He also highlights how movie industry insiders recognised at the time the negative ideological, moral and artistic effects of such a practice. Even Eric Johnson, who earlier had delivered the Waldorf Statement, is quoted as stating, “We are frank to recognise that such a policy involves dangers and risks. There is the danger of hurting innocent people. There is a risk of creating an atmosphere of fear. Creative work at its best cannot be carried on in an atmosphere of fear.” (122).

<sup>81</sup> Walter Goodman, *The Committee* (Baltimore: Penguin Press, 1969), p. 225.

pseudo-medical rhetoric, to claim that a fear and “psychosis” were pervading Hollywood and that motion-pictures had become “sterilized of ideas.”<sup>82</sup>

After 1947, both in the politics of Hollywood and in the movies it produced, one can trace a new commitment to producing un-official cold-war propaganda. A 1956 study of the content of Hollywood films would reveal these effects. In 1947, of all films released, 28 percent were said to be of a “serious social bent.” However, after HUAC, the representation of such themes steadily declined; by 1953 they represented only 9 percent of the films to reach cinema screens. The witch-hunters had created an atmosphere which made progressive social content in films difficult if not impossible.<sup>83</sup> Hollywood would instead create a large number of films with simplistic anti-communist themes. Grisly images of Soviet Communism would be displayed in contrast to a vibrant United States populated by happy and healthy men, women and children. A host of politically-unsophisticated films, with apt titles such as *The Iron Curtain* (1948), *Red Menace* (1949), *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), *Red Snow* (1952) and *My Son John* (1952), depicted communism, both external and internal, in lurid terms.<sup>84</sup> The communists portrayed in these films were “scruffy, humourless, effeminate and sinister.”<sup>85</sup> They were spies and recruiters for the party and murdered innocents who thwarted them. Although box-office failures, the studios regarded these films as “necessary for public relations.” Thus, following HUAC intervention, the

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<sup>82</sup> Lewis Milestone cited in May, *The Big Tomorrow*, p. 202.

<sup>83</sup> Dorothy B. Jones, “Communism and the Movies,” in John Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting*, (New York: Fund for the Republic, 1956), pp. 219-20. Similarly, Lary May claims that under the impact of the pressures of a Cold War, movies continued the affirmation of big business and classlessness that first permeated the screen in World War II. Apparently, the incidence of depictions of big business as villainous or of the rich as a moral threat decreased from 20 and 50 percent, to less than 5 percent during the fifties. Social reform in film became less the agency of citizens operating in the autonomous civic sphere than of experts aligned with established institutions. Along with the elevation of experts, fears of internal subversion accelerated from 10 percent during World War II to over 25 percent from 1945 to 1955. See *The Big Tomorrow*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>84</sup> The election year of 1952 provided a peak, with the production of twelve explicitly anti-communist films reaching the screen. 40 such films were released between 1948 and 1954.

<sup>85</sup> James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 239.

motion picture industry produced a series of crude, propagandist films that championed ideological purity and gave dramatic visual life and magnification to national fears of communist infiltration and infection.

Of course, this is not to say that Hollywood abandoned depictions of domestic disharmony. External communists were not the only enemy to be fought. There were communists within as well as without, and there were “others” who, although not communists, failed to live by proscribed standards of “normality” and were thus construed as evidence of social, familial and moral disintegration, their behaviour was deemed un-American, morally corrupt and entirely deviant. By failing to adhere to the rigorously defined notion of the “good” American, it was reasoned that they were suffering from, or prone to, infection. Popular imagery and rhetoric bound working women, domineering mothers, spinsters, lesbians, gay men, juvenile delinquents and drug addicts to the diseased Soviet Communist. Heterogeneous groups were seen as a danger to the home and family. They were easy targets, habitually deemed alien, subversive, dirty and sick. Their deviation from the “norm” was seen as evidence of a neurosis that not only corrupted the personality of the individual but threatened to undermine the security of the nation. Moral turpitude, like a viral agent, could easily be transmitted and infected and vulnerable individuals were identified, isolated and cured (or, where necessary, destroyed). In this sense, the politicisation of cultural products, including Hollywood film, was a testament to the extent to which the cold-war security state was determined to locate and control social aberrations.

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An analysis of the American woman provides a useful opening to my thesis because, as *Look* magazine reported towards the end of the 1950s, “For some years now, the American woman has been under persistent attack as the cause of the major ills of modern American Life.” The author of the article, American literary critic Diana Trilling, in the article, asserted that the American woman was responsible for a decline in “masculine self-esteem” and “the instability of the modern home,” as well as the “rise in juvenile delinquency and male homosexuality,” and even the “alarming incidence of heart disease among American men.” According to Trilling, “no thoughtful woman” could “fail to agree” that her sex had lost its way and that modern woman no longer knew how to “behave as a woman.” The modern American woman was thus constructed as corrupt and highly infectious. She reportedly had to learn how to behave “for civilization to be assured its survival.”<sup>86</sup> Her position of control within the family home and her invasion of traditionally masculine worlds were viewed as a threat, not only to herself, her children and the American male, but to the survival of the entire nation and thus she could be, and was, routinely blamed for *all* of America’s social ills.

Therefore, Chapter 1, “The Many Faces of Eve: Delineating the Boundaries of Femininity,” begins in 1947 with the publication of Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham’s seminal study *Modern Woman*, a species the authors subtitled “the lost sex.” Their instructional text claimed the modern woman to be a deeply disturbed part of a larger psycho-social problem described as a “ghostly epidemic.” According to the authors, modernity had rendered the traditional female role redundant. A host of labour-saving domestic devices and “diseased” feminist propaganda had dislocated women from the home, thereby unleashing scores of “infectious” females into the traditionally

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<sup>86</sup> Diana Trilling, “The Case of the American Woman,” *Look* (March 3, 1959), pp. 50 – 54.

masculine public sphere of paid employment, promoting the emancipation of an otherwise strictly-controlled female sexuality. By tracing the overt disease metaphors of *Modern Woman* through the journalism of *Life* magazine and *Ladies Home Journal*, instructional guides for living, television discussion shows, and ultimately Hollywood film, this chapter explores the extent to which in a culture of “containment,” Hollywood contributed to the delineation of normative boundaries of femininity. *All About Eve* (1950), *Young Man With a Horn* (1950), *The Goddess* (1958) and *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) form primary case studies which represent working, sexually adventurous and often sexually manipulative women in emotional and psychological crisis. They are seen to “suffer” from masculinity complexes, frigidity, lesbianism and multiple personality disorders. The films question, test and extend *Modern Woman*’s thesis, administering “cures” for those deemed worthy and punishment for those who are not.

As my analysis of *Young Man With a Horn* demonstrates, women could “suffer” from homosexuality and reduce men to alcoholism in the process. Chapter 2, “Suddenly a Homosexuality Epidemic,” reveals how women were blamed for infecting children, specifically their sons, with the homosexuality “virus.” As early as 1942, Philip Wylie, in *Generation of Vipers* had coined the word “Momism,” a term that would connote the harmful effects an excess of a mother’s love could have on the “proper” development of American sons. Taking Dr. Edmund Bergler’s sensationalist, pseudo-medical *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (1956) as my starting point, this chapter charts the construction of homosexuality as a disease and traces the movement of the “pathogen.” Examining *Tea and Sympathy* (1956), *Compulsion* (1959), and *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959) alongside Bergler’s book, tabloid journalism, television discussion shows and government reports, I demonstrate how Hollywood delineated the symptomatic manifestations of homosexuality as “disease.” In *Tea and Sympathy*, the

viewer is initially led to believe that the homosexuality “pathogen” resides in the slight, outwardly effeminate body of student Tom Lee. However, when Tom’s heterosexuality is made apparent, the film subverts a common assumption by suggesting the pathogen lies in the robust, overtly “masculine” frame of Tom’s housemaster, Bill Reynolds. The pathogen lacks obvious visible symptoms and in this way the “diseased” homosexual had become invisible. This invisibility informed the collapse of distinctions between the homosexual and the sexual psychopath in the popular media. Therefore, in *Suddenly, Last Summer* the body of homosexual protagonist Sebastian Venable is displayed as a fragmented, sinister and “infectious” predator.

My analysis of *Compulsion* brings the juvenile offender into focus. Judd and Artie, the film’s teenage protagonists, are responsible for the abduction and murder of a local schoolboy. Their criminal acts are manifestations of an inherent pathology. However, throughout the 1950s, Hollywood would also explore juvenile delinquency without making a link to homosexuality. Chapter 3, “Contaminated Teens: Juvenile Delinquency and Moral Panic” explores this in greater detail. The concept of the “moral panic,” purports that societies sporadically depict a condition, episode, person or group of persons as a threat to societal values and interests. Indeed, in 1955, *New York Times* Education Editor Benjamin Fine would liken juvenile delinquency to an outbreak of polio and warn that within a year the number of “infected” would reach 1,000,000 *Delinquents* (1955).<sup>87</sup> This chapter illustrates that Fine was not alone in his protestations. *Time* and *Life* magazines, Margaret Mead, J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Government would repeatedly warn of the danger posed by a juvenile delinquency “epidemic.”

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<sup>87</sup> Likening the juvenile delinquency “epidemic” to an outbreak of Polio would have resonated with readers in 1955, it was not until April of 1955 that a vaccination for Polio was declared effective.

With both the “panic” and “pathology” of juvenile delinquency established, Chapter 3 traces the spread of the delinquency pathogen from the “alien” environment of the inner-city slum in early film representations such as *City Across the River* (1949) and *Knock on any Door* (1949), to the idyllic suburban landscape of middle-class America in later films such as *The Unguarded Moment* (1956), *High School Hell Cats* (1958), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and the Ed Wood-scripted *The Violent Years* (1956). In the latter films, pathology supersedes poverty as the cause of both male and female delinquency.

This chapter also brings the role of mass culture into view. The term “mass culture” is used here to denote the reading, viewing and listening material that abounds in the public arena. It comprises the words and images that circulate closest to hand in everyday life, such as music, paperback books and magazines, television shows and movies.<sup>88</sup> Mass cultural artefacts were ostensibly capable of infecting their juvenile audience. Indeed, cementing this understanding of mass culture as a viral agent, Patrick Bratlinger argues that the term was originally used in the “diagnosis of social disease and breakdown.”<sup>89</sup> Lois Higgins, director of the Chicago Crime Prevention Bureau, testified before Congress in 1954 that mass cultural artefacts such as comic-books, movies and Rock ‘n’ Roll records were diseased propagandist weapons in the arsenal of a far greater foreign enemy:

Throughout the United States today...indeed throughout the entire free world, a deadly war is being waged...let us tell [our children] about the secret weapons of our enemy. Let us tell them, too, that the obscene material that is flooding the Nation today is another cunning device of our enemies, deliberately

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<sup>88</sup> See, Jed Rasula, “Nietzsche in the Nursery: Naïve Classics and Surrogate Parents in Postwar American Cultural Debates,” *Representations*, (29, Winter 1990), p. 50.

<sup>89</sup> See Patrick Bratlinger, *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983).

calculated to destroy the decency and morality which are the bulwarks of society.<sup>90</sup>

It was reasoned that cultural products such as television and radio programmes, films, magazines and comic-books were themselves inciting youngsters everywhere into committing delinquent acts. In 1950, the *New York Times* published some twenty articles examining the link between the mass media and delinquency. By 1954, James Gilbert claims this number had doubled. There was supposedly “concrete” evidence too; as one young murderer would tell the *Los Angeles Mirror-News* in 1957, “I saw all those stabbings in the movies and on television and I wanted to find out what it was like.”<sup>91</sup>

Many exponents of the “mass-culture as the cause of delinquency” approach failed to realise that they were championing some of the most radical European criticisms of a mass society, sharing the concerns of members of the Frankfurt School, including Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who settled in the United States in the 1930s and whose critique of American mass culture was becoming increasingly influential. Intellectuals such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse were concerned with the rise of a mass society and along with it a mass culture that they believed would come to dominate and eventually destroy all that was valuable and original in “traditional” culture. To these critics, the production and consumption of cultural forms had become economic and industrial activities governed purely by commercial interests. They depicted consumer icons such as Madison Avenue, Hollywood and Disneyland as threatening and degenerate, sapping the nation’s moral fibre for profit. According to these critics, audiences in a mass society had become an indifferent,

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<sup>90</sup> Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, Senate Judiciary Committee, 83<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess. (1954), 101-111, cited in James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 75.

<sup>91</sup> Cited in Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, p. 77.

politically-malleable mass. Hollywood movies were said merely to reflect and encourage deference to cultural hegemony.

The symptoms of the juvenile delinquency “disease” would manifest themselves cinematically in particular ways, from petty crimes such as intimidation, shoplifting and vandalism through to violent crime such as rape and murder. In *High School Confidential* (1958) an F.B.I. agent goes undercover in a suburban high school to expose a drugs ring and reveal the “epidemic” level of teen narcotics addiction. Chapter 4, “The Drug Addict: Crime or Cure?” charts the graduation of teen addicts into adult users. *The Man with The Golden Arm* (1955), *A Hatful of Rain* (1957), *Bigger Than Life* (1956) and *Let No Man Write my Epitaph* (1960) are positioned within a wider cultural and political debate between the medical community in the guise of the American Medical Association, and federal law-makers as represented by Harry J. Anslinger’s Federal Bureau of Narcotics. Looking closely at Anslinger’s 1953 study *The Traffic In Narcotics*, and the joint publication of the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association, *Narcotic Drugs*, this chapter explores how both sides of this often-heated exchange viewed the addict as diseased, but whereas the medical community saw this as reason for cure and compassion, Anslinger claimed it as proof of an infectious criminal insanity and the need for a system of mass quarantine.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **The Many Faces of Modern Woman: Inscribing the Boundaries of a Healthy Femininity.**

For some years now, the American woman has been under persistent attack as the cause of the major ills of modern American life...The instability of the modern home, the rise in juvenile delinquency and male homosexuality, even the alarming incidence of heart disease among American men – all of these are blamed on the American woman's distortion of her traditional female role...No thoughtful woman can fail to agree that her sex has lost its way and the modern woman no longer knows how to behave as a woman.<sup>1</sup>

In 1947 a book entitled *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* was published in the United States. This polemical text became an instant bestseller and swiftly entered the popular zeitgeist. In their study of 1950s culture and society, Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak claim that *Modern Woman* “achieved an astonishing amount of intellectual influence.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout the 1950s, phrases, paragraphs and chapters from the book were reproduced to an extent rare for a popular culture text. The book was highly provocative, claiming that the “problem” of women in the United States took precedence over and even created other problems such as crime, vice, poverty, juvenile delinquency, group intolerance, racial hatred, divorce, periodic unemployment, inadequate housing and care in old age. It was written with clarity and an accessibility

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<sup>1</sup> Diana Trilling, “The Case for the American Woman,” *Look*, (1959), pp. 50 – 54.

<sup>2</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 1. Further to this Miller and Nowak state that one could compare *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* to other rallying points of popular culture such as “McCarthy...to Sputnik...to the film *Rebel Without a Cause* and singer Elvis Presley.” Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977), p. 153.

that, coupled with the professional stature of the authors, lent the book a pseudo-scientific authority. The book's original blurb would thus present it as "one of the most penetrating, lucid and scientifically accurate studies of the dilemma of modern women."

Co-authored by journalist Ferdinand Lundberg and psychiatrist Dr. Marynia Farnham, *Modern Woman* was purportedly developed out of Farnham's experiences as a practising psychiatrist and was thus disguised as a scientific enquiry. Further social influence and a literary flourish were added by journalist Lundberg, already a published author. Together they claimed that a staggering majority of American women were suffering from a psychological disorder which was wreaking terrible personal effects and dangerous social harm. The aim of their book was to diagnose the source of the "contagion" and prescribe the necessary remedial socio-medical action so as to halt and reverse its spread.

As my Introduction indicates, their audacious claims should not be viewed in either cultural isolation or in a political vacuum. After 1945, as a response to supposedly unrestrained female sexuality and the rise of women in the workforce that war-time society and economy had allowed, there began the political and cultural glorification of the family and a revival of the domestic ideal. A 1963 television show charting the history of "The American Woman in the Twentieth Century" was able to observe that post World War II, the United States "plunged into a frantic race for normalcy...and after the hardship of war and depression [the American woman] wanted nothing more than to take her ease in the comfortable cocoon of the home."

The “normal” American woman was now a housewife and mother, “cocooned” in “push button” domestic harmony.<sup>3</sup>

Published in 1947, *Modern Woman* arrived amidst the new political culture of “containment.” Lundberg and Farnham worked their rhetoric so as to both directly and indirectly link the working, “unfeminine,” unmarried or sexually promiscuous woman with communism as contagion; these women presented a threat to domestic health.<sup>4</sup> The language of containment is evident in Lundberg and Farnham’s claim that the majority of American women suffered from a psychological disorder, as exposed in my Introduction, that they named the “ghostly epidemic.” The epidemic in question was understood by the medical community as neurosis and termed “ghostly” because it often remained hidden. In an article published in *The Annals of the American Academy*, Farnham singled out the female of the species and claimed that mental and emotional illness in women was increasing. She argued that female demands for direct psychiatric help were greatly in excess of available facilities. There existed a “picture of overwhelming emotional catastrophe”:

For every gain that medicine has been able to register in its struggle against disease in the purely physical sphere, it is now

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<sup>3</sup> “The American Woman in the Twentieth Century,” Wolper Productions and United Artists Television, September 1963. LoC Catalogue number: FDA 3698.

<sup>4</sup> Although culture-specific it is important to note that Lundberg and Farnham’s *Modern Woman* was not a new construct. The “Modern Woman” as they so describe her, shares many characteristics with the “New Woman” of the 1890s and early Twentieth Century. Advocates of the New Woman ideal reacted against woman’s prescribed role, as characterized by the so-named “Cult of Domesticity.” The Cult of Domesticity or the Cult of True Womanhood was a prevailing view during the Jacksonian Era in the United States (and evidently held sway into the 1950s). According to this “Cult” (so named by its detractors), home was identified as the “proper” sphere for women, who were expected to possess four virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. The supporters of the New Woman shared the common aim to encourage women to liberate themselves from male domination, manage their own lives, and reject any prevailing notions that might restrict their pursuit of happiness and their ultimate self-realization. In his seminal text *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen highlighted the conservative backlash against such a stance, claiming, not unlike Lundberg and Farnham would later, that “it is unfeminine in her (woman) to aspire to a self-directing, self-centered life; and our common interest tells us that her direct participation in the affairs of the community, civil or industrial, is a menace...The social relations of the sexes are fixed by nature.” Thorstein Veblen (1899), *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 355-356.

possible to enter a counterbalancing factor of increasing illness of psychological origin.<sup>5</sup>

Farnham and Lundberg saw the neurosis epidemic they described as hastened by industrialisation and the corresponding decline of the home as a vital social institution. The new suburban home was a functionless shell, they argued, suitable only for the “tattered dreams” of neurotics and alcoholics. In 1959, Columbia Broadcasting Systems (CBS) would air the daytime show “Woman! Is the American Woman Losing Her Femininity?” and declare that by residing in suburbia the American woman missed “the old home town” and the “stabilising” presence of family and friends; in this environment, CBS declared, she “tends to become neurotic.”<sup>6</sup> In Lundberg and Farnham’s rhetoric, the modern American home had become a place from which women sought to escape, usually into the more damaging world of competitive employment. Nowhere was this better expressed than by the proliferation of modern household appliances designed to free women from the drudgery of housework. A 1956 Philco print advertisement perfectly encapsulates this new “automatic” domesticity, announcing, “Her dinner for 8 cooks automatically...while she watches television that tunes itself...PHILCO...everything to make the woman’s world automatic!” In the accompanying image a beautiful blonde, bedecked in jewels, sits in her pristine home watching television.

In 1951, American journalist and author Robert Ruark asserted in *Look* magazine that the modern American woman was already living “under a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval, complete with freezing unit, home permanents, no-rinse detergents, radio, television, automatic transmissions, quick frozen vegetables, air conditioning,

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<sup>5</sup> Marynia Farnham, M.D., “Battles Won and Lost,” *The Annals of the American Academy* (May 1947), p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> “Woman! Is the American Woman Losing Her Femininity?” CBS, 1959. LoC Catalogue Number: FCA 1620-1621.

spin dryers, pressure cookers and charge accounts.” Ruark argued that it was inconceivable that, under such luxuriously modern living conditions, the modern American woman could consider herself to be “lost” or unhappy:

If the mass ever visited the really benighted areas, where the ladies draw the plows and are occasionally crippled, slain, or even eaten for a violation of decorum, they might cast aside the analytical volumes on Woman: The Lost Sex and send up a silent hosanna for a land that gives them a man’s privilege while simultaneously endowing them with female immunity from a kick in – you should excuse the expression – the pants. I don’t know what ails our girls – but I do know this: I’m tired of hearing about their operation.<sup>7</sup>

Lundberg and Farnham, however, purported to know exactly what ailed the American woman and would urge them to read on rather than cast aside their scripture. The modern technological advancements were far from a blessing and were responsible for the dislocation of women from their “natural” role, and had precipitated the rapid decline of their mental stability.<sup>8</sup> A *Life* magazine article entitled “American Woman’s Dilemma” used a case study of housewife Marjorie McWeeney of Rye, New York to illustrate the dramatic shift in domesticity and fulfilment. According to the article, Marjorie’s chores are “much lighter” than they would have been only a few generations ago. She cleans with machinery propelled by electricity, she uses food prepared in canneries, and her clothes are factory-made to fit every member of the family. However, although her chores are relieved of drudgery, they have lost their “creative satisfactions.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, it was argued woman “lost her sphere of creative nurture and

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Ruark, “I’m Tired of Women’s Problems,” *Look* (July 17, 1951), pp. 58 – 61.

<sup>8</sup> Ironically, in 1959, with then Vice President Nixon’s much-publicised visit to the Soviet Union, it was precisely these technological innovations that were touted as representing the essence of American freedom. In what has been termed the “kitchen debate,” Nixon engaged in a verbal spar with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev over the relative merits of American and Soviet domestic appliances. American superiority rested on the suburban home, complete with modern automatic appliances and distinct gender roles. The democratic way of life, Nixon suggested, was made manifest in one’s ability to choose a home and its appliances.

<sup>9</sup> “American Woman’s Dilemma,” *Life*, (June 16, 1947), p.105.

either was catapulted out into the world to seek achievement in the masculine sphere of exploit or was driven in upon herself as a lesser being.”<sup>10</sup> Either way, she was psychologically destroyed.

However, the rise of the industrial society and the “destruction of the home” merely provided Farnham and Lundberg a backdrop from which to launch a full-scale attack on the “deep illness” of feminism. In 1944, they would inform readers of *Ladies Home Journal* that feminism should be considered a “prolonged disaster,” representing an “unsuccessful attempt at a necessary readjustment by women to the Machine Age.” In essence, this was a “neurotic adjustment.”<sup>11</sup> Drawing women firmly into the containment culture, the authors make literal what early cold-war theorists had in most cases been content to leave at the level of metaphor. Feminism was a “deep illness” with feminist ideology an outward expression of “emotional sickness.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the American feminist was simply a puppet being used by the Soviet enemy as a tool of destruction through which to aid their expansion. The political agents of the Kremlin abroad, they argued, continued to beat the “feminist drums” whilst fully aware of feminism’s “disruptive influence.” Therefore, women who espoused feminist doctrines were incubating and precipitating the spread of the communist contagion, leaving the United States vulnerable to “barbarian invasion.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 363-364.

<sup>11</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, “Men Have Lost Their Women!” *Ladies Home Journal*, November, 1944, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 143. They based their assessment of feminism as a “deep illness” on a case study of Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women* published in London in 1792. In their revisionist reading, Wollstonecraft’s “illness” was brought about by an unhappy childhood in which she was denied parental love, witnessed her father beat her mother and was highly jealous of the attention given to her elder brother. This illness thus infected her writings. She was supposedly motivated in her writing by the need to rebel against her family, particularly her father. She thus hated men, and sought their castration by urging women to dedicate themselves to masculine norms of behaviour, thus ultimately denying their “entirely feminine nurturing functions.” Within this reading, feminism was borne of neurosis and illness.

<sup>13</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 166.

It is this complete immersion in socio-medical discourse and the authors' deep commitment to the tenets of the containment culture that sets *Modern Woman* apart from similar socially prescriptive texts for women published at this time. Lundberg and Farnham fully embrace a rhetoric that links disease to the feminist, the working or educated woman, the ineffectual mother, the highly sexualised woman, the spinster, the homosexual and the Soviet Communist. Their study is especially culturally revealing when located alongside Hollywood films produced in the same socio-political climate.

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In the early 1940s, when the United States entered the War, domestic gender roles were unavoidably disturbed and with the dramatic shift in demographic there was a potential for gender equality. Women were, at least momentarily, able to participate in roles previously defined as "male." Hollywood would patriotically reflect this shift and devote considerable screen time to the depiction of women in a range of roles. With cinema audiences almost entirely female, the era of the "women's picture" could and did concentrate heavily on the lives and problems of women, displaying them against a proliferation of job backgrounds and celebrating their success. For example, Ann Sothorn took a job as an aircraft worker in *Swing Shift Masie* (1943), Olivia de Havilland became a *Government Girl* (1944), Lucille Ball served as a defence plant worker in *Meet the People* (1944), Claudette Colbert became a welder in *Since You Went Away* (1944), and alongside Veronica Lake, and Paulette Goddard made up a trio of nurses in *So Proudly We Hail* (1943), Lana Turner matched Clark Gable's heroics as a war correspondent in *Somewhere I'll Find You* (1942), and Ginger Rogers would

serve as a defence plant worker while her husband fought overseas, sharing a home with three other women in *Tender Comrade* (1943). If Hollywood was to be believed, women had learned to survive and succeed in a world without men.

However, this situation, both on screen and in reality, was only transitory. At the War's end the government implemented the GI Bill of Rights and federal home mortgages, providing financial subsidies to millions of returning veterans, allowing them to more easily re-assume the socially-approved and masculinity-affirming roles of husband, father and family breadwinner. The media extolled the virtues of domestic life. Magazine images of Rosie the Riveter were replaced by young wedded mothers cradling their children and true femininity was equated with marriage and motherhood.<sup>14</sup> As a result of these measures, the percentage of women in the work force dropped from 36 per cent in 1945 to 28 percent in 1947.<sup>15</sup> This seismic demographic shift, although welcomed by Lundberg and Farnham, allowed them to claim in dramatically revelatory terms:

In the U.S. at the present time there are, despite all the women who work in and out of the home, a greater proportion of aimlessly idle women than at any time or other place, not excepting imperial Rome.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> As recent cultural historians have declared, the idealised constructions of "normality" that arose within postwar containment culture (particularly in regards to the nuclear family dynamic), were not the culmination of long tradition, but created to celebrate democracy and capitalism in direct opposition to the communist threat. The nuclear family dynamic had come to represent the very essence of democracy. For example, Stephanie Coontz argues the "traditional" family of the 1950s "was a qualitatively new phenomenon." The Great Depression and the Second World War had artificially reinforced extended family ties, but with hardship at an end Coontz claims that "popular commentators urged young families to adopt a "modern" stance and strike out on their own." Many did, moving to newly constructed suburban enclaves. With this move "the traditional range of acceptable family behaviours...narrowed substantially" and "popular culture turned such suburban families into capitalism's answer to the communist threat." Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 25-29.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Tallack, *Twentieth Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (London and New York: Longman; 1991), p.287.

<sup>16</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 210.

Although women were now removed from the neurosis-inducing, masculine sphere of employment, Lundberg and Farnham counselled that an isolated suburban existence coupled with an abundance of new, labour-saving domestic technologies was still wreaking devastating psychological damage. This idea found its way to cinema screens in 1947 in *Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman* as Hollywood began to re-establish the boundaries of healthy feminine behaviour in a post-war containment society. In the film, Angelica Evans (Susan Hayward), abandons her career as a singer when she marries struggling performer Ken Conway (Lee Bowman). In realigning her aspirations and telling her agent, “Girls do get married you know. I’m not just a set of vocal cords; I’ve got a heart too,” it appears that Angelica will avoid “infection.” However, after Ken’s career takes off, Angelica finds herself idle and isolated and swiftly succumbs to a life of alcohol abuse and neurotic jealousy. When Ken seeks the advice of a doctor, her condition is diagnosed thus: “Men like you make their wives idle, useless. You give them servants to clean their houses, nurses to take care of the children...in doing so you have taken all responsibility from her, left her life with no values...your wife is the victim of a disease.” In the pattern promulgated by *Modern Woman*, this Hollywood doctor would deny Angelica a career outside of the home and instead prescribes a “healthy” dose of old-fashioned housework and childrearing as a cure for Angelica’s alcoholism and deep neuroses.

The scores of “diseased” women who now found themselves idle and neurotic would now have to look to women’s magazines, self-help texts, their television screens and Hollywood film in order to discover their new, socially-sanctioned roles and thus rediscover their emotional health and patriotism.

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Nominated for fourteen Academy Awards, *All About Eve* (1950) was among the first and most successful of Hollywood's post-war productions to prescribe the boundaries of "normative" post-war femininity. The film opens at an awards ceremony, where Eve Harrington (Anne Baxter) is about to receive the Sarah Siddons Award for Distinguished Achievement in stage acting. The voice-over narration, provided by theatre critic Addison De Witt (George Sanders), introduces a number of other main characters in the ceremony's audience, including Karen Richards (Celeste Holm), wife of playwright Lloyd Richards (Hugh Marlowe), Max Fabian (Gregory Ratoff), the theatrical producer of the play which has won the award for Eve, and finally, Broadway actress Margo Channing (Bette Davis). In the remainder of the film, events from early October to June, which led to the award ceremony, are unfolded in flashback, initiated by the musings of the characters in attendance. The viewer witnesses the meteoric rise of Eve from star-struck fan of Margo Channing to reigning queen of the Broadway stage, while simultaneously observing Margo's retirement from the stage into the arms and loving "service" of stage director, Bill Sampson (Gary Merrill).

Like *Modern Woman*, *All About Eve* reprimands astute, aspiring, independent females who seek fulfilment and success outside of the home and offers steps toward a "healthy" reorientation. The film provides a plethora of female characters and performances from which to draw. However, the characters of Margo Channing, Karen Richards and Eve Harrington are of most interest to this study because their character

traits accord almost exactly with many of the neurotic ailments so vividly charted in *Modern Woman*.<sup>17</sup>

The first proper encounter with Margo Channing is backstage after a triumphant on-stage performance. Her difference from the feminine “norm” is immediately apparent. Chain-smoking, with her hair tied tightly back against her scalp and cold cream smeared across her face, she physically and verbally dominates the scene. Whilst talking over her guests, her aggressively open posture is juxtaposed with that of her best friend Karen who sits composed, draped in furs, hair neatly arranged and described by her husband as his “loyal little woman.” Far from being anyone’s “loyal little woman,” Margo urges Karen’s husband, playwright Lloyd Richards, to write her a play about a nice “normal” woman who “shoots her husband.” Such open, if ironic, hostility towards men is, in Lundberg and Farnham’s pseudo-Freudian discourse, an outward sign of “penis-envy.” Margo’s frequent outbursts, such as deriding Karen for being a “happy little housewife,” and stating clearly that she “hates men” are symptoms of a mental defection or “masculinity complex”:

The masculinity complex is characterised by the predominance of active and aggressive tendencies that lead to conflicts with the woman’s environment and....Woman’s intellectuality is to a large extent paid for by the loss of valuable feminine qualities: it feeds on the sap of the affective life and results in impoverishment of this life either as a whole or in specific emotional qualities....All observations point to the fact that the intellectual woman is masculinised; in her, warm intuitive knowledge has yielded to cold unproductive thinking.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The film still holds the record for the most acting nominations for female actors at the Academy Awards. Four actresses were nominated for their performance: Bette Davis and Anne Baxter in the category of Best Actress, and Celeste Holm and Thelma Ritter as Best Supporting Actress. However, Judy Holliday won the Best Actress gong for *Born Yesterday*, while the supporting actress nod went to Josephine Hull for her role in *Harvey*.

<sup>18</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 174-175. There was a renewed belief in and veneration of the writings of Freud throughout this era. As Betty Friedan would note in 1963, “Freud was interpreted to American woman in such curiously literal terms that the concept of penis envy acquired a mystical life of its own...it was as if Freud’s Victorian image of woman became more real than the twentieth-century woman to whom it was applied.” Quoting *Modern Woman*, Friedan claimed that such popularisers

Margo's assessment of her fans as "little beasts who run around in packs like coyotes" and as "juvenile delinquents" and "mental defectives" is evidence of the extent to which she appears to have yielded to such "cold unproductive thinking." Furthermore, Karen's later declaration that, "Every now and then, there isn't anything I'd rather do than kick Margo right-square in the pants" is indicative of her outward masculinity. Even her addiction to cigarettes hints at her "suffering." According to Frank S. Caprio, M.D., in a study of female homosexuality published in 1954, a woman's addiction to smoking "may be considered a form of psychic masculinity," and as such Margo could be viewed as a "latent homosexual."<sup>19</sup>

Margo's spinsterhood and her position as a career woman are presented in the film as the root cause of her aggressive masculinity and consequent unhappiness. Similarly, Lundberg and Farnham averred that work outside of the home provided prestige "only at the price of feminine relinquishment," and that the more importance that this work assumed, "the more are the masculine components of the woman's nature enhanced and encouraged." Striving for achievement outside of the sanctioned fortress of the familial home was to be kept "at a minimum," thus allowing a woman's natural femininity to "be available both for her own satisfaction and for the satisfaction of her children and husband."<sup>20</sup> Similarly, spinsterhood was a marker of impaired femininity, outwardly

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embedded Freud's "core of unrecognized traditional prejudice against women ever deeper in pseudo-scientific comment." Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974), pp. 106-107.

<sup>19</sup> Frank S. Caprio, M.D., *Female Homosexuality: A Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1954), p.133. This issue of female homosexuality will be addressed more directly later in this chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 235. A 1947 article entitled "Femininity Begins at Home," which appeared in the January edition of *Ladies Home Journal*, claimed that "true" femininity was a state of mind: "her whole future happiness will be largely determined by this ability, and willingness, to respect herself as woman, instead of feeling that she is in a race against man...True femininity does not *compete* with man, but prefers to *co-operate*, or, better yet, to *enlist his co-operation* – charmingly." The article concluded with a ten-point checklist, which allowed readers to assess, "How Feminine are you?" This checklist advised women not to feel complimented if told, "you have brains like a man." "Why

expressed by the rejection of a woman's "natural" reproductive role. Indeed, unmarried women were deemed to be so highly infectious that *Modern Woman* suggests that all spinsters be barred by law from having anything to do with the teaching of children on the grounds of emotional incompetence.

In *All About Eve* the emotional damage that Margo has inflicted upon herself by refusing to submit to the "norm," marry and bear children, is expertly visualised at Bill's homecoming / birthday party. As if Margo were aware of her own emotional "failings," and encouraged by alcohol, she (famously) warns her guests, "Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night!" Margo's excessive alcohol consumption in this scene is presented as an outward sign of an emotional sickness. The "problem drinker," as described by Lundberg and Farnham, is "not a happy person" but one beset by emotional problems for which they are unable to find a cure. Margo could thus be said to be attempting to "dissolve her problems in alcohol."<sup>21</sup> Once "dissolved," Margo begins to attack her closest friends and in particular Karen, for her subservience to husband Lloyd and her supposed acceptance of a "truly" feminine role.

In stating that as a "non-professional" she regards retiring to bed at the request of her husband an "excellent idea," Karen highlights exactly how in the eyes of Margo she fulfils this role. She is, outwardly, as Margo negatively assesses, a "happy little housewife," content to support her husband in his work and, having consumed only a moderate quantity of alcohol, return with him to their marital bed. As Marynia Farnham averred in *Coronet* magazine in 1948, a man "needs to feel he has a wife who is happy in providing affection and devotion," he needs a wife who "encourages and supports his manliness instead of challenging or dominating him."<sup>22</sup> Thus, in a later scene Karen is

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should you?" it asked, "Remember, the best Seeing Eye Dogs are Female!" Louise Paine Benjamin, "Femininity Begins at Home," *Ladies Home Journal* (January 1947), p.136.

<sup>21</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 406-7.

<sup>22</sup> Marynia Farnham, "Who Wears the Pants in Your Family?" *Coronet* (March 1948), p. 13.

seen at home whilst awaiting the return of her husband from work, further proof that Karen has subscribed to Lundberg and Farnham's claim that women should relinquish personal ambition and always be emotionally available to her husband.

However, although when contrasted to Margo, Karen can be seen as conforming to socially approved standards of feminine behaviour, she too lives outside of Lundberg and Farnham's prescribed feminine "norm." Both her Radcliffe education and the fact that she has never borne a child are proof enough that she deviates from "normal" behaviour. In Lundberg and Farnham's formulation, educated women suffer sexual disorders, and a childless woman was as much a freak of nature as a "two-headed calf." Indeed, husband Lloyd complains that Karen's "bitter cynicism" was a trait "acquired" whilst studying, to which she replies, "That cynicism you refer to I acquired the day I discovered I was different from little boys." Karen's retort, whilst joking that she suffers from a "masculinity complex," suggests that she also suffers from what, in 1956, journalist Robert Coughlan would identify as "suburban syndrome:"

It might take this form: the wife, having worked before marriage, or at least having been educated and socially conditioned toward the idea that work (preferably some kind of intellectual work, in an office, among men) carries prestige, finds herself in the lamentable position of being "just a housewife."<sup>23</sup>

Karen confirms her affliction when she openly acknowledges the frustration she feels at having no talent to offer outside of loving her husband. Thus, Karen too falls outside definitions of "true" femininity. Truly "feminine" women, argued Coughlan, accept

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Coughlan, "Changing Roles in Modern Marriage," *Time* (December 1956), p.113. Coughlan would continue by warning readers that a sufferer of "suburban syndrome" could work as much damage on the lives of her husband and children as if she were a career woman, "and indeed sometimes more."

their wifely functions with good humour and pleasure and do not think of themselves as “just” a housewife.

In a later scene, when distressed by the appointment of Eve as her understudy, Margo launches verbal attacks on her friends, leaving her lover Bill to exclaim that he is “sick and tired” of her “paranoiac outbursts,” telling her that she is “obviously not a woman.” The film thus validates Lundberg and Farnham’s claims regarding the negative effect of competitive employment upon women. Success in the “male spheres of action” brings with it a price, this being the “sacrifice of her most fundamental instinctual strivings.” In Lundberg and Farnham’s thesis that the female of the species “is not, in sober reality, temperamentally suited to this sort of rough and tumble competition, and it damages her, particularly in her own feelings,” Margo is so emotionally impaired by her years in the theatre that even her lover denies her femininity.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, although on the surface, the film suggests that Margo’s paranoiac outbursts and drunken rages are caused by insecurities of age and fading stardom, thus implying to a contemporary audience that a cure would lie in her occupational triumph over the younger rising-star Eve, it is made apparent that a cure can only be fully realised by the abandonment of her professional ambition and the assumption of “normative” codes of feminine behaviour. In Lundberg and Farnham’s diagnosis, the cure for Margo’s many ailments, and similar ailments afflicting many millions of women, is stated icily as “get women back in the home:”<sup>25</sup>

Government and socially minded organisations should...through propaganda, make it clear that such pursuits [as working outside the home] are not generally desirable for women...the emphasis of prestige, honour, subsidy and public respect should be shifted

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<sup>24</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p.11.

<sup>25</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, p. 364.

emphatically to those women recognised as serving society most fully as women.<sup>26</sup>

When conspiring with Eve, Karen drains the petrol from Lloyd's car so as to create the circumstances for Eve to take to the stage as her understudy and Margo is finally afforded a moment for self-reflection. She recognises that she has been oversensitive to Eve's youth, femininity and helplessness, to the "many things I want to be for Bill." She analyses that a woman's career is "a funny business:"

The things you drop on your way up the ladder so you can move faster. You forget you need them again when you get back to being a woman. One career all females have in common, whether we like it or not, being a woman. Sooner or later we have got to work at it, no matter how many other careers we've had or wanted. And in the last analysis nothing's any good unless you can look up just before dinner, or turn around in bed and there he is, without that you're not a woman. You're something with a French provincial office, or a book full of clippings, but you're not a woman.

In order to become a woman once again, Margo accepts Bill's proposal of marriage; we learn that she no longer comes to rehearsals because she has "too much to do around the house," and she enthuses that finally she has "a life to live."<sup>27</sup>

However, although Margo's many neurotic ailments are seemingly cured by marriage and the abandonment of her career, the film, like Lundberg and Farnham, suggests that such a prescription is unlikely to work in many cases:

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<sup>26</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, p. 370. In 1957, *Dr. Schindler's Woman's Guide to Better Living* helpfully reminded women that "there are some people who may be handling gigantic sums of money, or managing huge engineering projects, directing thousands of people, or charting the course of a nation, but none of them are doing a more important and significant work than you are." John A. Schindler, M.D. *Dr Schindler's Woman's Guide to Better Living* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p.155.

<sup>27</sup> Margo has successfully avoided the fate that met another ageing spinster actress in the same year. In Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), the silent movie actress Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) is driven to madness and ultimately murder. Her downfall is brought about by an excess of vanity and an unhealthy obsession with success.

From time to time it may have appeared in these pages that we are freely prescribing marriage for all persons. But we are by no means doing this any more than we are prescribing childbearing. Too many people today are unfit for both activities for such a recommendation to make sense.<sup>28</sup>

Some women, it seems, are unworthy of the “cure.” Indeed, when addressing the problem of overpopulation that would necessarily come about if their solutions to the crisis of the “Modern Woman” were followed, Lundberg and Farnham go so far as to suggest that a solution would be to “impose public controls to prevent the breeding of certain strains. With a full population the country could afford to be more selective, could discourage certain types of people from propagating.”<sup>29</sup> It is apparent that one person who would be discouraged from said propagation would be *All About Eve*’s eponymous character: Eve Harrington’s neuroses are too deep and she never attempts to relinquish her “masculine strivings.”

Eve Harrington is introduced to the audience by Karen’s voice-over narration. Karen relates that Eve began her life in the theatre as an innocent, forlorn, star-struck fan. Eve would watch every one of Margo Channing’s performances, waiting outside for a glimpse of her idol. Karen offers Eve the opportunity of an introduction, ushering her backstage and into Margo’s dressing room. Eve’s calculated manipulation of both Margo’s ego and emotions includes frequent references to the star’s “greatness,” and a tear-inducing tale of how she became a war widow. Eve’s performance enables her to ingratiate herself into Margo’s inner circle. Nearly everyone in the dressing room is

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<sup>28</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 365.

<sup>29</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 371. Here, Lundberg and Farnham raise the issue of eugenics, meaning the study of or belief in the possibility of improving the human species or a human population by such means as discouraging breeding by persons with genetic defects or “undesirable” traits. It is interesting to note that these comments were written when the full and horrifying details of the Nazi eugenics programme (including tests on live human guinea-pigs) were being exposed. In the years prior to the “final solution,” Hitler had initiated a eugenics programme based on that of the United States that included compulsory sterilisation of people deemed physically or mentally unfit and, going even further, many thousands of institutionalised disabled people were killed through compulsory “euthanasia.”

captivated by Eve's shy charm, her naiveté and her passion for the stage. Put another way, they are taken in by her unassuming feminine qualities, which the audience will soon discover act to mask her true self. Only Birdie (Thelma Ritter), Margo's personal assistant, recognises Eve's performance as exactly that, dryly commenting "What a Story! Everything but the bloodhounds snapping at her rear end." Perhaps if Margo had read *Modern Woman*, her slow realisation that Eve's true nature is negated by her outward characteristics could have been hastened. She would have discovered that:

Exaggerated manifestations of what passes for...femininity (gentleness, coyness, introversion) are, psychoanalytically, quite suspect...The extremely feminine appearing woman, the epitome of daintiness, propriety and gentleness are usually "putting on an act"...not only do they fool themselves they fool the world.

Lundberg and Farnham are adamant that true femininity, and indeed masculinity, cannot be assumed by outward masks, such as that worn by Eve. Margo's outwardly masculine traits belie her inward feminine strivings, and the reverse can be seen in Eve. Both masculinity and femininity, according to Lundberg and Farnham, are:

Inner neuropsychic tendencies resting on biochemical constitutional factors brought to a focus in the gonads...and are harnessed to the great and ultimate end of procreation...Neither trait, if firmly embedded in the body-mind, will permit itself to be deflected from the substantial realisation of its reproductive goal.<sup>30</sup>

*All About Eve* and *Modern Woman* highlight the contradictions inherent in the structure of social and sexual constructions of femininity. The film's writer-director Joseph Mankiewicz emphasises such a contradiction when Karen stresses the helplessness that women feel in having "no talent to offer outside of loving your husband." Dr. Marynia

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<sup>30</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 385-386.

Farnham's own existence as a professional woman in itself appears to contradict her writings. She was, as stated in her *New York Times* obituary, a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and the University of Minnesota Medical School. She undertook further training in London, Vienna and Boston, practising paediatrics until 1935 and psychiatry thereafter. Such contradictions are only narrowly evaded by her claims that as a "physically balanced woman" (in other words, a devoted mother and wife), her role as psychiatrist is merely an extension of her entirely natural "nurturing activities," and that part-time employment in areas such as "teaching, nursing, doctoring, social service work, guidance, catering, decorating, play direction, furnishing," can be viewed as a "healthy" and "feminine" release for the Modern Woman. In contrast, Eve Harrington's "body-mind" is indeed "deflected from the substantial realisation of its reproductive goal." She is entirely motivated by her ambitious desires to de-throne Margo Channing as "queen" of the Broadway stage.

Beyond these relatively innocent masculine strivings, however, hidden beneath her veneer of femininity, lies a deeper and more "sinister" character trait. Eve can be and, indeed, has been, read as a homosexual character.<sup>31</sup> Robert J. Corber argues that Eve's performative femininity highlights a cold-war preoccupation with the "femme," separating her from the overtly masculine and typically "butch" lesbian celluloid stereotype. The femme's ability to "pass" for straight ensured that she would overtake the "butch" lesbian in the discourse of national security, as the lesbian whose deviant gender identity created the greatest homophobic reaction. Indistinguishable from the "uninfected" female, the femme's femininity threatened to reveal that the normative

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Barrios claims that Eve's sexuality remains unmentioned but not undepicted: "Eve is gay, and not only as a matter of hindsight conjecture. Mankiewicz knew it, Anne Baxter knew it, and it informed their collaboration." Richard Barrios, *Screened Out: Playing Gay in Hollywood from Edison to Stonewall* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 225. See also Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet* and Robert J. Corber, "All About the Subversive Femme: Cold War Homophobia in *All About Eve*," in Douglas Field (ed.), *American Cold War Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 34 - 49.

alignment of sex, gender and sexuality was, rather than biologically-determined, in fact an ideological fiction working to maintain heterosexual dominance. Thus, what makes Eve so threatening as a lesbian character is her ability to impersonate normative femininity.

As Chapter 2 will demonstrate, one of the ways in which the national security state endeavoured to contain opposition to post-war norms of masculinity and femininity was by exploiting the fear that both male and female homosexuals were outwardly undetectable. Homosexuality had become a virulent, invisible “disease.” Furthermore, the homosexual’s “invisibility” or their ability to “pass,” linked them directly to the communists and fellow travellers whom the public were told threatened to overthrow the U.S. government. Traditionally, “masculine” gay men and the lesbian “femme” were thought of as an even greater threat to the existing social order than their “visible” counterparts. Their ability to accurately perform their given gender and socially-sanctioned sexuality supposedly enabled them to infiltrate heterosexual institutions and subvert them from within by “infecting” others with the homosexuality “pathogen.” In this way, sexual nonconformity was viewed as decidedly un-American.

The fear of a homosexuality pathogen during this period, analysed in Chapter 2, was mainly directed toward the homosexual male. The gay man threatened to destabilise the popular understanding of American masculinity and was therefore linked to a supposed increase in child molestation and violent sexual crime. Female homosexuals received much less media attention but were not ignored completely. In 1952, bestselling “muckrakers” Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer declared with alarm that:

The Sapphic lover, unless she goes to the extreme of wearing mannish habiliments and cutting her hair short, is seldom obvious...This form of perverted love is as ancient as male homosexuality....but women because of their nature and the

restrictions placed upon them by society have not been so obvious about it...One of the most startling surprises to slap us in the face as we dredged the nation for the truth was that sexual deviation is as great or greater among the female of the species than among the so-called male. None but the blind or those who don't want to see can fail to be aware of the diseased state of the nation's sex life.<sup>32</sup>

Eve's assumed homosexuality is perhaps not as openly apparent as gay activist and film historian Vito Russo has suggested. Russo claims that Eve is immediately identifiable as a homosexual character because of her "boyish" crop of hair and "malevolent" attitude. However, in 1950, these attributes alone could no longer substantiate a diagnosis of homosexuality. Further analysis is required to penetrate Eve's "closet" of femininity and make a truly accurate diagnosis.

At the aforementioned party, before a drunken Margo interrupts the conversation, her guests sit on the stairs discussing the stage actor. Addison De Witt proclaims, "We all have abnormality in common, we're a breed apart from the rest of humanity, we theatre folk. We are the original displaced personalities." Lloyd Richards concedes but ultimately protests: "Sure, there's a screwball element in the theatre, it sticks out. It's got spotlights on it and a brass band. But it isn't basic. It isn't standard. If it were, the theatre couldn't survive." The conversation may be read as a coded discussion of the homosexual element at work in the theatre. Due to Production Code restrictions still in place in 1950 and supplemented by Ayn Rand's additional 13 points, noted in the Introduction, open discussion about, or portrayal of homosexuality would not have been allowed in a major studio production. However, all viewers needed to do is replace the term 'screwball' with 'homosexual' to reach the same conclusion as Dr. Edmund Bergler. In his book, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (1956), Bergler claimed that "the influence of homosexuals in certain professions is great; in the

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<sup>32</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1952), pp. 42-3.

*theatre and the entertainment world in general*, in fashion and interior decoration, in the academic world, among writers, and in a lesser extent among critics” (emphasis added).<sup>33</sup>

In *All About Eve*, Lloyd concedes that success in the theatre “requires a concentration of desire, ambition and sacrifice such as no other profession demands,” and he argues that the “man or woman who accepts those terms can’t be ordinary, can’t be just someone, to give so much for almost always so little.” Lloyd’s acknowledgment prompts Eve to exclaim, in bleary-eyed close-up, “So little! Why, if there’s nothing else there’s applause...it’s like waves of love coming over the floodlights and wrapping you up...to know that different hundreds of people love you...they want you. You belong! Just that alone is worth anything.” If Eve’s protestations are to be believed, it would suggest that her covert “masculinity-complex” exists in part to acquire acceptance and a sense of belonging that in a strictly heterosexual culture can only be achieved within the acknowledged “screwball” theatre profession. As psychiatrist and author Frank S. Caprio, M.D. averred in his 1954 text *Female Homosexuality: A Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism*:

In the theatre or nightclub world, one finds the kind of environment conducive to the development of homosexual friendships...Many in this field regard themselves as being different from ordinary people and entitled to a way of life according to their own codes of ethics. They run the gamut of the unusual and the bizarre, and in sexual relations, which is of a promiscuous nature, the trend toward homosexuality...often, develops into a preferred pattern of sexual experience.<sup>34</sup>

Eve’s chosen profession can thus be viewed as symptomatic of her homosexual “infection.” Caprio may be read as understanding this idea. He suggests that idol

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<sup>33</sup> Edmund Bergler, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), p. 272-3.

<sup>34</sup> Frank S. Caprio, M.D., *Female Homosexuality: A Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1954), p. 131.

worship, such as that displayed by Eve toward Margo, should be recognised as an outward symptom of latent if not open homosexuality. In a passage that could easily be describing Eve and Margo's early relationship, Caprio claims:

The young aspirant to a career in the world of the theatre may overtly express her extreme admiration of her idol and invite an intimate relationship. Conversely, it is known that the successful actress finds narcissistic gratification in assuming the maternal role towards a beautiful young girl who worships her. The relationship becomes a neurotic one and serves to gratify unconscious, incestuous wishes by the young girl to feel secure and close to a mother surrogate. At the same time it affords the actress an opportunity to gratify her neurotic, narcissistic need to be adored and loved.<sup>35</sup>

There is even some suggestion in the film that Margo and Eve's relationship moves beyond the purely platonic. In a scene in which Margo and Eve have travelled to the airport to say farewell to Bill, who is leaving for a trip to Hollywood, Bill tells Eve, "Hey Junior, keep your eye on her, don't let her get lonely, she's a loose lamb in a jungle." Eve's longing look toward Margo renders her response of "I will" more ominous than reassuring. Eve and Margo leave the airport arm-in-arm, looking very much like a couple. As the scene fades, Margo's voice-over declares, "That same night we sent for Eve's things, her few pitiful possessions. She moved in to the little guest room on the top floor. The next three weeks were out of a fairy tale, and I was Cinderella in the last act...The Honeymoon was on." Here the film seems to suggest that the pathogen of homosexuality is indeed extremely virulent, and as cold-war paranoia dictated, the homosexual was ever seeking new converts.

However, despite this diegetic "evidence," Russo's claims that Eve is a lesbian character are somewhat thrown into question by her sexual advances toward Bill.

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<sup>35</sup> Caprio, *Female Homosexuality*, p. 132.

Although these advances are deemed to be “un-feminine,” they are nevertheless, on the surface, heterosexual in nature. After her performance as Margo’s understudy, Bill has gone backstage to congratulate Eve on her success. As he leaves, Eve exclaims, “Don’t run away Bill...you’re always after truth on the stage, but what about off? Face it, I have. Ever since that first night in this dressing room...when you told me that whatever I became it would be because of you, and for you.” Bill retorts, “I’m only human, rumours to the contrary, and I’m as curious as the next man. Only thing, what I go after I want to go after; I don’t want it to come after me!” Eve has become the sexual aggressor. She has momentarily let her “mask” of femininity slip, leaving herself vulnerable to attack, and Bill’s rejection of her advances, suggesting as he does that her behaviour is “unnatural,” provokes an aggressive response.

This confrontation speaks to Lundberg and Farnham’s claim that the feminist/neurotic woman addressed the “double standard” of male/female sexual activity, “not primarily because they wished to indulge in sexual sensuality, but because they wished to emulate the male,” most particularly in his role as “a Casanova, a roving impregnator.”<sup>36</sup> The diseased feminist, they argued, did not seek better lives for women, but were merely seeking “maleness for themselves.” This search for “maleness,” it was argued, was most frequently sought through proposed reconstructions of female sexuality:

At the core of feminism is a great preoccupation with sexuality. The earliest Woman’s Party and women’s movements usually had some explicit sexual demand on their platforms. The reform of the marriage laws giving women equal rights with men in the marriage contract was promoted where marriage was not condemned. Even sexual freedom within marriage, that is, the right to promiscuity was a frequent demand. This demand was coupled with the vigorous promotion of contraception as a method

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<sup>36</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 196.

of providing women with reproductive freedom, the right to have children or not.<sup>37</sup>

The normative female sexual role, alluded to in Bill's swift denunciation, and detailed by Lundberg and Farnham, is the antithesis of the aggressive position adopted by Eve. Lundberg and Farnham are keen to highlight the natural passivity of the "healthy" woman during the sexual act in a striking passage that completely undermines any female agency whatsoever:

Her role is passive. It is not as easy as falling off a log for her. It is easier. It is as easy as being the log itself. She cannot fail to deliver a masterly performance, by doing nothing whatsoever except being duly appreciative and allowing nature to take its course.<sup>38</sup>

Eve's performance as a "roving impregnator" can be viewed as an outward sign of her sexual maladjustment. As Margo's rehabilitation seems to prove, normative or legitimate female sexuality could only be achieved within the sanctified bonds of marriage. Eve's advances are born, not out of love of men, but from the desire to be like a man. She uses her sexuality in an attempt to advance her career (a "masculine" exploit), and thus exposes her "un-feminine" ambition.

A more successful seduction by a neurotic, ambitious lesbian occurs in *Young Man with a Horn* (1950).<sup>39</sup> Released in the same year as *All About Eve*, it stars Kirk Douglas as jazz musician Rick Martin. After a slow rise to the top of his profession,

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<sup>37</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, "Men Have Lost Their Women!" *Ladies Home Journal*, (November, 1944), p.133.

<sup>38</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 275. These sentiments were echoed almost a decade later in Robert Coughlan's 1956 *Time* magazine article "Changing Roles in Modern Marriage." Coughlan claimed, "For women the sexual act itself implies receptiveness and a certain passivity, while the long period of human gestation and the extraordinarily long period of a child's dependence implies a need for protection and support from the mother. These primarily feminine qualities – receptivity, passivity and the desire to nurture – color a woman's entire emotional life." Robert Coughlan, "Changing Roles in Modern Marriage," *Time* (December 24 1956), p. 109.

<sup>39</sup> The film was released under the title *Young Man of Music* in the U.K., and *Young Man with a Trumpet* in Australia.

Rick falls for the sly charm and sharp tongue of medical student Amy North (Lauren Bacall) and within weeks of being introduced by mutual friend Jo Jordan (Doris Day), the couple are married. Jo prophetically warns Rick that Amy is not a typical “stage door pick up...She’s a strange girl, and you’ve never known anyone like her before...Inside, way inside, she’s all mixed up. She’s wrong for you Rick. She’ll hurt you.” Her warning, however, arrives too late.

Amy is unable to commit herself completely to Rick; her marriage does not quench her thirst for success. Ultimately, she fails to appreciate what Lundberg and Farnham averred as early as 1944:

Men and women are profoundly different, but neither sex is superior or inferior to the other. They are both geared, with delicate precision in the physical, mental and emotional aspects of their natures to the demands of their functions as servants of the species...Each is vital to the consummation of the other.<sup>40</sup>

Amy is in constant competition with her husband, seemingly unaware of the necessary servitude to her femininity. After briefly abandoning her studies upon marriage, Amy returns to school, arguing that she wants everything Rick has achieved.

The marriage, of course, rapidly dissolves, both parties seeking solace in alcohol. Amy turns away from her husband in bed, unwilling to submit to him sexually, her frigidity a symptom of her “diseased” sexuality.<sup>41</sup> Lundberg and Farnham state that the failure of women, “in large numbers,” to obtain sexual gratification from their “natural” sexual nature is connected with the loss of their secure status in the home. Amy’s rivalry with Rick can thus be viewed as “an attempt at restitution for this loss,”

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<sup>40</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, “Men Have Lost Their Women!” *Ladies Home Journal*, (November, 1944), p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Edmund Bergler notes, “In observing and studying women patients for nearly thirty years, I have been amazed at the frequency with which one finds protracted or sporadic, transitory Lesbian episodes in the histories of frigid women,” p.244.

so that “A woman’s pleasure in sexuality varies in inverse proportion to how thoroughly she regards disparagingly or rivalrously the male and how thoroughly she rejects any part of her sexual nature in its totality.”<sup>42</sup> When Rick finally confronts Amy and asks why she married him, she reveals the extent to which she is his rival: “I don’t mean to hurt you Richard, it’s only that I’m jealous of you. I’d give anything to have what you’ve got. To be able to do one thing really well and know that it’s worth something. It’s the only *real* security in the world. Maybe that’s really why I married you, I thought some of it would rub off on me.” In the cold-war cultural climate Amy should have listened to Lundberg and Farnham when they warned *Ladies Home Journal* readers that:

Only a man could give birth to the Ninth Symphony. But only a woman could give birth to the creator himself, a stunning inescapable fact that brings us back to the basic role of the woman and, indeed, does much to explain the soundly grounded if poorly rationalized anxiety that has down through the ages hedged her about and surrounded her with restrictions that are now down, much to her damage and the damage of society. If she was overprotected and over restricted, it was always for a good emotional reason.<sup>43</sup>

Free from the restrictions traditionally imposed by servitude within the home and the rearing of children, Amy has become emotionally and sexually “damaged.”<sup>44</sup> She ultimately rejects Rick altogether, turning to a female artist for “companionship” and stating that she intends to travel with her to Paris.

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<sup>42</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 264.

<sup>43</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, “Men Have Lost Their Women!” *Ladies Home Journal* (November, 1944), p. 136.

<sup>44</sup> Marynia Farnham would tell readers of *Coronet* in 1948 that the rivalrous female “virtually eliminates the possibility of obtaining satisfaction from her marital relationship. The more she denies her femininity, the less capacity she has for tenderness and sensuality, which together add up to love...it is a well established fact that the happiest homes are the ones in which firm, self reliant husbands have the final say.” Farnham, “Who Wears the Pants in Your Family?” *Coronet* (March 1948), p. 13-14.

Rick appears to recognise the symptoms of Amy's "disease." Before their inevitable separation he declares to Amy that she is "sick." Calling her "dirty," he proclaims, "What a dope I was. I thought you were high class, like a real high note you hit once in a lifetime. That's because I couldn't understand what you were saying half the time. Well, you're like those carnival joints I used to work in, big flash on the outside, but on the inside nothing but filth...You're a sick girl Amy and you'd better see a doctor." Nevertheless, Rick is left an emotional cripple. Unlike Bill, who is able to resist the aggressive propositions of Eve, Rick's exposure to Amy's homosexuality leads him only to "Weaver Alcoholic Sanitarium." As Marynia Farnham explained to readers of the magazine *Coronet* in March 1948: "A man needs to feel he has a wife who is happy in providing affection and devotion....When he finds his wife has become a covert or open rival, his emotional integrity is seriously disturbed."<sup>45</sup> [Rick is ultimately only able to find sobriety and love in the arms of the wholesome and truly feminine Doris Day].

As *All About Eve* reaches its conclusion, it dissolves back to the awards ceremony with which it opened. Eve forgoes the party held in her honour and retires home to bed. Upon arrival, she is startled upon finding a young woman asleep in her apartment. The youngster transpires to be a star-struck teenager named Phoebe (Barbara Bates). Seductively draped across her couch with the shoulder of her dress hanging suggestively low, Eve exclaims, with a hint of invitation in her voice, "It's after one now. You won't get home till all hours." In effect, Eve suggests the teenager spends the night with her, in the same pseudo-aggressive way that she suggested Bill should be with her and not Margo. Vito Russo claims that Joe Mankiewicz was aware of the homosexual undertones in such a proposition: "According to writer-director

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<sup>45</sup> Marynia Farnham, "Who Wears the Pants in Your Family?" (*Coronet*, March 1948), p. 13.

Mankiewicz, [Eve's] vulnerability in the last scene to another conniving woman is the result of physical attraction.”<sup>46</sup>

Thus, although Eve fails to realise it, it is she who is under threat. As the 1952 bestseller *U.S.A. Confidential* warned, “the self-sufficient girl who doesn't want to become an incubator or “kitchen slave” for a man is a push-over for a predatory Lesbian...Lesbians in heat are more combative than the ordinary garden variety male. Uncooperative girls are often raped.”<sup>47</sup> Going even further, in *Female Homosexuality*, Caprio described:

A slavlike devotion to a career which rules out the responsibilities of married life is another factor that makes a homosexual way of living more preferable. Finally, a life characterized by loneliness among strangers, by frequent change of environment, and the necessity for sharing living quarters with members of their own sex, increases one's susceptibility to homosexual gratifications.

If Eve Harrington was not a homosexual at the beginning of the film, her excessive devotion to her chosen career coupled with her success and self-inflicted marginalisation leave her susceptible to “infection.”<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, in the 1958 film *The Goddess*, Hollywood star Rita Shaw (Kim Stanley) is dominated by an aggressive and “mannish” secretary Miss Hayward (Elizabeth Wilson). The film was given special notice in the lesbian publication *The Ladder*:

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<sup>46</sup> Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1952), p.43.

<sup>48</sup> It could also be seen that it is Phoebe who is in danger of infection. Caprio warns his readers about “predatory lesbians,” who make a habit of seducing “innocent young girls causing them to give up marriage and family life for a life of homosexual enslavement.” Frank S. Caprio, *Female Homosexuality*, p. 8.

Unloved in childhood and reared in a lonely atmosphere after (with her knowledge) being unwanted and abandoned by her widowed mother, the main character goes through two unsuccessful marriages and finds her life as a movie queen unsatisfying. She suffers a nervous breakdown, turns to liquor and becomes a very maladjusted person seeking only to be loved. She finally ends up living with her secretary, who is obviously a lesbian, and the last several scenes of the picture bring out this relationship with surprising frankness in the dialogue.<sup>49</sup>

Asleep in bed after attending her mother's funeral, Rita is watched by her admirer / secretary and awakes to the suggestive greeting "Hello baby." When Rita's first husband John Tower (Steven Hill) attempts to reconcile with his sick ex-wife, he is told, "She is asleep Mr. Tower, I gave her some pills...I don't think I'll let you see her Mr. Tower...I've been with Ms Shawn for three years. I'm very fond of her." As if this were not evidence enough of an "unnatural" attraction, she continues: "I'll take her back to California and she'll continue making movies because that's all she knows how to do. And whatever happens after that happens, but I kind of love her, and I'll take good care of her." Rita's literal cries for help go unanswered and she is left in the care of Miss Hayward. It is also revealed that Ms Shawn has been visiting a psychiatrist for four months; her doctor, however, has ominously concluded that "she will never really respond to treatment, she will always be the same," and that there is little hope of her "healthy" reorientation.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Laura Jean Ermayne, "The Sapphic Cinema," *The Ladder* (Vol. 4 No. 7, April 1960).

<sup>50</sup> *The Goddess* charts the transformation of Rita Shawn (whose pre-Hollywood name is Emily Ann Faulkner) from neglected child to Hollywood "goddess." Along the way, the film confirms many of Frank S. Caprio's claims as extolled in *Female Homosexuality*. Rita's ultimate nervous breakdown, alcoholism and lesbianism are made to seem inevitable. For example, according to Caprio, "Lesbians in the course of their interviews with a psychiatrist will often refer to a mother who was always critical, dominating or unsympathetic and distant" (p.122). A young Emily Ann suffers such rejection when she overhears her drunken mother screaming, "I don't want her, I don't want her, I didn't want her when she was born and I don't want her now!" In a later scene she is forced to discuss her school report card with the family cat. Such rejection, Caprio claims, is reflected in the relationship between two homosexual women, one of whom seeks a mother substitute. John Towers states that, in Miss Hayward, Rita had "finally found a mother."

As if to demonstrate Eve's similar vulnerability, *All About Eve* closes on Phoebe dressed in Eve's coat and clutching Eve's award. She stands in front of a triptych of mirrors, seeming to provide an infinite number of reflections, thus highlighting the truly epidemic number of Eve Harringtons that constitute the *Modern Woman*, and registering the fear that the disease of female homosexuality could quietly and invisibly reproduce itself almost endlessly.<sup>51</sup>

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*All About Eve* suggested that its main female characters suffered psychologically as a result of their excessive ambition and blatant disregard for the "normative" role of women in the post-war United States. However, the exact nature of their illness was not openly constructed by the text. The text merely displays their symptoms, allowing for the nature of their "infection" to be constructed when analysed alongside a diagnostic text such as Lundberg and Farnham's *Modern Woman*. However, not unlike *Modern Woman* itself, *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) severs any such metaphorical bonds. The title character, Mrs. Eve White (Joanne Woodward), openly suffers from Multiple Personality Disorder.<sup>52</sup> As if in response to the plight of the modern woman, Eve White's personality has moved beyond the simply "neurotic." Her personality has fractured, and gradually over the course of the film the "three faces" that lie within are revealed.

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<sup>51</sup> As Robert J. Corber has claimed, in the image of Phoebe's power "the film indirectly ratifies the findings of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which...claimed that it took only one homosexual to 'pollute' a government office. Like the homosexual employee conjured by the committee's report, Phoebe threatens to become a legion." Corber, "All About the Subversive Femme," p. 45. (In Chapter 2, I provide a detailed analysis of this document and its implications).

<sup>52</sup> Joanne Woodward would go on to win the 1957 Academy Award for Best Actress for her role as the multiple Eves.

The film is based on a case encountered by psychiatrists Corbett H. Thigpen and Hervey M. Cleckley in the early 1950s. Before the release of the film in 1957, the case was documented in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (1954), and then in the book *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957). The preface to the book, which also acts as a synopsis of the film, claims it to be:

(A) true account of the experiences of a woman of Augusta, Georgia, U.S.A., in the early 1950s. It tells how Mrs. Eve White came to her doctor suffering from severe headaches and occasional fainting fits; how, as the medical treatment developed, a second personality came to possess her body (Eve Black), so that there were two distinct women competing for control over her mind. After further extraordinary...developments, which drove one woman to divorce her husband for betraying her - in her own body - with another woman, yet a third person appeared (Jane)...The book must tell its own strange story in the words of the two doctors who cured her.<sup>53</sup>

In accordance with the self-proclaimed veracity of this text, the film is presented in pseudo-documentary fashion and introduced by “distinguished journalist and commentator” Alistair Cooke.<sup>54</sup> As in the preface to the book, Cooke informs us that what we are about to witness “is a true story...about a sweet rather baffled young housewife, who in 1951 in her home town in Georgia suddenly frightened her husband by behaving very unlike herself.” He continues, claiming that “this movie needed no help from the imagination of a fiction writer. The truth itself was fabulous enough.”

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<sup>53</sup> Corbett H. Thigpen and Hervey M. Cleckley, *The Three Faces of Eve* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), p.1. The use of Cleckley and Thigpen’s account of events is instructive to this study as it reveals the extent to which the claims made by Lundberg and Farnham remained vital ten years after publication. Thigpen and Cleckley openly differentiate between “true” femininity and its “diseased” counterparts. The authors also worked closely with the filmmakers, they were given writing credits for the film and received plaques from Twentieth Century-Fox, “in recognition and appreciation of your service to the movie industry and the whole world.”

<sup>54</sup> Cooke would have been a familiar and trusted face for both the American and British audiences of the period. Born in Greater Manchester, England as Alfred Cooke in 1908, he changed his name to Alistair at the age of 22. In 1935, he began work as a film critic for the BBC as well as London correspondent for NBC. Cooke moved to America in 1935, becoming a naturalised citizen of his adopted country in 1941.

However, this “fabulous truth” has since been revealed as a fallacy. Christine Costner Sizemore, who later revealed herself to be the real Eve White, wrote two autobiographical accounts of events, in 1978 and again in 1989.<sup>55</sup> Both autobiographies point to supposed inaccuracies that abound in Cleckley and Thigpen’s description of events and the film’s dramatisation. For example, Sizemore claims that control over her mind and body was shared with no less than twenty-two personalities, rendering the film’s “three faces” relatively simplistic.

However, it is precisely such omissions that make *The Three Faces of Eve* so relevant to this study. Far from being the accurate documentation of a clinical case of Multiple Personality Disorder, as it was presented to audiences in 1957, the film was in fact a prescriptive text that attempted to specify the norms of feminine behaviour.<sup>56</sup> Even the most benign choices made by Cleckley and Thigpen and the filmmakers, now assume a higher significance. For example, in naming their case study Eve, the authors consciously refer back to the biblical character Eve, the original female who has served as the West’s primary Christian source for definitions of both gender and morality. Perceived as containing fundamental and largely negative “truths” about the nature of women, the name Eve is representative of Woman. Because of the biblical Eve’s actions, the prevalent belief in the West has been that all women are “by nature”

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<sup>55</sup> For further insight into her own experiences, see Chris Costner Sizemore, *A Mind of My Own: The Woman Who Was Known as Eve Tells the Story of Her Triumph Over Multiple Personality Disorder* (U.S.A.: William Morrow and Co, 1989) and Chris Costner Sizemore, *I’m Eve* (New York: Doubleday, 1977).

<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the film presents the three distinct personalities contained within the body of “Mrs Eve White” as types. Eve White is described as “the defeated wife,” Eve Black is viewed as “the rollicking and irresponsible playgirl,” while the third personality Jane is labelled “the pleasant young woman who had no memory.” It is assumed that the doctors in the film should not merely cure Eve of her Multiple Personality Disorder, but ultimately provide Eve with a personality that falls within the “norms” of feminine behaviour. Furthermore, Robert Coughlan’s aforementioned *Time* article, “Changing Roles in Modern Marriage,” claimed that male and female identities had become so confused that many people were consulting psychiatrists. Coughlan referred to a specific case study described observed patients, “both male and female, [who] seem to have lost their identities entirely. Or they have multiple identities and come to him to find out who they really are.” “Changing Roles in Modern Marriage.” *Time* (December 1956), p. 109-118.

disobedient, guileless, weak-willed, prone to temptation and evil, disloyal, untrustworthy, deceitful, seductive, and motivated in their thoughts and behaviour purely by self-interest.<sup>57</sup>

On an even more reductive level, in naming the initial personality Eve White and the second (overtly destructive) personality Eve Black, the filmmakers uphold the racial symbolism of their source material. The demure “white” housewife is juxtaposed with the sexual “black” spinster (in the Civil Rights South), and a cure is only possible for Eve by abandoning her symbolically charged name, becoming Jane before the credits roll.<sup>58</sup>

The film opens in Georgia; we are informed of the date by Cooke, whose narration alerts the audience to each sudden temporal shift. It is August 20, 1951, and Mrs Eve White, makes her first visit to Dr Luther (Lee J. Cobb). In this initial meeting, we learn that Mrs Eve White, the original “face” that the audience encounter, is mother to a four-year-old girl named Bonnie, and that four months prior to this appointment she suffered a miscarriage. Mrs White appears timid, restrained and quiet. She lacks the confidence to engage the doctor with eye contact. She is neatly presented; her hair is tied back and hidden under a bonnet. Her dress is buttoned high in the neck. Her appearance and demeanour are inauspicious. She is described by Doctor Day (Edwin Jerome) as a “dreary little woman from across the river.” The

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<sup>57</sup> <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/eve-women/3eveidentity.html> (Accessed: 08-12-2005).

<sup>58</sup> Allison Graham, in a chapter entitled “The Purest of God’s Creatures: White Women, Blood Pollution and Southern Sexuality,” offers further insight into the racial symbolism at play in *The Three Faces of Eve*. The battle between white and black counterparts is read as an indicator of the era’s “racial hysteria.” Eve White is presented as a “hick.” Decidedly lower class, she is described as an embarrassment to 1950s progress, hence the need for her eradication. Eve Black, Graham argues, is representative of an uninhibited and dangerous “black” sexuality. The “whiteness” of this “black” character represents the “scandal” of the sexualized white woman whilst simultaneously redeeming whiteness by suggesting gross sexuality to be imitative rather than essential. Jane, the ultimate successor to the body of Mrs. Eve White lacks both a threatening “black” sexuality and lower class social signifiers (losing Eve White’s Southern accent). She is decidedly middle-class. This conclusion leads Graham to claim that middle-class whiteness was presented, not only as progressive, but entirely natural. See *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television and Race During the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp 18 - 53.

filmmakers are thus able to visualise Cleckley and Thigpen's literary description of Eve White as a "dull, colorless person, too bound by propriety and inhibition to manifest herself warmly or adequately."<sup>59</sup>

Through these visual cues in costume and performance, it is suggested that Mrs. White is emotionally and, more significantly, physically unavailable to her husband Ralph (David Wayne). It is emotional and physical detachment from her husband that, later in the film, leads Dr Luther to exclaim, "Neither Eve Black nor Mrs White is a satisfactory solution. Neither of them is really qualified to fill the role of wife, mother or even responsible human being. A victory for either would be disastrous, no solution whatsoever." Such a claim suggests, as Lundberg and Farnham also conclude, that emotional detachment and sexual frigidity are outward signs of neurotic imbalance and are symptomatic of Eve's diseased nature. According to Lundberg and Farnham, the "strange phenomenon" of sexual frigidity should be read alongside other modern problems such as alcoholism, a swelling "clamour for divorce," a rising crime rate, a steep decline in the birth rate, revolutionary demands, atheism, romanticism, cries for women's rights, sexual "freedom," machine industry, juvenile delinquency, mass migrations from country to city, larger wars, and more pronounced and numerous manifestations of mental disorder.<sup>60</sup>

A similar argument is made in *Look* magazine by J. Robert Moskin in a 1951 issue. Highlighting the extent to which female sexual frigidity had become a national concern, Moskin brings to the readers' attention the "countless" number of sufferers. Moskin claimed that American women involved in a competitive work life outside the

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<sup>59</sup> Thigpen and Cleckley, *The Three Faces of Eve*, p. 10-11.

<sup>60</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 263. For further discussion of similar ideas, see also Wilhelm Stekel, *Frigidity in Woman in Relation to Her Love Life Vol I and II* (New York: Liveright, 1943). Stekel claims that "Very few healthy women are [frigid] while among the neurotics most women are so...the proportion among my female patients amounts to over 50 per cent" (p.97). This high incidence of sexual failure among women or "the presence in our midst of so many persons who have lost the capacity to love" was, as Stekel asserts, "one of the signs of an unhealthy age" (p. 4).

home were targets for psychosomatic illness, manifesting itself as sexual frigidity. Frigidity was an emotional retardation that caused women to fear pregnancy and hate sexual relations with their husbands. According to Moskin, “the troubled woman must share her emotional distress candidly with a receptive doctor. She must examine the emotional roots of her physical complaint, even if it means giving up a useful defensive weapon against childbearing or sex relations. She must shift her attention from the specific organ that is affected and examine the underlying problems.”<sup>61</sup>

For Lundberg and Farnham, the wide-spread incidence of frigidity was a result of the ego strivings inherent in a woman suffering from a masculinity complex. The sex act itself, they claimed, had become a duel, a competition as to who would achieve climax first or who would last the longest. “Woman” had become “unconsciously hostile to the act and rivalrous toward the male.” Thus, in order to properly function sexually:

The woman needs to have in her unconscious mind the knowledge that for her the sex act, to yield maximum satisfaction, terminates only with childbirth or the end of the nursing period...for the sexual act to be fully satisfactory to a woman she must, in the depths of her mind, desire, deeply and utterly to be a mother.<sup>62</sup>

Eve White cannot be said to suffer from the masculinity complex that appears to afflict both Margo Channing and Eve Harrington. Eve White has already given birth to one child; it is the miscarriage of her second that can be read as the root cause of her frigidity. Her miscarriage is conceived as a sexual “failure,” because the sexual act “failed” to realise itself with the birth of a child. Thus, Eve White is presented as an emotionally damaged, frigid and therefore inadequate woman.

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<sup>61</sup> J. Robert Moskin, “New Hope for Troubled Women,” *Look* (August 28, 1951), pp. 36 – 39.

<sup>62</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p.264.

In contrast to the dreary Mrs. White, the audience meets Miss Eve Black who emerges unannounced for the first time during a consultation with Dr. Luther. Mrs. White slumps forward in her chair, gripping her head as if suffering a headache. Shortly thereafter her fingers part and a “new” pair of playful eyes peer out. When Cleckley and Thigpen describe the scene in their book, their fantastical use of language is suggestive of a style from which the film attempts to remove itself:<sup>63</sup>

An alien, inextricable expression then came over her face...The lines of her countenance seemed to shift in a barely visible, slow, rippling transformation. For the moment there was the impression of something arcane...she winced as she put her hands to her temples...then the hands slightly dropped. She relaxed easily into an attitude of comfort the physician had never before seen in this patient. A pair of blue eyes popped open. There was a quick reckless smile. In a bright unfamiliar voice, the woman said, “Hi, there, Doc!”<sup>64</sup>

In almost every way, Miss Eve Black is constructed as the direct opposite of her namesake. Her posture is open; legs and arms are spread wide. She ceremoniously removes Mrs White’s hat, tossing it across the room onto the doctor’s desk, un-pinning the hair beneath. The stockings are next to go, leading her to tease, “I think you better turn around though. You’re kinda cute but I don’t think I know you that well. Maybe sometime though hon.” The removal of these garments may be viewed as symbolic of her desire to remain separate and distinct from a competing personality, Eve White, by displaying sexual freedom and aggression. As Allison Graham has noted, this transformation scene is signalled by the well-worn cinematic conventions of film noir,

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<sup>63</sup> Cleckley and Thigpen devote a chapter of their “study” to the appearance of dual personality in literature. They focus primarily on Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1886 fiction *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. They state that “running through this vivid and poetic extravagance we find a texture of plausibility, a thread of reality that cannot be dismissed forthwith as mere supernatural moonshine” (p. 48). It could be argued that the authors have adopted much of Stevenson’s “vivid and poetic” use of language in their own account, further calling into question the book’s veracity as a medical study.

<sup>64</sup> Thigpen and Cleckley, *The Three Faces of Eve*, p. 26.

including “jazzy clarinet music complemented by a bluesy guitar, cigarettes, un-pinned hair, bare legs on display.”<sup>65</sup> She is therefore able to claim that “Eve Black’s materialization within the heavily coded *mise-en-scene* and soundtrack of film noir places her squarely in the tradition of cinematic bad women.”<sup>66</sup>

The film constructs Eve Black as a “bad woman,” and it does so primarily by constructing her as a sexual aggressor. Indeed, the film’s Eve Black seems to revel in her sexuality and openly criticises the “normative” outlets for such energy. When asked if Ralph is her husband, she claims, “I ain’t ever been married. That’s for laughs gettin’ married!” When asked if Bonnie is her child she states, “Not while I’m in my right mind she isn’t!” However, although undoubtedly constructed as a “bad woman,” she remains outside the definition of the “femme fatale” traditionally associated with film noir. Her behaviour is frivolous and playful rather than consciously destructive and evil.

In a later scene Miss Black, wearing a little black dress, dances in a nightclub. She takes to the floor to serenade an unidentified male partner. Through song she asks him to “hold me,” “take me,” and “thrill me” but is ultimately unwilling to leave the nightclub with her date: “Look are you crazy or something? I’m not going any place with you, I don’t know what you’re talking about.” When her date becomes aggressive, she literally disappears, allowing Eve White to take her place. Thus, despite her lewd bravado, Miss Black is constructed as sexually naïve. This sexual naivety is displayed further during Miss Black’s attempted seduction of Ralph.<sup>67</sup> Wearing yet another

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<sup>65</sup> Allison Graham, *Framing the South* p. 44. It is somewhat paradoxical that a film so intent on establishing its own veracity should choose to operate within such fictitious generic boundaries. Film Noir, as a generic category, operates under the assumption that female sexuality is ultimately damaging and more often than not, evil.

<sup>66</sup> Graham, *Framing the South*, p. 45.

<sup>67</sup> Possibly due to Production Code restrictions (which forbade the treatment of adultery), and despite the successful release of Otto Preminger’s *The Moon is Blue* (1953), which was denied a seal of approval for its own treatment of adultery, the film differs here from Cleckley and Thigpen’s description of events. In the book, Eve Black’s sexual advances were consummated, causing the breakdown of Eve White and

seductive dress, Eve Black accosts Ralph in the Dixie Motel. Cavorting around the room drinking bourbon, she removes her stockings, lays on the bed and agrees to a kiss. However, she quickly evades a sexual union and heads for the car, holding Ralph to his promise that he will “buy her something pretty.”

Thus, although she is presented as sexually confident and dominant, her inability to engage in sexual activity speaks, yet again, of frigidity. In fact, Eve Black’s frigidity accords more with Lundberg and Farnham’s description of the ailment than that of her “White” counterpart. Eve White never rejects her “normative” role of wife and mother, and we are led to believe that her frigidity and emotional distance are born of her failed pregnancy. Eve Black, however, openly rejects the “normative” role. She is, as Lundberg and Farnham describe, a “Woman of Fashion” rather than “femme fatale.” The “Woman of Fashion” is “an ideal social type...entirely new to history,” because industrialisation and commercialism have significantly altered the “symbols of womanly power.” The “Woman of Fashion” was a “wholly synthetic” modern construct, “now being turned out in endless replicas like cakes of soap or tin cans”. The “solid reality” of women in the pre-industrial world had, they assert, given way to a “vacuous reality” of commercial excess and neurotic imbalance. Within this “vacuous reality,” women were converting themselves into courtesans, “overdressed, over-perfumed, over-coiffed and over-bedizened with jewels and gewgaws...The ‘Woman of Fashion,’ like the feminist, is a neurotic.”<sup>68</sup>

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Ralph’s marriage. Alluding to the biblical overtones inherent in the name Eve, they describe the event: “Here, one might say...beckoned an enticing adventure, something with all the allure of stolen fruit...Enlivened by the transient enthusiasm she could so vividly display, Eve Black must have appeared now to be plainly a creature of such passion and erotic potentiality and inclination, that the immediate prospect of spending a night with her might well have stirred the imagination. Some men, after being bitterly disillusioned or icily rejected by what they regard as the sacredly good manifestation of femininity, have been known to fling themselves wildly into the arms of despised harlots” (p. 202).

<sup>68</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 222.

Eve Black's preoccupation with dresses is indicative of her status as a "Woman of Fashion". Dresses ordered by Eve Black are delivered to Eve White who cannot recall ordering them. Eve Black's attempted seduction of Ralph also functions as an exercise in extortion; for sexual compliance she demands new dresses. Similarly, in her last scene, when she can sense her imminent "death," Eve Black asks Dr Luther, "Do you remember that red dress? The low cut one...I want you to have it." For Lundberg and Farnham, the "Woman of Fashion," like the courtesans on whom they modelled themselves, "only very rarely, if ever, and for psychic reasons, experienced sexual gratification of any kind. Nor did they bear children." Sexual gratification for a woman, could only be "complete" when a physical orgasm is accompanied by "the feeling of complete emotional acceptance she obtains from her sexual relation with a man, in the total setting."<sup>69</sup> In other words, for a woman to obtain true pleasure from the sex act it must be committed within the sanctified institution of marriage, and more specifically within the marital home itself, without separation from a woman's natural desire to bear children. Thus, Lundberg and Farnham attest:

For the woman...the pleasurable and procreative aspects of sexuality cannot, particularly psychologically, be so rigorously separated. There is in nature no dividing line between sex as pleasure and as procreation. Both are part of the same curve...As procreation is ruled out - for fear, distaste, prudence, ambition or what not - pleasure itself limps, sags, fails, disappears or converts into active displeasure.<sup>70</sup>

By denying her "natural" libidinal desires, openly criticising the institution of marriage and showing distaste for children, Eve Black has condemned herself (and her husband)

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<sup>69</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, pp. 220-222.

<sup>70</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 295.

to a life of sexual “displeasure.”<sup>71</sup> She is so preoccupied by her narcissistic desire for adornment that she has denies herself the sanctioned love of a man, and upon her “death” in the film’s final scenes, is left to care only about losing a beloved red dress.

*The Three Faces of Eve* reaches the conclusion that, “Neither Eve Black nor Mrs. White is a satisfactory solution” Fortunately, upon her next consultation, Eve reveals her “third face.” Jane appears unannounced during a session of hypnosis with Dr. Luther. She asks the Doctor who he is, claiming not to know who she is either. She sits erect in her chair. She does not cower, as did Mrs. White, nor slouch and preen, as Miss Black. She appears, in even unfamiliar surroundings, to be articulate, composed and confident. The film is quick to establish Jane as the epitome of a healthy femininity. Just moments after her first appearance, Jane becomes the only one of the three personalities to commit herself to a loving, honest, heterosexual relationship. We witness Jane arriving home in the car with new boyfriend Earl (Ken Scott). He asks her why, although she says she loves him, she refuses to commit to marriage. After initial reluctance, Jane reveals her multiple personality secret. Earl claims that his love remains the same: “Whatever it is we can handle it, together.” Jane leans into Earl’s arms, her head in his lap. He holds onto her closely centre frame and they share a tight embrace. Jane, unlike Eves White and Black, realises that, as Lundberg and Farnham claim time and again, she is dependent on a man. There is no fantasy in her mind about being an “independent woman,” a contradiction in terms.

In this way, the stage is set for Eve’s cure. As the scene in Earl’s car slowly dissolves, Alistair Cooke declares, “On the afternoon of December 17, 1953, Mrs. White came to the office for regular treatment and died there.” Before her “death” she claims that she hopes Jane will inherit her body. Eve White believes Jane will make the

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<sup>71</sup> Doctors Cleckley and Thigpen state, in the results of Eve Black’s personality test, that she identified love and sex “as *bad, weak, passive* things,” p.181.

best mother for her child. When describing her last visit to Bonnie (who is staying with Eve's parents for the duration of her treatment), she states, "When I was saying goodbye to Bonnie, she said...don't come back that other way, mommy I don't like that other way...Come back this way, mommy, the way you are now. So I knew it must have been Jane...and she was sweet to Bonnie."

The role of motherhood received widespread media attention throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Mothers were simultaneously praised for a job well done and vilified for failure. In 1942, Philip Wylie would publish his misogynistic critique, *Generation of Vipers*, which introduced the term "Momism." In a polemic that Wylie would repeat into the 1950s, it condemned "frustrated" women who smothered their children causing boys, in particular, to develop into weak and passive adults.<sup>72</sup> In 1950, Wylie would inform readers of *Look* magazine that half of the nation's hospital population was suffering from mom-induced mental illness: "Our emotional stability and mental health are in such frightful condition that even the high command of our armed forces is appalled." Mom's sons were apparently, "going haywire by the millions!"<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, a 1945 article published in the *Ladies Home Journal* asked the question, "Are American Moms a Menace?" Amram Scheinfeld claimed that the American "Mom" was not mothering her son but "smothering" him. Quoting Professor Edward A. Strecker, a University of Pennsylvania psychiatrist and consultant to the

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<sup>72</sup> Philip Wylie's concept of "Momism" may also be read as the starting point for post-war debates over women's "proper" role and informed much of what is written by Lundberg and Farnham in *Modern Woman*. "Momism" is used to describe the concept of mother-worship Wylie saw as unique to the United States. "Mom" was celebrated by politicians, given her own national holiday, and venerated in song. Such an excess in adoration symbolised a pathological emptiness in the lives of women, he argued. Women had become a race of "parasites," devoted entirely to consuming all the money, affection and virility a man could offer, thus preventing their children from developing into adjusted and independent adults. It comes as no surprise that in a blurb for *Modern Woman* he refers to the book as "the most valuable book we have concerning women."

<sup>73</sup> Phillip Wylie, "Mom's to Blame," *Look* (November 21, 1950), pp. 115 – 121.

Army and Navy Surgeon General,<sup>74</sup> the article aims to expose mothers who are a dangerous influence on their children and a “threat to American national existence.”<sup>75</sup>

The article claimed that Moms “are accorded praise and adulation for giving their lives to their children” yet, “hidden from view is the hard tragic fact...they exact in payment the emotional lives of their children.”<sup>76</sup> In *Their Mothers’ Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem* (1946), Strecker would claim:

A mom does not untie the emotional apron string – the Silver Cord – which binds her children to her....[Moms] have one thing in common – the emotional satisfaction, almost repletion, she derives from keeping her children paddling about in a kind of psychological amniotic fluid rather than letting them swim away with the bold and decisive strokes of maturity from the emotional womb.<sup>77</sup>

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdra English argue that such authors had taken it upon themselves to “probe the maternal subconscious, searching for the neuroses, which could infect a generation of children with the germs of mental illness.”<sup>78</sup> Indeed, mothers were portrayed as in danger of being too loving or, inversely, too strict. Good

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<sup>74</sup> Scheinfeld was quoting from a lecture by Strecker on April 27, 1945, before medical students and physicians at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. Strecker was compelled to give this indictment of American mothers when, during World War II, some 3 million men were “either rejected or otherwise lost to the service for neuropsychiatric reasons,” this being “just a bit under 20 per cent!” According to Strecker, all these men were “sick” and their illness was born of their mothers. He would collate his evidence and publish it in a book entitled *Their Mothers Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1946).

<sup>75</sup> In the 1952 film *My Son John*, Lucille Jefferon (Helen Hays), is called “mother” not only by her children but also her husband. Excessive devotion toward her son (Robert Walker) is presented as the reason for his conversion to communism. In an emotional scene, she exclaims, “I pleaded for your education, and they teased me that you were my favourite...I had dreams myself, John, of great things to be done, but a wife and mother doesn’t have much time...I hoped, John, that you’d see that one day my tomorrows would come through.” By reflecting her “neurotic,” socialist ideals onto her child, Lucille has inadvertently “threatened American national existence.” John is ultimately revealed to be embroiled in a subversive plot to leak confidential security information to the communists.

<sup>76</sup> Amram Scheinfeld, “Are American Moms A Menace?” *Ladies Home Journal*, (November 1945), pp.36, 38, 140.

<sup>77</sup> Strecker, *Their Mothers’ Sons*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>78</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdra English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of Experts’ Advice to Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), p.249.

parenting, it seems, had become a balancing act that if not deftly negotiated would result in the emotional crippling of the child.

In a chapter entitled “The Slaughter of the Innocents,” Lundberg and Farnham exponentially identify four “types” of ineffectual mother: the rejecting mother, the over-solicitous or overprotective mother, the dominating mother, and the over-affectionate mother. Eve White is constructed in many respects as an over-affectionate mother. Indeed, Lundberg and Farnham’s definition finds visualisation in the cinematic construction of the character. They claim that such a mother is usually:

[D]isappointed in her libidinal life for one reason or another - her own or her husband’s lack of capacity...the over-affectionate mother converts her children simply into objects for her own love and clings to them without restraint. She is particularly damaging to her sons and by her influence produces a steady quota of passive men. She is not directly so damaging to her daughters, whom she harms chiefly by her inability to provide them with a satisfactory father.<sup>79</sup>

Eve White’s frigidity and the deep love of her child have seemingly denied Bonnie a satisfactory father, a father that Jane, in a loving relationship with Earl, may yet provide.<sup>80</sup> Eve Black, by comparison, although she overtly denies being a mother, can be seen in this very refusal to occupy the position of Lundberg and Farnham’s rejecting mother. Her rejection of the entire notion of motherhood manifests itself in the frequent physical attacks directed toward the child. Resentful of inadvertently finding

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<sup>79</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 316.

<sup>80</sup> A 1955 article published in *Parents Magazine* highlighting the tension between the dual role of motherhood and wifehood claims that success in the role of Mother can only follow a successful and happy marriage: “if as a wife, a mother feels a deep, underlying happiness in the unfolding of a many-faceted womanliness, she makes a more loving, giving accepting mother...It strengthens a man’s ego...to know his wife loves him profoundly and finds her greatest happiness in being his wife and the mother of his children...Her sons will be stronger, more masculine men because they have experienced in their formative years the love of a mature woman and found in their father the meaning of true manliness.” Eve White it seems, in the failure of her marriage, has also failed as a parent. Myrl C. Boyle, “Which Are You First of All? Wife or Mother,” *Parents Magazine* (August 1955), pp.34-35, 77-79.

herself in the role of mother to Bonnie, we witness her attempted strangulation of the child, and Eve White voices her suspicion of other physical attacks.

In the wider cultural context, John Bowlby's report *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, published in March 1951 and prepared on behalf of the World Health Organization, claimed:

Deprived children, whether in their own homes or out of them, are a source of social infection as real and serious as are carriers of diphtheria and typhoid. And just as preventive measures have reduced these diseases to negligible proportions, so can determined action greatly reduce the number of deprived children in our midst and the growth of adults liable to produce more of them.<sup>81</sup>

With the source of "infection" identified and the need for preventative measures established, it comes as no surprise that Eve's eventual "cure," which allows for Jane to gain sole responsibility for Bonnie, is realised only when Dr. Luther uncovers a horrifying truth about Eve's own childhood. In a flashback sequence we witness the traumatic event, the memory of which has caused Eve's mind to fragment. She is seen playing underneath her house until her mother demands that Eve come and kiss her grandmother goodbye. Inside the house we realise that Eve is being asked to kiss the corpse of her dead grandmother, so that "she won't miss her so much." A terrified Eve screams as her mother forces her head into the casket. Eve's own neurotic imbalance is revealed to be a product of her mother's devout faith and maternal rigidity. The neurosis of the *Modern Woman* is thus constructed as cyclical; a pathogen passed from

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<sup>81</sup> John Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 1952), p. 157. The report began life as a study of the needs of homeless children, but is finally presented as a study of the effects of maternal deprivation and the means of prevention. Produced under the auspices of the World Health Organisation, the report derives its statistical data and observations from France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

mother to child in a debilitating cycle that must be halted in order to preserve the vitality of a nation.

This shocking revelation allows both Eve White and Black to “pass away,” leaving Jane behind with full memories of Eve’s childhood. The film’s postscript, initiated by the arrival of a letter from Jane at Dr. Luther’s office, confirms for viewers that the “normative” personality has indeed survived. Now residing in Richmond, Virginia, Jane writes to commemorate the second anniversary of her cure. She informs her doctor that Eves White and Black have not returned. She has decided that at last it is safe to have Bonnie with her: “So here we all are, Earl and Bonnie and Me. Going home together.” The image on which the film concludes shows the reconstructed family, shot in close up, occupying the same frame, smiling, eating ice creams, and driving forwards toward a “healthy” and “normative” future.

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Ultimately, Lundberg and Farnham present the successful renegotiation of the feminine ideal as essential to the survival of the United States. In their concluding chapter, entitled “Ways to a Happier End,” they claim that left unconstrained, the United States would “finally be in the position of the Roman Empire in its latter stages, when its manpower was clearly and unmistakably neurotic and incompetent to resist barbarian invaders.”<sup>82</sup> During an era of cold-war conflict between two opposing ideologies, the rehabilitation of a neurotic populace would ensure that the ideology of “self” would conquer the ideology of the “other.” *Modern Woman* can be read as a “call to arms,” a

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<sup>82</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 356.

battle-cry that did not go unheard in Hollywood. But how exactly did Lundberg and Farnham suggest such mass rehabilitation could be achieved?

In likening the “ghostly epidemic” of the *Modern Woman* to the “typhoid bacillus,” the source of which was found in polluted water supplies, Lundberg and Farnham suggest the “disease” of *Modern Woman* should be similarly tackled at the source: “If one seeks for the major cause of psychoneurosis one finds it in the home, which is...now also polluted. Our disorganized homes are turning out the psychoneurotics. We must concentrate on the source.”<sup>83</sup> Concentrating on the source of contagion, as my analyses of *All About Eve* and *The Three Faces of Eve* have demonstrated, focused less on the home and more on the role played by women, as the apparent “keystone” in the problem within the home. Lundberg and Farnham call for a halt to domestic modernity. The freedom from household “drudgery” that the modern American home provided for its housewives was seen as the major cause of an epidemic of neurotic displacement. The solution was, they posited, a mass rehabilitation programme that would restore prestige to the socially sanctioned and “healthy” roles of wife and mother. They were not alone; Abram Kardiner’s *Sex and Morality* (1954) also claimed that:

The guilt and hypocrisy of the mother seeking “self fulfillment” is nothing to jeer at. It is the distressing dilemma of a person striving to establish some value for herself because her biological role as mother has been robbed of the dignity and prestige that now have to be established on a new and unfamiliar basis.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p.359.

<sup>84</sup> Abram Kardiner, *Sex and Morality* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1954), p. 224. Kardiner claimed that “in her frantic efforts to straddle the dilemma of being a mother and still being a person of some dignity, [woman] has been obliged to compromise her most valuable gift to society, the true essence of maternity that is now discounted...She can now meet her former oppressor, the male, on equal terms socially, economically and sexually. Technically, it must be scored as a victory, but its quality is Pyrrhic. The loser is child and society,” (p. 224). Like Lundberg and Farnham, he highlights the role modernity has played in a woman’s dislocation from her “natural” role when he asks, “does the female in our society recognize...that this time her degradation is due not only to male dominance and chauvinism, but also to the values that pervade our industrial, assembly-line culture?” (pp. 227-228).

Studies conducted by the Institute for Motivational Research, under the direction of Ernest Dichter, recommended re-dedicating the housewife's "menial tasks" by "building up her role as the protector of the family – the killer of millions of microbes and germs." The report stressed it was vital to "emphasize her kingpin role in the family...help her be an expert rather than a menial worker...make housework a matter of knowledge and skill, rather than a matter of brawn, and dull, unremitting effort."<sup>85</sup> An early example of this idea is the *Life* magazine case study of Marjorie McWeeney who is photographed and displayed across two pages in the costumes of the seven professional roles her work as housewife entails. The caption reads, "she is laundress, cook, expert nurse-governess, seamstress, chauffeur and housemaid...In addition to all the working roles she fills, Marjorie must also be John's glamour girl."<sup>86</sup> *Time* magazine's Robert Coughlan simply claimed that to combat the "woman problem," men should simply admire women, "not for the cut of their trousers...but for their miraculous, God-given, sensationally unique ability to wear skirts, with all the implications of that fact."<sup>87</sup>

While Kardiner blamed "the ravages of mass culture" for the degradation of images of women, there is evidence to show that mass media images addressed the problem and they did not always trivialise it.<sup>88</sup> Lundberg and Farnham would certainly have applauded the efforts of the Institute for Motivational Research and *Life* magazine. Their own "rehabilitation program" would include government-sponsored propaganda, mass psychotherapy for all afflicted females, a governmental supervisory agency devoted to women, (or more accurately "women who live as women") and government paid cash subsidies to mothers (thus removing the need for seeking work outside of the

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<sup>85</sup> This study is highlighted by Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974), pp. 215-216.

<sup>86</sup> "American Woman's Dilemma," *Life*, (June 16, 1947), pp. 106-107.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Coughlan, "Changing roles in Modern Marriage," *Time*, (December 24, 1956), p. 116.

<sup>88</sup> Kardiner, *Sex and Morality*, p. 228.

home). Women would also be encouraged to “re-examine the sphere of home tasks with a view to repossessing as many of them as possible.”<sup>89</sup> Only if the home was reclaimed as the central focus of women’s lives would recovery be complete.

However, it would seem that women did not hear the protestations made by Lundberg and Farnham or Hollywood. By 1963, the “ghostly epidemic” had lost its title. The problem now had no name, and Betty Friedan attempted to disaggregate - white and middle-class, educated women at least - from the conventional picture of femininity with the publication of the bestselling *The Feminine Mystique*. To demonstrate this fundamental shift, we need look no further than the daytime television schedules, aimed squarely at the American housewife. In 1959, the CBS discussion show “Woman! Is the American Woman Losing Her Femininity?” concluded by stating that it was “glorious” to be a woman. In the show’s estimation, a woman’s glory was her ability to turn male heads, and to “be needed and wanted and loved and admired.” But most glorious of all was to enjoy having “the power of creation inside you and to see it grow and become.” By September 1963, a similar television production, “The American Woman in the Twentieth Century,” had charted the history of the American female and allowed Friedan to deliver the closing statement:

I think there is a terrible contempt for women still in our society, implicit in this glorified image of a woman only as a sex-object, implicit in this glorified insistence that a woman’s fulfilment is motherhood and only motherhood. Cows can have babies, but women have minds as well as sexual organs and women are made to feel guilty if they really use their minds. We don’t yet know what women can do, what women can be.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 369.

<sup>90</sup> “The American Woman in the Twentieth Century,” Wolper Productions and United Artists Television, September 1963. LoC Catalogue number: FDA 3698.

Women were now being told that they need not choose between marriage and career; it was no longer unhealthy to combine marriage, motherhood and a job. However, as my subsequent chapter will show, not all groups rendered pathologically diseased would see the beginnings of their social rehabilitation by the early 1960s. With the Stonewall riots not occurring until 1969, throughout the 1950s, homosexuals routinely faced government persecution. Their “condition” was officially classified as a sociopathic personality disturbance in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) until as late as 1974.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Suddenly, A Homosexuality Epidemic.**

**Wingate:** I would like to start directly with the title of your book here, HOMOSEXUALITY: DISEASE OR WAY OF LIFE? In your opinion, what is the answer?

**Bergler:** The homosexual believes it is a way of life. In objective reality, he is a diseased person. He just won't admit to that.

**Wingate:** How is he diseased? In what way?

**Bergler:** He is diseased in his personality...a personality distortion. The sexual problem is put into the center only by the person who is involved. In other words, if you meet a homosexual and look at him under a microscope, you find a peculiar distortion of the personality which consists of the fact that basically this person is what we call an injustice collector...

**Wingate:** You are stating categorically that there are no healthy homosexuals?

**Bergler:** Categorically.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter's epigraph is a transcript of a U.S. television show entitled *Nightbeat* that aired in the US in 1958. Interviewer John Wingate is questioning Dr. Edmund Bergler about claims published in his book *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life* (1956). Bergler, whose books were based on his "successful treatment" of homosexual patients, repeatedly insisted that homosexuality should be understood only as a disease and that like most other diseases it could be cured.

Bergler rejected the "popular" definition of the homosexual as a "person who derives his sexual excitement and satisfaction from a person of his own sex."<sup>2</sup> He argued that this suggested a false parity between the homosexual and heterosexual and

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Bergler, M.D, *One Thousand Homosexuals* (New Jersey, Pageant Books, Inc., 1959), pp. 160-167. Bergler had authored twenty books by 1959. Four of these titles dealt exclusively with homosexuality: *Counterfeit Sex* (1951), *Kinsey's Myth of Female Sexuality* (1954), *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life* (1956), and *1000 Homosexuals* (1959). Bergler was a graduate of the Medical School of the University of Vienna. He was in private practice as a psychoanalytic psychiatrist in Vienna and New York from 1927 until his death in 1962. From 1942 to 1945 he lectured at the Psychoanalytic Institute in New York.

<sup>2</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.13.

failed to take into consideration the psychopathic “neurotic defenses” and “personality traits” that were “specifically and exclusively” characteristic of homosexuals. Rather, he argued the homosexual belonged to “a special psychiatric category” distinct from the heterosexual, amongst whom uniformity could not be established.<sup>3</sup>

*Nightbeat* was not the only mass media outlet to respond to Dr. Bergler’s sensational thesis. Unsurprisingly, the ever salacious and controversial *Confidential* magazine declared with glee that, at last, Bergler had provided the “proof” that “perversion” was a mental illness. Under the sensationalist headline **“HOMOSEXUALS CAN BE CURED!”** *Confidential* claimed:

A homosexual is not any of the things he would like you to believe. Not a member of a third and superior sex, not a freak of biology with a built in sex-compass...not the pitiable victim of an inescapable heredity. *He is just mentally ill!*

*Confidential* described Bergler’s approach as “revolutionary” and his proof of cure “irresistible.” Equating homosexuality with a terminal illness, it stated:

For parents grieving over a homosexual child, for a wife married to a homosexual husband, for an individual made miserable by his own perversion, for a world alarmed by the spread of this evil disease, it is enough to know that the way is open – that, at last, most homosexuals can be cured.<sup>4</sup>

Bergler’s book also found print coverage beyond the tabloid press. On December 10, 1956, it was reviewed in the “Medicine” section of *Time*. The review whole-heartedly accepted Bergler’s assertions, condemning “misleading propaganda” that alleged that homosexuality was an incurable hereditary condition, and that the homosexual way of

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<sup>3</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Peterson, “HOMOSEXUALITY CAN BE CURED!” *Confidential* (May 1957), pp. 38-39, 62.

life was therefore “normal.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Gilbert Cant, Associate Editor of *Time* but writing for *The New Leader*, reviewed the book with an almost vicious enthusiasm. Since World War II, he asserted, there had been a marked increase in overt homosexuality, and like communists before them homosexuals were openly seeking to make converts to their “abnormal” pattern of life. Cant used Bergler’s publication as a platform. His review opens with the seemingly unequivocal statement that:

Beethoven had syphilis. Robert Louis Stevenson had tuberculosis. Dozens of other great figures in the pageant of arts and letters have suffered from chronic and vile diseases. Yet none of them, so far as we can recall, has ever rated his disease as a badge of pride, or sought deliberately to spread it among those who, happily, were uninfected.<sup>6</sup>

His words thus strengthened the stereotypical link between gay and artistic personalities evident in *All About Eve*.

Bergler’s work was also recognised by a fledgling homosexual “community.” The Mattachine Society, the first “homophile” movement to arise during this period, devoted an entire issue of new publication the *Mattachine Review* to a discussion of his book.<sup>7</sup> The publication was frequently used as a sounding board for willing experts to

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<sup>5</sup> “Curable Disease?” *Time* (December 10, 1956), pp.74-76.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Cant, “The Malady of Sexual Inversion,” *The New Leader* (January 7, 1957).

<sup>7</sup> The Mattachine Society was founded by Henry Hay in 1950, with the first publication of the *Mattachine Review* in January 1955. The initial goals of the Society were to engender a recognition of homosexuals as an oppressed minority, a distinct social group. Initially, the society would champion the homosexuals’ “difference,” marking them as unique from but equal to the heterosexual majority. However, by 1953, both the leadership and outlook of the Mattachine changed. Henry Hay would step down as leader because of his past affiliation with the Communist Party. The Society now argued the homosexual was no different from the heterosexual except in choice of sexual partner. The society did not go unnoticed. *Confidential* magazine warned its readers to be “on guard.” The Mattachine society, it claimed had the goal of one million members and a 6 million dollar annual income. Such an organisation, it warned, would be able to “throw plenty of weight around, politically and socially!...On guard America! The mincing males are on the march, and the hand that’s on the hip today may slap your face tomorrow. These cuties aren’t kidding!” Kenneth Frank, “Homosexuals, Inc.” *Confidential* (May 1954), pp.18-19. In 1955, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon formed the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), a society conceived as an explicitly lesbian alternative to the Mattachine, and would begin the publication of its newsletter *The Ladder* in 1956. For a history of the Mattachine and DOB, see John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970*

uphold, question, challenge or dismiss psychiatric orthodoxy. Prior to *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* the *Mattachine* were generally receptive to those who argued that homosexuality was a disease rather than a criminal rejection of social morals. If homosexuality really were a disease, the “afflicted” need not feel shame or guilt, and psychotherapy might be used, if not always for cure, to generate a healthy self-acceptance. However, the *Mattachine* reaction to Bergler’s assertion that all homosexuals were “psychic masochists” seems to mark a shift in their relationship with the psychiatrist.<sup>8</sup>

The May 1957 issue of *Mattachine Review* openly attacks many of his claims. Luther Allen rejects Bergler’s claim that every homosexual thrives upon injustice and mockingly tells his readership:

You are a masochist, you know. It is your own fault that your family kicked you out when they discovered you were homosexual. It is your own fault that you got fired from that good job when the boss received an anonymous letter revealing your homosexuality...It is your own fault that a good-looking detective picked you up, led you on, and then arrested you when you responded to his advances.<sup>9</sup>

In September of 1958, in an issue looking forward to the Society’s ninth year of operation, the *Mattachine Review* appears, finally, to have severed any ties with the psychoanalysts who would declare them diseased. The *Mattachine*, they claim, will “attack ancient anti-sexual attitudes that are still prevalent in Western cultures,” and

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(Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 57-125. For history and interviews with founding members, see Jonathon Ned Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Meridian Books, 1992) and also Vern L. Bullough, *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Bergler believed that every homosexual was an “exquisite” injustice collector and therefore a “psychic masochist.” He wrote, “the psychic masochist is a neurotic who constantly creates, by means of his own *unconscious* provocations, situations in which he finds himself ‘behind the eight-ball.’ What he is really after, although he is ignorant of this dreary fact, is defeat, humiliation, rejection.” Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Luther Allen, “If the Cat Can Look at the King...” *Mattachine Review* (May 1957), pp. 12-14.

declare that the “concept of homosexuality as a disease is unacceptable.”<sup>10</sup> For all their hopes, in the 1950s popular imagination, homosexuality was a vile disease.

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By mid-century, nearly all mental health professionals in the United States agreed that homosexuality was an acquired (as opposed to an inborn) trait. It was a growing pathology that called for “treatment,” “prevention” and “containment.” Of course, the idea that the homosexual was “diseased” was neither new nor unique to the 1950s; the medical model of homosexuality that existed in the 1950s can be traced to the acceptance of medical assumptions dating back as far as the Eighteenth Century. Although not unique in categorising homosexuality as a “disease,” Bergler’s writings emphasise a post-war shift toward Freudian psychoanalytic perspectives, which transferred the examination of homosexuality from the body to the psyche. In 1952, homosexuality was defined by the United States Public Health Service as a sociopathic personality disturbance, appearing in the first printing of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-I)*.<sup>11</sup> However, during the 1950s, homosexuality was also thrust into the media spotlight and rose to the surface of American life to become a subject of serious cultural concern.

With the publication of Alfred C. Kinsey’s *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948), homosexuals had become more “visible” than at any other time in U.S. history and thus homosexuality as a ‘disease’ was reasoned to be rapidly increasing. In a

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<sup>10</sup> “Ninth Year Ahead,” *Mattachine Review* (September 1958), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion see Irving Bieber et al, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study* (New York: Basic Books, 1962) and Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987). For an insight into the formation of a medical model of homosexuality dating back to 1728, see Vern L. Bullough, “Homosexuality and the Medical Model,” *Journal of Homosexuality* (Vol 1, No 1, Fall 1974), p. 99-110 and also, Jonathon Ned Katz, *Gay/Lesbian Almanac* (New York: Harper Row, 1983) and Katz, *Gay American*, pp.129-207.

culture of “containment,” social and sexual nonconformity was linked directly to communist aggression and national security.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, although Kinsey would argue that his statistical evidence proved that homosexuality should be considered a “normal” sexual expression, his view would not adhere and in 1950, when the federal government began to purge homosexual employees from its payroll, the perverted and highly infectious nature of the homosexuality “disease” could not (openly) be denied.

On February 28, 1950, Undersecretary of State John Peurifoy, under cross-examination from the Senate Appropriations Committee, testified that most of ninety-one government employees dismissed for “moral turpitude” were homosexual. Furthermore, Lieutenant Roy E. Blick of the Washington Vice Department made the claim that 3,500 homosexuals were employed in Government agencies, 300 to 400 of whom were in the State Department. His assumptions, reproduced in the *New York Times* on May 20, 1950, were reportedly a “quick guess,” based on a list compiled after interviewing arrested homosexuals who would say, “Why don’t you get so and so and so and so?”<sup>13</sup>

Keen to exploit the issue of national security and thus discredit the Truman administration, Republicans pounced upon these remarks, thrusting “sexual perverts,” this time dangerously linked to communist aggression, into the national

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<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Foertsch has also argued that the fear of communists and gay men is derived from their similarity. Both communists and gay men are near invisible and both “reds” and “gays” have long been considered “infectious.” *Enemies Within: The Cold War and the AIDS Crisis in Literature, Film and Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p.17. In Morris L. Ernst and David Loth’s *Report on the American Communist*, published in 1952, it is argued that there is a “reasonable quota” of homosexuals among the membership of the Communist Party, USA. The authors even claim that some psychoanalysts say that “there is a slight analogy between the analysis of a Communist and that of a homosexual. These analysts explain that among both they find individuals who want their shame and enjoy the guilt of lying, cheating, and deceiving their friends.” Morris L. Ernst and David Loth, *Report on the American Communist* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1952), p.165.

<sup>13</sup> William S. White, “Inquiry by Senate on Perverts Asked,” *The New York Times* (May 20, 1950), p. 8. This claim was eclipsed by Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, whose enquiries for their book, *Washington Confidential*, led them to the “discovery” that there were “at least 6,000 homosexuals on the government payroll.” *Washington Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1951), p. 90.

consciousness.<sup>14</sup> On April 19, 1950, an article entitled “Perverts Called Government Peril” appeared in the *New York Times*. The article reproduced comments made by Guy George Gabrielson, then Republican National Chairman, who claimed that “perhaps as dangerous as the actual communists are the sexual perverts who have infiltrated our Government in recent years. The State Department has confessed that it has had to fire ninety-one of these. It is the talk of Washington.”<sup>15</sup> At the core of Gabrielson’s comment is the insinuation that just as communism lay outside the boundaries of legitimate political ideology, so too homosexuality lay outside the parameters of legitimate sexual expression, and both were equally dangerous to the preservation of “America.”

The result of such concerns, what political historian Robert D. Dean has since labelled the “Lavender Scare,” was a report authored by the Hoey committee, submitted to the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments on December 15, 1950.<sup>16</sup> This report, entitled *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, created an explicit link between political, moral and sexual subversion. The report conflated fears of domestic political subversion and foreign aggression with anxieties about the maintenance of the domestic social and sexual order. It revealed the extent to which anticommunism was driven, not only by a fear of a foreign ideology,

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<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed political discussion of this series of events see John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 40-53; John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) pp. 288-295; John D’Emilio, “The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America,” reproduced in Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Eds), *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), pp. 226-240. Also, Max Lerner, “The Washington Sex Story,” *The New York Post* (July 10 – July 22, 1950).

<sup>15</sup> “Perverts Called Government Peril,” *The New York Times*, (April 19, 1950), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Dean describes the “Lavender Scare” as “a partly subterranean purge linked to the anticommunist crusade and mirroring its form, but not subsumed by it. The homosexual purge, too, came complete with congressional investigations, inquisitorial panels, executive branch “security” doctrine, guilt by association, threat of punitive exposure, ritual confession, the naming of names, and blacklisting.” Moreover, President Truman’s handling of the homosexuals-in-government issue mirrored the earlier handling of communists-in-government issue that was dealt with via the Loyalty-Security Program, made effective in 1947. For more, see Dean’s excellent study, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

but by an equally pressing fear of sex and gender. In this conservative era, the effective containment of communism and the safeguarding of an idealised “Americanism” rested on public adherence to a traditional, patriarchal sexual order.

The purpose of the investigation and the subsequent report is clearly stated. The government sub-committee set out to find reasons why the employment of homosexuals was unsuitable, ignoring any personal expertise that individuals may have brought to their posts:

The primary objective of the subcommittee in this enquiry is to determine the extent of the employment of homosexuals and other sex perverts in government; to consider reasons why their employment by the government is undesirable; and to examine into the efficacy of the methods used in dealing with the problem.<sup>17</sup>

The authors were in no doubt that homosexuality should be treated as a dreaded disease. Accordingly, enquiries were made into the basic medical and psychiatric phases of the “problem,” and a number of “eminent” physicians and psychiatrists were consulted and also brought before the subcommittee to testify.

This collaboration led the subcommittee to the conclusion that “persons afflicted with sexual desires which result in their engaging in overt acts of perversion should be considered as proper cases for medical and psychiatric treatment.” At the same time, however, the report also concludes that by violating the moral codes and laws of society such “deviates,” “must be dealt with as transgressors and dealt with accordingly.” Thus, the “victim” of the homosexuality “disease,” could be afforded no sympathy and was to be punished.

Despite having previously established that “sex deviation results from

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Senate, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government* (Washington, D.C., 1950), reproduced in Jonathon Katz (Ed), *Government Versus Homosexuals* (New York: Arno Press, 1975).

psychological rather than physical causes,” it was still deemed to be highly contagious. The preying homosexual was considered a threat, particularly to those who were “young and impressionable,” and, thus, unable to resist the supposedly “frequent” attempts made to entice them into acts of sexual perversion. Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, in the salacious *U.S.A. Confidential*, similarly claimed, “Young men are being infected with the virus of an epidemic.” Their writing makes explicit the connection between political and sexual transgression implicit in much political discourse. Their shameless tabloid sensationalism would be easy to dismiss were it not for the vast readership (sales of their paperbacks numbered in the millions).<sup>18</sup> Implying that homosexuality is a contagious disease that through exposure could easily contaminate the body politic, the report ominously concludes that “one homosexual can pollute a Government office,” in a style not dissimilar to that of America’s most sensationalist publication.

However, the report surmised that the most disturbing aspect of the homosexual “disease” was its apparent lack of visible symptoms by which homosexuals might be confidently diagnosed:

Contrary to common belief, all homosexual males do not have feminine mannerisms, nor do all female homosexuals display masculine characteristics in their dress or actions...many male homosexuals are very masculine in their physical appearance and general demeanor, and many female homosexuals have every appearance of femininity in their outward behavior.

The psychiatric rather than physical nature of the homosexual “disease” had rendered the homosexual invisible to the “normal” person, and as such it was impossible to determine “accurately the number of homosexuals and other sex perverts in the

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<sup>18</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1952), p.45. For more, see K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 73-75.

Government service.” It was precisely this invisibility that allowed the authors of the report to identify the “sex pervert” as a “security risk.”

The concealed homosexual, it was argued, was highly susceptible to blackmail at the hands of the “foreign espionage agent.” The report asserted that if “blackmailers can extort money from a homosexual under the threat of disclosure, espionage agents can use the same pressure to extort confidential information or other material they might be seeking.” Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer also alleged that young Soviet Communists were being given “a course in homosexuality,” and were using their newfound skills around the globe:

Espionage agents have found it rather easy to send their homosexuals here and contact their kind in the sensitive departments of our government. Blackmail and many other schemes are used to gather secret information...It is found that the cycle of these individuals’ homosexual desires follows the cycle closely patterned to the menstrual period of women. There may be three or four days in each month that the homosexual’s instincts break down and drive the individual into abnormal fields of sexual practice.<sup>19</sup>

Lait and Mortimer popularised the assumption that the male homosexual was a slave to his libidinal desires, which is further evinced in the report’s conclusion that homosexuals, by their very nature, were weak-willed, immature and narcissistic. Their ludicrous claim that the sexual cycle of a homosexual closely resembles that of the female menstrual cycle was not mere conjecture, but based upon the “professional” opinion of physician and Congressman Arthur L. Miller. These claims were entered into the congressional record in May of 1950. Indeed, in an article entitled “Homosexual International,” that appeared in the Washington Publication *Human Events* and was read into the *Congressional Record* in May of 1952, author R. G. Waldeck, a political writer, novelist and self-proclaimed expert on homosexual-political

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<sup>19</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *Washington Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1951), p.96. For more detail see K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*, pp.53-54.

intrigue, also claimed that the homosexual threat was increasingly international in scope, and that homosexuals were joining forces with communists in the United States and around the globe. Members of one conspiracy, Waldeck reasoned, were likely to join another. Homosexuals were enemies of society and thus naturally “enemies of capitalism.”<sup>20</sup>

With such terrifying links established, the report is able to conclude that homosexuals are “unsuitable” for employment in the federal government on the grounds that indulgence in such “degraded” activity, as well as being both “illegal” and “immoral,” also constituted a valid security risk. External communism, depicted as an implacable, expansionist, and overtly hostile enemy, was portrayed internally by security state officials as a domestic infection, an intelligent and invisible pathogen with the conspiratorial aim of undermining national vigour. According to the report, homosexuals provided one avenue of infection. In effect, it was reasoned that communism, as an ideology and a way of life, appealed to a maladjusted individual’s psychosexual weaknesses. Homosexuals, being “moral weaklings,” prone to blackmail and conversion, were to be isolated, examined and discharged, lest they reveal top-secret information or simply infect vulnerable young employees.

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Although homosexuality would rise to the surface of American social and political life in the 1950s, the Hollywood Production Code ensured that it remained simmering

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<sup>20</sup> Cited in K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*, pp. 67-68.

beneath the surface of mainstream Hollywood film.<sup>21</sup> Homosexuality in the movies, like the pathogen itself, was invisible yet insidious.

Vincente Minnelli's *Tea and Sympathy* (1956), adapted from Robert Anderson's play of the same name, was able to tackle homosexuality without even whispering its name. On July 25, 1955, *Time* magazine reported that M.G.M. were busy attempting to "clean up" the homosexual theme of the play in order to render the film version suitable for release. The article explained that the male protagonist, "who suffers doubts about his manhood," would be portrayed, slightly less ominously, as "offbeat" or "nonconformist." A similar process was in operation with the adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. According to *Time*, M.G.M. studio boss Dore Schary was personally responsible for changing the "relationship of the younger brother to a homosexual football captain;" the relationship was to become "simple hero worship." However, despite attempts to disguise the homosexual themes at work in such films, the fact that they were present in any form suggests the extent to which the Production Code was beginning to lose its force. Indeed, it could be argued that the pressure to stifle expressions of sexuality in the 1950s only masks the fact that cultural production was becoming increasingly less rigid and even permissive. This claim is attested to by the production and release of films such as *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Baby Doll* (1956), *Tea and Sympathy* (1956) and *Compulsion* (1959).<sup>22</sup>

*Tea and Sympathy* tells the story of Tom Lee (John Kerr), an effeminate and sensitive but heterosexual teenager, who is taunted by his classmates and accused of incubating the homosexuality pathogen. Tom is labelled "Sister Boy" for his love of the theatre and of sewing, and his close friendship with his housemaster's wife, Laura

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<sup>21</sup> The code was explicit in denying the depiction of "sex perversion or any inference to it." The code was revised on October 3, 1961, stating that, "in keeping with the culture, the mores and the values of our time, homosexuality and other sexual aberrations may now be treated with care, discretion and restraint." Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), p. 122.

<sup>22</sup> "The Censors," *Time* (July 25, 1955), p. 86.

Reynolds (Deborah Kerr). Although the film never directly suggests that Tom Lee might actually be homosexual, and it is in fact revealed that he is deeply in love with Laura, it does offer viewers a meditation on the symptomatic nature of the homosexuality “disease.”

As the report on the *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government* had exposed, it could no longer be assumed that all feminine-appearing males and masculine-appearing women were homosexual. Likewise, it was also safe to assume that many of the most “masculine” men and “feminine” women were invisibly “infected.” In January of 1954, the ever-controversial *Confidential* magazine reported, in an article entitled “HOLLYWOOD – where Men are Men and women too!” that:

Things have gotten so out of hand in this new Sodom-on-Sunset Boulevard that you can't tell the he-men from the she-men without a scorecard...We got the shock of our lives when we discovered that one of the nine top cowboy stars, after a hard day riding the movie range, likes nothing better than to swap his cowboy pants for lace panties.

The pathogen of homosexuality was seemingly capable of infecting even the most virile and masculine of American men. Although the “gay cowboy” has more recently become a cultural cliché, in 1954 the exposure led *Confidential* to claim that:

No one knows, for sure, how many fairies there are in Hollywood. The town is loaded in high places with people who have bivalent tendencies – meaning they're double-gaited. And while it poses a problem for police and psychiatrists, it's a helluva lot tougher on the women. They never know, when they go out with a man, whether they're dating a Jack or a Jill.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Juan Morales, “Hollywood – Where Men are Men and Women Too! *Confidential* (January, 1954), pp. 28-29. Juan Morales was in fact a pseudonym for Howard Rushmore, then editor of *Confidential* and once “director of research” for Senator McCarthy. Interestingly, just four years after the publication of the article in question, Rushmore would himself become the subject of tabloid journalism when he shot both himself and his wife dead in the back seat of a New York taxi on January 3, 1958. See Sam Kashner

By the mid 1950s, external behaviour was no longer considered a reliable factor in the identification of a homosexual, and *Tea and Sympathy* highlights the extent to which the now invisible pathogen of homosexuality complicated the traditional constructions and common understandings of both masculinity and sexuality in the 1950s. The film is able to simultaneously reinforce and query traditional notions of homosexuality and masculinity. Ultimately, the film asks the question: if the pathogen of homosexuality is without visible symptom, how might one recognise the “disease”?

The film opens as Tom Lee returns to his school for a reunion. As he passes through the school gardens towards his old dorm-room, former classmates comment on his presence: “Never thought I’d see him at a class reunion,” and “Well, I suppose he’s got a right.” Such comments hint at the action that will unfold as Tom Lee sits at his dorm-room window and the film dissolves into flashback. Tom’s “offbeat” nature and “non-conformist” attitude are made immediately apparent. As the flashback opens, we witness a younger Tom sitting in the same window. His classmates are members of the varsity club, playing sports at the beach, while Tom pursues a more “feminine” interest; he plays his guitar and sings “The Joys of Love.” Laura Reynolds can be seen tending to the garden, and Tom sings as if to serenade her. Upon joining Laura, we learn that Tom “used to have a garden,” and that his father “wasn’t keen on the idea, but...he wasn’t around much anyways.” As for Tom’s mother, we discover that she has been missing from Tom’s life since he was five years old when his parents divorced. Tom explains that he was “supposed to hold them together. That’s how I happened to come into the world. I didn’t work. That’s a terrible thing you know, to make a flop of the first job you get in life.” Thus, the film is quick to establish not only the supposed

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and Jennifer MacNair, *The Bad and the Beautiful: Hollywood in the Fifties* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002), pp.17-63.

symptoms of the homosexual “disease,” but also to engage with what was widely believed to be the root cause of such an emotional disturbance: the child’s relationship with his parents.

As I suggested in my analysis of *The Three Faces of Eve*, “Moms” were often blamed for inducing homosexuality in their male offspring. However, as Tom states, the only thing he can remember about his mother during his formative years is that she would repeatedly tell him to “go outside and bounce a ball.” Thus, it must be assumed that Tom’s “maladjustment” has arisen from a lack of either maternal or paternal interest. Had Tom’s mother and father been more active parents, they may have taken heed of warnings printed in the popular press. In 1945, the *Ladies Home Journal* warned, “If indeed we have gone too far in the direction of maternal conditioning, we must see that the psychological diet of our boys is supplemented by more ‘masculine vitamins.’ American fathers must be impressed with the need of greater participation in the rearing of their sons.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, a *Time* article entitled “The Hidden Problem,” reported that “Every day hundreds of U.S. parents are faced with a problem which few of them know how to tackle: a son (more rarely a daughter) who shows more interest in his own than the opposite sex.” Claiming that the underlying cause to every “true” case of homosexuality was a child’s failure to identify with the correct parent, the article focuses on the role of the father as the inducer of this “emotional disorder:”

If the father is a dominating, bullying type, the boy is likely to prefer, and tend to identify himself with his mother’s yielding tenderness. If father is a henpecked weakling, the boy will reject him and resolve to avoid his mistake of falling into the clutches of a dominating or shrewish woman. The possible variations are innumerable.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Amram Scheinfeld, “Are American Moms a Menace?” *Ladies Home Journal* (November, 1945), p.140.

<sup>25</sup> “The Hidden Problem,” *Time* (December 28, 1953), p. 28.

The article even spotlights the theatrical production of *Tea and Sympathy* as an example: “Herbert Lee, divorced when his son Tom was five, claims to have given the boy “everything”...in truth he has been everything to the boy but a father.” According to *Time*, the best thing fathers could do for their sons was take them to a psychiatrist, where “such cobweb words as ‘hereditary,’ ‘congenital,’ and ‘hopeless’ should be swept from their minds.”<sup>26</sup>

Like Dr. Benjamin Spock’s *Baby and Child Care*, published shortly after World War II, *Tea and Sympathy* appears to advocate increased responsibility for the paternal parent. Spock’s concerns about physically and mentally absent fathers were twofold. Firstly, he stressed the need for mothers to keep men posted overseas in military service fully informed as to the development of their children. Secondly, he was concerned about the damaging effect of the absence of fathers on children, particularly boys who were at risk of becoming “precocious and effeminate” if deprived of “healthy” male role models.<sup>27</sup> Spock was not alone in advocating a more involved paternal relationship. His writings signal a shift toward the ideal of a more domesticated American masculinity that would become increasingly important throughout the 1950s. Although this emergent discourse concerning male participation in the rearing of children is less frequently an element in popular movies of the period, which are typically more concerned with levels of juvenile delinquency emanating from fatherless families

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<sup>26</sup> “The Hidden Problem” *Time* (December 28, 1953), pp 28-29. In many popular magazines of the period, men were called on to become more effective fathers so as to counteract excessive maternal conditioning that could lead to homosexuality. A psychiatrist writing for *Parents* magazine in 1947 urged male readers to “take on the most important occupation in the world,” reassuring them that “being a father is not a sissy business.” It was reasoned that “a boy who admires his dad and cherishes the happy hours they spend together can accept his masculine role smoothly and easily.” See Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 172-173.

<sup>27</sup> Dr. Benjamin Spock, *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Pocket Books, 1946), p. 484.

(discussed in more detail in Chapter 3), *Tea and Sympathy* goes some way to suggesting the ideal paternal role and the negative effect of paternal absence.<sup>28</sup>

Tom Lee is not a homosexual. Although the film suggests he suffers from symptoms directly linked to the homosexual “disease,” he is what Dr. Bergler would describe as a “passive-feminine Milquetoast,” a “type” that “until very recently even scientific literature mistakenly classed...as homosexual.” Bergler claims that this “type” is too well known to warrant further elaboration: “everybody has met him: the henpecked husband, the pathetic little nobody.”<sup>29</sup> In Bergler’s formulation, the “Milquetoast” and his opposite, the “Wolf” (a male who “thinks of himself as *the* authority on sex enjoyment and the epitome of masculinity”), are born of the same neurotic complex. This complex is labelled the “negative or inverted Oedipus” and, instructively in the case of *Tea and Sympathy*’s Tom Lee, is developed between the ages of two and a half and five years.

The “negative” Oedipus is the direct parallel to the more commonly understood “positive” Oedipus, in which “the boy develops a strong attachment of the Oedipal mother, and a strong aggressive rejection of the father...As normal development continues, these wishes, with their libidinous and aggressive contents, are relinquished.” Parallel to this, within every child “to a quantitatively negligible degree” exists the “negative” Oedipus. Within this complex there is “ambivalence” toward the father, who is rejected whilst also being admired for his “strength and power.” In this instance, the boy identifies with his mother, and wants to enjoy “all the mysterious and ‘cruel’ pleasures of the mother-father relationship.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For more, see Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 65 – 95.

<sup>29</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.104.

<sup>30</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, pp.101-102.

If we follow Bergler, we would assume that the “abnormal” conditions of Tom’s first five years, and his subsequent motherless years, caused him to become “fixated” on this negative Oedipus, allowing this “ordinarily harmless and transitory stage” to become predominant. The results of this fixation are deemed very serious. The child, once grown, “despises” women, and if his defences are too weak to adopt a “Wolf-like” attitude, the personality becomes that of the Milquetoast, “and the environment dismisses the sufferer as effeminate and a homosexual.”<sup>31</sup> However, although published in the same year as the film’s release, it is unlikely that the filmmakers would have read *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* or indeed chosen to adopt its ideas; much of Tom’s behaviour and his eventual diagnosis are still to be examined.

Tom’s love of music and gardening are not the only personality traits the film suggests may be viewed as symptomatic of homosexuality as disease. Shortly after talking in the garden with Laura, Tom goes indoors for a fitting of his costume for the upcoming student production. His interest in the theatre would be questionable enough, at a time when the influence of homosexuals in the theatre and entertainment world was considered ubiquitous. However, Tom’s dress fitting turns out to be just that. In a boys’ school Tom will be playing a female in the play and his costume is a flowing gown. He is apparently aware of the suspicion and anger that his gender-bending role will provoke, claiming that his dad would “hit the roof” if he were to discover his only son playing a girl. Indeed, although it could be assumed that Tom’s “transvestitism” is, by its theatrical nature, socially sanctioned, in the 1950s transvestitism was viewed as a symptom of the homosexual “disease.” Transvestitism and homosexuality were one and the same. In July 1953, *Confidential* published an article entitled “The Lavender Skeletons In TV’s Closet!” which aimed to expose homosexuals in key positions as

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<sup>31</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p. 102.

directors, producers and leading “men.” *Confidential* alleged that these “vivid violets” were giving the television industry a “black eye.” In typically cryptic fashion, the article exposes the scandalous “homosexuality” of three top male TV stars:

- a) An overnight smash success as a comic. He undoubtedly found it easy to play his part as a milksop, because he’s been that type of shy sweetheart for a long time to one of Hollywood’s tough guys.
- b) A “rough and ready” TV detective who’s really so delicate that writers have strict orders never to include women’s undergarments as “prop clues” in his weekly dramas. He can’t control his compulsion to don the stuff.
- c) A co-hero of a “space drama” for kids. They’d probably toss up the breakfast food he coaxes down their gullets if they knew his favorite diversion is going to Greenwich Village parties “in drag,” with taffeta skirts swishing at his ankles.<sup>32</sup>

Transvestitism is presented unquestionably as a symptom of homosexuality. Never are the two regarded as separate “deviations” from the specified and “completely virile” masculine norm. Furthermore, the article declares:

Show business has had its nances ever since boys with piping voices played the female parts in Shakespeare plays on the boards of London’s Old Globe theatre in 1595. The entertainment industry has always accorded them an easy tolerance because, like it or not, queers have often possessed surprising talents as scene designers, actors, playwrights, directors and producers.<sup>33</sup>

*Confidential* would not have excused Tom his female acting role; any desire, professional or personal, to don female attire was deemed to be exclusively homosexual.

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<sup>32</sup> Brooks Martin, “The Lavender Skeletons in TV’s Closet!” *Confidential* (July 1953), pp.34-35.

<sup>33</sup> Brooks Martin, “The Lavender Skeletons in TV’s Closet!” *Confidential* (July 1953), pp.34-35.

In Robert Anderson's play, Tom obtained his "sister boy" moniker upon being found skinny-dipping with a male teacher. In the screenplay, adapted by Anderson, this explicitly homoerotic encounter has necessarily been replaced by a seemingly innocent encounter with a sewing kit. Tom portentously decides to forgo the heterosexual shirtless wrestling, volleyball and football enjoyed by his peers, and wanders the beach alone.<sup>34</sup> He discovers Laura and a gaggle of female friends fixing shirts. He is invited to sit with the women and offers to help in their task. His assured sewing technique provokes even the women to mock his masculinity and question his sexuality: "Well would you look at that...Can you cook? Well you'll make some girl a good wife!" Laura attempts to reclaim Tom's masculinity by suggesting that the Army taught her husband Bill (Leif Erickson) how to sew. However, such efforts are in vain when Tom's activities are discovered by students retrieving a wayward ball. His "diagnosis" is now complete, and when he returns to school later that day the words "Sister Boy Lee" have been scrawled across his bedroom door.

That swimming naked with another man and mastery of the sewing needle have become synonymous, both indicative of a homosexual "infection," is suggestive of the extent to which the post-war public fear of homosexuality had forced the re-inscription of conservative gender roles. This re-inscription is evinced diegetically when Bill Reynolds and his students discuss a magazine quiz that asks the all-important question "Are You Masculine?" Bill is unknowingly invited by one of his students to participate in the quiz, a game of word association: "I'll say a word, then three words, and you pick the word of the three that fits the first one...Beautiful, then flowers, girls, music." Further examples include "Fun, then reading, hunting, gardening." Bill responds with the "correct" answers and is told the quiz assesses his "manliness." When it is

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<sup>34</sup> The irony of this will be addressed later in this chapter.

suggested that Tom's masculinity be tested using the quiz, it is deemed "superfluous, unnecessary and a waste of time."<sup>35</sup> This exchange alludes to the extent to which "masculinity" had become both a personal and political obsession. Bill is literally summoned by his students to complete the quiz: "the witness before the Special Subcommittee on Masculinity is Mr. Reynolds." Such quizzes, which aimed to reveal an individual's "masculinity quotient," were popular in the 1950s.

However, the audience needs no magazine quiz to test the degree of Tom's "masculinity," because each aspect of Tom's appearance and behaviour is subjected to microscopic analysis; in the film, even the most inane of physical and behavioural characteristics assume a higher significance in the face of a possible homosexual diagnosis. Tom is repeatedly advised by his father, Herb (Edward Andrews), to "get a crew cut like the other fellas." On passing a barbershop he urges, "Get in there and get rid of all that hair," suggesting that even a hairstyle could be viewed as an outward symptom of sexual "perversion." Likewise, Tom's roommate Al (Darryl Hickman) feels obliged to give Tom a lesson in walking; suggesting that Tom's walk is too flighty or bouncy, he is taught how to walk without inciting suspicion. So as to avoid being labelled a "prancing nance,"<sup>36</sup> Tom observes Al's "masculine" walk, his legs spread wide with a bend in his knee and Al staggers across the screen as if suffering an injury to the groin. This exaggerated walk seems to equate masculinity with the Neanderthal; should his arms be long enough Al would certainly be dragging his knuckles.

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<sup>35</sup> In the October 1959 edition of *Esquire*, an article alleged, "Masculinity can be measured accurately," and invited readers to discover their "M.Q.". According to the article, "researchers have found that masculinity can be measured fairly accurately. The same famous student of human behavior who did much to develop the well-known I.Q. tests – Dr. Lewis Madison Terman of California's Stanford University came up with a series of masculinity-femininity tests designed to unmask a person's thinking and general attitude in order to determine in general terms his or her femininity or masculinity." The revealing and apparently insightful questions included, "Can you make friends with a Cat?"

<sup>36</sup> This description of the homosexual male is provided by Lait and Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential*, p.44.

Even Tom's athletic abilities are rejected by both his father and peers as un-masculine. Although he is the best in his class at tennis, as showcased in the film, his ability is denounced when his oft-defeated opponent taunts, "Sister Boy can put more twists on that ball. Why doesn't he hit the ball like a man?" Tom is effectively accused of playing a "women's" game rather than over-powering his opponent in a "masculine" contest of strength. Points won by Tom's opponent when smashed across court draw cheers from the crowd, while Tom's points, skilfully won through tactical manipulation of the ball, draw cheers from, as Tom's father describes them, a trio of younger non-athletic "characters." Tom's father is thus coaxed away from courtside to watch the more "masculine" exploit of baseball. Even when victorious, Tom's match is described in the locker room afterward as a game of "mixed singles."<sup>37</sup>

These scenes highlight the extent to which masculinity / maleness is in fact performative. As Judith Butler has more recently exposed, this is the concept of masculinity as a construct, "a complicated assemblage of exterior signifiers, such as clothing, and acquired behaviours that position the male body not as the source of masculine identity but as the site of its performance."<sup>38</sup> At the suggestion of Al, Tom feels it necessary to "performatively" prove his masculinity, heterosexuality and thus, health. Attempting to transform the outward manifestation of his "neurosis" from that of the "feminine milquetoast" into a "masculine wolf," Tom seeks the affections of local waitress Ellie Martin (Norma Crane). Bergler claims that "the wolf is a sexual

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<sup>37</sup> In 1946 and 1949, American tennis star, William "Big Bill" Tilden generated headlines that would link homosexuality, tennis and paedophilia. Tilden was first arrested on November 23, 1946 on Sunset Boulevard when he was caught in a parked car placing his hand in a teenage boy's trousers. The boy was a male prostitute whom Tilden had solicited. Tilden's second arrest came after he made sexual advances toward a sixteen-year-old male hitchhiker. Again, Tilden was sentenced to a one year prison term. In July of 1953, *Confidential* in "Bad Boys of Tennis," highlighted the link between homosexuality and paedophilia. Apparently divulging the secrets of Tilden's career longevity, the article claimed: "While champs in other fields occasionally broke training to dally with chorus chicks till the wee hours, Big Bill was always fast asleep by 10:30. For Tilden's dissipation was always with juveniles who had to go to school the next day." Gene Huffman, "Bad Boys of Tennis!" *Confidential* (July 1953), pp. 44-45.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2006), p. 96.

imposter. Inwardly he is a Milquetoast; he is unconsciously ridden by the fear that he will be proved impotent.”<sup>39</sup> As if to qualify Bergler’s assertions, Tom is unable to consummate the union. Ellie exposes Tom’s “disguise”; as they dance, she remarks “you’ve got soft hands, almost like a girl’s.” This comment causes Tom to pull away, turning his back on his would-be partner and covering his face with his hands: “That’s what they call you, Sister boy, I should have known.” Ellie’s discovery prompts Tom’s breakdown; grabbing a knife from a kitchen drawer, he attempts to cut himself before being forced from her apartment.

Tom’s heterosexuality is ultimately “proved” in an illicit sexual union with Laura. In a clandestine meeting in woodland on the school grounds, where Tom is seeking isolated refuge, Laura is quick to reassure Tom that his inability to consummate his union with Ellie is due to his lack of feelings for her and does not indicate a homosexual infection. The meeting ultimately leads to Laura’s utterance of the now-iconic line “years from now when you talk about this, and you will. Be kind.” The illicit couple kiss and embrace and the film dissolves back to the scene with which it opened. Tom is apparently cured of the symptoms, which so negatively affected his school years; his wedding-band is held repeatedly in close up.

With Tom’s heterosexuality now proven, the film renders redundant its own “How Masculine Are You?” quiz. By blurring the markers / signifiers of masculinity, the film is able to preach a tolerance and understanding of “difference.” Tom may be “different,” but despite his appreciation of gardening and music, he is finally deemed “masculine.” A similar plea for the tolerance of “difference,” making reference to the film, appears on the pages of the homophile publication *The Mattachine Review*. “Effeminacy v. Affectation” claimed:

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<sup>39</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.104.

The hostility against homosexuality manifests itself very clearly against any symptoms believed to be indicative of it. A lot of people suffer unfairly in “Tea and Sympathy” fashion and are the victims of stereotyped thinking as to the “effeminacy” of the average homosexual.<sup>40</sup>

However, although *Tea and Sympathy* suggests that “difference” should be understood and tolerated, it simultaneously concludes that homosexuality should not. Indeed, the “condition” is so feared and deemed so contagious that any literal reference to it is disguised, as if for fear of infecting the audience. The label “Sister Boy” replaces the more common tabloid terms “fairy” or “queer”; Tom’s innocuous sewing activities become implicitly homosexual acts and his desire to be a “folksinger” is treated by his father as a shameful and deviant lifestyle choice.

The author of “Effeminacy v. Affectation,” Randolfe Wicker, surprisingly for a *Mattachine* writer, showed little tolerance for the “affected” homosexual: “It is the ‘affected’ person who is offensive in his conduct...Most so-called ‘effeminate homosexuals’ fall into this category.” As opposed to the “gentle, sensitive and quiet” effeminately heterosexual male, the “affected homosexual” could be identified by an “inflection of voice, mincing steps and broken wrists,” characteristics that apparently indicated a dangerous “neurosis.” In Wicker’s view there was “no excuse” for their “deliberately offensive behavior.”<sup>41</sup> It appears that even homosexual sympathisers could tolerate an effeminate male, but not an effeminate homosexual male in the 1950s.

By denying previously assumed symptoms of the homosexuality “disease,” the film also succeeds in exacerbating the homosexual panic. Tom’s “differences” are not homosexually induced, thus the film compels its audience to question their own understanding of masculinity. As Laura tells Bill, “If he could be manly then you have

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<sup>40</sup> Randolfe Wicker, “Effeminacy v. Affectation,” *The Mattachine Review* (Vol. IV, No. 10, October 1958), pp. 4-6.

<sup>41</sup> Randolfe Wicker, “Effeminacy v. Affectation,” *The Mattachine Review*, pp. 4-6.

to question your own definition of manliness.” In fact, the film appeared to locate the homosexuality “pathogen” within the traditionally heterosexual / conservative constructions of masculinity which at first it appeared to celebrate. Bill Reynolds’ preoccupation with “his boys” and his lack of physical and emotional interest in Laura provide the most overt displays of homosexual behaviour in the film. When Laura suggests a trip to Canada with her husband, “just the two of us,” Bill is quick to dismiss the suggestion: “Gee that would be great,” he says, “But I’ve already invited some of the boys up to the lodge with us this summer...I can’t disappoint them.” In a later scene, Laura actually confronts her husband about their lack of physical intimacy: “Oh Bill...we so rarely touch anymore. I keep feeling I’m losing contact with you, don’t you feel that? We don’t touch anymore; you seem to hold yourself aloof from me. You don’t feel yourself holding away from me until it becomes overpowering?” Bill, of course, is quick to dismiss such a suggestion: “What are you talking about Laura? It can’t always be a honeymoon.”

If Bill does not enjoy the company of his wife, he certainly enjoys the company of his students. Shortly after Tom is discovered sewing on the beach with the faculty wives, Bill is seen wrestling in the sand with shirtless young men. Setting up a fight between two of his students, he positions their bare legs whilst stroking and patting their shirtless backs. With his arms draped around the shoulders of two of the gathered students, Bill dismisses the masculinity quiz put before him, suggestively stating, “If anyone wants to have a more practical test of manly strength, I’m on!” In a later scene, Bill takes great pleasure in watching the “bonfire pajama fight” that has become a school tradition. Bill is quite willing to miss dinner with Laura, yet confesses that he “wouldn’t miss” this school custom, “where the new boys put on their pajamas and the older boys try to tear them off.” He claims it “may make a man” of Tom. The ritual

plays out as described. Bill looks proudly onward at his students, with flaming bonfire in the background, as they surround one another and tear off each other's clothes.

The film thus makes visual what "innocent" readers of *U.S.A. Confidential* were told they would not believe:

Any cop will tell you that among the fairies he arrests are tough young kids, college football players, truck-drivers and weather-bitten servicemen...Many queers are married, fathers of families. They hide their perversions from their wives and neighbors...young thugs fight over the affections of their male sweethearts with brass knuckles, knives, fists and boots, as their grandfathers did over girls.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, whilst *Tea and Sympathy* outwardly preached a tolerance of "difference," it was simultaneously able to aggravate the growing fear of an overtly undetectable homosexual "threat." As the authors of the report on the *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government* had observed in 1950, and *Tea and Sympathy* visualised in 1956, homosexuality was now without definite visible symptoms. Homosexuality had become the "hidden disease," its symptoms non-specific, thereby allowing for the construction of the homosexual as a risk to national security and informing the transformation of homosexuals into insidious sexual psychopaths. According to George Chauncey in his history of gay life:

The long-standing public image of the queer as an effeminate fairy whom one may ridicule but had no reason to fear was supplemented by the more ominous image of the queer as a psychopathic child molester capable of committing the most unspeakable crimes against children.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lait and Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential*, pp.44-45.

<sup>43</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pp. 359-360.

That homosexuals no longer seemed so easy to identify made them seem even more dangerous, since, as with communists, it meant even the next door neighbour could be one.

The “typical” homosexual who, according to Bergler, was “perpetually on the prowl,” equipped with an “insatiable sexual appetite,” was now free to prowl undetected, leaving vulnerable the nation’s youth.<sup>44</sup> This lurid transformation is signalled by the ease with which terms such as “degenerate,” “queer,” “pervert,” “sex criminal,” “paedophile,” “sexual psychopath,” and “homosexual” proliferate in popular literature. Estelle B. Freedman claims that the term psychopath served in part as code for homosexual at a time of heightened public consciousness of homosexuality, and homosexual writer James Fugate would write in the *Mattachine Review*, “To the average person the terms homosexual, pervert, degenerate and sex fiend all mean the same thing...as a confessed homosexual I am a potential child molester, perhaps even killer.”<sup>45</sup>

As early as 1947, J. Edgar Hoover had warned readers of *The American Magazine* that “the most rapidly increasing type of crime is that perpetrated by degenerate sex offenders.” Hoover claimed that such a crime was committed every 43 minutes, day and night, in the United States. Hoover used sensational language: “Should wild beasts break out of circus cages, a whole city would be mobilized instantly. But depraved human beings, more savage than beasts, are permitted to rove America almost at will.” He painted a picture of a nation overrun by sexual savages who “leave maimed and murdered women lying in isolated areas,” and “violated children in a state of

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<sup>44</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, pp.17-18.

<sup>45</sup> James Fugate, “A Homosexual Looks at the Child Molester,” *Mattachine Review* (April, 1956), p. 7. Fugate was also the author of several gay-themed novels and plays under the pen name James Barr. For further *Mattachine Review* perspectives on the sex offender, see “Sex Offenders Tell of Helping Themselves,” (December, 1955), pp.12-15, and Paul W. Tappan, “Some Myths About the Sex Offender,” (February, 1956), pp. 9-13, 36-43.

hysteria.”<sup>46</sup> Although Hoover only refers directly to sexual crimes heterosexual in nature, his frequent use of the term “degenerate” provided an implicit link to homosexuality - a link soon to be made explicit.

In 1949, a *Newsweek* feature entitled “Queer People,” responding to the publication of a book called *The Sexual Criminal* by Dr. Joseph Paul de River, claimed:

The sex pervert, whether a homosexual, an exhibitionist, or even a dangerous sadist is too often regarded merely as a “queer” person who never hurts anyone but himself. Then the mangled form of some victim focuses public attention on the degenerate’s work. And newspaper headlines flare for days over accounts and feature articles packed with sensational details of the most dastardly and horrifying crimes.<sup>47</sup>

Dr. de River warned readers of *The Sexual Criminal* (first published in 1949, with a second edition deemed necessary in 1956), that “all too often we lose sight of the fact that the homosexual is an inveterate seducer of the young of both sexes, and that he presents a social problem because he is not content with being degenerate himself; he must have degenerate companions, and is ever seeking for younger victims.”<sup>48</sup>

The September 1950 issue of *Coronet* magazine would take Dr. de River’s thesis and run with it. Ralph H. Major Jr.’s “New Moral Menace to Our Youth” likened homosexuality to an outbreak of syphilis and warned readers that homosexuality was “rapidly increasing throughout America.” *Coronet* readers discovered that “no degenerate can indulge his unnatural practices alone. He demands a partner. And the partner more often than not, must come from the ranks of the young and innocent.” The

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<sup>46</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, “How Safe is Your Daughter?” *The American Magazine* (July, 1947), pp.33-34, 102-103.

<sup>47</sup> “Queer People,” *Newsweek*, (October 10, 1949), p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Dr. J. Paul de River, *The Sexual Criminal: A Psychoanalytical Study* (1949) (California: Bloat, A Publishing Company, 1956), p.xviii. According to River, it was “not unusual to find sadistic homicide, particularly among the male homosexuals,” pp. 101-102.

magazine warned that thousands of youngsters were being “seduced” into “degenerate” sexual practices each year, resulting in “irreparable mental and psychological damage.” The article even provided case studies of male teenage “victims,” reportedly “ripped” from the pages of the psychiatrist’s file. *Coronet* did not abandon its topic there; apparently, “male sex deviants do not stop with infecting their often-innocent partners: they descend through perversions to other forms of depravity, such as drug addiction, burglary, sadism, and even murder.” Readers were also informed that “While the appearance of most of these unfortunates may betray them to watchful persons, other sex aberrants look, act, and dress like anyone else. It is they who are the real threat.” Ultimately, Major demanded that the “shadow of sexual perversion be removed from the pathway of America’s youth.”<sup>49</sup>

In the wake of increased media attention some communities were driven to take action. On January 21, 1950, *Collier’s* magazine celebrated St. Louis as “The City That Does Something About Sex Crime.” According to the article, the city’s children were becoming “hunted game, stalked by the molester, the sex psychopath and the despoiler” and “naïve parents who felt safe because their children were *boys*” were “shocked” to discover that “20 per cent of the victims” were young males.<sup>50</sup>

“The City that Does Something About Sex Crime” referred directly to measures adopted by concerned parents in a city on high “sex predator” alert. Parents of children attending the Bryan Mullanphy School founded the “Children’s Protective Association.” Women from this organisation became “block mothers” who would patrol the streets in the morning, at lunchtime and in the evening, “watching for strangers, herding the kids through alleys, standing guard near open fields and garages.” Along with teachers and the children themselves, parents were “taught to fight sex

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<sup>49</sup> Ralph H. Major Jr., “New Moral Menace to Our Youth,” *Coronet* (September 1950), pp. 101-108.

<sup>50</sup> Howard Whitman, “The City That Does Something About Sex Crime,” *Collier’s* (January 21 1950), pp. 20-21, 64-65.

crime as jungle families must be taught to fight the panther.” They also campaigned for suitable laws that would both punish and treat offenders: “we would like to see the persons guilty of these offences treated like the sick people they are, instead of as criminals – but in any event committed to an institution until they are cured.” Accordingly, a sexual psychopath Bill was drawn up and signed into law on August 1, 1949, the basic provision of which was that “mentally ill sex offenders may be sent away to a state hospital to be *treated and helped* – but at the same time *kept isolated from society until cured*. This means they may stay away for life if they remain sick and dangerous.”<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the most infamous response to the “homosexual psychopath” was reported by *Time* in December of 1955, under the headline “Idaho Underworld.” The article reported the exposure of a thriving homosexual underworld that had shocked the Idaho state capitol Boise.<sup>52</sup> The arrest of three men in November of 1955 on charges of sex with teenage boys resulted in a fifteen-month investigation into Boise’s male homosexual population, here labelled an “underworld.” Exaggerated measures adopted by police included a curfew for the city’s youth and collaboration with investigators with experience in uncovering homosexuals; such measures only accelerated the emotional hysteria surrounding the case. Ultimately, 1400 of the city’s residents were called for questioning and many homosexuals were forced to flee the city for fear of

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<sup>51</sup> Howard Whitman, “The City That Does Something About Sex Crime,” *Collier’s* (January 21 1950), p. 65. Between 1947 and 1955, twenty-one states and the District of Columbia enacted laws with many other legislatures revising pre-existing ones. Such laws often failed to differentiate between violent and nonviolent, consensual and non-consensual behaviours. Whether convicted of exhibitionism, sodomy, child molestation, or rape, sexual “psychopaths” could be transferred to state mental hospitals or psychiatric wards of prisons for indefinite periods. The laws rested on the premise that even minor offenders, as psychopaths, posed the threat of sexual violence. It was therefore understood that indefinite incarceration would protect society from the threat of sexual crime. See Estelle B. Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960,” in, Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (ed), *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press; 1989).

<sup>52</sup> The incident is well documented in John Gerassi, *The Boys of Boise: Furor, Vice and Folly in an American City* (1966) (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001).

being “named” in what had become a vicious witch-hunt. *Time* reported that citizens of Boise, Idaho, usually thought of as “a Boisterous, rollicking he-man’s town and home of the rugged Westerner...were shocked to learn that their city had sheltered a widespread homosexual underworld that involved some of Boise’s most prominent men and had preyed on hundreds of teen-age boys for the past decade.” The article reported that some 125 youths, aged between thirteen and twenty, had been involved in the scandal and that “a special team of psychiatrists” had been drafted in from Denver “to treat the young victims.”<sup>53</sup> The situation in Idaho made it possible to declare with alarm that scores of rugged western “he-men” were able to repeatedly lure young boys into committing sexual acts, and that this behaviour could go undetected for a decade.

Thus, homosexuality, psychopathy and paedophilia were now being constructed as symptoms of the same disorder. Homosexuals were no longer merely “sick” individuals in need of cure, but dangerous “sexual psychopaths” suffering from mental disorders that threatened to contaminate the nation’s youth and destroy entire communities. Hollywood would respond accordingly. 1959 saw the release of two films in which homosexual characters are portrayed as “sexual psychopaths,” criminally deviant characters whose aberrant sexuality culminates in violence, murder and cannibalism!

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*Compulsion* (1959), based on Meyer Levin’s novel of the same name, a “fictionalized” account of the infamous 1924 Leopold and Loeb child murder, tells the story of teen killers Judd “Leopold” Steiner (Dean Stockwell) and Artie “Loeb” Strauss (Bradford Dillman), whose close “friendship” and belief in their superior intellects leads them to

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<sup>53</sup> “Idaho Underworld,” *Time* (December 12, 1955), p.25.

kidnap and murder an eight-year-old boy, believing it to be the “perfect crime.”<sup>54</sup> The film, while set in 1920s Chicago, is full of fifties themes: the explanatory power of Freudian psychology, the obsession with normality, deviant sexuality, and juvenile delinquency which combine in a study of the “homo-sexual psychopath.” Furthermore, Nathan Leopold was released from prison in 1958, thrusting the crime back to the forefront of the public consciousness.<sup>55</sup>

*Compulsion* opens in 1924, the titles informing viewers that we are located in Chicago. Artie and Judd are seen exiting through the window of a fraternity house. Jumping into an automobile, they drive speedily away. Both the sexual nature of the couple’s relationship and their psychotic tendencies are made immediately apparent. Discussing their burglary, Artie berates his partner for stealing a typewriter: “I told you to leave it alone. But, no, you were so scared you froze to it.” He calls Judd’s attention to their deal: “You could take orders, you said. You wanted me to command you.” The suggestive, and necessarily coded, discussion of a “pact” between the criminal partners is the first suggestion that their friendship is sexually as well as criminally “deviant.” Artie’s “part of the agreement” is to provide Judd with sexual favours for his criminal obedience. Artie’s grin when reminded of his role within this “unholy union” hints at the “perverse” personal satisfaction garnered from his sexual power. Although the Production Code would not allow for the direct portrayal of the homosexual aspect of their relationship, 1958 readers of *Confidential* magazine would have recognised in this

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<sup>54</sup> Leopold, 19, and Loeb, 18, believed themselves to be Nietzschean supermen who could commit a “perfect crime.” On May 21, 1924, they lured a fourteen-year-old neighbour, Bobby Franks into a rented car. Franks was bludgeoned with a chisel, suffocated and burned with acid. His body was discarded in a culvert under a railroad track outside of Chicago. The body was discovered shortly after, and the pair’s efforts to make Frank’s disappearance look like kidnapping failed. Adding a further “lurid” twist to the tale was the discovery that the murderous pair had been lovers. The case was also the inspiration for Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948).

<sup>55</sup> See Paula S. Fass, “Making and Remaking an Event: The Leopold and Loeb Case in American Culture,” *The Journal of American History* (Vol. 80, December 1993), pp. 943-945. Richard Loeb was murdered in prison in 1936.

coded conversation its recollection of the original killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb:

The two 18-year-old philosopher killers were as close as any two men could be. Their weird, odd-ball personalities, one playing upon the other, produced their criminal acts together. But individually, only Loeb was capable of criminality. He needed Leopold to help him carry out some of his crimes. And Leopold needed Loeb for physical gratification. The result was a solemn compact based upon this unnatural relationship.<sup>56</sup>

Further along the road, the pair twice comes close to killing a drunken vagrant who stumbles ahead of them. Artie plays a dangerous game of “chicken” with the man, narrowly avoiding a collision until Judd pulls on the steering wheel at the last second, exclaiming, “We could have killed him!” When the man responds violently, waving his arms and telling them to “Get back there!” Artie commands Judd to run him down: “He’s asking for it. Give it to him. That’s an *order* Judd.” The car careens toward the man, as Artie screams, “Faster. Hit him. Hit him!” The man dives out of the path of the vehicle just in time, leaving Judd to exclaim, “We could have hit him, it would have been murder.” Artie responds, “And you know why I tried it Juddsy? Because I damn well felt like it.” The maniacal laugh that follows highlights Artie’s “psychotic” nature. As Artie rolls his head back with laughter, sporting a sinister grin, the camera zooms in close on the pair. Artie continues to roll his head in uproarious pleasure, while Judd’s steely eyes remained fixed forward, concentrating on the road, and thus looking directly to camera. Even before the film’s opening credit sequence begins, when

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<sup>56</sup> Frank Lewis, “Nathan Leopold’s Secret...Richard Loeb’s Other Thrill Crimes,” *Confidential* (June, 1958), p.14. Hal Higdon’s *The Crime of the Century: The Leopold and Loeb Case* makes more literal reference to this “compact” as it was discussed in court during the trial of Leopold and Loeb. “Leopold was to have the privilege of inserting his penis between Loeb’s legs at special dates. At one time it was to be three times in two months...and then it was once for every criminalistic deed...They experimented once or twice with each other...Loeb would pretend to be drunk, then this fellow would undress him and then he would almost rape him and would be furiously passionate at the time, whereas with women he does not get that same thrill and passion...Loeb admitted them but claimed he submitted in order to have Leopold’s aid in carrying out his criminal ideas,” (p. 214-215).

**COMPULSION** is scrawled in bold and jagged font across their faces, it has been made apparent that Artie and Judd suffer from a compulsive psychotic disorder.

Following the credits, Artie and Judd come to the decision that will propel the film's narrative. Unsatisfied by petty theft and dangerous driving, Artie proposes to his "friend" that they "do something really dangerous. Something that will have everybody talking, not just a few guys." He claims that they will "have the fat headed cops in Chicago wondering about it while we sit back and laugh about it." Judd is keen to emphasise how this deviant act must be done together, a criminally deviant and vicious crime that would outwardly symbolise their sexual "togetherness." Artie leans across to Judd in the passenger seat, their faces close, with eyes meeting in a gaze, as he suggestively claims, "We can do it...Together."

Both the sexual aspect of the couple's relationship and their psychotic tendencies are solidified by claims made about their own intelligence. Judd states that their proposed crime should be "perfect, something brilliant, a true test of the superior intellect, with every little detail worked out...it must be done as an experiment, detached, with no emotional involvement and no reason for it except to show that we can do it." Such emotional detachment is indicative of the "psychopathic"; the very definition of the "psychopath" emphasises a lack of emotional involvement and a lack of remorse, qualities evinced by Judd's exhortations. In addition, it was a popular idea that the homosexual was of a superior intellectual ability. In 1928, Havelock Ellis had claimed:

The fact that homosexuality is especially common among men of exceptional talent was long since noted by Dante...It has been noted since and remains a remarkable fact. There cannot be the slightest doubt that intellectual and artistic abilities of the highest order have frequently been associated with a congenitally inverted sexual temperament.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co., 1928), p. 26.

In 1950, Max Lerner would comment in part ten of his twelve-part newspaper series, “Scandal in the State Department,” that homosexuals were “a good distance ahead of the rest of the armed forces in education, in rating and intelligence. More than half had gone through high school, one in 10 were college graduates, very few were illiterates.”<sup>58</sup> In the 1952 film, *My Son John*, eponymous character John Jefferson (Robert Walker) rejects a military career to pursue a career in politics and academia. John’s vast intelligence is accompanied by a distinct lack of interest in the opposite sex. As audiences in 1952 were aware, homosexuals were a risk to national security; *My Son John* is thus able to implicitly link intelligence, homosexuality and political subversion.

In *Compulsion*, the duo’s belief in their superior intellect, suggests what Bergler refers to as the “Unfounded Megalomaniacal Conviction of the Homosexual’s Superiority.” In Bergler’s thesis, a megalomaniacal outlook on life was “another typical homosexual sign.” The homosexual was apparently “convinced of the superiority of his kind over all others.”<sup>59</sup> Bergler was not alone in this belief. The aforementioned *Coronet* article, “The New Moral Menace to Our Youth,” also claimed that homosexuality, once contracted, soon became a way of life, which, “to its zealots, is infinitely superior to normal human relations.”<sup>60</sup> This supposed trait is certainly evident in both Artie and Judd, and such “queer” behaviour does not go unnoticed. When Judd returns to his opulent home after his evening with Artie, he is confronted by elder

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<sup>58</sup> Max Lerner, *New York Post*, July 20, 1950, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.19. This claim is countered by Donald Webster Cory, author of the 1951 book, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach*. In this autobiographical study, Cory, writing under a pseudonym, claimed that “the very doubts over my judgment of my personality – the very impact of the words: *I am a homosexual, I am a queer, I am a fairy* – forced me at each turn of life and at all moments of the day to convince myself that I was as good as the next person; in fact, better...Because mankind made it so difficult for me to preserve my self-esteem, I found it necessary to hold aloft my own activities...in order that my faith in self could survive the impact of many crushing blows.” Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Castle Books, 1960), p.150.

<sup>60</sup> Ralph H. Major Jr., “New Moral Menace to Our Youth,” *Coronet* (September 1950), p. 108.

brother Max (Richard Anderson), who asks, “Where were you? Up to some *funny business* with Artie again, as if I didn’t know!” Highlighting Judd’s apparent megalomaniacal preoccupations, he continues, “Outside of Artie and your birds you don’t give a damn about anything in the world do ya?” As if he understands Judd to be a (homosexual) “fool in love” he continues, “It just irritates me to see someone as brilliant as you make a jackass out of himself over someone like Artie Strauss...Don’t you ever go to a baseball game or chase girls or anything? When I was your age...” Similarly, in a later scene when Judd makes a date to go bird-watching with Ruth Evans (Diane Varsi), her newspaper investigator boyfriend Sid Brooks (Martin Milner) laughs, “It should be a very entertaining afternoon for you, watching Judd and all the other strange birds...you know birds, a genius I.Q., graduate school at 19...Look honey, for all I know he’s another Casanova...I just don’t think I’m gonna have to worry about you out there at Hegewisch Park.”

Max appears to be well aware of Artie’s criminal tendencies. Max claims to know “all about Artie Strauss and his mind,” and when Judd describes Artie as a gentleman, claiming the concept to be “something I doubt you understand,” Max retorts “Oh, I understand alright...You like me to tell you something else about him? I think he’s dirty and evil,” prompting Judd to scream for Max to keep his “filthy mouth shut.” Of course, Max is proved right; the deviant pair plans and executes the “perfect” crime, the bogus kidnapping and murder of their eight-year-old neighbour Pauly Kessler. However, in *Compulsion*, this crime is far from perfect. Upon disposal of the body, Judd accidentally leaves behind his glasses, and a false ransom note delivered to the boy’s parents is typed on the stolen fraternity typewriter, later discovered at Judd’s home. In the film, the intricate details of the crime are of less importance than the nature of the crime itself. In reality, the teen killers abducted and murdered a fourteen-

year-old boy. The decision made by Meyer Levin in 1956, and upheld by the filmmakers in the 1959 adaptation, to reduce the victim's age to just eight can be seen as a conscious decision to further sensationalise an already sensational crime. In almost every other respect, Levin's novel aimed for a veracity bordering on the documentary; both the novel and the film include a lengthy reproduction of defence attorney Clarence Darrow's closing statement, an exact reproduction of the criminal investigation, and the "fictionalised" characters assume the same interests and neuroses as their real-life counterparts. The apparent authenticity of the text inspired Levin to provide the following explanation of his work:

If I have followed an actual case, are these, then, actual persons? Here I would avoid the modern novelist's conventional disclaimer, which no one fully believes in any case. I follow known events...I suppose *Compulsion* may be called a contemporary historical novel or a documentary novel, as distinct from a *roman à clef*.<sup>61</sup>

By reducing the age of the victim, *Compulsion* feeds on the very genuine, if unfounded, 1950s fear of the "sexual psychopath." Widening the age gap between victim and killer, the crime becomes synonymous with the many sensational headlines highlighting violent, sexual crimes against children. In this way, the 1950s audience would likely assume that (as was assumed and largely reported in the 1920s) Paulie Kessler was not only murdered, but also sexually assaulted.<sup>62</sup> If viewers would not make this transition themselves, the film would prompt them to make it.

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<sup>61</sup> Meyer Levin, *Compulsion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), p. ix. Paula Fass, in her article "Making and Remaking an Event: The Leopold and Loeb Case in American Culture," claims that "anyone deeply familiar with the case, as I have become, would be caught short trying to find the boundary between what she knows from the evidence and what Levin has interpolated or re-created in his book." *The Journal of American History* (Vol. 80, December 1993), p. 943.

<sup>62</sup> Although neither Leopold or Loeb admitted to molesting their victim and the coroner's report found no evidence of sexual abuse, when reporting Loeb's death at the hands of a fellow inmate in 1936, *Time* stated, "On May 21, 1924, two perverted Chicago youths...kidnapped 14 year old Bobby Franks, knocked him unconscious, violated him, killed him, poured acid over his face, buried his body in a

Shortly after the murder, when searching for Judd's glasses and interrupted by Max, Artie claims that Judd was just about to drive him the two blocks home, because "the neighbourhood is swarming with kidnappers and degenerates." In a later scene, Artie stands outside Pauly's school, feigning interest in helping with the case and delighting at confusing the police whilst simultaneously appearing innocent. He gleefully answers their questions. When asked, "What about the teachers? Any odd-balls?" Artie suggests Pop Wigan: "You wouldn't say he was exactly normal, snapping towels at kids in the gym, stuff like that, but uh, that wouldn't mean anything!" Of course, predatory "towel snapping" teachers and swarming degenerates are images that would have resonated with audiences in 1959, and these choice remarks undoubtedly cement Judd and Artie's position as depraved "homosexual psychopaths" in the minds of those watching *Compulsion*. Those viewers who had previously seen the theatrical trailer for the movie would have come to view the film with specific expectations. The trailer is keen to highlight the "queer" and thus sensational relationship between the film's protagonists. After pausing a scene to introduce the main players, the voice over narration asks, "Do you know the strange relationship that existed between them?" The trailer then plays out a compendium of scenes to illustrate that relationship. Artie leans toward Judd, stating, "Look, we agreed to explore all the possibilities of human experience didn't we?" Artie tells Judd, "You said you wanted me to command you," to which he replies, "I do." Artie asks Judd, "Are you ditching me for some girl?" Jonathon Wilks asks the Judge, "Do you think you can cure *it* by hanging these boys? Do you think you can cure the hatred and *maladjustments*?" The trailer goes on to claim this to be, in typical exploitation movie style, "some of the most daring subject matter

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culvert on a forest reserve." Loeb died after being slashed 56 times with a razor while showering in prison with a fellow inmate who, according to *Time*, Loeb had invited to be his "partner in perversion." Prison apparently had "only exaggerated Loeb's unnatural appetites." "Last of Loeb," *Time* (February 10, 1936), p.15.

the screen has ever known.” For these viewers, both Judd and Artie’s homosexual and psychotic tendencies would have been clearly established before the screening.

Upon the capture and confession of the teen killers, the film shifts gear with the introduction of defence attorney Jonathon Wilks (Orson Welles). As with the 1924 trial on which the film is based, *Compulsion* turns to Freudian psychoanalytic analysis to explain the killers’ actions, and mediates the validity of the death penalty. According to Wilks, Artie and Judd’s repeated criminal actions are those of “immature boys of diseased minds.” The act of murder for which they are tried is “the mad act of two sick children who belong in a psychiatric hospital.” Although the prosecution denies the attempts of the defence to label the boys “insane,” the pair are spared the gallows and sentenced to a lifetime behind bars.

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The narrative focus in *Compulsion* lay primarily with dual homosexual protagonists Judd and Artie. *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959), on the other hand, tells the story of Catherine (Elizabeth Taylor) who, after a European vacation ends abruptly with the mysterious death of her cousin, Sebastian Venable, appears to have gone insane. Residing in a sanitarium, Catherine is threatened with a lobotomy at the request of Sebastian’s mother, Violet (Katherine Hepburn), so as to prevent the truth about her son’s death surfacing. However, Catherine is nursed back to “health” by Dr. Cukrowicz (Montgomery Clift) and the horrifying truth is revealed. Like the homosexuality “pathogen” itself, Sebastian is “invisible.” The would-be homosexual protagonist is, like all the most terrifying horror movie “monsters,” glimpsed only in fragments, a shadowy and sinister figure haunting Catherine’s dreams. The “hidden disease” with

which Sebastian is infected renders him invisible to the audience, and as such, like the homosexual-predators who could imperceptibly prey on the youth of Boise, Idaho for over ten years, Sebastian is free to indulge his “diseased” sexual appetite unnoticed, that is until *Suddenly, Last Summer*...<sup>63</sup>

The film opens with an external shot of Lions View State Asylum. Inside, the desperate plight of the “Modern Woman,” examined in Chapter 1, is made vividly apparent. A bare, lifeless room is occupied by scores of dishevelled, elderly women, suggesting the asylum to be the ultimate destination for the neurotic, childless spinster so vividly illustrated by Lundberg and Farnham. A patient holds a baby doll protectively in a beam of light. The doll is left behind, forcibly abandoned when she is removed from the room and lobotomised; her neurotic desires are removed in a procedure that, on film, is completed in less than one minute. Shortly after performing this procedure, Dr. Cukrowicz is informed of Violet Venable’s offer of money for a new hospital wing that would allow for the treatment of the “1200 mental cases Lions View can’t afford to handle.” The money would be provided upon the completion of the lobotomy of her niece Catherine, currently residing at “a place called St. Mary’s...a custodial home for the insane.” Thus, Dr. Cukrowicz agrees to meet with Violet at her home to discuss Catherine. The meeting does little to prove Catherine’s “illness” but acts to highlight the “unhealthy” relationship between mother and son as well as Sebastian’s own psychotic and homosexual nature.

Violet descends into view on an elevator elaborately constructed in the entrance hall of her home. As Dr. Cukrowicz waits below, a dislocated and echoing voice

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<sup>63</sup> Sebastian’s “invisibility” was a necessary adjustment in order for the film to receive a Production Code Seal of Approval. As Vito Russo claims, the Breen Office gave the filmmakers “special permission” so that Sebastian’s homosexuality could be “inferred but not shown.” Furthermore, screenwriter Gore Vidal claimed that his script was initially “perfectly explicit...and then the Catholic Church struck.” Once the necessary cuts were made, the film was given a special classification: “since the film illustrates the horrors of such a lifestyle, it can be considered moral in theme even though it deals with sex perversion.” Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 116.

declares, “Sebastian always said, Mother when you descend it’s like the goddess from the machine. Just like an angel coming to earth I float, float into view.” Violet repeatedly displays an excessive devotion to her son. In mourning she wears white, Sebastian’s “favourite colour.” Violet suggests that without Sebastian she has become obsolete; she claims that to lose a husband you become a widow, and to lose parents you become an orphan, but “lose your only son and you are nothing.” She speaks of Sebastian as if they were lovers, declaring that they were “a famous couple.” People, she claims, “didn’t speak of Sebastian and his mother, or Mrs. Venable and her son. No, they said Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian...And every time we appeared attention was centred on us...we would carve each day like a piece of sculpture...We left behind us a trail of days like a gallery of sculpture, until suddenly, last summer...” As Edward A. Strecker first wrote in 1946 in *Their Mothers’ Sons*, republished in 1951:

A mom who gets too much personal satisfaction from her son’s deep attachment to her as his “love object” and prefers to continue as his “light of love,” instead of freeing him gently but firmly and guiding him along the path of normal sexual development which ends in mature heterosexuality, often sows the seeds of latent or even overt homosexuality in her son.<sup>64</sup>

This claim finds visual representation in the relationship between Violet and Sebastian in *Suddenly, Last Summer*. The excessive adoration displayed by Violet throughout the film suggests that she did indeed acquire “too much personal satisfaction” from her relationship with Sebastian. As Catherine observes, “Poor Aunt Violet was hooked from the beginning, loved Sebastian from the beginning and nobody else. She gave everything up for Sebastian, even her husband.” In April of 1958, the *Mattachine Review* reprinted the writing of W. W. Bauer, M.D. Director of Health Education at the

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<sup>64</sup> Edward A. Strecker, *Their Mothers’ Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1951), p.131.

American Medical Association (A.M.A.). Bauer enthusiastically called attention to a study of sexual deviation published in the journal of the A.M.A., in which most sexual deviations were attributed to parental attitudes. Most cases of homosexuality, the study claimed, were a result of “unconscious or even conscious, fostering of such behavior in early life by the parents.” More tellingly for Violet, who left her husband to die alone while choosing to travel with her son, it is claimed that, “unsatisfactory sexual relationships in marriage are present in all such cases.”<sup>65</sup>

Violet proudly declares that her son was chaste, “as strictly as if he had taken a vow.”<sup>66</sup> She claims, “I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people. Time after time he would let people go, dismiss them because their attitude toward him was not as pure as Sebastian demanded....My son and I had a rare and wonderful love between us, a contract, a covenant.” Such remarks suggest that Violet enjoyed an imaginary, if not genuine, sexually incestuous relationship with her son, and refused to believe he could gain sexual pleasure from any other partner.

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<sup>65</sup> W.W. Bauer, M. D., *The Mattachine Review* (April, 1958), pp. 8-9. In 1952 Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer similarly claimed that “Doting mothers raise soft sons, plump for laws so they can’t work in their youth and don’t have to in their manhood. America is becoming a land of manicured hermaphrodites, going the way of Rome.” *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1952), p. 2.

<sup>66</sup> It is worth noting here that Violet’s comments, here depicting Sebastian as “saintly,” perhaps allude to the significance of Sebastian’s name. Sebastian could have been named after Saint Sebastian, originally patron saint of archers, soldiers, athletes, and sufferers of the plague, and more recently the “homosexuals saint.” Born in the third century, Sebastian converted to Christianity as a young adult. A presumed lover of the Emperor Diocletian, Sebastian was appointed Captain of the Guard in the Imperial Roman Army. During the emperor’s persecution of the Christians, legend states, Sebastian visited Christian prisoners in order to provide them with supplies. Diocletian subsequently demanded that Sebastian renounce Christianity, and Sebastian refused. The emperor thus ordered Sebastian’s execution. He was tied to a tree, and shot with arrows. However, he survived, returning to the emperor’s palace to denounce Diocletian’s persecutions. Sebastian was eventually clubbed to death and his body thrown into a sewer. Such accounts of his life may have helped, along with explicitly homoerotic Renaissance images, to form Sebastian’s reputation as a homosexual martyr. His story could be read as a “coming out” tale, followed by his survival of a “penetrative” execution. Furthermore, his role as “plague saint” could have produced associations between Sebastian and homosexuality, which in a nineteenth-century, and indeed medical context, was represented as disease. Tennessee Williams had previously explored this religious icon and his “homosexuality” in his poem, *San Sebastiano de Sodoma* (1948).

Although we never witness the “famous couple’s” interaction on screen, we are introduced to Sebastian’s garden. The garden, like Sebastian, has been allowed to thrive outside of sanction and rule. Violet claims it to be part of her son’s “life-long war against the herbaceous border.” As with Sebastian’s lifestyle, his garden openly defies accepted social boundaries; it is at once overgrown, monstrous and primordial, “like the dawn of creation.” A shrill yet ominous score accompanies Dr. Cukrowicz’s movement through this space, suggesting perhaps, the film is unleashing its “monster” upon the viewer for the first time. Dr. Cukrowicz declares it to be “frankly a little terrifying.” With Sebastian absent, his garden has become a physical, living embodiment of his “diseased” nature, a disease that Violet quite literally feeds.

Violet introduces the doctor to a giant Venus Fly Trap named “Lady,” “a devouring organism aptly named for the goddess of love.” She feeds insects to the plant whilst explaining its functions: she “exudes this marvellous perfume which attracts them, they plunge into a chalice and they never come out.” Choosing to name this carnivorous plant “Lady” suggests what Bergler described as true of all homosexuals, that Sebastian is “mortally afraid” of women:

As if the greater the distance the greater the safety, he flees as far from women as he can, going to “another continent,” man. The homosexual’s typical assurance that he is “indifferent” to women is no more than wishful thinking. Inwardly, the homosexual hates women with the compensatory hatred of a fear-ridden masochist.<sup>67</sup>

By naming this deadly plant Lady, Sebastian also unconsciously reveals his homosexual infection.

However, despite the apparent contempt for women displayed in the naming of this plant, Lady’s deadly and consuming functions can be seen as a direct parallel to

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<sup>67</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p. 16.

Sebastian's own "predatory" actions. We are informed that he was a poet. He would travel to Europe each summer with his mother to draw inspiration for his work. Here, the film makes similar links to *Tea and Sympathy* and *Compulsion*. Sebastian's artistic nature, like that of Tom Lee, and his overt intelligence, like that of both Judd and Artie, are seen as synonymous with his homosexuality. Like Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer who, in *Washington Confidential*, claimed that "the homosexual is often a man of considerable intellect and ability," all three films appear to suggest that artistic interest and ability, coupled with an innate intelligence are symptomatic of impaired masculinity or, worse still, a homosexual "infection."<sup>68</sup> Violet explains that Sebastian would "use people," and that he did so "grandly, creatively, almost like God." Like the sexual psychopaths the popular press warned were preying on the nation's youth, Sebastian, we are told, was always surrounded by "a perfect little troop of young and beautiful people." As Catherine testifies in the film's "shocking" denouement, "We were going to blondes next, blondes were next on the menu...Sebastian was famished for blondes...fed up with the dark ones, famished for the blonde ones. It's the way he talked about people, as if they were items on the menu. That one's delicious looking, that one is appetizing, that one is not appetizing." As with the homosexual who Bergler warned was "perpetually on the prowl," equipped with an "insatiable sexual *appetite*" (emphasis added), Sebastian, like Lady, would "feed" on his victims. As Catherine claims, he "fed on life," people (young boys) were merely objects for his own pleasure.<sup>69</sup>

Violet informs the doctor that Catherine suffers from a condition called Dementia Praecox, tellingly choosing to ignore his response that "Actually Dementia Praecox is a

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<sup>68</sup> Lait and Mortimer, *Washington Confidential*, p. 96.

<sup>69</sup> The parallels between Sebastian and Lady continue. Lady is housed within a gilded glass cage, "such an extravagance really, from early fall to late spring Lady must be kept under glass." Sebastian too is free to indulge his sexual appetite at will only during the summer months, "the other nine months were merely preparation."

meaningless phrase...there must have been a more exact diagnosis.” Erratically flitting from a conversation about Sebastian’s poetry, Violet asks, “This operation of yours, does it really work?” Apparently Violet was “struck” by the poetic nature of comments made by the Doctor in a newspaper, “about the sharp knife that kills the devil in the soul.” According to Violet, Catherine’s symptoms manifest in “wild hallucinations...babbling, dreadful obscene babbling...of an unspeakable nature, mostly taking the form of hideous attacks against the moral character of my son Sebastian.” Of course, the film reveals that the “obscene babbling” to which Violet refers is the cerebral surfacing of a truth that Catherine is subconsciously attempting to suppress and Violet is desperate to remove. Indeed, when the Doctor warns of the great risk of operating on the brain, stating that the procedure is only for the “unapproachable,” Violet’s only concern is that the operation will “pacify” Catherine, that it will succeed in “quieting her down.”

Catherine’s condition is neither unapproachable nor hopeless, and thus Violet’s desire to cut the truth out of Catherine’s mind will not be realised. Dr. Cukrowicz informs a colleague that “something horrible happened to that girl last Summer, some dreadful, traumatic experience of some kind...and she refuses to allow herself to remember. She’s gonna have to be made to remember.” With the help of the Doctor, and a medically induced trance, the horrible truth about what happened to Sebastian and Catherine *Suddenly, Last Summer* is gradually revealed.

In a confrontation with Violet, Catherine, now residing in Lion’s View awaiting possible lobotomy, is able to expose the “unhealthy” relationship that existed between mother and son whilst simultaneously hinting at Sebastian’s “perverse” and “predatory” activities in which all three were complicit. Catherine claims that something had broken in Sebastian last Summer, forcing him to abandon his poetry; it was “that string of

pearls old mothers hold their sons by...hold them from life...you fed on life, both of you taking, taking. People were objects for your pleasure, that's what you taught him." Vito Russo claims that the cause of Sebastian's homosexuality is not explored in the film. However, he seems to forget his own analogy that likens Sebastian's ultimate demise with that of the monster in James Whale's *Frankenstein*. If Sebastian can be seen as Frankenstein's monster, then Catherine has exposed Violet as the mad scientist, creator and teacher. A full "exploration" of the cause of Sebastian's homosexuality may be absent, but is perhaps unnecessary in a film that puts so much emphasis on the results of an "unnatural" love between mother and son / creator and monster.

Catherine cries, "Oh you were superior to mere mortals" and Violet responds only to agree, "So we were, we needed no one but each other." Violet not only reaffirms the "unhealthy" bond cultivated between her and Sebastian, but also, by extension, Bergler's belief that the homosexual, equipped with an "unfounded megalomaniacal conviction of superiority," is "peculiarly convinced of the superiority of his kind over all others."<sup>70</sup> It is Violet who has consciously developed this conviction in her son. As the aforementioned article by W. W. Bauer M.D. claimed, in the 1950s, "Direct and hostile sexual misbehavior is usually due to the conscious form of parental fostering," as distinct from "aberrations and perverse behaviour," which are due to "unconscious parental stimulation." Violet's consciously "perverse" parenting has seemingly resulted in Sebastian's overtly "perverse" sexuality.

Sebastian leaves his mother at home because she has lost her attraction and Catherine is the key to unlocking the film's puzzle: "Sebastian left her home like a toy he had tired of, he took me like a new toy on his last voyage....We were decoys...he used us as bait, and when she was no longer able to lure the better fish into the net, he

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<sup>70</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.19.

let her go...we procured for him...Sebastian was shy with people, she wasn't, neither was I, but we both did the same thing for him, we both made contacts for him." Like the Venus Fly trap that Violet feeds, Violet and Catherine "exude" a "marvellous perfume" with which to attract the young objects of Sebastian's homosexual desires, before his "victims" are plunged "into a chalice and never come out." The Florida Legislative Investigation Committee replicated this poetic image, albeit using more routine language. In a report entitled "Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida," published in January of 1964 and written so as to "understand and effectively deal with the growing problem of homosexuality," the distinction between the child molester / sexual psychopath and the homosexual is collapsed.<sup>71</sup> Highlighting the homosexual's apparent "addiction to youth," the report concluded:

The homosexual...prefers to reach out for the child at the time of normal sexual awakening and to conduct a psychological preliminary to the physical contact. The homosexual's goal and part of his satisfaction is to "bring over" the young person and hook him for homosexuality.<sup>72</sup>

Like being plunged into a chalice of no return, the "victims" of the predatory homosexual, the report claims, would either "quickly come out by becoming full-fledged homosexuals, taking an aggressive role in sexual acts," or become homosexual "hustlers," who frequently become "fairies, interested only in sex with any man, or 'dirt,' willing to be passive in a homosexual act but given to robbing the homosexual of

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<sup>71</sup> Indeed, it is even suggested that the effect of a consenting homosexual encounter is worse than that of being sexually molested. Apparently, "the outlook for a victim of molestation is generally good for recovery from the mental and physical shocks involved and for the enjoyment of a normal life." The same recovery, however, could not be enjoyed by those youths plunged into the "chalice" of homosexuality. Furthermore, the report provides still images of a young boy posing in his underwear. The images were apparently procured from "the catalogue of a supplier of homosexual erotica," the young boy in the images providing evidence of the "frequent homosexual fixation on youth."

<sup>72</sup> *Homosexuality and Citizenship: A Report of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee* (January, 1964), pp. 7-9.

all money and clothing at its conclusion.” As will be revealed, such seemingly hyperbolic claims are provided some “validity” by the closing scenes of the film.

*Suddenly, Last Summer*’s shocking finale, in which Sebastian’s “unnatural” homosexual “appetite” and the true nature of his death are finally revealed in flashback, can be viewed as a warning to the concerned viewer. Just as the authors of “Homosexuality and Citizenship in Florida” claim of the results of their report, Catherine’s recovered memory could be seen as valuable to all citizens: “For every parent and every individual concerned with the moral climate of the state, should be aware of the rise in homosexual activity noted here, and be possessed of the basic knowledge set forth.”<sup>73</sup> Dr. Cukrowicz gathers Catherine’s family together in Sebastian’s garden. After she is injected with a “truth serum,” Catherine is told to give the doctor all her “resistance to the truth.” She promises to tell the truth because she has to and despite Violet’s initial interruptions, Catherine is able to tell her story.

Catherine tells those gathered how Sebastian, whose sexual appetite had changed from the evening to “afternoons on the beach,” had forced her to wear an “immodest” bathing-suit. She is physically forced (and in flashback Sebastian’s arm can be seen dragging her reluctantly into the water), to parade along a partition that separated the private beach they occupied with the adjacent free beach. Her “immoral” white bathing-suit, which turned transparent on contact with water, soon gathers a crowd of lustful young men and boys. Once the boys have been procured, Catherine becomes redundant; she sits alone writing postcards “until it was time to meet him outside the bathhouses on the street.” Sebastian is glimpsed leaving a bathhouse, a vision of the “monster”

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<sup>73</sup> *Homosexuality and Citizenship: A Report of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee* (January, 1964), p. 2. Vito Russo highlights an article by Henry Hart, which appeared in *Films In Review* in January of 1960. Hart writes that “Tennessee Williams wrote *Suddenly, Last Summer* when a psychiatrist advised him that for his own sake – not to mention society’s – he had better stop denigrating normality and begin to expose the evils of homosexuality and its allied forms of vice.” Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, pp. 117-118.

obscured by throngs of “hungry young people who’d climbed over the fence from the free beach.” He is seen passing out tips to young boys, “as if they’d all shined his shoes.” Of course, an astute viewer would realise that the “tips” were provided for activities far more personal than “shoe-shining.” The 1950s viewer, aware of the ways in which images of homosexuality were circulating in popular culture, would likely understand, as Bergler did, the “sinister” implication of frequenting a bathhouse:

The hatred and scorn for women shown by the most violent heterosexual misogynist appear to be benevolence when compared with the contempt shown by the typical homosexual for his sexual partners. This attitude is so marked that frequently the whole personality of the “lover” is obliterated; many homosexual contacts take place in comfort stations, in the obscurity of a park, in Turkish baths, where the sex object is not even seen. This fully impersonal means of achieving “contact” makes even a visit to a heterosexual whorehouse seem like an emotional experience.<sup>74</sup>

In *Suddenly, Last Summer* the crowd outside the bathhouse grows day by day, “bigger, noisier, greedier.” As if the government officials working for The Florida Legislative Investigation Committee were correct in their assumptions, Sebastian succeeds in infecting scores of young men on the brink of sexual maturity. He creates a troop of homosexual “hustlers.”

Seemingly aware of the monster of his own creation, Sebastian, only his hands and right arm visible, tells Catherine, “Let’s go north...I think we’ve done Cabeza de Lobo. I think we’ve done it, don’t you?” However, Sebastian’s desire to leave has come too late. As he sits eating breakfast with Catherine, young boys line the fence that separates the restaurant from the beach. Tellingly, “they made gobbling noises with their mouths, stuffing their fists into their mouths and making gobbling noises with frightful grins.”

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<sup>74</sup> Bergler, *Homosexuality*, p.16. One may question what kind of personal experience Bergler had that could qualify these claims.

Catherine states that the children could be heard calling for bread; however, that their cries were directed at Sebastian rather than any of the other patrons suggests that their “gobbling” sounds and “fisting” actions pertain to a newly acquired and far more “sinister” dietary predilection. Sebastian, apparently all too familiar with such a situation, tells Catherine, “Don’t look at those little monsters. Beggars are a social *disease* in this country. If you look at them you get *sick* of the country. It spoils the whole country for you.”

However, the children will not be ignored. Having fashioned percussion instruments out of discarded tin cans and scrap metal, they begin to “serenade” Sebastian, the music “terrifying” him as “he recognised some of musicians. Some of the boys, between childhood and older.” Sebastian flees the restaurant, followed by the chorus of percussion through the winding Spanish streets, trying to escape, but “unable to find a way out.” At the top of a hill, outside “an ancient ruined temple,” the children overtake him. His arm is seen reaching skyward as the children crowd him to the floor. Sebastian’s body is later found “lying naked on the broken stones...it looked as if they had devoured him. As if they had torn or cut parts of him away with their hands or with knives or those jagged tin cans they made music with. As if they had torn bits of him away and stuffed them in their own gobbling mouths.” Sebastian is literally devoured by the children who have previously satisfied his sexual desires. Thus, he is consumed by an “epidemic” that his own “infection” has precipitated; sexual predator has become prey to the “insatiable appetite” of cannibalistic child “hustlers.” As outlandish as such a conclusion may seem, Henry Hart of *Films In Review* would solemnly claim that this finale pointed to one of many “horrible fates that can overtake this particular kind of pervert.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*, pp. 117-118.

The devastating effect of Sebastian's infection is not only found in the pieces of flesh left ravaged on the "hot white" streets of Cabeza de Lobo. After the horrifying truth is finally revealed, Catherine slumps to the floor in an uncontrollable flood of tears, while Violet, seemingly attempting to repress the truth that she feared would come out, retreats into a fantasy world. Dr. Cukrowicz "becomes" Sebastian to steer her away, and ascending into shadow on the elevator on which she was introduced, she declares, "Oh Sebastian, what a lovely summer it's been, just the two of us. Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian, just the way it's always going to be. Oh we are lucky my darling, to have one another and need no one else, ever." The creator, it seems, suffers in life as the "monster" in his death. As Violet ascends in her elevator, the audience can assume that her ultimate ascension will soon arrive, and she can be with Sebastian once again.

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Thus, in a daring film Hollywood would replicate the media and governmental transformation of the homosexual male into a predatory sexual psychopath. As portrayed in *Compulsion* and *Suddenly, Last Summer*, the homosexual male had transmuted into an outwardly undetectable yet inwardly voracious "monster" with an eye fixed firmly on the youth of the nation. Thus, as Bergler averred, these films suggest that the homosexual's "poor and unsatisfactory sexual diet" meant that he was constantly "on the prowl," providing undeniable "proof" of the "diseased" homosexual's masochistic craving for danger. For a long time merely an effeminate "fairy" open to "justifiable" ridicule in a *Tea and Sympathy* fashion, the homosexual is portrayed as an invisible "queer," a psychopathic child molester capable of committing

violent sexual crimes. As Estelle B. Freedman has retroactively claimed, “psychopath literature,” (and to this I add Hollywood film), was able to reinforce the fear of male homosexuality. She argues:

At times it appeared that a major motive of the psychopath laws was to prevent the contagion of homosexuality from spreading from adults to youth. Such contagion might corrupt the entire community and might ultimately result in violent death.<sup>76</sup>

Aside from such statutory renegotiation (a reaction to an unnecessary fear, which only served to swell the fear it attempted to suppress), how could this contagion be contained?

Bergler advocated the dissemination of “fact,” in other words, a dissemination of the fact that homosexuality is a disease. If the “facts” remained unspoken, he claimed, “the confirmed homosexual is presented with a clear field for his operations – and your teen-age children may be the victims.”<sup>77</sup> In this way, Bergler claimed that the only effective way of fighting and counteracting homosexuality would be the “wide dissemination of the knowledge that there is nothing glamorous about suffering from the disease.” Everybody, it seems, was to be taught that the disease known as homosexuality could be cured and that this sexual disorder is “coupled with severe unconscious self-damage that will inevitably show up outside of the sexual sphere...because it embraces the entire personality.” Only, according to Bergler, if this “triad of countermeasures” were adopted could the pernicious cycle of the homosexuality disease be halted.

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<sup>76</sup> Estelle B. Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960,” reproduced in, Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press; 1989), pp. 213-214.

<sup>77</sup> Dr. Edmund Bergler, *1000 Homosexuals: Conspiracy of Silence, or Curing and Deglamorizing Homosexuals?* (Paterson, N.J., Pageant Books, Inc., 1959), p. 249.

It appears that the dissemination of such “facts” continued well into the 1960s. In 1967, the C.B.S. television network aired an edition of the C.B.S. Reports current affairs show, illustratively titled “The Homosexuals.” The show claimed, “Most Americans are repelled by the mere mention of homosexuality. 2 out of 3 Americans look upon homosexuals with disgust...No one knows how many homosexuals there are in the U.S...this much is certain, male homosexuals in the U.S. number in their millions and their number is growing.” The programme was certainly able to present a “deglamourised” vision of homosexual life. Replicating much of Bergler’s assertions, the programme featured a 27-year-old, college-educated man, who was “unable to hold a job because of his inability to control his homosexual inclinations.” Speaking from the shadows, partially visible through a large indoor plant, the unidentified male attributed his homosexuality to a “very domineering mother.” He claims he felt “superior,” as though he had “licence to satisfy every need, every desire, every tension,” through “animal sexual gratification.” When asked how he views himself, he states, “I use the term sick...I know that inside I am sick. I’m not just sick sexually; I am sick in a lot of ways, immature, childlike and the sex part of it is just a symptom, just like a stomach ache is the symptom of who knows what?” His Doctor was, “the kind of man who took someone like myself, who was not interested in being human, and in 2 years time brought me to the point where I can relax in society. I don’t have to act out...I consciously avoid it like the plague...this in itself might be a cure.”<sup>78</sup>

Bergler would have certainly appreciated this effort, reiterating as it does much of his thesis. However, despite the dissemination of these “facts,” in 1973, the weight of

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<sup>78</sup> “The Homosexuals,” CBS Reports, March 7, 1967, FCA 5181 – 5182. In 1964, *Life* magazine printed a photo essay exposing the increasingly visible, yet “sad and sordid” gay world. The essay observed that “Homosexuality shears across the spectrum of American life – the professions, the arts, business and labor, it always has. But today, especially in big cities, homosexuals are discarding their furtive ways and openly admitting, even flaunting, their deviation.” However, for every “obvious” homosexual, *Life* warned, “there are probably nine nearly impossible to detect.” Paul Welch and Bill Eppridge, “Homosexuality in America,” *Life*, June 26, 1964, pp. 66-74.

empirical data, coupled by changing social norms and the development of a politically active gay community in the United States, led the Board of Directors of the American Psychiatric Association, to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), a decision ratified in 1974 by a vote of the membership. It was no longer socially, politically or medically viable to view homosexuality as a “disease.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Contaminated Teens: Juvenile Delinquency and Moral Panic.**

Just as we are pressing ahead to find the causes and cures for polio, cancer, and multiple sclerosis, so we must press forward to eliminate the causes of juvenile delinquency.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1950s, Americans worried deeply about a reported rise in juvenile delinquency. These sometimes hyperbolic, often misplaced fears exist now in long-redundant government documents, in numerous out-dated medical and social studies, on the archived pages of tabloid magazines, in back-issues of *Time* and *Life*, and they are forever committed to celluloid in Hollywood films. At the time, the fear was palpable; commentators from across political and vocational spectrums would sound the same alarm, warning the American populace about the dramatic and fearful rise of a delinquent juvenile army. Supreme muckrakers, alarmists and number-one bestsellers Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer would promote panic with their salacious depiction of a morally bankrupt, peer-oriented juvenile subculture. Such a depiction was afforded some validity when reproduced with slightly more restrained, but equally damning,

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents* (New York: The New American Library, 1957), p 116.

language by Pulitzer prize-winning journalists such as Benjamin Fine and Harrison Salisbury. The fear was also given medical support in the pseudo-scientific offerings of psychologists Marynia Farnham M.D. and Frederic Wertham M. D. whose claims were published in book form and serialised; their arguments were condensed in popular magazines such as *Life* and *Readers Digest*, thereby reaching a mass audience. Even renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead and social critic Dwight Macdonald would sound the delinquency alarm.

Although varying in forum, purpose and tone, commentators were united by the use of an often apocalyptic rhetoric that fed a moral panic.<sup>2</sup> Whether employed to promote fear, ignite action or encourage social regulation, juvenile delinquency was constructed as a disease capable of destroying the much-fabled “American way-of-life.” Margaret Mead would tell a 1959 television audience that the problem of juvenile delinquency was swiftly reaching the level of an “epidemic,” an argument that *New York Times* Education Editor Benjamin Fine had made four years previously.<sup>3</sup>

In the foreword to his 1955 book, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, Fine highlights President Eisenhower’s message to Congress on January 17, 1954, in which the President called for \$3,000,000 with which to “attack the problem of juvenile delinquency.”<sup>4</sup> Fine believed that such a request was “the most important recognition of the delinquency menace that has ever been made in the United States.”<sup>5</sup> He predicted that within the year over one million boys and girls would get into trouble serious

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of the “moral panic,” introduced by British sociologist Stanley Cohen in 1972, purports that societies sporadically depict a condition, episode, person or group as a threat to societal values and interests. Implicit in the term “moral panic” is the suggestion that the threat posed is to something held to be fundamental to society; it is not a mundane or arbitrary threat but a threat to an idealised social order. For a concise history and understanding of the concept of the moral panic, see Kenneth Thompson, *Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Mead, appearing on “Crime and Delinquency,” *The Search for America*, KETC-TV, St-Louis Missouri, 1959. LoC catalogue number FCA 3885.

<sup>4</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, p. v. Benjamin Fine worked for the *New York Times* for twenty years between 1938 and 1958; he was awarded the Pulitzer in 1944 for public service reporting.

<sup>5</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, p. v.

enough to warrant being apprehended by the police. By 1960, he suggested, this figure would reach 2,250,000. With such figures in mind, Fine was able to claim that there was “good reason” to think of delinquency as a serious national epidemic. He argued that if one million youngsters had shown the first symptoms of cholera, the nation would have been aghast; people everywhere would have been “galvanized into effective action,” taking every conceivable step to prevent the disease from taking hold and spreading.<sup>6</sup> *1,000,000 Delinquents* operated as a call-to-arms for concerned parents, the police, the juvenile courts and the schools. Thus, in order to stimulate a response, promote fear and create awareness, Fine would cast juvenile delinquency as a virulent pathology, a viral agent both swift and debilitating.

Fine’s claims were rooted in a cold-war mentality that pathologised a variety of perceived threats, not only from behind the “iron curtain,” but from a plethora of marginalised domestic groups. Delinquency, like the numerous maladies supposedly suffered by modern woman, and homosexuality in both men and women, was considered a pathological entity that threatened national security. Juvenile delinquency would even become a serious issue for Congress with the formation of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, which convened to discuss the negative effects of sex and violence in the mass media upon the nation’s youth. Numerous delinquency studies were conducted and their results were widely published; in almost every instance, juvenile delinquency was discussed in socio-medical terms, the predominant metaphors being ones of contagion, contamination and infection.

Juvenile delinquency as an “epidemic” can be easily viewed in relation to the larger, more pervasive fears about the effectiveness of American institutions and the strength of American society under the fear, pressure and paranoia of the Cold War. In

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<sup>6</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, p.18.

many instances, this relationship moved beyond the metaphorical, so that juvenile delinquency was *directly* linked to the communist threat. For example, Senator Robert Hendrickson, the original chair of the Senate Subcommittee would tell the Conference on Delinquency at Health, Education and Welfare in June 1954 that not even the Communist conspiracy could devise a more effective way to “demoralize, disrupt, confuse, and destroy” future citizens than “apathy on the part of adult Americans to the scourge known as Juvenile Delinquency.”<sup>7</sup>

Four years later, Harrison E. Salisbury, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of delinquency study *The Shook –Up Generation* (1958), would claim that the situation was even more critical. According to Salisbury, juvenile delinquency was not only “demoralising” and “confusing” teenagers; it was threatening the country’s very existence. The launch of the Russian satellite “Sputnik” in October 1957 was seen as proof by Salisbury that Russian technology was moving ahead of the United States, and that Russia was “doing a better job of training her young people and of mobilising her human potentialities than we are.” The solution to this crisis was quite simply “the most rapid possible liquidation of adolescent delinquency.” If the United States was no longer committed to this goal on moral grounds, Salisbury claimed that the nation was now compelled to act “for the sheer sake of survival.”<sup>8</sup>

Husband and wife criminologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, in *Delinquents in the Making* (1952), told a more scientifically-minded readership that there was real danger implicit in the “fact” that “some of the more striking traits that mark delinquents are similar to the characteristic traits of Nazi, Fascist or Communist leaders.”<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> *New York Times* (29 June 1954), p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Shook-Up Generation* (London: Michael Joseph, 1958), pp. 211-212.

<sup>9</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, *Delinquents in the Making: Paths to Prevention* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), pp. 7-8. The Gluecks conducted their research into delinquency out of Harvard Law School. Their work began in the 1930s with the publication of *One Thousand Juvenile Delinquents* (1934). They continued to publish their findings into the 1970s.

Gluecks did not arrive at these conclusions blindly. Their extensive study compared 500 “delinquents” with 500 “non-delinquents” to reach a composite picture of each through statistical differences. They compared home-life, personality type, and physical traits and included a chapter entitled “Health and Delinquency,” whereby all participants were subjected to a thorough medical examination with the aim of learning about the child’s “general state of health and gross evidence of disease.” The height and weight of each child was taken. Abnormalities of the skeleton and palate were recorded. The skin and teeth were examined for defect. Ears were checked for deafness and otitis media. Examination was made of the heart, the lungs, the abdomen and the genital organs. A brief neurological examination gave particular attention to irregular reflexes. Functional deviations were noted, particularly stuttering, lisping, tics, extreme nail-biting and left-handedness. Unsurprisingly, the results of these thoroughly invasive examinations revealed “no significant difference” between the opposing groups. However, the results themselves are somewhat irrelevant, particularly to my thesis; what is significant is that the Gluecks took the metaphorical link between juvenile delinquency and disease to a literal extreme, highlighting the extent to which, in the strict binary culture of the 1950s, juvenile delinquents were not merely posited as troubled individuals but as a diseased “other,” and even left-handedness could be considered a symptom.

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The roots of juvenile delinquency fears can be traced back to a time of hot, not cold, war. Juvenile delinquency hit the national headlines during the war years, thus marking the beginning of an obsession that would persist throughout the 1950s. The inevitable

disruptions of war-time society were reportedly damaging to social institutions, such as the family, long entrusted with maintaining social order. With so many fathers overseas and mothers at work, the supervision of the nation's adolescent population became increasingly difficult; the family unit had become dislocated. As F.B.I. director J. Edgar Hoover recalled in an article for the *Syracuse Law Review* in 1953, "In time of war, as during any great emergency when the pattern of home life is disrupted, juveniles assume an increasingly important role in the nation's criminal life."<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, in April 1946, *Life* magazine reported "Juvenile Delinquency: War's Insecurity Lifts Youthful Crime 100%." The photo essay reported a major crime wave in the previous year. Total juvenile delinquency, *Life* claimed, was up just over 100%. The ten-page article set out to thoroughly investigate juvenile delinquency, "its causes, development, manifestations and possible alleviations." Like war, the essay extolled, "delinquency has no easy panacea." At this time, *Life* considered juvenile delinquency to be "a product of sickness" that would only diminish when "society's other ills diminish." Thus, as was common in the 1940s, before the onset of the Cold War, *Life* reported that delinquency was an "urban phenomenon," a product of "insecurity, poverty and dissatisfaction," and its most fertile breeding place was in the slums.

Street culture had long been pathologised by social scientists as delinquent and the effects of an inadequate home life were reportedly exacerbated by poverty and ignorance and gang culture. Such constructions conformed to an archetype of juvenile misbehaviour that had existed in literary and cultural discourse since the late Nineteenth Century. However, *Life's* essay engages with the disease metaphors that

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<sup>10</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, "Juvenile Delinquency," (*Syracuse Law Review*, Spring, 1953, Vol. 4, No. 2). The significance of Hoover's role in promoting the fear of juvenile delinquency should not be downplayed. Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, Hoover would warn about a rising juvenile crime-wave. His morally charged and often sensational words, seemingly backed by indisputable FBI statistics were being widely reproduced in national newspapers and periodicals. In a 1943 issue of *American Magazine*, he would warn of a new breed of child, produced, he claimed by a "wartime spirit of abandon," by broken homes and moral decline. J. Edgar Hoover, "Wild Children," *American Magazine*, Vol. 136 (July 1943).

would come to dominate the juvenile delinquency scare of the 1950s, discussing the need for a “cure” and claiming that delinquent juveniles conform to a paradigm: “they are indecisive, uncertain of themselves, many of them pathological.”<sup>11</sup>

Early post-war film explorations of the subject appear to support this war-time understanding of the nature and location of the juvenile menace, and are embedded in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century discourse that pathologised the urban environment as delinquent. *City Across the River* (1949) and Nicholas Ray’s *Knock on Any Door* (1949) both locate the problem firmly within the urban slum. *City Across the River* makes its location immediately evident in a sobering opening monologue that exists outside of the diegesis and is delivered, in documentary fashion, earnestly and directly to camera, by prominent newspaper and radio journalist Drew Pearson:

For most of us, the city where juvenile crime flourishes always seems to be the *City Across the River*. Don’t kid yourselves! It could be your city, your street, your house! Although this story happens in Brooklyn, it could just have well have happened in any large city where slum conditions undermine personal security and take their toll in juvenile delinquency.

A film adaptation of Irving Shulman’s controversial 1947 novel about urban street gangs, *The Amboy Dukes*, tells the story of 16-year-old Frank Cusak (Frank Goldfarb in

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<sup>11</sup> “Juvenile Delinquency: War’s Insecurity Lifts Youthful Crime 100%,” (*Life*, April 8, 1946), pp. 83-93. The discovery of the juvenile delinquent can be traced back to the urbanisation of the American landscape. The rise of the city also saw a rise in criminality, and thus the city was conceived as the breeding ground of delinquency. As William Douglas Morrison would write in his 1897 text *Juvenile Offenders*, urban communities produced “a large proportion of weak and ineffective people possessing very inadequate physical equipment for successfully fighting the battle of life...Disease and sickness interfere with them and incapacitate them, and they are driven down to the very lowest social stratum.” Thus, a child entering such a social world is impelled by circumstance, temptation, neglect, and by a sense of adventure, into a criminal life. William Douglas Morrison, *Juvenile Offenders*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1897), pp. 28-33. In early cinema, the city was often similarly depicted as a dark and corrupt environment; in F. W. Murnau’s *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927), a country man is seduced by the charms of a morally desolate city woman who convinces him that he must kill his wife. Similarly, King Vidor’s 1928 release *The Crowd* tells the story of a family’s struggle amidst the poverty, cramped living conditions, stress and anonymity of life in a pitiless big city.

the novel) who, embittered by his impoverished surroundings and neglected by parents who must constantly work overtime to feed the family, sinks deep into criminal life.<sup>12</sup>

The narrative proper begins by setting the scene. Personalising the story, the voice-over narration informs the audience that *we* live in Brooklyn. The audience is shown, in stark black-and-white photography, the main street of *our* neighbourhood, where *we* “hang out” with *our* gang. *Our* “country club” is the “Happy Times Pool Rooms.” Vagrants and sleeping children line *our* street, and *our* 62-year-old tenement is the only home *we* have ever had. As usual *we* wake in cramped conditions, in a bedroom shared with *our* younger sister, in an empty home, *our* parents both working. *We* are asked to walk in Frankie’s shoes, to experience his dire situation and thus to understand his descent into delinquency. In much the same way that Benjamin Fine would repeatedly ask inclusive, rhetorical questions of his readers, “Where shall we place the blame? How shall we find the solutions? How shall we put them into effect?” *City Across the River* attempts to implicate all viewers in the delinquency crisis; *we* are all involved and *we* all have the ability to remedy the situation.

If this inclusive rhetorical device and the situating opening monologue are not proof enough that the film sees delinquency as isolated to the slum, Frank’s parents are witnessed plotting the family’s necessary “escape.” Father, Joe (Luis Van Rooten), recognising the decline in his son’s behaviour, tells wife (Thelma Ritter): “Kitty, we gotta move, we gotta get the kids outta here! Somewhere they can grow up decent; where they can bring their friends and not be ashamed...We’ll have to buy a place.”

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Thomas McGee and R.J. Robertson, in their survey of juvenile delinquency movies, note the adaptive concessions made in order to render Shulman’s novel acceptable for Maxwell Shane’s screen version: “From the outset, the Breen office stated they could in no way approve of a story that concerned juveniles mixed up with raping 12-year-old girls, consorting with whores, performing brutal sex acts, smoking reefers and engaging in murder and violence. So Shane bartered. The rape became a mild beating. The whores, the reefers, and the novel’s strong language were eliminated. Frank’s brutal death was changed to incarceration.” *The J.D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies* (Jefferson, N.C., McFarland and Company, Inc., 1982).

Forgoing his dream of opening his own suburban grocery store, Joe is prepared to spend his \$632 savings on a “better life” for his children: “We can bury the dream; we buried a child once, we can bury a dream too. We gotta save the child that’s living!” The film cuts to a newspaper advertising “1425 Radford St., Sea View Terrace,” a centrally-heated, three-bedroom bungalow where Frank would have his own bedroom. The house is situated in an idyllic American suburb; not only do children innocently ride bikes and roller-skate along the vagrant-free sidewalk, but their every childlike move is accentuated by an upbeat melody. However, the family’s move is not to be; when Kitty falls sick, the savings are spent on her medical treatment and the family is forced to remain in their cramped and squalid tenement abode. Thus, despite the obvious love and affection they have for their child, Frank’s parents are unable to prevent his decline into “gangsterdom” and murder. For, as Benjamin Fine would state “there can be no home life without an adequate home”:

When parents and children have to sleep together, sometimes five and six in a bed regardless of sex, in rooms used for all purposes, the impossibility of privacy, the tensions that arise from lack of sanitary facilities and from overcrowding, all combine to degrade the family where the very roots of its life should be growing strong and healthy – in the home...In such atmospheres it is evident that moral influences may be weakened and that temptation to delinquency strengthened.<sup>13</sup>

Fine evokes metaphors of life, growth and health in opposition to death, degradation and disease. So does the film. The audience learns that Frankie’s elder brother died due to the conditions into which he was born. Frankie has survived but his moral influences are so weakened that it is presented as inevitable that Frankie and the Dukes will murder a local high-school teacher with a gun made in shop class. Death, delinquency

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<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, pp. 62-64.

or both are presented by both Fine and the film as the only escape from the squalor into which these boys are born. Spared the gruesome death accorded his character in the novel, Frankie is ultimately apprehended for his crimes and sentenced to life imprisonment. Drew Pearson assures us that “he’ll serve his time,” and maybe in time “he’ll find hope.” We are then asked to ponder the fate of “all the other Frankies.”

If these early post-war movies are to be understood as an accurate reflection of the fate of juvenile delinquents, then the “other Frankies” would meet a similar and deservedly-sticky end. Nicholas Ray’s *Knock on Any Door* documents the life of delinquent Nick “Pretty Boy” Romano (John Derek). Tackling juvenile delinquency some six years before his own *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) would reinvent the genre and simultaneously create a tragic “teen” idol in the shape of James Dean, Ray presents the first on-screen teen to adopt the philosophy of “live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse.” This philosophy would come to encapsulate the real life of James Dean, who, after just three film roles, died in a car-crash at the age of twenty-four. Indeed, *Rebel* was the first of two posthumous film releases for the young actor, along with *Giant* (1956). Contrasting Ray’s delinquency films reveals the extent to which juvenile delinquency became increasingly pathologised in a relatively short span of time. In 1949, delinquency is bred by the slum; it is the environment that is sick, and not necessarily the child. In 1955, Jim Stark (Dean) is a rebel from a ‘good’ family, a “neurotic” middle-class delinquent and the problem has “spread” to suburbia. In 1949, *Knock on Any Door* is told from the perspective of Nick’s lawyer; in 1955, the audience is expected to identify with the “neurotic” teens themselves, while the adult characters remain on the periphery. The problem was no longer attached to an anonymous gang member occupying some distant tenement building, it was in “our” own home, and *Rebel* adopted the “problem’s” point of view.

*Knock on Any Door* opens with a crime; Nick Romano is involved in a backstreet shoot-out which leaves a police-officer dead. Lawyer Andrew Morton (Humphrey Bogart), takes Romano's case. Himself a child of the slum, Morton's courtroom defence of the delinquent killer begins: "In every man's life, there are pinpoints of time that govern his destiny. If his adolescence and his youth are pushed to the right, a life of honour and credit, if pushed to the left, a life like Nick Romano's..." What follows is a series of flashbacks that demonstrate how environment and circumstance conspire against Nick and create a juvenile killer: Nick's traumatic childhood, the wrongful imprisonment and death of his immigrant father, his move to the slums with his disabled mother and two sisters, the escape from his new "pig-pen" home onto the streets with his gang, and his witnessing his best friend's murder during a stint in reform school. A desire to "go straight" is ignited by marriage to girlfriend Emma (Allene Roberts), but his inability to hold a job leads to a huge fight when she announces her pregnancy. Emma kills herself, and Nick kills a police-officer out of sheer frustration and grief.

The film is devastatingly clear in its politics: slums breed delinquency. Morton, a survivor of a slum upbringing and thus a voice of authenticity, functions as the cinematic equivalent of many a cultural commentator. His courtroom soliloquies could easily have been culled from a 1940s juvenile delinquency text. Morton informs the court early in the trial that at his most impressionable age Nick is forced to move to "one of the worst districts in the city, the worst in any American city, and that can do it. A year or so of that can take what was once a family and finish it, can take a fine, sensitive, friendly kid and twist and turn him." Finally, like many social commentators of the time, and on the same basis that Jonathon Wilks defends "homosexual" killers Artie Strauss and Judd Steiner in *Compulsion* (1959), Morton's closing statement

emphasises not the crime but the inescapable causes of the crime. Morton claims that Nick is guilty, not of murder, but of “knowing his father was killed in prison. He’s guilty of being reared in poverty. He’s guilty of having lived in the slums, of having the wrong companions...He’s guilty of the vile treatment of a primitive reform school.” As in *City Across the River*’s opening narration, Morton’s role is to implicate the audience directly in the juvenile delinquency “problem”; once again, the audience is inclusively addressed as “we.” Morton claims that while Nick Romano is guilty “so are *we*, and so is that precious thing *we* call society...Until *we* do away with the type of neighbourhood that produced this boy, ten more will spring up to take his place, a hundred, a thousand. Until *we* wipe out the slums, and rebuild them, knock on any door and you may find Nick Romano.” Thus, in the late 1940s, Hollywood was involved in the maintenance of a cultural archetype, locating delinquency in the slum, a pathology bred by poverty. The problem was presented as requiring the collective effort of the audience, the mobilisation of vast numbers committed to the eradication of poverty and the associated slum. However, in the face of a new highly pervasive communist enemy and growing fears of social corruption and disintegration, this view would not adhere for much longer.

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Urban poverty and gang culture continued to be debated in relation to the causes of juvenile delinquency in the 1950s, but when the problem was deemed an “epidemic” rather than a “crime-wave,” something more sinister happened. Popular rhetoric stated that knocking on any door *outside* of a slum would also reveal a Nick Romano or Frankie Cusack. In pathologising juvenile delinquency, social class and urban location

became redundant in explaining the phenomenon. No locality was immune; “infection” was indiscriminate, and thus new causes and cures would have to be sought. Benjamin Fine was among the first to raise the alarm, claiming juvenile delinquency to be a “nationwide problem.” Fine refers to statistics in support of his claims that there had not only been an overall increase in delinquency but that it had “spread.” Unless, Fine presaged, “this cancer is checked early enough, it can go on spreading and contaminate many good cells in our society.”<sup>14</sup> Fine’s melodramatic language invokes the metaphor of the body politic in much the same way as government officials were adopting it to demonstrate the political threat to the United States emanating from external communist regimes. While he does not cite statistics directly, Fine underpins his claims with official sources, highlighting comments made by the director of the Children’s Welfare Bureau of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bertram M. Beck, who stated that delinquency could be found “creeping from the wrong side of the tracks to the right side of it.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, during an episode of the television series *Searchlights on Delinquency*, entitled “Poor Little Rich Boy,” that aired on the *National Educational Television* (NET) channel in 1956, presenter and sheriff of Cook County, Illinois, Joseph D. Lohman informed viewers that “fifty percent of the youngsters who come to the attention of the courts in America come not from the slum, the gang...but from ordinary homes and families.” This series ran for a total of thirteen episodes. Each week, presenter Joseph Lohman would highlight and analyse a specific cause or symptom of the juvenile delinquency “disease.” The individual episode titles included “Addiction Among Teenagers,” “The Broken Home,” “The Gang,” “Emotionally Disturbed,” “Poor Little Rich Boy,” “I.Q. and Delinquency,” and “Who Are the

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<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, pp. 19-20.

Delinquents?” The middle-class, “ordinary” victim of the delinquency disease was “as much distorted, as much disturbed as if he came from the *other* side of the tracks.”<sup>16</sup> Long associated with a lower-class slum “other,” quarantined by the metaphorical “track,” juvenile delinquency had found a way to traverse this invisible yet formerly unyielding boundary. Thus, delinquency as viral entity was capable of striking indiscriminately in both slum and suburb; the geographical and social boundaries erected by the security state had become porous and the “disease” universal in symptom.

It was one thing for the largely poor, black and immigrant populations associated with the inner-city slums to suffer such a crippling malady, but the upward mobility of the disease was, it was warned, endangering white middle-class communities slow to recognise this strange “new” infection. In 1959, Harrison Salisbury reported that a “typical outbreak” had occurred in Maplewood, New Jersey. One night, in this “fine community of middle-class families,” Salisbury reports that:

A gang of boys broke into the Maplewood Junior High School...and set fire to the place...Only after this outrageous attack did the community discover that there had been signs that gang behaviour was *infecting* the younger generation (emphasis added).<sup>17</sup>

But what was it exactly that these middle-class communities were slow to realise about their children? Could they really *all* be consumed by a gang mentality and “infected” with the pathology of a “problem” presumed to be neatly contained amongst a lower-

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<sup>16</sup> “Poor Little Rich Boy,” *Searchlights on Delinquency*, National Educational Television, 1956, LoC catalogue number FCA 3960.

<sup>17</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Shook-Up Generation* (London: Michael Joseph, 1959), pp. 107-108. In his study of gang membership, *The Violent Gang* (first published in 1962 but directly related to findings and research conducted whilst working a crime prevention program on the upper West Side of Manhattan in 1953), Lewis Yablonsky was able to conclude that the “kill for kicks homicide is today a source for concern not only in the large city (eleven gang homicides in New York City in the summer of 1958) but also in the suburbs and the small towns.” Lewis Yablonsky, *The Violent Gang* (London: Penguin books, 1962), p. 21.

class population? Part of the answer lies in the social dislocations caused by the Second World War. At this time, most experts assumed delinquency to be a problem rooted in family structure. When the “normative” nuclear structure was disrupted, delinquency was considered an inevitable by-product. Thus, as the war split families, first by conscription and then when mothers entered the workforce, children were free from the usual societal constraints and subject to pressures that could lead them to misbehave.<sup>18</sup> It seems that whilst out on the city streets, crossing the metaphorical “tracks” erected to protect them, these children became vulnerable to infection and seemingly carried the virus back with them at the war’s end.

Whether it was accurate to label many children delinquent, it was certainly evident that in the post-war United States a specifically “teen-age” culture appeared that began to blur once-rigid signifiers between middle and lower-class America. Thus, to a vast majority of middle-class parents, their seemingly “typical” teenage son or daughter had become indistinguishable from the genuinely delinquent, lower-class hoodlum.

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It was in 1904 that psychologist G. Stanley Hall first “discovered” the American adolescent. Adolescents had, of course, always been there, but Hall was the first to stress the significance of the developmental phase that begins with puberty and ends with mature adulthood. What had previously been understood and treated as

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<sup>18</sup> Leerom Medovoi claims that the disruption of the idealised family dynamic placed middle-class adolescents, for the first time, “on the streets alongside their less privileged peers,” *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 26.

“childhood,” “youth,” or “young adulthood” became a distinct experiential realm and by the end of the World War II the term “teenager” had entered the popular lexicon.<sup>19</sup>

It seems no little coincidence that the initial war-time delinquency scare and the post-war delinquency “epidemic” would arise at the same time as the American teenager was “born.” In the booming post-war consumer marketplace teenagers represented a new target audience; in the media, at home and at school, the “teenager” was treated as a special creature or new species in need of specialised handling. In 1958, social critic Dwight Macdonald would claim that “the very notion of the teenager” had been “created by the businessmen who exploit it.”<sup>20</sup> As advertising became teen-specific, teens were increasingly polled on their tastes and interests, and consequentially the more their sense of themselves as a special group was enhanced. In the 1950s, guide books such as *How to Live with Your Teenager* (1953), and *Understanding Teenagers* (1955) were designed for parents to overcome new-found issues with their children, and they all stress a universal approach that discourages individual treatment. Such guide books also existed for teenagers themselves. For example, William C. Menninger M.D. published numerous guides for teenage living, including *How to be a Successful Teen-Ager* (1954) and *Blueprint for Teen-Age Living* (1958). Chapter headings include “Understanding Yourself,” “How to Live with Parents,” “Understanding Sex,” “Facts About Alcohol,” “Facts About Narcotics,” “Dating Do’s and Don’ts,” and “Guide to Good Grooming.” Like the guides published for their parents, these books assumed all teenagers to be fundamentally the same.

In short, traditional tools of socialisation, including parental child rearing, schooling and advertising, sought to collectivise the newly-discovered teen, cementing

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<sup>19</sup> Leerom Medovoi attributes the first use of the term to journalist Elliot Cohen in 1945, when he published “A Teen-Age Bill of Rights” in the *New York Times Magazine*. Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*, p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Dwight Macdonald, “A Caste, a Culture, a Market,” *New Yorker Magazine* (November 29, 1958), pp. 58-59.

a group mentality and encouraging teens to identify with one another as “a caste apart, or even, in the view of some anthropological thinkers, a culture apart.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, with a truly staggering number of “members,” it is unsurprising that both liberal and conservative sociologists, academics and public officials began to speak of this new and mysterious ethnographic group as a “subculture” of “epidemic” proportions. In an age of cold-war anxieties, strange new patterns of teenage leisure emerged centred on high school, new dating customs, drive-in movie theatres, souped-up cars, teen magazines, haircuts, and clothes. The fads and fashions of the new teen-age “subculture” were the basis of many anxious enquiries by clergymen, social scientists, parents, journalists and even Congress.

Above all, however, teen-culture (and the fear it generated) became centred on Rock ‘n’ Roll, a style of music and an attitude that drew from a “deviant” black underworld and the boisterous sub-culture of southern country music, styles that for many seemed opposed to security state conceptions of an “American way.” Rock ‘n’ Roll came to a zenith of popularity amongst teenagers in the 1950s, and was often deemed subversive by custodians of security state culture, a “corrupting influence that led to deafness, promiscuity and, of course, juvenile delinquency.”<sup>22</sup>

Marketed directly at teens, Rock ‘n’ Roll appeared to foreground black and working-class artists and styles, often conveying a rebellious attitude. The deeper cold-war concern was that it threatened the borders that policed race, gender and class by glorifying deviance and delinquency. Grace Palladino surmises succinctly in *Teenagers: An American History* (1996) that “Rock ‘n’ Roll was everything that middle-class parents feared: elemental, savage, and dripping with sexuality, qualities

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<sup>21</sup> Dwight Macdonald, “A Caste, a Culture, a Market,” *New Yorker Magazine* (November 29, 1958), p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> McGee and Robertson, *The J.D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies* (Jefferson, N.C., McFarland and Company, Inc., 1982), p. 41.

that respectable society usually associated with ‘depraved’ lower classes.”<sup>23</sup> A correspondent to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency claimed that Elvis Presley was a dangerous symbol, “his strip tease antics threaten to ‘rock-n-roll’ the juvenile world into open revolt against society. The gangster of tomorrow is the Elvis Presley type of today.”<sup>24</sup> Frank Sinatra would call the music “a rancid-smelling aphrodisiac,” and a Connecticut psychiatrist, using rhetoric indicative of moral panic, would label it a virulent “communicable disease,” observing that “if we cannot stem the tide of rock ‘n’ roll with its waves of rhythmic narcosis and waves of vicarious craze, we are preparing our own downfall in the midst of pandemic funeral dances.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, to the conservative commentator, Rock ‘n’ Roll was both addictive and dangerous, an infectious disease that could only possibly lead to a socially crippling pandemic.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the results of “anxious enquiries” into the newly-discovered teenager often concluded that teen-culture, as exemplified by this new musical genre, was synonymous with delinquency. Teenagers as a distinct social grouping had become the unwitting victims of a moral panic. Defined as a threat to societal values, the teenager was presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion. The media fixed on the image of the adolescent as a blue-jeaned, leather-jacket wearing menace. As the media would

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<sup>23</sup> Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), pp. 155-156.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Jerry Hopkins, *The Rock Story* (New York: Signet Books, 1970), p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> Although widely considered a social evil in 1950s America, it could in fact be argued that Rock ‘n’ Roll actually served to buttress the conservative values of the dominant containment culture with lyrics that celebrated monogamy, heterosexual love and marriage. Hollywood would attempt to communicate this to parents. In the 1956 film *Don't Knock the Rock*, “father of rock and roll” Alan Freed would reassure the adults present in the audience that “they really need not worry so much” about the younger generation. By gathering together an audience of concerned citizens and treating them to an elaborate demonstration of the Charleston, Freed was able to demonstrate how the 1950s Rock ‘n’ Rollers were really no different than the preceding generation. Such a demonstration allowed a formerly-concerned parent to declare that “we were just trying to find a scapegoat for our own shortcomings in bringing up our children, Rock ‘n’ Roll happened to be handy so it was picked to get the blame, I say we were wrong and I’m ready to admit it.” At the film’s conclusion, parents and children alike are free to enjoy a healthy dance to the film’s title track.

have it, all juveniles who chose to dress like Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* (1953) were likely to be brandishing a switch-blade. *Cosmopolitan*, in a special issue published in November of 1957, asked the pertinent question, "Are Teenagers Taking Over?" and likened teenagers to "a vast, determined band of blue-jeaned storm troopers."<sup>27</sup> Such representations allowed Marynia Farnham to claim that it was impossible to disentangle delinquency from adolescence.<sup>28</sup> Dwight Macdonald made similar claims highlighting the testimony of a New York housewife who told of her husband arriving home from work two hours late: "Oh my god, I thought, the teenagers have got him!"<sup>29</sup> In this way, it had become redundant to distinguish between the mere teen and the infected-delinquent-teen, leading to scores of inaccurate "diagnoses." Nowhere is this dilemma more explicitly visualised than in the 1957 Hollywood production *The Young Stranger*.

The film tells the story of affluent teenager Harold Ditmar (James Macarthur). Hal lives in the idyllic surroundings of Beverly Hills, where his father Tom (James Daly) is a successful movie producer, and his mother Helen (Kim Hunter) a glamorous and loving housewife. However, there exists a gulf between father and son: Tom is unable to understand and appreciate the eponymous young stranger with whom he lives. Initially, this lack of understanding constitutes only a minor irritant to Hal, who is accustomed to the lack of communication between himself and his father, claiming that

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<sup>27</sup> Richard Gehman, "That Nine Billion Dollars in Hot Little Hands," *Cosmopolitan* (November 1957), p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Marynia Farnham, *The Adolescent* (1951) (London: Collier Books, 1970), p. 145.

<sup>29</sup> Dwight Macdonald, "A Caste, a Culture, a Market," *New Yorker Magazine*, (November 29, 1958), pp. 60-61. The formation of a distinct "youth culture" only heightened fears of an epidemic. Teenagers and juvenile delinquents alike now ran together leaving Dr. Robert M. Lindner, author of the 1944 deviancy study *Rebel Without a Cause: The Hypnoanalysis of a Criminal Psychopath*, to tell a Los Angeles audience in 1954 that "our youth today is no longer in rebellion but in a condition of downright active and hostile mutiny. Within the memory of every living adult, a profound and terrifying change has overtaken adolescence." One such profound change was, according to Lindner, the abandonment of solitude "in favour of pack running, of predatory assembly, of great collectivities that bury, if they do not destroy individuality." Lindner's comments are cited by Dwight Macdonald, "A Caste, a Culture, a Market," *New Yorker Magazine* (November 29, 1958), pp. 64-65.

the only time he ever sees his father is “when I do something wrong.” Hal push-starts an old “jalopy” to travel to and from school. When Hal asks to borrow his father’s car for a trip to the movies, his request is refused. Instead, Tom offers him a hand-me-down, oversized dinner jacket as recompense, joking with his son about his “delinquent” attire of blue jeans and baseball jacket, and enquiring sarcastically, “Who’s your tailor?”<sup>30</sup> Hal has the label of juvenile delinquent forced upon him during his trip to the movies. In the theatre, Hal’s “teen” presence is met by similar attitudes to those displayed by the New York housewife who worried about the safety of her tardy husband. A gentleman sitting in front of Hal comments, “You can’t go to the movies anymore without being plagued by these kids.”

However, Hal is guilty only of wearing the supposed “uniform” of delinquency and of momentarily placing his feet on the seat in front of him. For these minor infractions, Hal is asked to leave the theatre and enter the manager’s office. When Hal attempts to exit the building, he is physically dragged back and in an act of self-defence “slugs” the theatre manager (Whit Bissell). From this moment he is labelled a “hooligan,” and his protestations of innocence are ignored both by the police and his father. The theatre manager seeks to make an example of him: “Let these smart aleck kids get away with one thing, pretty soon they are all over the place writing dirty words on walls, slashing up seats with knives; it will be my pleasure to teach one of them a lesson.” Out of frustration at the situation in which he finds himself, Hal mocks the delinquent label so rapidly thrust upon him: “That’s me alright, all the way down the

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<sup>30</sup> Hal should have read William C. Menninger M.D.’s *Blueprint for Teen-age Living*. There he would have received style tips that would enable him to negate his delinquency label. In Chapter IX “Guide to Good Grooming,” Menninger provides the teenage boy with some all-important dressing “tips” informing his male readership that “there is no reason to believe that just because you’re the manly sex, a neat, well scrubbed, frequently-tubbed look doesn’t make you more appealing to sit next to in class or to date every Friday night.” So what exactly should the respectable teenage boy be wearing? “A white oxford-cloth shirt with button-down collar is top style...Argyle socks and plain ribbed wool socks are excellent, too.” William C. Menninger, M.D., *Blueprint for Teen-age Living* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co. Inc., 1958), pp. 217-218.

line, bad companion, bad influence, bad boy, bad, bad, bad. Scared sergeant? Got your gun on ya? I might make a break for it ya know?" When asked what makes him think he "can go around hitting people," he retorts "I do it all the time, it's just homework. We have a course in hitting people at Grant High." Hal is thus seemingly aware of the synonymy of the high school student and the juvenile delinquent.

Throughout the remainder of the film, Hal's attempts to convince his father of his innocence are unsuccessful and he teeters precariously on the brink of conforming to his newly acquired label. He pleads with his father for understanding, "This is me, Hal. Not some criminal...Okay, I was a wise-guy, I was fresh. If you think I haven't learnt that, you are out of your mind...You wanna think of me as a juvenile delinquent okay, if it makes you feel any better, then fine; maybe you'll all be a lot happier if I just conform to your opinion of me." Eventually, Hal's protestations, and the theatre manager's confession that he provoked Hal's attack, force Tom to reassess both his reaction to the "delinquent" incident and his failing relationship with both Hal and his wife. As the film closes, father and son share a moment of masculine bonding, gently punching each other's arms; Tom even manages to compliment his son on his display of strength by saying, "I'm really glad it was [the theatre manager] you hit and not me. That was quite a shiner you gave him." Thus, they walk away from the police station toward a normative, delinquency-free future.

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*The Young Stranger* explores how the delinquency label could be mistakenly applied, but is simultaneously reflective of the genuine concern about the apparent spread of the

“virus” from the inner-city to suburbia and beyond. Indeed, the film is quick to address the idea that juvenile delinquency can be as easily found in the more affluent neighbourhood as in the slum, with police sergeant Shipley (James Gregory) informing Hal’s father, “Mr. Ditmar, your kid’s like a lot of the kids who come through here, a little too fresh for his own good, a little too quick with his fists...some of you smug people up there in Beverly Hills seem to have the idea that delinquency simply just wouldn’t dare happen to one of your kids!” By 1957, Hollywood was contributing to the image that money could not buy immunity from the delinquency pathogen.

If the middle classes were no longer immune to infection, and suburbia could incubate the pathogen as well as any slum, who or what could be to blame? The sociologist, the psychiatrist, the educator, the concerned parent, the Christian crusader and the congressman would travel down numerous avenues of inquiry. The slum would remain central to an understanding of inner-city delinquency, but gang culture appeared to have spread, and thus parents, schools, church groups, community groups, the police and popular “mass” culture would come under investigation. With the exposure of a teenage marketplace coinciding with an apparent rise in juvenile delinquency rates, many commentators blamed the rise in teen-specific cultural artefacts for the correlating increase in teen delinquencies.

As indicated in the Introduction, in such a climate the role of mass culture and of an entertainment industry gearing product toward a new teenage marketplace would make national headlines and provoke a government-sponsored investigation into the relationship between mass culture and juvenile delinquency. Dwight MacDonald was America’s most vocal mass-culture theorist, who succinctly voiced such concerns in “Masscult and Midcult” (1960), in which he argued mass-culture (or Masscult) was devoid of artistic integrity and was undermining “serious” high art. Hollywood films,

for example, merely allowed for the “assembly” of culture, the text itself prescribing every reaction. In 1958, Macdonald had posited that “the movies present the teenager as sinister but exciting – and an image is built up that in most cases merely impels him to behave rudely at breakfast but in others tempts him to go in for more sensational misdeeds, preferably in bad company.”<sup>31</sup> Mass-culture was thus an insipid contagion, a virus that infected high art and created delinquency.

Dr. Frederic Wertham was perhaps the most successful and influential exponent of mass-culture theory as it specifically related to juvenile delinquency. He openly shared the concerns of the Frankfurt scholars, enjoying a close friendship with Adorno.<sup>32</sup> Wertham’s 397-page polemic against the comic-book industry, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), demonstrated scant concern for the social sciences. It was a reductive, one-sided polemic which hijacked the rhetoric of a moral panic and linked the comic-book with the perceived rise in juvenile crime, thereby gaining a level of urgency and notoriety.<sup>33</sup> He had begun his crusade against the publication of comic-books in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, in May 1948, when he claimed that comic-books were systematically “poisoning” children:

Are comic books the marijuana of the nursery or the penicillin of a happy childhood? This difference of opinion is reflected also in the conflict in the child’s mind. Briefly summarized, it is a conflict between super-ego and sub-machine gun.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Dwight Macdonald, “A Caste, a Culture, a Market,” *New Yorker Magazine* (November 29, 1958), p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> For more on this relationship, see Amy Kiste Nyberg, *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> For a direct analysis of the comic-book “panic” see “Horror Comic Panic: Campaigning Against Comic Books in the 1940s and 1950s,” in John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 121-146.

<sup>34</sup> Fredric Wertham, “The Comics... Very Funny,” *Saturday Review of Literature* (29 May 1948), p. 27.

In 1953 he was still campaigning. He wrote for *Ladies Home Journal*, in “What Parents Don’t Know About Comic Books,” that comic books had the ability to affect *all* children, “normal ones; troubled ones; those from well-to-do families and from the lowest rung of the economic ladder; children from different parts of the city...”<sup>35</sup> In 1954, he elaborated on these ideas in *Seduction*. Wertham’s hyperbolic (and unsubstantiated) claims were designed to appeal to the general public rather than the psychiatric community; his book was praised by the *New York Times* as “a most commendable use of the professional mind in the service of the public,” and chosen by the National Educational Association as the most important book of the year. An editorial in the Association’s journal claimed that “if read by the great body of American citizens, [Wertham] would help to build the understanding essential to the growth and survival of our free democratic society.”<sup>36</sup> Wertham’s book was written in hopes of mobilising public opinion in support of his proposed ban on the sale of comic-books to children, and this platform achieved wider publicity still when the book was condensed in the pages of *Readers Digest*. His melodramatic, hyperbolic and pseudo-scientific prose reached both the concerned parent and social activist, providing “explanation” for both the rise and the apparent spread of juvenile misbehaviour.

As the inflammatory title suggests, Wertham sought to link a rise in juvenile crime, illiteracy, sadism, masochism, homosexuality and numerous other “aberrations” to a rise in the circulation and readership of crime and horror comic-books, and he did so under deliberately sensationalist chapter headings, such as “Design for Delinquency: The Contribution of Crime Comic Books to Juvenile Delinquency,” “I Want to be a Sex Maniac: Comic Books and the Psychosexual Development and Children,” and

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<sup>35</sup> Fredric Wertham, “What Parents Don’t Know About Comic Books”, *Ladies Home Journal*, Vol. 70 (November 1953), pp. 50-53.

<sup>36</sup> C. Wright Mills, *New York Times* (25 April 1954), p.20. John E. Twomey, “The Citizens’ Committee and Comic-Book Control: A Study of Extragovernmental Restraint,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 20, no. 4 (Autumn 1955), p. 624.

“Bumps and Bulges: Advertising in the Comic Books.” Wertham claimed that comics could “bring about mass conditioning of children,” and he provided an 8-point list of the “bad effects” of comic-book reading for all children:

- 1) The comic-book format is an invitation to illiteracy.
- 2) Crime comic-books create an atmosphere of cruelty and deceit.
- 3) They create a readiness for temptation.
- 4) They stimulate unwholesome fantasies.
- 5) They suggest criminal or sexually abnormal ideas.
- 6) They furnish the rationalisation for them, which may be ethically more harmful than the impulse.
- 7) They suggest the forms of [sic] delinquent impulse may take and provide details of technique.
- 8) They may tip the scales toward maladjustment or delinquency.<sup>37</sup>

Juvenile delinquency in Wertham’s formulation was not “a thing in itself.” Children, he posited, “do not become delinquents; they commit delinquencies.”<sup>38</sup> The delinquency of a child was not a disease but rather a symptom, with comic-books the virus. After reading a foul and “diseased” publication, children would be so affected as to imitate the action displayed, thus becoming a physical symptom of the diseased text. Following this “logic” through, Wertham was able to claim that “pouring sordid stories into the minds of children is not the same as pouring water over a duck’s back,” and

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<sup>37</sup> Fredric Wertham, M.D., *Seduction of the Innocent*, (London: Museum Press Limited, 1955), p.118. Taking a closer look at some of these eight points, Wertham claimed that not only did comic-books incite illiteracy but, due to their unique page-layout, they also brought about reading disorders, such as “word blindness” and “linear dyslexia.” Furthermore, he claimed, “comic books stimulate children sexually,” (p.175). The fetishistic tendencies of comics, “girls shown in slacks or negligees with their pubic regions indicated with special care and suggestiveness....special emphasis to...girls’ buttocks,” apparently taught children to equate sex with violence, and thus “unwholesome fantasies.” Comics could even create a homosexual. According to Wertham, at an early age boys find themselves “addicted to the homoerotically tinged type of comic book.” What type of comic is so homoerotically charged? Wertham was quick to explain: “Several years ago a California psychiatrist pointed out that the Batman stories are psychologically homosexual. Our research confirms this entirely. Only someone ignorant of the fundamentals of psychiatry and of the psychopathology of sex can fail to realize a subtle atmosphere of homoeroticism which pervades the adventures of mature “Batman” and his young friend “Robin.” The relationship between Batman and Robin was to Wertham, “like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together.” (pp.189-190).

<sup>38</sup> Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, p.156.

that child experts had overlooked this fact for years. Benjamin Fine agreed, writing in 1955 that:

We should ban horror comics, pornographic literature, or other crime-provoking books. Although comic books by themselves will not create delinquency, repetitive dunning into the child's mind of ways to commit crime, of glorifying crime, as horror books do now, can well create an attitude within the child that makes him more susceptible to delinquency than he might otherwise be.<sup>39</sup>

For Wertham and his acolytes, comic-books had transformed the juvenile delinquent, and delinquency was now different “both in quantity and quality.” By virtue of such changes, delinquency had become “a virtually new social phenomenon.” Seduced by the mass appeal of the comics, delinquents were becoming younger and committing even more serious and violent acts.<sup>40</sup> Harrison Salisbury made similar observations in 1958, highlighting the words of Dr. Marcel Frym, director of criminological research at the Hacker Clinic of Beverly Hills, California. Frym asserted that the young were living “in an era which glorifies violence,” and it was inevitable that they be greatly influenced by their environment. Salisbury's *A Shook-Up Generation* (1958) posited that these modern developments were reinforced by mass communication media:

Television programmes which can be observed at home, day and night, motion pictures, emphasising and actually glorifying violence as indicative of masculinity, gory newspaper reports as well as comic strips and comic books which feature force and ridicule higher values.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, p. 260. Despite these comments, Fine differed from Wertham in that his study was somewhat inattentive to the media influence as a contributing factor to the rise in juvenile delinquency. Fine downplayed sensationalism and instead focused on social analysis and a broader contextualisation, touching upon the changing shape of the family, broken homes, and peer-group pressure.

<sup>40</sup> Fredric Wertham, M.D., *Seduction of the Innocent* (London: Museum Press Limited, 1955), p. 26.

<sup>41</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Shook-Up Generation* (London: Michael Joseph, 1958), pp. 192-193.

Wertham's proposed remedy to the virulent and universal infectiousness of such violence was to ban the sale and display of comic-books to children under the age of fifteen. Although he failed to achieve an outright ban, his critiques were more responsible than any other publications for forcing self-censorship upon the American comic-book industry. As *Time* magazine would report, referring directly to Wertham, comic-books were "the marijuana of the nursery" and the comic-book publishers had agreed "to a clean-up campaign of their own."<sup>42</sup> Taking its cue from other media outlets, the Comics Magazine Association of America, founded in 1948, appointed a Code Authority and Advisory board. Thus, as with films under the Production Code, by 1954 the comic-book industry was forced to conform to post-war security state standards.<sup>43</sup>

Although Wertham would dismiss the code as an inadequate half-measure, his work did gather much support from church groups, parents, teachers and service organisations. Wertham's arguments provided the concerned reader with the necessary inflammatory information and derogatory slogans to participate in a national crusade against the comic-book industry. His campaign also precipitated the congressional investigations that would draw the television industry and Hollywood into the juvenile delinquency debate and lead a charge for imposed censorship.

Indeed, Wertham's crusade was so successful that the "comic-book issue" would be debated nationally. Shortly after the publication of his initial *Ladies Home Journal* article in 1953, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) would discuss the issues he raised there live on the television show *American Forum of the Air* in an edition

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<sup>42</sup> "Code for the Comics," *Time* (July 12, 1948).

<sup>43</sup> The Association of Comics Magazine Publishers' 1948 attempt at self-regulation, after Wertham's first assault on the industry, was a failure. Many larger publishers refused to join the Association, some found subscription to the code too expensive and pulled out, and others simply went out of business. It was in 1954, following Wertham's continued campaigning and the formation of the Comics Code Authority (CCA), that a successful code was launched.

entitled “What are your Children Reading?” On the show, a group of respectable American citizens openly debated with presenter Frank Blair. Blair, making reference to the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency’s latest endeavours, announced that, “Last week a special Congressional Committee sounded a warning of intense concern to all parents, a warning that an incredible volume of filthy literature was flooding the newsstands.” Blair posed the following question for the assembled guests: “Just what kind of reading matter should be classified as unfit for young people?” Lawyer and author Morris Ernst was alone in his conviction that “every older generation thinks the younger generation is acting in tasteless fashion...in respect to obscene literature, there is none on the newsstand.” More representative responses came from Judge Charles Fahey (representative of the National Council of Catholic Men), who claimed that “the flood of this lewd literature has reached alarming proportions...all legal means should be used to protect our communities from this evil...it is the sort of thing that will lead to spiritual disease, resulting in bodily disease and crime...every single boy or girl who becomes a target of this evil runs the risk of losing his or her ideals; nothing can weaken our national life so much.” Similarly Clarence Hogg, executive editor of the *Christian Heritage*, who stated: “Your children and mine are being subjected to a flood of literature that is as sinister as an open sewer...a clean-up is definitely called for.”<sup>44</sup> The following year, Wertham would take his “clean-up” operation to Congress, giving evidence to the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “What Are Your Children Reading?” *American Forum of the Air*, NBC, Jan 4, 1953, LoC catalogue number FCA 9082.

<sup>45</sup> Wertham appeared before the Subcommittee on day one of the investigation, on Wednesday April 21, 1954. At this time, he reiterated many of the claims already discussed in this chapter and already put forward in his text *Seduction of the Innocent*.

The Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency was established in 1953 under the leadership of Senator Robert Hendrickson, and rejuvenated under the chairmanship of Senator Estes Kefauver in 1955. In the early years, the Committee attended to the myriad assumed causes of juvenile delinquency: the slums, poverty, broken homes, lack of recreational facilities, poor schools and so on. However, between 1954 and 1956, ostensibly due to a barrage of letters from concerned parents, the mass media debate dominated:

The committee has received about 15,000 or more unsolicited letters from people all over the country. Of this “man on the street” reaction, nearly 75% seem to me to reflect some concern over comic books, television, radio or the movies.<sup>46</sup>

The result was the publication of three separate reports analysing the relationship between juvenile delinquency and crime and violence as portrayed in comic-books, on television, and on cinema screens via Hollywood. The reports were based on hearings that inquired into the “possible deleterious effect” on children of mass communication. Experts on both sides of the debate were paraded before the committee. Among these were Fredric Wertham, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck and Dr. Edmund Bergler.

Issued in March 1956, the committee’s report on *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency* was a contradictory text through which Congress at once praised and criticised the film industry. The subcommittee, they claim in the opening of their report, realised “that to say bad movies create additional delinquency is not in keeping with present-day social-psychological thinking.” However, the Subcommittee did “believe that with the prevailing world conditions, with the uncertainty of the draft, with the lurking of Atomic destruction...an atmosphere of violence is being assumed and conveyed by the mass media.” The committee acknowledged that the media were

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<sup>46</sup> Senator Robert Hendrickson, 1954, cited in Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, p. 143.

merely reflecting “the behavior of the older generation;” however, in doing so, they are, in turn, “forming the minds of the younger generation.” Furthermore, it was emphasised that while social scientists could not assure themselves of the exact relationship between movies and children’s behaviour, “they do feel that the indiscriminate showing of scenes depicting violence or brutality constitutes a threat to the development of *healthy* personalities on the part of our young people” (emphasis added).<sup>47</sup> Therefore, despite acknowledging a lack of valid medical evidence to support such a position, the committee concluded that violent movies were detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the juvenile viewer.

This conclusion was based on conjectural evidence hidden behind authoritative medical titles. A seemingly never-ending parade of medical experts appeared to make grandiose and unquantifiable claims which, without further exploration, would be accepted by a credulous committee and disseminated in its reports. For example, Dr. Frederick J. Hacker (member of the Medical Correctional Association) testified that of all the media of mass communication, the movies had the greatest impact on children. Hacker based this claim on the introduction of recent technological developments such as stereophonic sound, Cinemascope and Vista Vision. Dr. Marcel Frym, taking on board Hacker’s claim that “uninhibited display of orgies of brutality” were in fact “hostile manifestations of perverse sexuality,” claimed that the most vicious and brutal

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<sup>47</sup> *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency: Report on the Judiciary Containing an Interim Report of the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), pp. 2-3. It was not just the movies themselves that stood accused of inciting juvenile misbehaviour. Movie advertisements also came under scrutiny and were found to be lacking in decency. Dr. Ralph S. Banay, a research psychiatrist from Columbia University, submitted to the committee an editorial entitled “Prurient Motion Picture Advertising in Times of Increased Sex Crimes.” Banay claimed that movie advertisements had reached the point of “pornography.” “Supercharged sex is the dominant keynote. Bosomy, carnally glorified heroines are portrayed in the throes of passion. Couples locked in frenetic embrace suggesting the inevitability of coition. Purple prose is keyed to a feverish tempo to celebrate the naturalness of seduction, the condonability of adultery, the spontaneity of adolescent relations.” Banay concluded that with “sex crime so rampant,” it was “not expedient to multiply the sources of aggravation to which psychopaths are subject, or to foster an impression that sexual promiscuity is a common inclination.” The adverts were accused of having an effect greater than the movies themselves because “ads are sometimes more suggestive than the actual films.” (pp.20-21).

of on-screen crimes carry with them “a strong underlay of homosexual intentions.”<sup>48</sup> Dr. Rudolph V. Brasso, psychiatrist at the Dayton State Receiving Hospital, was adamant that “improper movies exercise undue influence upon the mind, especially of youth. They destroy the sense of ethical values and, therefore, contribute to juvenile delinquency.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Dr. James L. McCartney of New York City stated that “there is no doubt in my mind that these programmes, as well as the comics and other pathological literature, are showing their effects on juveniles...One cannot escape the conclusion that...the printed page, movies and television very definitely have an effect which is not at all healthy.”<sup>50</sup> Mass culture, and movies in particular, were deemed to be detrimental to the health of adolescent viewers, inducing them to commit violent acts, destroying their sense of ethical values and often seducing a young boy into a life of homosexual abandon.

Surrounded by such incredible allegations that were conspicuously endorsed by Congress, Hollywood found itself in a dilemma, astutely and neatly summarised by the Committee. Calling attention to an argument that has frequently been raised throughout the history of cinema, the Committee noted that if crime and violence assume an “upswing” in the national experience, it was reasonable to assume that Hollywood movies would reflect that increase with an upswing of “screenplays featuring violence.” For the Committee, this represented a “vicious cycle” in which the motion picture industry was borrowing “criminal color” from current circumstances and turning it back out into society, “at some peril of increasing the momentum of the prevailing evil.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency*, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency*, p. 7. This is an especially fitting observation, especially in regard to juvenile delinquency as a movie “genre.” Films that focused on the juvenile menace were typically exploitation movies that literally took their inspiration from the most shocking newspaper headlines. Independent studio American International Pictures, founded in 1955, was perhaps the most successful in exploiting the appeal of both juvenile delinquency and an autonomous youth culture. AIP marketed rebellion and nonconformity alongside Rock ‘n’ Roll.

To illustrate the workings of such a “vicious cycle,” the committee singled out the 1955 juvenile delinquency film *Blackboard Jungle*, stating:

While the committee recognizes and appreciates the artistic excellence of this film, it feels there are reasons for concluding that the film will have effects on youth other than the beneficial ones described by its producers...It is felt that many of the type of delinquents portrayed in this picture will derive satisfaction, support and sanction from having made society sit up and take notice of them.<sup>52</sup>

*Blackboard Jungle* is presented as a “realistic” study of inner city juvenile delinquency. The film showcases a New York City public school engulfed in a reign of juvenile terror, reflecting stories commonly reported in the press. For example, on June 5 1954, *The Nation* published an article entitled “The Delinquent: Society or the Juvenile?” that highlighted a series of some twenty articles that appeared in the *New York Daily News* between February 28 and March 20, 1954. These articles aimed to expose “teen-age terrorism” in New York public schools, which were accused of becoming a “vast incubator of narcotic addiction, vandalism, gang warfare, and sexual promiscuity.”<sup>53</sup> In February 1958, *Time* magazine reported “another grim chapter in one of the more shocking tales of modern education, the continuing story of a great city apparently unable to cope with the teen-aged hoodlums who terrorize its streets and public schools.” In the “melting pot” school of John Marshall Junior High in Brooklyn, two students, one armed with a shovel, the other with a knife, attacked a third boy in the cafeteria. Furthermore, a policeman was assaulted on school grounds and a 13-year-old girl was raped in the school basement. Such incidents had led to the suicide of 55-year-old school Principal George Goldfarb.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Motion Pictures and Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>53</sup> “The Delinquent: Society or the Juvenile?” (*Nation*, June 1954), p. 482.

<sup>54</sup> “Outrage in Brooklyn,” *Time* (February 10, 1958), p. 36.

In what could have been confused with a newspaper headline, *Blackboard Jungle*'s tagline screamed "A drama of teen-age terror! They turned a school into a jungle!" It tells the story of idealistic teacher Richard Dadier (Glenn Ford), who accepts a teaching position at a large, inner-city vocational training school, North Manual High, where juvenile delinquency has reached "epidemic" proportions, manifested in repeated acts of violence and vandalism both within and outside of school. Dadier and his pregnant wife are subjected to physical and mental abuse, and a female teacher narrowly escapes being raped by a sexually-delinquent teen driven wild by her tight blouse and stockings. The film concludes with Dadier regaining control of his class and cultivating an atmosphere conducive to learning, but much of what precedes this conclusion is met with criticism.

Perhaps suprisingly, it was less the scenes of physical and sexual violence that bothered America's moral guardians, but, rather more, those scenes privileging an autonomous youth culture that caused most anxiety. The film presents a high school with unsympathetic administrators and teachers in the grip of teenage hoodlums. This is a divided America, a clash of cultures with a generation of adolescents on one side and adults on the other, presented with frightening clarity. For example, the film was the first major motion picture to use a Rock 'n' Roll musical soundtrack. As Frank Zappa recalled of viewing *Blackboard Jungle* in *Life* magazine:

When the titles flashed up there on the screen, Bill Haley and his Comets started blurching 'One Two Three O'Clock, Four O'Clock Rock...' It was the loudest rock sound kids had ever heard at the time. I remember being inspired with awe. In cruddy little teen-age rooms across America, kids had been huddling around old radios and cheap record players listening to the 'dirty music' of their life style....But in the theatre, watching *Blackboard Jungle*, they couldn't tell you to turn it down. I didn't care if Bill Haley was white or sincere...he was playing the Teen-Age National Anthem and it was so LOUD I was

jumping up and down. *Blackboard Jungle*, not even considering the story line (which had the old people winning in the end), represented a strange sort of ‘endorsement’ of the teen-age cause: ‘They have made a movie about us; therefore, we exist...’<sup>55</sup>

As Zappa suggests, the rousing chords of Bill Haley and the Comets’ “Rock Around the Clock” undermines the film’s opening, scrolling disclaimer, which reads:

We, in the United States, are fortunate to have a school system that is a tribute to our communities and to our faith in American youth. Today we are concerned with Juvenile Delinquency – its causes – and its effects. We are especially concerned when this delinquency boils over into our schools. The scenes and incidents depicted here are fictional. However we believe that public awareness is a first step toward a remedy for any problem. It is in this spirit and faith that BLACKBOARD JUNGLE was produced.

As McGee and Robertson claim, with the release of *Blackboard Jungle*, “the music and juvenile delinquency became inseparable bedfellows. Many people were firmly convinced that the music actually caused delinquency.”<sup>56</sup>

One particular scene perfectly encapsulates and visualises the clash of cultures. When Maths teacher Josh Edwards (Richard Kiley), in an attempt to reach the children on a level they will understand, brings his “priceless” jazz collection into school, the delinquent teens instantly set about to ruthlessly destroy it. Just prior to tossing one of the 78s across the classroom like a frisbee, chief delinquent Artie West (Vic Morrow) recognises the records for what they were intended to be, a method of control over their learning. He cries, “Haven’t you heard? Music is soothing to the savage beasts!” His fellow classmates cry out for Rock ‘n’ Roll, repeatedly shouting “What about some bop?” Symbolically, these boys are rejecting not only adult authority but an adult culture which is deemed alien and out of touch. As Dwight Macdonald told readers of

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<sup>55</sup> Jerry Hopkins, *The Rock Story*, (New York: Signet Books, 1970), pp. 20-21.

<sup>56</sup> McGee and Robertson, *The J.D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies* (Jefferson, N.C., McFarland and Company, Inc. 1982), p. 24.

the *New Yorker* in 1958, Rock ‘n’ Roll (the very name of which he found to be “orthographically unsettling”) was “teenism” at its “nadir” or “climax.” According to Macdonald, it was precisely in an adolescent’s reaction to Rock ‘n’ Roll that one could “observe in their purest forms the teenagers’ defiance of adult control, their dominance of certain markets, their tendency to set themselves up as a caste, and the tribal rituals and special dialect they have evolved.” He highlights a letter published in *Teen* magazine by two teenagers or “tribesmen,” in which they claim that, “rock ‘n’ roll has to be here to stay. It’s *our* music! The older generation has a tendency to go for classical music and standards...Rock ‘n’ roll is our way of showing how we feel. Fast music is a way of keeping up with the pace of the world. The world will be ours in a few years – so why fight it?”<sup>57</sup> Rock ‘n’ Roll was thus a symbol of the widening gap between adults and teenagers in the post-war United States, and as Macdonald claimed about letters sent in by teenage fans to *Teen* magazine, it should be heard as a “tocsin” ringing ominously in adult ears.

*Blackboard Jungle* was viewed as a poison with many reviewers suggesting that it would incite rather than prohibit juvenile violence. Some cities, including Memphis, Tennessee, were successful in banning the film from being shown altogether. The American Legion, ever conscious of the image that Hollywood films presented to overseas audiences, voted *Blackboard Jungle* the film “that hurt America the most in foreign countries.” However, the most celebrated reaction to the movie was in *Time* magazine on September 12, 1955. The *Time* article, entitled “The Image of the U.S.” opened by claiming:

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<sup>57</sup> Dwight Macdonald, “A Caste, a Culture, a Market,” *New Yorker Magazine* (November 29, 1958), p. 91.

Probably the deepest trouble of the contemporary U.S. is its inability to produce a reasonably accurate image of itself. In plays, movies, novels it cruelly caricatures its life, parades its vices, mutes its excellences. This tendency, far more than Communist propaganda is responsible for the repulsive picture of U.S. life in the minds of many Europeans and Asians.<sup>58</sup>

This caricature, the article continued, was a fact which every American responsibly concerned with U.S. foreign relations must face, and so it was U.S. Ambassador to Italy Clare Boothe Luce who, in a bid to “rescue” America’s reputation overseas, was successful in forcing the removal of the film from the Venice Film Festival schedule.

*Blackboard Jungle* was viewed as further proof that mass culture was capable of “infecting” the young whilst simultaneously aiding communist conspiracy abroad. The mass culture explanation, for many people, quite literally solved the mystery of delinquency as “epidemic.” As an outside force (guided from media centres in New York and Hollywood), the explanation stood well in a society so fervently geared toward the “containment” of Soviet Communism abroad and social disease within. It was a force (as with the invisible pathogens of communism and homosexuality) with the ability to affect all classes of children and it could penetrate the fortress that was the family, appearing to promote social mores and morals that were seemingly contrary to the adult world.

As the movement to control and contain the “spread” of delinquency grew in the 1950s, so too grew the impulse to investigate, control and ultimately censor mass culture, leaving Hollywood in a difficult position. Having recently discovered the teenage marketplace, Hollywood understood that the teenager represented the largest and fastest growing movie-going demographic. However, it also recognised the risk of offending the moral majority by validating a deviant lifestyle. The result was an array

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<sup>58</sup> “The Image of the U.S.” *Time* (September 12, 1955), p. 12.

of films that at once seemed to glorify and condemn the wayward teen. As Dwight Macdonald recognised in 1958, a “moral peculiarity” of movies both about teens and aimed directly at teens was that it was “never quite clear how the audience is supposed to feel about the *dramatis personae*.” According to Macdonald, everybody in these films behaved the same way, “tough, sexy, jive-talking, and generally hopped up.”<sup>59</sup> This ambiguity was both a reflection of a teenager’s own identity confusion and a reflection of the instinct of Hollywood to please the P.T.A. as well as the child.

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I have previously demonstrated how, in the 1940s, Hollywood suggested that the juvenile delinquent was a victim of a diseased society; the causes of his delinquencies lay outside in the (slum) environment. In *Knock on Any Door* (1949), Humphrey Bogart was able to convince a jury that “Pretty Boy” John Derek, although technically guilty of murder, was in fact only guilty of “knowing his father died in prison, of living in poverty, of having been raised in the slums, of the foul treatment of a primitive reform school.” By the 1950s, however, with the cold-war tendency to pathologise enemies external and internal, children were no longer merely delinquent or criminal; they were sick. Prosperity and pathology had conspired to render poverty obsolete as an explanation for delinquency as epidemic. As Marynia Farnham argued with prescience in 1951:

Poverty and slum conditions, which were the natural consequences of urban life, have long been thought to be

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<sup>59</sup> Dwight Macdonald, “A Caste, a Culture, a Market,” *New Yorker Magazine* (November 29, 1958), p. 88. It is interesting to note that Macdonald’s claims, suggesting that 1950s “teen” movies were morally ambiguous, goes against his later more famous claims that Hollywood films pre-digested meaning for the viewer, that moral positions were built directly into the text.

breeders of crime...This theory, however, has not survived in its original form...Too many slum dwellers fail to become delinquent to make that the entire answer. Also, it was soon obvious that a large number of children who did not suffer from the ill effects of slum life also became delinquent.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the causes of this “new” strain of pathology were now myriad, and Hollywood would aim to expose and exploit them. With poverty and the slum now seemingly obsolete in explaining the perceived delinquency epidemic, it was reasoned that someone or something else must be to blame; the causes were still out there in the environment. Comic-books, television and movies were one avenue of inquiry, but Hollywood would be loath to blame itself and would thus seek differing avenues of attack. One avenue was to simply and routinely blame the parents. In many 1950s Hollywood movies, as well as in delinquency literature, bad families, rather than bad neighbourhoods, were seen to breed the delinquency virus.

Perhaps unbeknown to themselves, parents were incubating a virus the symptoms of which were displayed by their adolescent offspring. Parents, whether exaggeratedly present, or routinely absent from their children’s lives, were to blame for their child’s delinquencies. The broken home was a sure-fire route to infection, whilst the dysfunctional parenting of those who remained married was also likely to result in a delinquent child. As *Time* magazine would report in March 1954, “when a child in an apparently normal family of good reputation develops such habits as setting fires, stealing, truancy, vandalism or sexual misconduct the chances are he was stimulated by his parents’ unconscious approval.” In such cases, it was claimed, the parents have been unable to resolve their own antisocial impulses, and the child’s “defect” was “always traceable to one or both parents.” How exactly did parents unconsciously stimulate such delinquencies? *Time* editorialised that:

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<sup>60</sup> Marynia F. Farnham, *The Adolescent* (1951) (London: Collier-MacMillan Ltd., 1970), pp. 249-250.

Such sanctioning ranges from encouraging a child to lie about his age, so as to enter a movie at cut rates, to...inordinate maternal curiosity regarding daughters' experience with boys...misguided, too exciting discussions about sex...encouragement of display of undue degrees of nudity at home.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, it was argued, working “modern” women, and ineffectual, possibly latent-homosexual, fathers could not help but “infect” their children with their own neuroses which often found expression in violent delinquent acts on the part of the child. I have already highlighted dangerous “moms” in an earlier chapter; these “moms” could infect their sons with homosexuality through an excess of love and devotion. In opposition, the absent mother was deemed to be equally detrimental to the mental health of a child. For example, Benjamin Fine quotes Bowlby’s report on behalf of the World Health Organization, “Maternal Care and Mental Health,” which observed a “specific connection between prolonged deprivation in the early years and the development of an affectionless psychopathic character given to persistent delinquent conduct and extremely difficult to treat.”<sup>62</sup> It was thus often reasoned that working or simply uninterested mothers were likely to raise psychotic-delinquent children. Fathers too could not escape criticism: the ineffectual father, as described by Dr. Edmund Bergler, so often to blame for the homosexuality of his son, could also be viewed as responsible for his non-sexual delinquencies. A child, particularly a boy, needed an appropriate “father-figure.” Benjamin Fine highlighted a “real life” case of a boy caught stealing, running away and playing truant. Fine reported that the father was “unassertive,” with a “highly neurotic” wife. However, when the parents came before the court, “the father for the first time took hold of him in a masculine way. He began to assume the real

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<sup>61</sup> “Bringing Up Parents,” *Time* (March 22, 1954), p. 60.

<sup>62</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, p. 41.

responsibilities of a father. Since then, the boy has made an excellent record; he found his father figure.”<sup>63</sup>

Thus, parents would worry that if they failed to emulate the security state’s definition of the normal / American family, their own living-room could become a breeding ground for the delinquency virus. To borrow a family name from the popular 1950s situational television comedy series, *Leave it to Beaver*, healthy parenting had become a case of keeping up with the Cleavers.<sup>64</sup>

*The Unguarded Moment* (1956) is illustrative of this new conviction. The film is told from the perspective of high school music teacher Lois Conway (Esther Williams), an attractive, bright and unattached career girl (qualities that, for the most part, the film unsurprisingly deems as negative) who is advised by a male colleague to “quit teaching and look for a husband.” Lois is victimised by an initially unidentified male student who delights in providing her with numerous “sexually suggestive” notes. One note reads “TEACHER DEAR. WOW! COULD WE MAKE MUSIC TOGETHER,” whilst another is deemed too sensational to be disclosed and Lois finds herself surprised that the sentiment “didn’t burn the paper.” The prime suspect in the case is the school’s model student and football star, Leonard Bennett (John Saxon), who lives in a single parent family with his father (Edward Andrews). As with *Blackboard Jungle*, the teacher has fallen prey to her students. However, in this case the school is not located in the uber-metropolis of New York City, but in the sleepy, residential and decidedly middle-class suburban enclave of Ogden.

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<sup>63</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, p. 44.

<sup>64</sup> Situation comedies such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* presented an ever-growing television audience with images of the “perfect” American family; father would work, mother would tend to the house, whilst the children would worry about science projects and generally stay out of trouble. The Andersons and the Cleavers lived in suburban bliss, surrounded by the desirable products of a consumer society. As John Patrick Diggins claims, “every culture has a basic need to reassure its identity by experiencing the collective forms of popular symbolism. To fulfil that need there could be no better program than the situation comedy...that focused on the essential health of the American family.” John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace, 1941-1960* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), p. 188.

The film opens in a film noir style with the portentous night-time discovery of a female body on a darkened suburban street. Lieutenant Harry Graham (George Nader) hints that the victim was sexually assaulted prior to her death: “Some woman walks along the streets of this town minding her own business, maybe coming home from the job, some ape jumps out of the dark and does that to her...” The film cuts to an outside shot of Ogden Central High School, a cut of direct correlation rather than juxtaposition. The ominous score that accompanies the discovery of the latest victim of a serial sex attacker is maintained as the camera pans across the school’s fascia, which in the chiaroscuro shadows afforded by night, and with barred windows, suggestively resembles a prison. Thus, as the film’s title sequence begins, the audience realises that both victim and school are inextricably related.

When music teacher and cheerleading coach Lois begins to receive the suggestive notes, presumably from a smitten male student, she foolishly accepts an invitation for a “date” from her stalker-by-notes, meeting him at “locker room B, at the stadium, at 10 o’clock.” The meeting accounts for the eponymous *Unguarded Moment*. Naïvely, Lois hopes to “help” the “disturbed” young man. However, her attempts at talking to the anonymous and amorous student fail. In the dark, he blinds her with a flashlight, moving the beam of light up and down her body: “I’d like to take a look at you, I’d like to take a *real good* look at you...What’s that perfume? You wouldn’t fix yourself up the way you do if you didn’t want me to notice.” When Lois pleads for the flashlight, the young man owns up to his diseased state, claiming, “I’m in a mess right now, might as well get something from it.” At this moment, stalker becomes sex attacker and Lois is fortunate to escape the darkened locker room with nothing more than a torn dress. When her attacker breaks into her home to steal back the notes he sent, car headlights expose his identity and Leonard Bennett is seen absconding from the scene.

In a further display of naïveté, Lois refuses to press charges, telling emerging love interest, police Lieutenant Graham (George Nader), that she does not want to file a complaint: “I don’t want any police involved. That was a high school boy not a criminal...That was a high school boy in the locker room, a child, just a boy.” Lois will stay true to her liberal convictions despite Lieutenant Graham’s best efforts: “The town is going through another *epidemic* of assault cases,” he tells her, “One of them ended in murder. Now maybe living in a school room everything is sweet and clean and full of sunshine, but to me kids are like everyone else, they can go bad...so he burglarised your house, this nice, innocent, clean cut boy. I ought to drag you up to the reform school and show you some of the angel faces roosting there.” Here, criminality and juvenile delinquency are likened to an epidemic and Lieutenant Graham favours a hard-headed criminological approach as “cure.” Although it seems naïve given the violently sexual nature of his offences, *The Unguarded Moment* ultimately sides with Lois and, as with many films of the 1950s, leans toward a liberal psychology as both an explanation of and cure for Leonard’s many ills.

Leonard is presented as a teenage victim of parental pathology. When the audience first meets Mr. Bennett (Edward Andrews), they are made immediately aware of Leonard’s unorthodox (in the 1950s, a word synonymous with “unhealthy”) upbringing and his father’s deeply neurotic personality. Overbearingly chaperoning Leonard during an after-school trip to a local diner, he informs Lois that he and his son “run a real bachelor house,” proudly declaring that not only is Leonard’s mother not present in his life, but that he refuses even to employ a cleaning woman. Furthermore, Mr Bennett announces that, through his athletic achievements, Leonard is “doing the things that I never could.” Apparently, he suffered from rheumatic fever as a child, an affliction which “wrecked his heart.” When Lois attempts to show sympathy toward Mr

Bennett, he rejects her consolations, and assures Miss Conway that his son is “going to have everything *he* wants out of life.” Thus, as will be more graphically demonstrated in later scenes, it is apparent that Leonard, raised in a broken motherless home, is being forced to live out the neurotic fantasies of a symbolically impotent father.

In the 1950s, being raised in a motherless home was reason enough for a child to develop a dysfunctional personality and enter a life of criminal or possibly even sexual delinquency. As Benjamin Fine claimed, “the emotional and physical deprivations implicit” in the single parent family structure are a “definite” cause of many a child’s delinquencies.<sup>65</sup> However, rather than being presented as merely the result of a mother’s absence, Leonard’s sexual pathologies and delinquent tendencies are dramatised as a direct result of the teachings of a severely neurotic father. When Leonard is discovered by his father sneaking in through his bedroom window at night, Mr. Bennett delivers this monologue:

Your mother used to waste hours out of each day just sitting here looking out. There was something out there she wanted more than she wanted us, do you know what it was she wanted Leonard? Sure you do. I told you about that a hundred times before you were even five-years-old. Don’t you remember me telling you the kind of woman she was? This was her room until she ran away. After that I rearranged the whole house to get the sight and smell of women out of it...I don’t know how she could walk out on a sick man and a baby. Women can do things like that, I’ve been drumming that into your head ever since you were knee high...if you ever break down what I’ve spent years building up, I’ll break every bone in your body!

It is apparent that throughout his formative childhood years Leonard has been taught not only to distrust women but to actively scorn them. His absent mother, he has repeatedly been told, deserted him in search of sexual adventure. Leonard’s repeated

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<sup>65</sup> Fine, *1,000,000 Delinquents*, pp. 40, 55.

acts of sexual hostility toward women (we learn he also attempted to force himself upon a local waitress) are borne of his father's dominance over his son and his hatred of the opposite sex. Being repeatedly warned of women's sexual voracity, Leonard's natural adolescent sexual awakening has been distorted so that he is unable to control his sexual impulses. Leonard's neuroses are entirely his father's. As J. D. W. Pearce writes in his 1952 delinquency study *Juvenile Delinquency: A Short Text-book on the Medical Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency*:

The adult community, by the pressure of direct and indirect education during the formative years, leads the child to organize its way of life through the proper canalization of its instinctive urges and emotional needs and the development of its personality and character, in such a way that his conduct will conform thereafter to the pattern of which society approves. This process is achieved by the exercise of various mental mechanisms; such as "introjection", whereby the child, much as he swallows the food offered him and builds it in his bodily tissues, swallows the ideas with which he is plied and builds them into the structure of his mind.<sup>66</sup>

Mr. Bennett is presented as being of diseased mind and has been successful in moulding another diseased personality, in which he takes such an intense personal pride that he is willing to "break every bone" in Leonard's body if his son should ever question his teachings.

Once the source of Leonard's "infection" has been revealed, it is the contaminator rather than contaminated who becomes the film's prime villain. It is reasoned that if Mr. Bennett, as the source of Leonard's infection, is successfully eliminated, Leonard will be able to make a full recovery. When Mr. Bennett breaks into Lois Conway's home to plant evidence suggesting that she was the sexual aggressor, her early return

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<sup>66</sup> J. D. W. Pearce, *Juvenile Delinquency: A Short Text-book on the Medical Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1952), p. 26.

home forces him to hide in her closet. As he covertly watches Lois undress, he is driven into a rage. Ripping the telephone out of Lois's hand, he screams, "You are very pretty, that perfume you are wearing is very exciting." As Lois attempts to leave he raves, in what amounts to a confession for the recent "epidemic" of sex attacks: "You're not in the classroom now...I'm getting away with it outside the classroom too because you're a woman, and just like every woman, you're dirty. You lie and cheat, you ought to be wiped off the face of the earth, every one of you." His attack is interrupted and he is forced to flee, and ultimately pays for his crimes with his life, suffering a heart attack whilst attempting to enter his home through the same upstairs window at which his wife dreamed of her escape.

With Mr. Bennett's demise, the stage is set for Leonard's (and Lois's) necessary rehabilitation. Lois finally marries and Leonard, the audience learns, has been cured of his pathology; at military school, free from his father's sickly influence, Leonard has become a smiling, healthy and well-adjusted army private. Thus, *The Unguarded Moment* removes any element of blame from the delinquent teen. Left in the sole custody of such an unrelentingly misogynistic father, it is viewed as little wonder that Leonard has "learnt" to disrespect women and seek, with violence if necessary, an outlet for his developing sexual urges.

Although Leonard's delinquencies are directly related to his abandonment by a sexually adventurous mother and his being reared in a single-parent environment, the film blames not the missing parent but the noxious influence of the remaining parent for the boy's infection. Indeed, during the 1950s, parenting became fodder for the "experts." Encouraged by the enormous success of Dr. Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946), numerous guidebooks would be published that explicitly demonstrated the workings of the "healthy" and normal family. These

guides would inform their conscientious readers, just as National Educational Television (NET) had informed viewers of its “Searchlights on Delinquency” series in 1956, that a broken home no longer meant the absence of one or more parent; the true broken home could be defined by impairment of “the formal relationship of the home.” In this respect, both parents could still be present and it “not be a proper home.” According to NET, it was no longer the mere “technical aspect” of a missing parent that caused delinquency, but “the damage that comes about when the home presents a distorted influence over the child.” Similarly, a 1959 medical text published by the Family Service Association of America claimed that “no one doubts that treatment of juvenile delinquents is far more likely to be successful if the parents are included in the treatment process.” Parents were thus considered to be as equally pathological as their delinquent offspring. These parents were considered a problem to those who would offer rehabilitation because they were “numerically frequent” and displayed such an extreme degree of “social pathology.” The Family Service Association felt it was safe to say that “families with members suffering from severe character disorders represent the most serious social problem in our country.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Marynia Farnham claimed that:

Such circumstances as a broken home and desertion by a parent are of enormous consequence. Nor does a parent literally have to desert the child in order to make the child feel deserted. The parent who is indifferent, for example, preoccupied with his own wishes, and cavalier toward the child’s demands produces the same feeling of abandonment and lack of value – a feeling which will last the child his life long.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Beatrix Simcox Reiner and Irving Kaufman, M.D., *Character Disorders in Parents of Delinquents* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1959), pp. 3-4.

<sup>68</sup> Marynia Farnham, *The Adolescent* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1951), pp. 156-157.

The film industry concurred. Where there was a delinquent teen on screen, there were delinquent parents. As Nora Sayre comments about films of the 1950s, “rarely has family life looked so repulsive as it did in a decade that also tried to uphold the family as an institution.”<sup>69</sup> Parents who did not “understand” or cherish their children were as guilty as the gangsters of the previous era and would be punished or rehabilitated accordingly. For example, James Macarthur’s parents in *The Young Stranger* occupy separate bedrooms and lament a lack of spousal communication. They are ultimately forced to reassess and reconstruct their failing relationship in order to set their son back on a non-delinquent trajectory. Similarly, the following year, in a break from the typically gendered construction of the juvenile delinquent as male, the parents of new *girl* in town Joyce Martin (Yvonne Lime) are forced to readjust their attitude toward parenting to rescue their young daughter from the claws of the *High School Hell Cats* (1958).<sup>70</sup> Indeed, by the latter half of the decade many on-screen parents would have to contend with delinquent daughters. Hollywood, breaking a sociological paradigm that constructed the juvenile delinquent as predominantly male, would demonstrate how the delinquency pathogen, bred by ignorant parents, was capable of traversing the borders of gender as well as social class.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*, (New York: Dial Press, 1982), p. 102.

<sup>70</sup> Increased mobility, and the disruption that moving home can have on a youngster, was in itself seen as a root cause of the delinquency epidemic. When, in 1959, the KETC television network of St. Louis, Missouri went on a *Search for America*, presenter Huston Smith warned of a spreading social cancer, and guest speaker Bertram Beck claimed that “today we find delinquency in the suburbs and neighbourhoods that are by no means slums...the youngsters brought up in our typical middle-class neighbourhood tend to be new to the area; we have a terrific mobility in families today, great shifts in population that a youngster doesn’t have the type of stability he would have had growing up 50 years ago in a small town that characterised America.” Delinquency could in this way be seen as resulting from social dislocation or isolation.

<sup>71</sup> Of course, some sociologists and criminologists noted with alarm an apparent shift in the nature of female crime and “striking,” shrinking male-to-female ratio (see Milton L. Barron, *The Delinquent in Juvenile Society* (New York: Knopf, 1954)). But the majority of sociologists simply chose to ignore these shifts, perhaps employing the logic that because girls represented approximately only 1 out of 4 of every juvenile court cases, in effect juvenile delinquency was male. For more see Rachel Devlin, “Female Juvenile Delinquency and the Problem of Sexual Authority in America, 1945-1965,” in Sherrie A. Innes (ed), *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century Girls’ Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 83 – 101.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Hollywood had suggested that juvenile delinquency and conformity were symbolically attributed to masculinity and femininity respectively. The delinquencies of a male protagonist were often set in contrast to the essential goodness of a female love interest. The experts agreed: Albert Cohen claimed, in his 1955 study *Delinquent Boys*, that “the subcultural delinquency we have been talking about is overwhelmingly male delinquency. In the first place, delinquency *in general* is mostly male delinquency.”<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Paul Goodman, author of *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (1960), claimed that “we see groups of boys and young men disaffected from the dominant society. The young men are Angry and Beat. The boys are Juvenile Delinquents. These groups are not small, and they will grow larger.” To clarify this statement, Goodman elucidated on the gendering of delinquency:

I say the “young men and boys” rather than “young people” because the problems I want to discuss in this book belong primarily, in our society, to the boys: how to be useful and make something of oneself. A girl does not *have* to, she is not expected to, “make something” of herself. Her career does not have to be self-justifying, for she will have children, which is absolutely self-justifying, like any other natural or creative act...Correspondingly, our “youth troubles” are boys’ troubles – female delinquency is sexual: “incurability” and unmarried pregnancy.<sup>73</sup>

In sociological circles, it was believed juvenile delinquency only really affected the male. Girls could only commit delinquencies by engaging in pre-marital sex, thus deviating from moral and sexual, but not necessarily criminal, norms. Most deviants, such as Beats, juvenile delinquents, homosexuals, drug addicts, and communists, were male in the public mind too (although their deviance was probably precipitated by an

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<sup>72</sup> Albert K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys*, (New York: Free Press, 1955), p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd: The Problems of Youth in the Organized Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 11-13.

ineffectual mother). Goodman went so far as to assert that a girl need not rebel because she had no cause to question her existence; her maternal role was enough. As I demonstrated in my opening chapter, should a girl wish to achieve outside of the sanctioned role of wife and mother she would be discouraged, even punished. For this reason, Wini Breines argues in *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing up Female in the Fifties* that female rebellion during the decade was barely visible. Although she provides much evidence to support claims that many young girls experienced much uneasiness about the inevitability of their lives, she believes that such trepidation remained hidden incipient worries that would only surface later in the 1960s. In Breines' analysis:

Middle-class white girls' disaffection was barely discernible because no one thought to consider it and because the expression was often oblique...Girls' deviance was much more circumspect and less dramatic than boys', especially working class boys', the subject of much concern in the fifties with its alarm about juvenile delinquency.<sup>74</sup>

Breines' observations go some way towards explaining the lack of iconic on-screen female rebels during the early part of the decade. Female characters in early juvenile delinquency films reflected a paradigm in which they served as a representation of the domestication from which the male protagonist sought to escape, the most palpable example of this paradigm being Mary Murphy's Kathie Bleeker in opposition to Marlon Brando's Johnny Strabler in *The Wild One* (1953). Setting a precedent followed by many subsequent juvenile delinquency movies, *The Wild One* opened with a disclaimer. "This is a shocking story," captions declared, "It could never take place in most American towns, but it did in this one. It is a public challenge not to let it happen

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<sup>74</sup> Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Absurd in the Fifties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 129.

again.” The cautionary prologue refers to the hooliganistic actions of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club, which wreaks havoc upon the sleepy California town of Wrightsville. Whilst there, Johnny falls for the Sheriff’s daughter Kathie, and although Kathie expresses a desire to escape with Johnny, the following exchange exemplifies his fear of the domestication that she represents:

Johnny: You think you’re too good for me. Nobody’s too good for me. Anybody thinks they’re too good for me, I make sure I knock ‘em over sometime. Right now, I can slap you around to show you how good you are. And tomorrow, I’m someplace else and I don’t even know you or nothing.

Kathie: Do you want to?

Johnny: I wouldn’t waste my time with a square like you. What do I want to knock myself out for? I’m gonna take you back and dump you. Come on. Where’re you going?

Kathie: Johnny.

Johnny: Quit that.

Kathie: It’s crazy, isn’t it? You’re afraid of me. I don’t know why, but I’m not afraid of you now. You’re afraid of me.

Johnny: I’m afraid of you? Are you cracked? Come on, get on.

Johnny is ultimately unable to conform to the same extent as his new-found love. Realising a relationship would be impossible, he leaves town without Kathie, leaving behind his cherished (albeit stolen) motorcycle trophy as a symbol of his feelings.

However, although convincing, Breines’ claims about the invisibility of female rebellion seem reductive when one considers that by the latter part of the decade Hollywood would repeatedly expose the female delinquent. In 1957, audiences were introduced to a *Reform School Girl*. Delinquent 1950s sexpot Mamie Van Doren would be sent to the correctional school *Girls Town* in 1959 (only to emerge as a nun). Audiences discovered that girls also liked to drive fast cars in the 1956 film *Hot Rod Girl*. In 1958, Russ Tamblyn exposed a teen girl’s marijuana dependency in *High School Confidential*. Mercedes McCambridge would inherit Marlon Brando’s biker

outfit as a lesbian delinquent who looms over gang-rape victim Janet Leigh in *touch of Evil* (1958), demanding, “Let me stay, I wanna watch,” and the *High School Hell Cats* would terrorise school newcomer Joyce Martin into joining their delinquent gang.

If girls (even middle-class white girls) were now infected with the pathogen of juvenile delinquency, then Hollywood suggested that it was the parents who precipitated their infection. In *High School Hell Cats*, Joyce lives a latch-key existence, her father working late while her mother is more interested in a game of bridge. Joyce’s parents are thus completely out of touch with the teenager. Father Roger, disturbed by his daughter’s developing body (and possibly guilty, it is inferred, of an incestuous sexual attraction), finds it difficult to relate to his daughter, slapping her face when she appears before him in her underwear. Such a relationship appears to support Rachel Devlin’s claim that the female juvenile delinquent became a site for the expression of cultural anxiety about the authority of the family generally and fathers specifically. For Devlin and the filmmakers, it seems that the juvenile delinquency “epidemic” as it infects girls reproduced post-war tensions concerning the nature of the father-daughter relationship in a society where “girlhood was increasingly marked by social and sexual precocity and where female juvenile crime was visibly and dramatically on the rise.”<sup>75</sup> A father’s presence in a girl’s life was considered critical because he could validate and encourage her sexual development. However, Joyce’s father is unable to reconcile his own sexual impulses toward his daughter which, in turn, causes him to be overly restrictive and antagonistic at any sign of her sexual maturity. He tells his wife that Joyce “needs more discipline,” an assessment based on “the way she dresses,” specifically “those tight sweaters and that lipstick.”

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<sup>75</sup> Rachel Devlin, “Female Juvenile Delinquency and the Problem of Sexual Authority in America, 1945-1965,” in Sherrie A. Innes (ed.), *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth Century American Girls’ Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 84.

In the face of such parenting, Joyce seeks emotional fulfilment in the shape of delinquent girl gang the “Hell Cats.” Hell Cats leader Connie tells her, “You’ll find that the Hell Cats will be sort of a home away from home, unless of course you don’t need us?” When Joyce claims that she does indeed need a “club like this,” the response is telling: “Who doesn’t!” Joyce tells her non-delinquent boyfriend Mike, “I know how you feel about that gang, Mike, and you’re probably right, but I have to belong...besides, for all the attention I get at home I may as well be renting a furnished room...That’s why I joined, I guess that’s why most of the other girls joined. Connie calls it a home away from home...I think that’s what everyone really wants it to be.” As if the cause of the delinquency virus were still unclear, she continues: “If we had the right kind of homes we wouldn’t have to go out and look for another one, if our parents showed some real interest in us instead of just...” Delinquent parenting in this case results in the formation of an alternative and delinquent sub-culture.

When this sub-culture loses its leader, murdered by her own “understudy,” Joyce’s parents assess their failings. Questioning, “whatever happened to the respect that children used to show their parents?” they are able to surmise that children “have to receive it before they show it...she’s an individual and we tend to forget that.” Finally, shocked and impressed by their own “psychological” abilities, they prescribe a dose of “understanding” to cure Joyce’s delinquent ills. Seemingly cured of his own incestuous neuroses, Joyce’s father welcomes boyfriend Mike into his home and the film closes with the family cleansed.

Interestingly, however, Joyce, unlike her murderous and sexually adventurous peers, is never constructed as *truly* delinquent. When she and her fellow Hell Cats shop-lift jewellery from a local store, Joyce furtively pays for the items. She is also reluctant to take an alcoholic beverage, disposing of it in a pot plant rather than

drinking it. In this way, the film appears to resist the common, basic assumption that delinquent parenting automatically results in a delinquent child. Although if Joyce had remained a member of the Hell Cats, her long-term prognosis would have been dire, the film appears to agree with a minority of experts who argued that delinquent parenting *alone* was not enough to infect a child. Within this minority was Dr. Laretta Bender, senior psychiatrist at Manhattan's Bellevue Hospital. As *Time* somewhat incredulously reported in August of 1955, "from pulpit and bench, from social workers and editorial writers, the U.S. regularly hears dire warnings about the growth of juvenile delinquency and the crisis this implies for civilization. Nonsense, says Dr. Laretta Bender." Bender's basic and unfashionable argument was that juvenile delinquency had not increased significantly since the turn of the century. Furthermore, she states, "we have blamed the home entirely too much. After all, who are those parents from 'bad homes'? Poor, unhappy people themselves. A broken home in adolescence is a tragedy, but by itself it will not cause delinquency." Her study of 8,000 of the "worst cases" of delinquency at Bellevue hospital had revealed that each individual problem had a plethora of causes, the most common being "gross deprivation of love, severe punishment and brutality at home, enforced submissiveness and isolation, learning difficulties and organic disorders especially of the central nervous system." Of course, some of these involved the home but according to Bender it took a combination of several to push an individual child along the road to delinquency.<sup>76</sup>

Edward D. Wood Jr. would not be so open minded, scripting the most outlandish, bizarre and incredulously sombre and literal film to dramatise a causal connection

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<sup>76</sup> "The Amazing Capacity," *Time* (August 1, 1955), p. 34.

between parental apathy, juvenile delinquency and communism.<sup>77</sup> The voiceover narration that opens *The Violent Years* (1956) warns the audience that the shocking story they are about to witness is a “story of violence, a violence born of the uncontrolled passions of adolescent youth, nurtured by this generation of parents. With their little world of selfish interests and confused ideas of parental supervision, they refuse to believe today’s glaring headlines. But it *has* happened; only the people and places have been changed.”

The main players in this instance are delinquent teen Paula Parkins (Jean Moorhead) and her equally delinquent parents, Jane (Barbara Weeks) and Carl (Arthur Millan). Paula’s father is never home; he publishes the local newspaper. Paula’s mother, although physically present, is emotionally unavailable to her daughter. When Paula asks Jane, “Got time to talk for a minute? It’s terribly important,” her mother’s response is quite simply, “Good gracious no!” Perhaps had she spared the time, not simply questioning her motives (“What can be so important in your young life?”) and handing over a blank cheque (“Need some money? There’s never enough”), she would have been able to prevent the ensuing armed robbery that leaves a gas station attendant in a coma. Her parents may also have been able to prevent Paula and her gang from robbing a young couple and, taking sexual delinquency to an extreme, raping the hapless young man in question: “Maybe he’s got more to offer than his money.” They may also have prevented Paula’s illegitimate teenage pregnancy and her involvement with a “well organised foreign plan,” which pays for American school rooms to be destroyed and flags burned. It is Paula’s association with this “unidentified” foreign conspiracy that leads to her downfall. Two of her gang are shot and killed by police,

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<sup>77</sup> Choice, unintentionally hilarious dialogue includes, “These kids, when will they ever learn?” “These aren’t kids, they’re morons!” and “I’m up for president of the student body this year, this type of thing you call juvenile delinquency, it may help if I knew more about it and how to prevent it,” “If you knew how to prevent it you’d go down in history as the greatest person of our time.”

and in returning fire Paula kills a police officer. Unable to escape, Paula is apprehended by police and her parents realise that their daughter is beyond cure.

Although Paula is sentenced to life imprisonment by the judge and death during childbirth by the pen of Ed Wood, it is for the parents that the film saves its harshest criticisms:

The thrill seekers come from all walks of life, the rich as well as the poor, it comes from the home, a home where parents are too busy in their own affairs to take time to teach their children the importance of self restraint, self discipline, politeness, courtesy, the love for the mother and the father, the church and their country...Some people think newspapers exaggerate juvenile crime, or that it is confined mostly to large cities. This is far from the case, coast to coast juvenile delinquency is on the rise. No child is inherently bad, he is made what he is by his upbringing...adults create the world children live in and in this process parents take a key role...Juvenile delinquency is always rooted in adult delinquency...No young offender should be released into the custody of his parents unless an investigation shows the parents are capable of controlling his behaviour.

Thus, by the latter half of the 1950s the delinquency disease had truly gone airborne, carried across lines of social class and gender on radio-waves playing Rock 'n' Roll, creeping into homes on the pages of comic-books, invisibly seeping from television and cinema screens across the country, even passing from parent to child in a viral cycle that threatened to become an "epidemic."

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However, the fear of juvenile delinquency, whether bred by the slum, delinquent parenting or the “infected” products of a corrupt mass media, ultimately proved to be misplaced. The much-vaunted delinquency “epidemic” was seemingly cut short. As the 1950s became the 1960s, agitation against juvenile delinquents, delinquent parents, Rock ‘n’ Roll and the destructive effects of the mass media began to diminish. Many critics, of course, continued to sound the alarm, but this alarm was no longer heard by the majority. The perception of youth culture changed from a negative to a positive. This change of attitude can be attributed to a parallel shift in demographics. By the early 1960s, the effects of the post-war baby-boom would be obvious to all. Seventeen and eighteen year-olds now represented the largest age group in the United States; what had previously existed as a warning had become reality; the blue-jeaned storm troopers had taken over and, perhaps surprisingly for many, this shift did not precipitate a decline into anarchy or enslavement at the hands of a godless communist adversary. Indeed, for Grace and Fred Hechinger, authors of the 1963 text *Teenage Tyranny*, it was no longer the teenagers who were to be feared, but the United State’s new-found adoration of its largest demographic that represented a danger:

American civilization tends to stand in such awe of its teenage segment that it is in danger of becoming a teenage society, with permanently teenage standards of thought, culture, and goals. As a result, American society is growing down rather than up.<sup>78</sup>

The Hechingers were “not concerned with juvenile delinquency,” for there were new evils with which to contend. In their analysis, the huge bulge in the teenage demographic had led to a “juvenilisation” of American society and culture. Teenagers, once feared and often misconstrued as delinquent, had been handed power. It was this

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<sup>78</sup> Grace and Fred M. Hechinger, *Teenage Tyranny* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1964), p. x.

new-found commercial power, rather than delinquencies, that the Hechingers believed to be the true sickness. It was, in their formulation:

A creeping disease, not unlike the hardening of the arteries. It is a softening of adulthood. It leads to immature goals in music, art, and literature. It forces newspapers, television producers and movie-makers to translate the adult English usage into the limited vocabulary of the teen-culture. It opens up vast opportunities for commercial exploitation and thereby sets off a chain reaction which constantly strengthens teen-age tyranny.

This shift in fear can be attributed to the success of the youth market cultivated during the 1950s. A new focus on youth led advertisers and designers to celebrate rather than condemn youth. Just as 1950s entrepreneur Eugene Gilbert had begun to conduct market research specifically targeting teenagers, so too would political candidates in the early 1960s. As the Kennedy election suggested, pollsters successfully encouraged political hopefuls to chase the young voter. This shift in attitude was equally as obvious on cinema screens. Albeit with some trepidation, Hollywood began to court an adolescent audience with youth-specific pictures in the mid-1950s; by 1960, however, this courtship had blossomed into a fully-fledged romance. As over fifty percent of the movie-going audience was now under the age of twenty, the “teenpic” had become Hollywood’s most marketable and financially viable commodity.

Further changes were also afoot. After 1965, images of “teen culture” were superseded by those of the “counter culture” as the Baby Boom generation rebelled against the ideological perspectives of their elders. Indeed, as film historian Peter Biskind claims in *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, by the latter half of the 1960s, after a series of premonitory shocks including “the civil rights movement, the Beatles, the pill, Vietnam, and drugs – that combined to shake the studios badly, and send the demographic wave that was the baby boom crashing down about them,” there occurred

a “cultural convulsion” to upend the film industry.<sup>79</sup> Teenagers became “youth” and subculture became “counterculture.” In such a landscape, the petty crimes of 1957’s *The Delinquents* were revised to become more like the countless felonies of infamous American outlaws such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and the troubled white middle-class teens exposed during *High School Confidential* (1958), having successfully navigated college, found themselves as emotionally and culturally adrift as 1967’s *The Graduate*.

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<sup>79</sup> Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock ‘n’ Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), p. 14.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **The ‘Infectious’ Addict: Creation of a Diseased Dope Fiend.**

The junkie arouses mass hysteria. (The dope fiend as the bogeyman who can be hanged in effigy and electrocuted in the flesh to calm the hysteria of the citizens)...only in America could such hysteria be...only where machinery had impressed its forms deep into the fibres of the human brain so as to make efficiency and the willingness to cooperate the only flags of value, where all extravagance, even of love, was condemned, and where a million faceless mind-doctors stood in long corridors, ready to observe, adjust, shock-operate...only here could such hysteria be.<sup>1</sup>

Harry J. Anslinger, commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) from 1930 to 1962, dominated the formation of drug policy in the United States, and, more than any other individual, influenced America’s attitude toward the addict. Adopting a metaphor that would dominate cold-war rhetoric, in 1948 Commissioner Anslinger began to warn of an addiction “epidemic.” Between 1940 and 1945, while war disrupted the traffic of illicit narcotics, there was a marked decline in related violations. With the war’s end, and the re-opening of international smuggling routes, an increase in addiction rates was both inevitable and expected. *The New York Times* repeatedly warned of this increase under unambiguous headlines, such as “Narcotics Arrests Show Sharp Rise,” “Narcotics Addicts on Increase in City,” and “Heroin Addicts Mount.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Trocchi, *Cain’s Book* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 236 - 237.

<sup>2</sup> “Narcotics Arrests Show Sharp Rise,” *The New York Times* (March 5, 1950), “Narcotics Addicts on Increase in City,” (April 18, 1950), “Heroin Addicts Mount” *The New York Times* (December 3, 1950). [www.druglibrary.org](http://www.druglibrary.org) (Accessed 19.03.09). However, some elements of the popular press would disagree. Both *Pageant* and *Harper’s* magazines ran articles in 1952 questioning the legitimacy of the so-called “drug menace.” *Pageant* claimed that since 1909 the addiction rate had fallen drastically, “because the actual number of addicts has dropped...while population has increased.” There was little reason to worry because, contrary to many reports, “it’s seldom the clean-cut high school football captain and the queen of the junior prom who become addicts. The more likely victims are slum kids from bruised or broken homes – with no easy economic prospects and no healthy family life to fall back on.” Herbert C.

Anslinger would use this reported rise to his political advantage. Official FBN statistics put addiction rates at 60,000 U.S. addicts, amounting to one addict per 3,000 of the population; deflecting responsibility for the apparent upswing away from the FBN, Anslinger would routinely and alternately blame the up-surge on the Mafia or Communist China, the “hoodlum” class, jazz music, soft-hearted judges or insufficiently punitive laws, allowing for the (successful) tightening of narcotics legislation and the increase of the Bureau’s budget.<sup>3</sup>

Striving for absolute control of information, the FBN frequently campaigned to suppress ideas antithetical to their own, a strategy that played an important role in the emerging ideology and mythology regarding drug addicts and drug addiction. Cultural historian Larry Sloman goes so far as to argue that “the thing that Anslinger concerned himself with most was the dissemination of information. He completely disagreed with the free exchange of ideas on the subject.”<sup>4</sup> Recalling the 1950s in his 1977 introduction to William S. Burrough’s autobiographical novel *Junky*, Allen Ginsberg judged that:

There was at the time...a very heavy implicit thought-form, or assumption: that if you talked aloud about [drugs] on the bus or subway, you might be arrested...It was just about illegal to talk about dope...[T]he fear and terror...was so real that it had been internalized in the...publishing industry, and so, before the book could be printed, all sorts of disclaimers had to be interleaved with the text – lest the publisher be implicated criminally with the author, lest the public be misled by arbitrary opinions of the author

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Rosenthal, “How Much of a Menace is the Drug Menace?” *Pageant* (October 1952), pp. 128-135. Similarly, *Harper’s* “The Truth about the Drug Menace,” claimed that America was a nation of “calamity-howlers,” and the supposed drug menace simply “doesn’t exist.” John Gerrity, “The Truth about the Drug Menace,” *Harper’s* (February 1952), pp. 27-31.

<sup>3</sup> Anslinger’s figure of 60,000 addicts was widely deemed to be a conservative estimate. This figure contrasts sharply with evidence in Alden Stevens’ November 1952 *Harper’s* article which, citing the New York Mayor’s Committee on Narcotics, claims that in the summer of 1951 there were between 45,000 and 90,000 addicts in New York City alone. “Make Dope Legal,” *Harper’s* (November 1952), pp. 40 – 47.

<sup>4</sup> Larry ‘Ratso’ Sloman, *Reefer Madness: A History of Marijuana in the United States* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1998), pp. 199-200.

which were at variance with “recognised medical authority” – at the time a forcible captive of the Narcotics Bureau.<sup>5</sup>

It was not only the publishing industry that operated at this level of anxiety; Anslinger’s influence also extended to Hollywood. During the 1940s, a series of celebrity arrests for marijuana possession, which included such household names as Robert Mitchum, brought the industry much negative press attention, and many Hollywood insiders believed that Anslinger had assigned a special team of agents to collect evidence against the stars. According to Production Code Administration staff member Jack Vizzard, Anslinger used information about the drug abuse of certain MGM stars to blackmail the Motion Picture Association when it sought to remove the drug provision from the code in 1948, with Anslinger promising to resolve the matter “quietly” if the narcotics clause remained in the Code.<sup>6</sup>

Anslinger’s activities coalesced in a moral crusade, and he consistently depicted both users and sellers of narcotic drugs as innately criminal. Unlike the cultural commentators around whose words my previous chapters pivot, Anslinger’s cultural cachet carried with it political clout and legislative power. For his entire tenure, Anslinger would respond to the nation’s drug problem by campaigning for, and achieving, longer prison sentences, high fines, and compulsory hospitalisation.<sup>7</sup> The legislation enacted during his 32-year career – The Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, the

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<sup>5</sup> William S. Burroughs, *Junky: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Definitive Edition* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 156.

<sup>6</sup> See Jack Vizzard, *See No Evil: Life Inside a Hollywood Censor* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), pp. 180 – 181.

<sup>7</sup> Howard S. Becker describes Anslinger’s activities as “moral enterprise.” Wherever rules are applied, Becker argues, “we should be alive to the possible presence of an enterprising individual or group...for what they are enterprising about is the creation of a new fragment of the moral constitution of society, its code of right and wrong.” As with Anslinger, who would successfully manipulate the mass-media in generating support for his policies, Becker continues, “wherever rules are created and applied we should expect to find people attempting to enlist the support of coordinate groups and using the available media of communication to develop a favorable climate of opinion.” *The Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), pp. 145 – 146.

Boggs Act of 1951, and the Narcotics Control Act of 1956 – is demonstrative of the extent to which Anslinger believed that punitive action would cure America of its drug problem. His well-publicised views that narcotics education would exacerbate the problem, that increased punishment was the best deterrent, that marijuana was a gateway drug, and that all users were criminal prior to addiction, remained unchanged over his career as commissioner and in his public statements after retirement. Frequently, however, Anslinger was factually mistaken and his words propagandist. Nevertheless, although some dissenters did speak out against Anslinger's deeply negative appraisal of the addict, he remained America's pre-eminent voice on drugs and drug addiction for over three decades. As the original commissioner of the FBN, he had no predecessor. No precedent was in place for the limits of the commissioner's authority. Anslinger received respect and his ideas gained credibility so that his accusations were never refuted by a more "credible" authority.<sup>8</sup>

In 1953, Harry Anslinger labelled the typical American drug addict a "parasite." In 1959, he would describe the addicted as "immoral vicious social lepers." Opposing plans endorsed by both the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Bar Association (ABA) to open an experimental clinic that would legally dispense narcotics to drug addicts and work with them towards curing their addiction, Anslinger declared derisively that the next logical step in this progressive thinking would be for the state to "set aside a building where on the first floor there would be a bar for alcoholics, on the second floor licensed prostitutes, with the third floor set aside for sexual deviates, and crowning them all, on the top floor a drug-dispensing station for

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<sup>8</sup> In the preface to his 1961 expose of illicit narcotics traffic *The Murderers: The Story of the Narcotic Gangs*, Anslinger proudly declared himself a veteran "front-liner" in the battle against the drug addict and peddler. He declared himself "an expert" and a provider of "the facts." It is for these reasons that relatively few individuals would challenge Anslinger. For more, see Jonathon Erlen and Joseph F. Spillane, *Federal Drug Control: The Evolution of Policy and Practice* (New York: Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2004).

addicts.”<sup>9</sup> Anslinger’s comparisons, while melodramatic, are also illuminating. In directly associating the drug addict with alcoholics, prostitutes and homosexuals, the man assigned the job of “cleansing” America of addiction not only revealed his personal hostilities but also established the drug addict’s position within an imagined hierarchy of “diseased” social outsiders. In Anslinger’s apocalyptic approximation, the drug addict would preside over a society of outsiders comprising of the sexually aggressive female denounced by Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham in *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, the “vile” homosexual male as described by Dr. Edmund Bergler in *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?*, and Benjamin Fine’s *1,000,000 Delinquents*.

Furthermore, as with the feminists, working women, homosexuals and juvenile delinquents of my previous chapters, drug addicts were inextricably linked to the communist “Other” and thus considered to be suffering from a malady of communist origin. Psychologist Dr. Charles Winick, for example, would claim that “the family constellation and personality of the addict are often not only similar to the schizophrenic’s, but they are also similar to those of some members of the American Communist party, which would appear to be a different kind of group.”<sup>10</sup> In *The Traffic in Narcotics* (1953), Anslinger claimed communists were smuggling heroin from Red China into the United States. This was allegedly part of a communist policy to “weaken an enemy by subsidizing addiction” so that “the free people of the world” were the targets of an enemy “spreading addiction to swell its coffers and finance a war.” He warned readers that the Communists of Red China were “exploiting the poppy,” and “financing and fostering aggressive warfare through depravity and human misery.” In this way, drug addiction was represented as “a cold, calculated, ruthless,

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in John M. Murtagh and Sara Harris, *Who Live in Shadow* (London: W.H. Allen, 1960), p. 171.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Charles Winick, “Some Psychological Factors in Addiction,” in Dan Wakefield (ed.) *The Addict* (Greenwich, Connecticut; Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1963), p. 52.

systematic plan to undermine [the United States] by creating new addicts while sustaining the old.”<sup>11</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer would also explore this connection in the sweeping, scandal-mongering survey, *U.S.A. Confidential* (1952). According to the infamous muckrakers, school children, started out with free samples, were forced by their addiction into prostitution and violent crime. Boys became “killers, burglars, stick-up men, dope pushers or anything,” whilst girls were “turned over for prostitution, blackmail or extortion.” Such a process, they claimed, “fits nicely into the ideas of the Reds. They not only get fortunes for having supplied the dope in the first place, but it helps them promote civil disorder here. A definite tie-up exists between Communists and the narcotics traffic.”<sup>12</sup> With these comments, Lait and Mortimer not only exposed a supposedly incontrovertible link between communism and drug addiction, but they also highlighted what would become a pressing social concern across the 1950s: an apparent increase in drug addiction amongst teenagers.

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An “epidemic” of drug addiction formed part of the wider moral panic of juvenile delinquency outlined in Chapter 3. Anslinger himself would declare that narcotic addiction among younger people was primarily an extension of a wide-spread surge of juvenile delinquency.”<sup>13</sup> In the popular press, heroin addiction was routinely presented as the most dangerous and the culminating symptom of the delinquency pathogen. Drawing on tropes of the 1950s horror film, Anslinger ominously declared that “the tentacles of addiction reach into many unsuspected areas,” and with juvenile

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<sup>11</sup> H. J. Anslinger and William F. Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1953), pp. 10-11.

<sup>12</sup> Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1952), p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> H. J. Anslinger and William F. Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1953), p. 166.

delinquency “creeping” across socio-economic boundaries, from inner-city slum to suburbia, like *The Blob* (1958), drug addiction had infiltrated the unsuspecting middle classes.<sup>14</sup> In 1951, *Today's Health* informed readers that addiction had “jumped” racial, economic and social boundaries. “Our Youth and Narcotics” editorialised that there were now no typical juvenile addicts, and exposed that physicians practising in middle-class and higher income groups were referring young addicts to private sanitariums for treatment. It had apparently become “impossible to estimate” to how many “good” American cities, towns and rural areas the “outbreak” would spread.<sup>15</sup> In 1952, the *Catholic Digest* warned that children in smaller communities were now falling into the orbit of national drug rings and addiction was carving “a path of debauchery across economic, religious and racial boundaries.”<sup>16</sup> Addiction as “pathogen” had rendered social class irrelevant; money could not buy immunity.

Indeed, disease imagery would always accompany discussion of teenage addiction. In 1953, *Look* magazine printed the sensationally-titled “The Dope Habit: Your Child May Be Hooked,” and cautioned:

The current wave of addiction hits this country at a most crucial time, and it has been expressed in some quarters that it is the work of subversive forces. If this is true, they could not have picked a better section of the population to really hurt us than our adolescents, and the wave will not run its course and die down like a true epidemic.

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<sup>14</sup> Harry J. Anslinger and Will Oursler, *The Murderers: The Story of the Narcotic Gangs* (Letchworth; The Garden City Press Limited, 1961), p. 165. *The Blob* is an independently made American horror / science fiction film now famous for being a quintessential addition to the genre and as film actor Steve McQueen's first feature. The film gets its title from a giant amoeba-like alien that, not unlike Anslinger's drug addict, creeps through the small town of Dowingtown, Pennsylvania consuming residents, growing ever larger and more terrifying.

<sup>15</sup> Victor H. Vogel, M.D., “Our Youth and Narcotics,” *Today's Health* (October 1951), p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Edward J. Mowery, “The Dope Menace and Our Children,” *The Catholic Digest* (October 16, 1952), pp. 44 – 48.

According to *Look*, the “appalling” average age of new addicts was “sixteen and one half years.” The heroin pusher was “on the prowl for more customers,” and whereas “Typhoid Marys spread their maladies unintentionally,” the heroin addict “spreads his disease deliberately and for profit.” Personifying the drug as a sinister “enemy within,” *Look* suggested that teenagers were likely to “meet” marijuana in a parked car, or at a “tea party,” the latter typically developing into sex or music “orgies.” *Look* instructed readers to “roll up the sleeves of every tea party regular and at least one will show the needle marks of a mainliner.” Teenagers were falling victim to a deadly and deliberate disease, one that resulted in both criminal and sexual depravity and for which *Look* cautioned there was no cure.<sup>17</sup> Hollywood, of course, was keen to exploit such sensational headlines and in 1958 would combine sex (in the shape of Mamie Van Doren), drugs (marijuana and heroin), and rock ‘n’ roll (Jerry Lee Lewis) in the delinquency film *High School Confidential!*

The plot of *High School Confidential!* was, I surmise from wider research, lifted directly from a small column of the education section of *Time* magazine from December 3, 1951. “Teacher’s Nightmare,” chronicles the “sensational” arrival of a new male student (Alexander Garza) at a Texas High School, a child who bears an uncanny resemblance to the film’s protagonist Tony Baker (Russ Tamblyn). *Time* warned that Garza’s delinquent appearance alone, “slim, tough looking...a mustache, long side-burns and a goatee...blue jeans,” was enough to turn heads. However, he also “packed a snub-nosed .38 pistol tucked into his waistband” and “had a switch knife with which he picked his teeth.” The article reveals that within hours of his arrival Garza made “loud pointed remarks about the physique of the prettiest teacher;” he had “put his feet on the desk in the school office, lit a fresh cigar and called the principal

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<sup>17</sup> Dan Fowler, “The Dope Habit: Your Child May Be Hooked,” *Look* (June 30, 1953), pp. 98-103.

“Skinny.” He picked a fight with the toughest kid in school and “whaled him into quivering wreckage,” and, ominously, within the week Garza had spoken knowingly of his ability to “blow the weed.” He was quickly nicknamed “Weedhead” and had become “the swaggering leader of the worst element of the institution.”

Although names and locations have changed, and neither pressbook nor reviews cite *Time*, *High School Confidential!* incorporated all the details of this article into its plot. The film opens with Jerry Lee Lewis riding through the streets on the back of a pick-up singing “High School Hop,” followed by scores of dancing teens, and introduces a new student at Santa Bello High School: the slim, tough-looking, blue jean-wearing, switchblade-toting Tony Baker. On his first day he flashes a roll of bills, asking the school secretary “You got change for a \$20?” and picks a fight by asking “You wanna start a rumble?” He puts his feet on the desk in the school office, lights a cigar and calls the principal “Baldy.” He asks the prettiest teacher, “Why don’t we cut out and go to your pad and live it up?” During a lesson on the origins of slang words he spouts what *Time* describes as “the fastest jive talk his astounded class mates have ever heard” with: “You could be the most but all that old style jive you got written on the board is nowhere...that stuff is strictly for the tinnies who live round the block.” Ominously, within the week, he speaks knowingly of his ability to smoke marijuana (“I’m looking to graze on some grass”) and becomes President of the worst element of the institution: the drug-touting “wheelers and dealers.”

In this instance, film and news media have a direct and symbiotic relationship. Just as the article adopts a narrative form akin to film melodrama, the film adopts the sensationalist tactics of the tabloid press. As with many delinquency films of this era, *High School Confidential!* was promoted by drawing attention to its own “sensational” content, the tagline reading, “Behind these “nice” school walls...A TEACHERS’

NIGHTMARE! A TEEN-AGE JUNGLE!” Even the exclamation mark in the title calls to mind the attention-grabbing, rhetorical practices of the tabloids.

With this symbiotic relationship established, it is of no surprise that article and film share the same finale. Just as *Time* magazine revealed that “Alexander Garza, wasn’t Alexander Garza at all, but a 23-year-old narcotics agent,”<sup>18</sup> *High School Confidential!* reveals that Tony Baker is not Tony Baker at all, but narcotics agent Mike Wilson, and in his attempts to uncover and infiltrate the wholesalers, retailers and pushers of narcotics at Santa Bello High School, the film serves to preach the evils of teen marijuana and heroin addiction.

Before bearing witness to the extent of teen-addiction, the audience is given a sobering lesson in drug identification and the “epidemic” level of narcotics-led infection.<sup>19</sup> In their lounge, the teachers gather before an “expert” and are taught to identify a “marijuana cigarette,” one of which has been discovered in the girls’ locker room. When English teacher Miss Williams suggests that the issue has been magnified and that she believes in the “progressive theory that there is no such thing as a bad boy or girl,” she is immediately dismissed as naïve:

Well there’s a High School in Indiana, I don’t know whether they followed your progressive theories or not. They had no problem three years ago, but out of a total enrolment of 1200 students, 285 were found to be using marijuana or heroin and this dreadful condition was only uncovered through a horrible accident. One student, desperate for money to pay for his habit, sold Bennies for quarters and dimes to kids in elementary school. It was the death of a 13-year-old who had been addicted to

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<sup>18</sup> “Teacher’s Nightmare,” *Time* (December 3, 1951), p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Such education for teachers was not uncommon. School teachers were encouraged to study a pamphlet issued by the Police Department which included a description of types of narcotics, “the methods used by addicts to get their ‘lift,’ and a list of the ‘more common symptoms of drug addiction.’” Teachers were alerted to be on the look-out for “furtive glances, watery eyes, marked restlessness and body movement, stooped shoulders, unusual and abnormal ideas and frequent yawning.” “New York Wakes up to Find 15,000 Teen-Age Dope Addicts” *Time* (January 29, 1951), p. 23.

marijuana and then to heroin that exposed the ugly facts, but by that time it was too late for 41 teenagers who were addicted.

To close his monologue, the attending “expert” looks directly at camera to claim: “It can happen here.” No longer solely a problem of the urban slum, drug addiction was “infecting” middle-class girls and boys as young as thirteen and *High School Confidential!* was bound to expose it.

In this sensationalist context, it is unsurprising to discover that it is the outwardly “clean-cut” Joan, pretty blonde and the immediate object of Tony’s affections, who is revealed as a “sick girl.” The loss of the all-American, middle-class girl-next-door to addiction was certain to raise more alarm and generate more sensational headlines than the addiction of a male slum-dweller. In desperation, Joan is seen pleading with a schoolmate for “a stick,” and charging dresses to her father’s account for cash from crooked store-owners in order to financially support her marijuana addiction. Joan’s friend Doris suffers further. Tony uncovers needle marks on her arms, and tries to use Doris as a warning: “Do you want me to spell it out for ya? If you flake around on the weed you are gonna use the hard stuff.” Doris is last seen writhing around in the throes of withdrawal ready to prostitute herself for a “fix” at the hands of the local wholesaler, who assents, “The more kids that get hooked, the better for business.”

A rapid “graduation” from marijuana use and a speedy decline into depravity and criminality was a common supposition about drug use in the 1950s. As Eric Schaefer highlights, by the late 1940s, attitudes toward marijuana had undergone a major shift: “no longer was it an ‘assassin of youth’ that turned kids into raving sex fiends and

crazed killers; now it was firmly positioned as a gateway to hard narcotics.”<sup>20</sup> This stepping-stone hypothesis was repeatedly expounded in both the popular press and on screen. The 1949 film, *She Shoulda Said No!* for example, is representative of the exploitation film. Not only does the film exploit sensational headlines of teenage marijuana addiction, but it also exploits the notoriety of its female star, Lila Leeds. An aspiring actress, Leeds had been arrested in September 1948 whilst smoking marijuana at the L.A. home of movie star Robert Mitchum. Released from jail in the Spring of 1949, she found work all but dried-up. In July of 1952, in an article entitled “Narcotics Ruined Me,” Leeds remembered that “There was no work for me in Hollywood. I had only one offer – the lead in a quickie called *The Wild Weed* [*She Shoulda Said No*’s original title], which was an obvious attempt to cash in on the Mitchum-case notoriety. I took it. I was broke.”<sup>21</sup> In a trope typical of exploitation, *She Shoulda Said No!* opens with a scrolling disclaimer: “We are proud to bring to the screen this timely, new film about Marihuana. It enables all to see, hear and learn the truths. If its presentation saves but one young girl or boy from becoming a ‘dope fiend’ – then its story has been well told.” According to the voice-over, narrating over moving images of shadowy streets and clandestine marijuana transactions, “Light the match and inhale the smoke and it becomes an invitation to your own murder...When boredom sets in, heroin, cocaine, opium is always the next step...if you live that long.” Similarly, just two years after the film was released, *Life* magazine reported that:

A decade ago dope addict arrests were always adult, often middle-aged. What had come over today’s 15-year-olds? One answer was the brazen pusher, who needing customers, was now cynically making them among naïve youngsters...not always, from poor homes. Another answer was marijuana, widely

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<sup>20</sup> Eric Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 243.

<sup>21</sup> Lila Leeds and Bill Fay, “Narcotics Ruined Me,” *Colliers* (July 26, 1952), pp. 21- 24.

available and publicized as nonaddictive – which is...tragically misleading since it is usually the first step toward ultimate enslavement by heroin.<sup>22</sup>

*High School Confidential!* concurs with *She Shoulda Said No!* the popular press and official voices such as Anslinger's, in the belief that marijuana use was an automatic invitation to a life of heroin addiction, criminality and female prostitution. Joan's all-consuming marijuana addiction is thus presented melodramatically as only the first step along a road leading only to unspeakable depravity.

It is significant to note that Joan's parents are represented as the cause of her condition. As so often with representations of homosexuality and other manifestations of apparent "delinquency," movies typically find fault with the parents of the "infected." John M. Murtagh and Sara Harris, in their evocatively titled journalistic study of drug addiction *Who Live In Shadow* (1959), declared that "Adolescence is at best a period of considerable insecurity and social adjustment. And not just for slum children. Children from respectable, harmonious families can also be seething inside and trying to find a means for making themselves more comfortable." Investigative journalism of this type emphasised that parents ought to think about the ways in which they may be failing their offspring.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, in *High School Confidential!* Joan's parents display a remarkably naïve outlook on the extent of drug use amongst the local children. They lazily assume that "the only problem children...are the ones who have problem parents," and fail to see how their own attitudes are destroying their daughter.

Knocking-back whisky, Joan's father describes the narcotics epidemic as "political

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<sup>22</sup> "Children In Peril," *Life* (June 11, 1951), pp. 116-126. According to *Life*, it was a "sad fact" that marijuana use had "inexplicably" become a "fad" in many a school. The article breaks down a child's "graduation" from drinking to marijuana for "bigger kicks" to "caps" of heroin initially provided to them as a free sample from a drug dealer: "Before long he graduates from snorting to taking "skin shots" – injecting a heroin solution beneath his skin with a hypodermic, usually homemade. Or he may go directly to "main-lining," the most affective and addictive way to use dope...The life of such a person thereafter is a nightmare...He cares for nothing and no one but dope...he would kill his own mother or child for a "deck"...He is no longer a human being," p. 126.

<sup>23</sup> Murtagh and Harris, *Who Live In Shadow*, p. 25.

hay” designed to impress voters with a sensational scandal. All too easily appeased when his daughter tells him that she has “never even read about [narcotics],” he claims that the “hullabaloo” will only serve to get the kids to ask questions and “god forbid to even use narcotics.” This attitude, although promoted by Commissioner Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and supported by Congress, was also being challenged by 1956.<sup>24</sup> In fact, as early as 1952, Dr. Lois Higgins, Director of the Chicago Crime Prevention Bureau, warned parents:

If you do not, at this very minute, know enough about [heroin’s] deadly peril to discuss it with your sons or daughters, *God grant that you immediately take positive steps to get that information!*...For deadlier by far than the menace of narcotics, as grave as the threat truly is, and deadlier than the threat contained in any other eruption of so-called juvenile delinquency, is the failure of family and community units they indicate!<sup>25</sup>

In *The Traffic in Narcotics*, Anslinger claimed that such educational material was unnecessary because in itself it would arouse curiosity and could lead to addiction. Anslinger argued that were it not for such “commendable self-imposed restrictions” as the Hollywood Production Code, the public would be “continually subjected” to motion pictures with a narcotics theme, “with a strong potential increase in drug

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<sup>24</sup> When the Narcotic Control Act of 1956 went before Congress on June 19, it contained the following recommendation regarding narcotics education: “Careful consideration...has led to the conclusion that it would tend to arouse undue curiosity on the part of the impressionable youth of our Nation...Many young persons, once their curiosity is aroused, may ignore the warnings and experiment upon themselves with disastrous consequences.” Cited in Jonathon Erlen, *Federal Drug Control: The Evolution of Policy and Practice* (New York: Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2004), p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Lois Higgins, “The Menace of Narcotics,” *The Catholic Mind* (July 1952), p. 434. Likewise, in the same year, fellow Catholic publication the *Catholic Digest* asked the pertinent question, “Who inspired the assertion that educators who instruct their youthful charges on the horrors of habit-forming drugs “teach drug addiction?”” According to the Digest, “Education can and must be made a prime factor in our battle against drug addiction. Proper education under proper direction constitutes a vital contribution to the attack on the spreading evil of dope addiction.” Edward J. Mowery, “The Dope Menace and Our Children,” *The Catholic Digest* (October 16, 1952), pp. 44–48.

addiction.” Citing a film created for the sole purpose of educating high school students, Anslinger highlighted seven areas of contention in support of this thesis:

1. It vividly pictures the appearance of growing marihuana which might lead some youngsters to experiment.
2. It portrays addiction as a disease of youth which might accidentally occur in a normal and healthy environment. This is inaccurate.
3. It teaches the technique of mugging, robbing, shoplifting and the peddling of drugs.
4. It shows the technique for smoking marihuana.
5. It depicts the withdrawal of drugs as a mildly uncomfortable affair rather than its true, vicious light.
6. It shows treatment merely as a pleasant occupational therapy.
7. It conveys the impression that addiction can be cured like the measles which is wholly incorrect. The statistics on recidivism alone shatter that conclusion.<sup>26</sup>

Based on his descriptions of the on-screen action, it would appear that Anslinger is describing the Encyclopaedia Britannica-produced educational short *Drug Addiction* (1951). This short film opens in the idyllic grounds of a “typical” middle-class suburban high school and voice over narration declares that youth ought to be “a happy time and a carefree time, a time of auto-rides and double-dates...a time of fun and pranks and jokes, of ice-cream cones and chocolate sodas.” But it has become “in these troubled days,” a “living nightmare.” Why? Because of “addiction to drugs.” Next is shown drug experimentation by groups of young people which inevitably results in the rapid progression from marihuana smoking to the “mainline” use of heroin which can not be said to glamorise the practice. Teenagers are then pictured consorting with the criminal underworld, stealing, shoplifting and mugging in order to secure their “fix.” The film warns that drug addiction is contagious, “one can make five, five can make twenty-five.” The film’s case study (or “hero” as Anslinger would inaccurately describe

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<sup>26</sup> Anslinger and Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, p. 217.

him), Marty, resorts to peddling drugs in order to support his habit and thus “spreads his contagion.” Finally, he is arraigned before the Juvenile Court and placed on probation to undergo a “cure.” According to Anslinger “the impression gained of the cure is that it is pleasant, quick and certain, featuring desirable occupational therapy, followed by a return to his former environment where he is shunned by good boys and girls.” The film, however, unlike Anslinger, recognises that Marty acquired his habit through ignorance of the facts so displayed.

Rather than the cinematic visualisation offered by this classroom film, Anslinger believed that the subject of narcotics addiction required “the careful and considered discussions attendant on such ills as sex perversion and syphilis.”<sup>27</sup> Within Anslinger’s false logic, any given population educated in the way of the “sex pervert,” would necessarily be inspired to try such activity for themselves; this was infection by observation.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Anslinger requested that producers who looked to produce film narratives about drug addiction should simply stop. His “official” linking of the drug addict with “diseased” paedophiles and homosexuals is roundly rejected in *High School Confidential!* Rather, the naïveté it risks promoting is presented as the primary route of infection.

Naturally, in a Hollywood film still governed by the conventions of the Production Code, lessons are predictably learned, criminals routinely punished and the family unit necessarily restored to health. In *High School Confidential!* after Tony/Mike successfully exposes the local drugs ring, the film concludes with an extra-diegetic voice-over announcement:

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<sup>27</sup> Anslinger and Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, pp. 216-217. Incidentally, in 1956, with the revision of the Production Code allowing for the considered depiction of drugs and addiction, “sex perversion” remained the only totally taboo subject in Hollywood.

<sup>28</sup> Anslinger and Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, pp. 215 – 218.

You have just seen an authentic disclosure of conditions which unfortunately exist in some of our high schools today. But now Arlene will teach in a school that has cleansed itself of an ugly problem [and] Joan confines her smoking to ordinary cigarettes...But the job of policemen like Mike Wilson will not be finished until this insidious menace to the schools of our country is exposed and destroyed.

Significantly, *High School Confidential!* assigns a police officer, rather than a medical professional, the role of “cleansing” the community of drug addiction. In the film, it is solely the hard work and determination of the police that allows for the restoration of civic harmony. Were it not for Commissioner Anslinger’s unwavering belief in the mimetic effect of the cinematic visualisation of addiction, he might have much-admired the film’s positive appraisal of narcotics law enforcement. Indeed, despite the film’s assertion that education and open discussion of addiction was essential for curtailing the spread of addiction, *High School Confidential!* positions itself on the Federal Bureau of Narcotic’s side of a dispute that would rage throughout the 1950s.

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During the 1950s, law enforcement officials and the medical community openly debated how best to define and treat the “spreading” problem of adult drug addiction. Whilst both sides of this argument agreed that the addict should be considered “diseased,” the medical community, represented by the American Medical Association (AMA), regarded punishment as inappropriate, and sympathy and treatment as necessary. Law enforcement officials, headed by Anslinger’s Federal Bureau of Narcotics, would disagree. For Anslinger, addiction was merely a symptom of a criminal pathology. Such a position allowed Anslinger to legitimise increasingly

punitive legislature, and sustain the popular image of the drug addict as a parasitic “dope fiend,” a diseased entity requiring quarantine rather than cure.

This debate infiltrated the popular press and popular culture. In 1959, *Reader's Digest* informed its readership that:

Approximately 50,000 people in the United States today are narcotic addicts. They commit over one fourth of the nation's crimes. They infect thousands of others every year with this dreadful disease. Half of them are under 25. All of them suffer the tortures of the damned.

The same article also raised the pertinent questions, “Is the addict to be treated as a criminal or an invalid? Should he be put in prison or a hospital? Should he be confined at all?” Whatever the answer, the *Digest* was able to unequivocally claim the drug addict to be “a frightening menace.”<sup>29</sup>

The emergence of the American “dope fiend” can be traced back to a tax law of 1914.<sup>30</sup> The Harrison Narcotics Tax Act was a federal law that regulated and taxed the production, distribution and importation of opiates. On the surface, at least, the Harrison Act was purely a tax measure designed to bring the domestic traffic of narcotics into the open under a licensing system. Yet it was also a law that Rufus G. King, chairman of the American Bar Association's committee on narcotics, would declare served to push the drug addict out of society and relegated him or her to the criminal community. In 1956, Dr. Marie Nyswander, a psychiatrist who served on the

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<sup>29</sup> Frederic Sondern Jr., “This Problem of Narcotic Addiction – Let's Face it Sensibly,” *Reader's Digest* (September 1959), p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the cinematic representation of the drug addict can be traced back to 1914. A series of films produced at this time, including *The Drug Terror* (1914), *The Derelict* (1914) and *The Devil's Needle* (1916), served to reinforce the new ideology. The drug film and representations of the addict have remained in transition since. The films of the 1920s closely linked the addict with the Red Scare; thus, in films such as *The Drug Traffic* (1923), addiction led to individual degeneracy, thereby weakening national security. In the 1930s marijuana became the newest drug menace with *Reefer Madness* (1936) and *Assassin of Youth* (1937) shaping public perception of the drug often linking it with illicit sexual practices.

staff of the Federal Narcotics Hospital at Lexington, Kentucky and would later become President of the National Advisory Council on Narcotics, summarised the situation:

[B]efore 1914 [the drug addict] had little or no involvement with criminal activity. He carried on his job, maintained his home and family life. His illness did not inflict injury on any one other than himself. He considered himself and was considered by others to be grappling with a definite and difficult problem and he expected to obtain treatment in a legitimate manner.<sup>31</sup>

After 1914, drug addiction became attributed to a virulent, pathological criminality rather than simply an immoral activity. Although the Act protected the right of the physician to prescribe, by effectively criminalising addiction the Act fundamentally altered the image of the addict and thus definitions of what could be considered professional practice.<sup>32</sup>

Prior to the enforcement of this tax law, narcotics users were “sufferers” or “patients,” and often received prescribed relief from medical practitioners. However, King maintained that a “propaganda barrage” had distorted the popular view of the addict and associated drug addiction with a “menace” to society.<sup>33</sup> Enforcement of the Harrison Act coincided with the Red Scare of the early 1920s when, as in the 1950s, Americans experienced a social climate in which dissent and difference were not tolerated and were often figured in terms of contamination and disease. For example, a 1921 report by a member of the Committee on Narcotic Drugs of the American Medical Association asserted:

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Marie Nyswander, *The Drug Addict as a Patient*, in Dan Wakefield, *The Addict* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications Ltd., 1963), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/history/e1910/harrisonact.htm> (Accessed 18.03.2009).

<sup>33</sup> Rufus G. King, “The Narcotics Bureau and the Harrison Act: Jailing the Healers and the Sick,” *Yale Law Review* (April, 1953), pp. 736 – 749. This “propaganda barrage” would include motion pictures. Eric Schaefer discusses some early examples. He argues that these motion pictures helped define the “new addict profile” and most had “drugs gnawing away at the productive capacity of upper-middle classes,” (p. 220). For further discussion of early drug films from 1914 through to the 1950s, see Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!* pp. 217 – 252.

The vice that causes degeneration of the moral sense and spreads through social contact, readily infects the entire community, saps its moral fiber, and contaminates the individual members one after another, like a rotten apple in a barrel of sound ones.<sup>34</sup>

Narcotics addiction as described here was seen as leading to antisocial acts and individual degeneracy, and thus the public readily opposed anyone advocating the maintenance of “evil.” In 1924, the *Saturday Evening Post* would state America’s task succinctly: “The work in hand is to rid the country of the leeches who are sucking at the very lifeblood of American stability.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, despite vast differences in drug users’ status and occupation, after the passing of the Harrison Act all were divorced from “normal” or “healthy” societal conduct. There are noticeable parallels between the association of internal subversion in the 1920s and in the 1950s. Both led to extreme punitive sanctions against addicts and dealers. Toleration of or sympathy for the addicted was attacked as a dangerous weakness. Public sympathy was set against a social fear of addiction that had no connection to physiology or pharmacology.<sup>36</sup> Addicts were represented as a threat to the cohesive American values of the family and home. Collectively, they were weak-willed, using drugs to escape reality and insult “normality.” That such conduct could now also be classed as “illegal” only served to enhance this negative imagery. To outside observers, narcotics users became fiends, “goggle-eyed madmen in straight jackets immured in backwater asylums, slaverling molesters of children, zombies stalking the back streets of Chicago, comatose Chinese in their smoky dens, and so

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<sup>34</sup> Report cited in H. J. Anslinger and William F. Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, p. 192. This metaphor would later be adopted by Secretary of State Dean Acheson when describing the threat of communism in 1947 (see Introduction).

<sup>35</sup> Fred F. Sully, “The Hidden Trail,” *The Saturday Evening Post* (May 31, 1924), p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> See David S. Musto, *The American Disease* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 232.

on.”<sup>37</sup> Dissenting voices were conveyed by the popular press as belonging to ill-informed “do-gooders” or a minority determined to “undermine the foundations of...society.”<sup>38</sup> After the Act was passed and the addict no longer considered a patient, narcotics prescribed were supplied outside of professional practice. In this way, a tax law intended to ensure the orderly marketing of narcotics was converted into a prohibition law barring the supply of narcotics to addicts, even on a physician’s prescription. Any doctor who prescribed a narcotic drug to a known addict to ease withdrawal could be threatened with prosecution or placed in prison. Thus, the medical profession withdrew as the addicts’ last point of contact with civic society, turning him over to illegal peddlers or to the police as scorned by a “clean” society.

Lurid images of the “dope fiend” would resurface in post-war America as internal subversion became a national obsession. The following, lengthy description from a 1950s police journal is representative of some of the more sensational, vivid and almost cinematic descriptions afforded the drug addict at this time. To be a confirmed drug addict, the journal claimed, was to be:

One of the walking dead...The teeth have rotted out; the appetite is lost and the stomach and intestines don’t function properly. The gall bladder becomes inflamed; eyes and skin turn a bilious yellow...the membranes of the nose turn a flaming red; the partition separating the nostrils is eaten away – breathing is difficult. Oxygen in the blood decreases; bronchitis and tuberculosis develop. Good traits of character disappear and bad ones emerge. Sex organs become affected. Veins collapse and livid purplish scars remain. Boils and abscesses plague the skin; gnawing pain racks the body. Nerves snap; vicious twitching develops. Imaginary and

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<sup>37</sup> This 1947 description of the “dope fiend” is provided by novelist William Styron in a passage of *Sophie’s Choice* and is typical of the many stereotyped imaginings of the narcotics addict that would linger in the minds of the American public following their “criminalisation” and marginalisation. *Sophie’s Choice* (1976) (London: Corgi Books, 1983), p. 415.

<sup>38</sup> Rufus G. King, “The Narcotics Bureau and the Harrison Act: Jailing the Healers and the Sick,” *Yale Law Review* (April, 1953), pp. 736 – 749. Rufus King would later author *The Drug Hang-Up: America’s Fifty Year Folly* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1976).

fantastic fears blight the mind and sometimes complete insanity results...Such is the torment of being a drug addict; such is the plague of being one of the walking dead.<sup>39</sup>

With such descriptions transforming the drug addict into a “monster” more fantastic than even Hollywood imagined on screen, the “dope fiend” would take his place (as a type, he was almost always male) alongside communists, juvenile delinquents, homosexuals and the “un-feminine” woman, as a pernicious threat to essential American values. A commentator writing for *Christian Century* in 1959 summarised the situation:

In this country it is almost an article of faith that everything connected with narcotics is filthy and evil, and that stern, repressive measures are the only way to deal with the “human scum” involved. Years of publicity have convinced the public and most congressmen that the very foundations of our culture are threatened by the dope habit and that it must be ruthlessly wiped out. That another course of action might be possible is a notion that seems almost un-American.<sup>40</sup>

FBN reports recounted in the national press would reiterate long-established dogma about the nature of the addict. Anslinger claimed addicts were criminal long before actually becoming addicted, with addiction representing just “one of the later phases” in a “criminal career.”<sup>41</sup> Judge Twain Michelson of the Municipal Court, San Francisco, also adopted vivid and sensationalist language to claim that:

If the people of America are to be addressed on the...vital problem of drug addiction in its relation to crime – if they are to understand the psychosis of the mental deviate who lulls himself into a false sense of well-being by the use of narcotics, then the

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<sup>39</sup> “The Scourge of Narcotics,” *Spring 3100 at 7* (December 1958), cited in Richard Kuh, “Dealing with Narcotics Addiction Part 1,” *The New York Law Journal* (June 8, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Albert B. Southwick, “Treating Narcotics Addiction,” *Christian Century* (December 16, 1959), p. 1467.

<sup>41</sup> Anslinger and Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, p. 269.

dope fiend in his every activity should be recognized and indexed for what he is. It may be said that murder is murder, whatever the processes of its commission may be, and likewise a dope fiend is a dope-fiend whatever the source of his addiction may be. In the world of crime we find him standing in the front ranks of the most subversive and antisocial groups in the country.<sup>42</sup>

Addiction to drugs was considered to be “worse than smallpox.” Anslinger argued that addiction was not a “true disease” such as TB or diphtheria but a form of “self-infection,” and therefore sufferers were not unfortunate victims of a condition acquired in the course of normal life. The FBN portrayed the addict as a ruthless predator. The infection of others was deemed accidental only in the very few cases where addiction was acquired through medical treatment. Rather, the addict suffered from a “compulsive urge” to pass the habit on.<sup>43</sup> Addicts were represented as quite willing to infect “friends, wives, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters” with the disease “without the least compunction.”<sup>44</sup> According to the FBN’s published response to the joint committee report of the American Medical Association and American Bar Association (analysed later in this chapter), addicts who were not hospitalized or confined were liable to “spread” their habit with “cancerous rapidity.” According to the report, it was inevitable that “this contagious problem” would increase unless drug addicts were placed “in quarantine type confinement or isolation.”<sup>45</sup>

Quarantine is fundamental to the containment of infectious and contagious diseases and in the 1950s was touted as the only way to curb the addiction epidemic. A narcotics official from Illinois told a 1958 symposium that “If we want to eliminate this

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<sup>42</sup> Anslinger and Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, p. 271.

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Edward R. Bloomquist, cited in *Comments on Narcotic Drugs: Interim Report of the Joint Committee of the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association on Narcotic Drugs by Advisory Committee to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1959), p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Mr. Lynn A. White, cited in *Comments on Narcotic Drugs* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1959), p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> Mr. C. Aubrey Gasque, cited in *Comments on Narcotic Drugs*, p. 104.

health hazard promptly, we must work toward a program where we will quickly and surely take the addict out of society.” Anslinger himself would advocate that the addict be “plucked out of the community and quarantined,” and quoted a member of the Los Angeles Police Department who alleged “these people are in the same category as lepers, and...the only defense society has against them is segregation and isolation whenever possible.”<sup>46</sup>

The removal of social lepers, in the cold-war rhetoric of the 1950s, became vital to the survival of the nation. Patriotism led Lynn White, Deputy Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department to argue that the United States had become “great” not by “coddling the evildoers, or pampering the morally weak,” but through “vigorous action” which removed them from society.<sup>47</sup> Anslinger even conceived of a project to convert Ellis Island into a designated narcotics quarantine facility.<sup>48</sup> Under such a torrent of negative propaganda, it became a common assumption that all habit-forming drugs, regardless of the social and economic status of the user, if abused for extended periods would cause a loss of moral control and / or physical and mental collapse. This common premise is given credence by the Hollywood film *Bigger Than Life* (1956).

*Bigger Than Life* was released in the year in which the federal government vastly increased criminal penalties against drug peddlers and addicts. The Narcotic Control Act of 1956, signed by President Eisenhower on July 18, greatly increased the minimum and maximum penalties for all drugs offences and allowed for the implementation of the death penalty for anyone found guilty of supplying heroin to a

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<sup>46</sup> Anslinger and Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics*, p. 272.

<sup>47</sup> Mr. Lynn A. White, cited in *Comments on Narcotic Drugs*, p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> See David Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 155.

minor.<sup>49</sup> On viewing *Bigger Than Life*, such extreme penalties appear justified. The film tells the story of school teacher and family man Ed Avery (James Mason) who suffers from a rare and deadly heart disorder and is prescribed a “miracle drug,” the hormone Cortisone. His treatment takes a terrifying turn when, on becoming addicted to his drug, he begins to abuse his medication and terrorise his family. The fact that Ed’s addiction is medically induced and the addictive drug is non-narcotic is irrelevant. The film was marketed as a shocking study of a “man with a habit!” That this deadly habit is triggered by a supposedly life-saving miracle drug only speaks to the epidemic levels of fear and paranoia that had come to surround the issue of addiction in 1950s America. Dr. Robert S DeRopp compared the attitude toward addicts with “the same hysteria, superstition, and plain cruelty as characterized the attitude of our forefathers toward witches.” Such hysteria was no doubt exacerbated by the dread of the addict within. The “dope fiend” became a symbol of the paranoid fear of personal, moral and physical degeneration. As “Janet Clark,” the pseudonymous drug-addicted author of *The Fantastic Lodge: The Autobiography of a Girl Drug Addict* (1961) observed retrospectively:

The junkie frightens [the general public] because they realize that this is something no human is prepared to cope with at all; that even they, with a warm, normal home and lovely background and a setup in society and so forth, could be hooked in the end. And it’s true. That’s another reason why I’m very suspicious of those people and their feelings, because, actually, in all these loud protestations about ‘Throw them in jail!’ ‘Get rid of them, preying on society!’ et cetera, et cetera, all I can see is the terror underneath.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Punitive measures had already been stiffened with the introduction of the Boggs Law of 1951 (named after congressman Hale Boggs). For more on both of these acts, see Rufus King, *The Drug Hang-Up: America’s Fifty-Year Folly* (W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.: New York, 1976), pp. 142 – 150.

<sup>50</sup> Janet Clark, *The Fantastic Lodge: The Autobiography of a Girl Drug Addict* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1961).

*Bigger Than Life* is a domestic horror film which dramatises this underlying terror. If a loving and wholly productive middle-class father could unwittingly find himself an addict, then surely the “disease” could strike anyone, anywhere.

*Bigger Than Life* is representative of a Hollywood tendency to represent stories that, despite narcotic addiction being more prevalent amongst the lower-classes, suggest addiction is at its most destructive when threatening the middle and upper classes and encroaching on the suburban idyll.<sup>51</sup> As Eric Schaefer argues, “Laborers in the working class were replaceable; elimination of the ‘criminal classes’ through the terminus of drug-induced death was no great social loss.” However, as was also evident in *High School Confidential!* “the loss of a single doctor, lawyer, businessman, or potentially productive middle-class youth, was a boundless evil.”<sup>52</sup> Fearfully, in *Bigger Than Life*, addiction strikes at the very heart of American society: the white middle-class American family.

As the film opens, Ed is struggling to manage his illness, which manifests itself in bouts of severe head and chest pain. He is holding down two jobs in order to support his wife Lou (Barbara Rush) and son Richie (Christopher Olsen), working as a schoolteacher and holding a second, clandestine, position as a cab driver. Although his secret life arouses Lou’s suspicions and denies Richie a father-son fishing expedition, Ed is portrayed as a devoted family-man. His second job is a necessary evil that allows for his family’s middle-class privileges and lets his wife stay at home to care for their

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<sup>51</sup> Indeed, in stark contrast to the film’s protagonist Ed, historian David T. Courtwright provides a mid-1950s modal addict profile. According to Courtwright, this modal profile was one of “a young black man in his twenties.” He would have begun to use heroin in his late teens, most likely in 1949 or 1950, “the peak years of the postwar epidemic.” He would have smoked marijuana before sniffing heroin and “may originally have been a member of a street gang,” but now “associated with other junkies who taught him, among other things, that mainlining was a more efficient way of using adulterated heroin.” He would speak in his own language or “code,” and have developed a speciality or “main hustle,” such as burglary. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 151.

<sup>52</sup> Eric Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!* p. 225.

son.<sup>53</sup> However, with the swift onset of addiction, Ed's attitude towards his family takes a sinister turn, giving credence to comments made by one Judge in 1953, that drug abuse quickly reduces those addicted "to pitiable wrecks of humanity," causing even "high-minded, upright, courageous, influential members of society" to "lie, steal, murder – do anything."<sup>54</sup> Ed is this fear made manifest; he fulfils an anxiety communicated across different cultural forms that no personality type, in any part of the social hierarchy, is immune to addition.

Ed is instructed to take the miracle drug, described by his doctor as "the greatest thing to come our way since penicillin," once every six hours. Almost immediately, he appears transformed. He has an abundance of enthusiasm and energy, prompting Richie to ask, "Mom, isn't Dad acting a little foolish?" and his best friend Wally (Walter Matthau) to observe, "Haven't you noticed anything lately? Like the way he talks? He just isn't the same person. You know, big-shot; he even looks bigger." It is from this idea of growth, with the drug literally increasing Ed's size, that the film gets its title. Although Ed does not literally grow, his grip over the family does. In many scenes he is lit from below so that his silhouette is seen looming ominously, dominating the frame. It is quickly established that Ed has ignored his doctor's instructions, increasing his dosage. In "junkie" fashion he begins to lie to his doctor, fulfilling Anslinger's warnings that addicts are ingenious and occupy a world of deception. Ed denies any adverse side-effects, ignoring warnings of the "queer mental effects" associated with his drug and fabricates a tale of spilt bottles, ("my hands were wet I dropped the bottle,") in order to secure further prescriptions. He even commits the federal crime of

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<sup>53</sup> As proof of Ed's devotion, before being admitted to hospital, father and son share a tender moment: Ed bequeaths to the new "head man" of the house his beloved prize-winning high school football, much to his son's delight.

<sup>54</sup> Judge N. J. Menard, cited in *Comments on Narcotic Drugs* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1959), pp. 103-104.

impersonating a medical professional, forging his own prescriptions in order to gratify his ever-increasing habit.

However, Ed's greatest crimes are those he commits against his family, openly rejecting the family unit as "petty domesticity." He spurns his wife both physically and mentally. His lack of physical connection to his wife would be of no surprise to the Public Health Service doctor who testified before a government committee that, "It is important, particularly in people who are married, that one of the things wives tell us about the addicted is that he is sexually impotent and that he therefore loses his function as a male."<sup>55</sup> Ed quickly loses all interest in sex and marriage, important markers of masculinity in the 1950s. Over dinner he states bluntly, "Let's clear this up once and for all. I'm staying in this house solely for the boy's sake. As for you personally I'm completely finished with you. There is nothing left. Our marriage is over. In my mind I've divorced you." However, his father's continued presence does not benefit Richie. Ed subjects his son to mental and physical torture with excessive physical and scholastic regimes. He withholds food and drink when he fails to meet his father's impossibly high standards, leading Richie to exclaim "I hate him Mom, I hate him!"

Upon discovering Richie attempting to dispose of his drugs, claiming "I'd rather you were dead than the way you are now," and using the Bible as his justification, Ed resolves that the family, already ravaged by his addiction, should literally be destroyed. Locking his wife in a closet, he takes a pair of scissors to his son's room with the intention of murder. He is only stopped from committing the crime by a crippling withdrawal pang and the fortuitous arrival of Wally, who wrestles Ed to the ground and renders him unconscious. That an upstanding teacher, driven mad by addiction to a prescription drug, is presented as willing to murder his entire family, acts as a cinematic

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<sup>55</sup> Cited in King, *The Drug Hang-Up*, p. 144.

testament to the fear that became common in the 1950s, that a “dope fiend” would go so far as to kill his own mother should she stand in the way of his habit.

At the film’s conclusion, Ed’s doctor reveals that he was suffering from a Cortisone-induced “psychosis.” According to the doctor, it was Ed’s misuse of the drug, not the drug itself that brought about his condition. Should Ed wake unharmed, all further prescriptions will be administered under supervised conditions and in carefully controlled doses. *Bigger Than Life* thus lends support to medical and legal officials who, in often heated opposition to Anslinger and the FBN, openly supported the supervised administration of drugs to known addicts. In 1955, the American Medical Association (AMA) joined with the American Bar Association (ABA) to form a joint committee in order to produce a study of narcotics that would recommend such a scheme and arouse a vitriolic attack from the FBN.

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The Joint Committee, recognising the damaging, propagandist effect of harsh punitive legislation, lurid newspaper reports and sensationalised Hollywood films, saw the need for a complete revision of attitudes toward drug addicts and drug addiction. This union marked the first time that the institutions of medicine and law had openly and directly challenged Anslinger’s methods of narcotics control. The Joint Committee’s *Interim Report* (1958) contained five recommendations which included the establishment of an experimental outpatient clinic for the treatment of addicts, a study of relapse and causative factors and a reassessment of educational and preventative research.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interim Report published as *Drug Addiction: Crime or Disease? Reports of the A.B.A. – A.M.A. Joint Committee on Narcotic Drugs* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1961).

The respectability and prestige that the ABA and AMA brought to their report intrigued the popular press, and articles and editorials began to question Anslinger's methods. *The Christian Century* claimed that not only was Anslinger failing to "stamp out" the dope problem but reasoned that he "may actually be spreading it." It argued that by attacking drug addiction as a criminal problem, "we are almost certainly doing the wrong thing," and even questioned prevalent "dope fiend" imagery, claiming that whilst some chronic dope addicts are "pitiful creatures," thousands of dope users experienced "little visible harm."<sup>57</sup> Similarly, eminent sociologist and author Alfred R. Lindesmith would inform readers of *The Nation* that Anslinger's policies were "morally bankrupt," claiming it to be "no more than an act of common decency" to assist an addict in avoiding withdrawal when there is no possibility of medical attention. To deny the addict proper medical attention because he should not have acquired the habit in the first place was, Lindesmith asserted, "the moral equivalent of denying medical treatment for gonorrhea on the same grounds." He made a case for the legalisation of drugs in the same sense that "venereal disease and cancer are 'legal'; and like them, addiction should be declared the concern of the healing professions."<sup>58</sup> Lindesmith was later chosen to edit and organise the Joint Committee's Interim and Final reports, under the title *Drug Addiction: Crime or Disease?* (1961), according to which the drug addict

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<sup>57</sup> Albert B. Southwick, "Treating Narcotics Addiction," *The Christian Century* (December 16, 1959), pp. 1467 – 1468.

<sup>58</sup> Alfred R. Lindesmith, "Our Immoral Drug Laws..." *The Nation* (June 21, 1958), pp. 558 – 562. Lindesmith was an Indiana University Professor of Sociology. He was among the first scholars to provide a rigorous and thoughtful account of the nature of drug addiction. Lindesmith's work on drug addiction began in 1938 with the publication of an essay entitled "A Sociological Theory of Drug Addiction" in the *American Journal of Sociology*. He developed a full theoretical and empirical account of the nature of drug addiction, which culminated in the 1947 study *Opiate Addictions*. Lindesmith's views were diametrically opposed to Anslinger and the FBN. Thus, from the late 1930s through the 1950s, the FBN concentrated on intimidating Lindesmith, printing rebuttals of his work in major medical journals, referring to him as a "crackpot" in official correspondence, secretly tapping his telephone and contacting J. Edgar Hoover regarding the possibility that Lindesmith was a "member of any Communist-Front organisations." The targeting of Lindesmith in this manner was possible because, until the formation of the ABA AMA Joint Committee, he stood alone against federal drug control policies. For more, see John F. Galliher; David P. Keys; Michael Elsner, "Lindesmith v. Anslinger: An Early Government Victory in the Failed War on Drugs," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* Vol. 88, No. 2 (Winter 1998), pp. 661 – 682.

required cure rather than punishment, help and understanding rather than quarantine and ridicule.

Although the ABA and AMA devised their document as the foundation of conversation with other parties invested in the problem, such motives were lost on Anslinger and the exchange immediately became explosive. A carefully phrased and tentative document, the Interim Report seemed dangerously clear to the FBN as an attempt to garner support for the softening of legal penalties, narcotics education in schools and, worst of all, the legal distribution of narcotics to registered addicts. Terrified, Anslinger hurriedly authorised the publication of a shrill FBN counterattack. The FBN Advisory Committee's report *Comments on Narcotic Drugs*, which at 186-pages was twice the length of the *Interim Report*, was an ad hoc document that compiled a collection of old and new essays in no particular order. The FBN even used the same name, format, and layout as the ABA-AMA report to create confusion and to minimise the impact of the joint report on the public. The contents page was merely a list of the fourteen contributors linked to random headings such as "report," "survey" and "Honolulu." Although Anslinger had little direct involvement in the report, his Introduction sets the incredulous tone that prevails throughout:

When one examines the composition of the joint committee of the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association, one finds that the members are, almost without exception, individuals who had identified themselves with one panacea. These single minded individuals then emerged under what appeared to be the sponsorship of the ABA and AMA. The public is conditioned to expect that ABA and AMA committees are oriented toward impartial deliberation, rather than propaganda.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Advisory Committee to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, *Comments on Narcotic Drugs: Interim report of the Joint Committee of the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association on Narcotic Drugs* (July 3, 1958), p. vi.

When Anslinger wrote a letter of reply to joint committee member Morris Ploscowe's request for a meeting of minds, he declared that after reading their report he found it "incredible that so many glaring inaccuracies, manifest inconsistencies, apparent ambiguities, important omissions, and even false statements could be found in one report on the narcotic problem" and denied his request.<sup>60</sup> In a single sentence, Anslinger dismissed the entire report with scant explanation.

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Where would Hollywood situate itself in this now public and noisy debate? Whilst there were news headlines and public interest to exploit, film producers ignored Anslinger's calls for a blanket silence. Otto Preminger, who in 1953 defied the Production Code Administration by releasing *The Moon is Blue* without a Seal of Approval, would have to defy the Administration once again in 1955 with the release of *The Man with the Golden Arm*.<sup>61</sup> The film is based on Nelson Algren's award-winning, naturalistic novel about a Chicago drug addict. Algren's protagonist, Frankie Majcinek, returns from World War II dependent on morphine and resumes his pre-war job as a card-dealer in the seedy backrooms of Chicago's Polish slums. Despite a desire for respectability and legitimacy, Frankie is trapped by fate, his environment, and his addiction. His wife Sophie, crippled in an auto-accident with Frankie at the wheel, binds him to her with guilt; to support her needs and feed an ever-growing habit, he

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<sup>60</sup> Advisory Committee to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, *Comments on Narcotic Drugs*, p. vii.

<sup>61</sup> The "un-approved" release came despite director Preminger working closely with PCA director Geoffrey Shurlock in an ill-fated attempt to bestow a seal upon the film and thus bring about an amendment to the Code's restrictions governing the depiction of narcotics and addiction. The complicated story surrounding the censorship of the film is examined in Jerold Simmons, "Challenging the Production Code: The Man with the Golden Arm," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (March 22, 2005), pp. 39-48. Furthermore, in a 1960 edition of the CBS-produced *Small World*, Preminger would describe such censorious activity as "evil." Preminger stated that censorship represented the actions of an "evil institution where the state or other authorities try to impose their will on people."

begins to cheat at cards and is caught. With his pride and optimism destroyed, Frankie fights with a drug pusher and kills him accidentally. Wanted by the police and rejected by friends, he hangs himself.

A film version of this story could only go so far in flouting the Production Code's many restrictions; a sensitive adaptation was required. In the film, Frankie (Frank Sinatra) struggles to adjust to a complicated life in the urban slum after receiving a "cure" for heroin addiction at the Federal drug rehabilitation facility in Lexington, Kentucky. Upon his return, Frankie toils to care for his wheel-chair bound wife Zosch (Eleanor Parker), contend with his feelings for true love Molly (Kim Novak), avoid the attentions of a corrupt police force, and attempt to find work as a musician, all whilst avoiding the ever-present lure of heroin and a predatory drug-pusher. Circumstance and environment conspire against Frankie and he quickly finds himself addicted again. In the film's strongest scenes, Frankie is seen going "cold-turkey" in a successful attempt to "kick" his habit, and in the film's conclusion it is revealed that his wife is not really crippled but using her wheelchair to control her husband. When her ruse is discovered by a predatory drug-pusher, it is she, rather than Frankie, who kills him, and to avoid capture by the police she plunges to her death from the apartment balcony. The film concludes with Frankie and Molly facing an uncertain future together.

Unsurprisingly, with filming nearing completion, *The Man with the Golden Arm* received the public condemnation of Harry J. Anslinger. The front page of trade publication *Variety* reported "U.S. Narcotics Commr. Rues 'H'wood Hokum' in Dope Film's Happy Ending." This article, in response to an interview with the narcotics commissioner, reported his unequivocal opposition to the film. Specifically, Anslinger expressed disappointment with Preminger's alteration of the novel's pessimistic ending. In keeping with his apocalyptic view of the dope addict, Anslinger preferred Frankie

should suffer and take his own life, rather than kick the drug habit in what he described as a “100% complete Hollywood ending.”<sup>62</sup> Frankie’s successful self-rehabilitation sent the wrong message for Anslinger who firmly believed, once a junkie, always a junkie; Preminger would retaliate a week later, denouncing the commissioner’s statements as “unfair and damaging,” and accusing him of dictating not only what pictures not to make but also how to treat stories and how to write scripts.<sup>63</sup> In this way, I would argue, the bravest and most graphic on-screen depictions of drug addiction and drug-use were, by default, also anti-Anslinger movies, and *The Man with the Golden Arm* not only paved the way for an unprecedented revision of industry regulations but also for a change in wider societal attitudes toward the addict.

*The Man with the Golden Arm*’s “hero” Frankie is a junkie and is significantly portrayed by Frank Sinatra, a huge star and household name. If the movie set out to alter the public perception of the drug addict as projected by Anslinger and films such as *Bigger Than Life*, casting Sinatra was an inspired decision. Allowing star and character to share a first name, the film automatically subverted Anslinger’s media-construction of the addict as a criminal “fiend” and parasitic social leper. Sinatra was a beloved all-American screen-star and musician and as the result of his star image, Frankie remains a sympathetic character throughout. Indeed, his use of illicit narcotics aside, Frankie is not a criminal; he has the desire to forge a legitimate career in music and to live a drug-free existence. Frankie is the victim of a corrupt environment and misguided beliefs.

As the film opens and Frankie steps off a bus, back in his old neighbourhood, it becomes immediately apparent that he will struggle to avoid past temptations. Frankie’s is a gritty, neon-lit world of “girls girls girls,” beer and pool, “10c hotdogs” and

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<sup>62</sup> “U.S. Narcotics Commr. Rues ‘H’wood Hokum’ in Dope Film’s Happy Ending,” *Variety* (October 19, 1955).

<sup>63</sup> “Preminger Angry at Narcotics Rap,” *Variety* (October 26, 1955), p. 13.

“money to loan.” Ominously, his first port of call is the bar, where his former drug-pusher is forcing an elderly man and alcoholic to dance for a shot of whisky and within minutes he has offered Frankie a free shot of heroin. Reserve still intact, Frankie refuses the offer, “I don’t need it is all. I kicked it.” Frankie is heeding his doctor’s advice, telling a friend, “I’d rather chop my arm off than let him touch it. This Dr. Lennox who took care of me down at the hospital, he told me, Frankie, when you get out of here, you take even one fix you’re hooked again. Don’t worry about me, buddy boy.” As in this instance, the film repeatedly champions a medical approach to the “cure,” whilst the police are presented as cruel and unsympathetic. At the bar, Frankie describes Lexington to his old friends as “the greatest place you’ll ever see, ball games, great food, I even learned how to play the drums.” When asked incredulously, “It is a prison, no?” Frankie retorts, “More a hospital.” In opposition to Anslinger, who advocated quarantine and incarceration as a means of rehabilitating the addicted, Frankie only has praise for the medical facilities and his personal care, returning from his six-month stay six pounds heavier and with the skills and desire to abandon dealing cards and pursue a legitimate profession as a musician.<sup>64</sup> However, although he is at this moment able to refuse an offer of heroin, Frankie lacks the societal understanding and external support structure to ensure his permanent rehabilitation.

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<sup>64</sup> It should be noted that not all graduates of the Lexington programme were quite as complimentary. Alexander King, a television commentator, writer and painter, who became addicted to morphine through medical treatment, would write about the first of his four stays at Lexington in *Mine Enemy Grows Older* (1958). King claimed that “There was a great deal of mealy mouthed talk at Lexington about drug addiction being an illness and not a crime. Nobody believed this, not even the patients. There existed an occasional saint among the physicians who honestly felt that the addict was primarily a psychiatric and not a criminal problem, and I met two such men down there. One of them has since been booted out.” Dope fiend mythology, it seemed, had infiltrated the hospital walls. King would also criticise Lexington as being a breeding-ground for criminals. Commenting on the young delinquent sent to Lexington he claimed, “He is greeted by a few hundred new drug connections and a couple of hundred old magicians, soothsayers and alchemists.” Finally, in a statement that contests Preminger’s representation, King claims that the medical treatment was entirely inadequate; once the doctors had “liberated you from the toxic effects of your addiction,” subsequent medical care was “negligible.” Reproduced in Dan Wakefield (ed), *The Addict* (Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1963), pp. 126 – 138.

Frankie's wife frequently urges him to return to his former card-dealing profession, failing to understand his need to physically and psychologically remove himself from all aspects of his former, "deviant" lifestyle. His desires for a clean and legitimate existence are also dealt a blow by a corrupt police force. On the way to an audition Frankie is unceremoniously bundled into the back of a police car and charged with receiving stolen goods (the suit he is wearing for the audition). The arrest is revealed to have been staged by his former boss and Frankie is forced to return to work in return for his bail, but not before witnessing an incarcerated addict in the throes of withdrawal, a disturbing reminder of his past and a terrifying premonition of his immediate future.

Frankie's situation in *The Man with the Golden Arm* echoes the writing of psychologist David P. Ausubel, who argued that there was great truth in the addict's contention that he was too often forced to relapse because of social discrimination:

Not only is the released addict handicapped by the social stigma of being an ex-convict, but he also does not receive the badly-needed social work, psychiatric and vocational guidance normally given to every patient discharged from a state hospital for the mentally ill. Instead, like other ex-prisoners, he comes under the jurisdiction of federal probation officers who are more interested in the formal legality of their charges' pursuits than in their social rehabilitation.<sup>65</sup>

Ausubel contends that the former addict patient, for too long a commodity of the police, is, upon release from a federal institution, relegated to the lowest strata of society; he or she thus fails to receive even a very basic level of out-patient care and is treated by the moral majority with fear and disdain.

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<sup>65</sup> David P. Ausubel, *Drug Addiction: Physiological, Psychological, and Sociological Aspects* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 85.

The film recognises the good sense in the advice presented directly to President Eisenhower in a report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Narcotics dated February 1, 1956. This report, directly ordered by the President, “in order to define more clearly the scope of the [narcotics] problems which we face,” recommended a support system that would ease the difficult transition of the addict from institutional to free community. The President was informed that:

The released former addict is likely to find himself cut off from helpful guidance and opportunity at the moment when he feels the need for them most keenly. Communities, even families, show a marked scepticism, sometimes hostility, towards the former addict. Too often he can find quick acceptance only in his former haunts, and among those associated with his earlier addiction...It seems apparent, therefore, that post-hospital follow-up is essential to hopeful and lasting treatment of the addict.<sup>66</sup>

This is certainly true of Preminger’s Frankie, who is forced back into his former job of dealing cards for illegal gamblers by a needy and unsympathetic wife, an unscrupulous former pusher and by the actions of a prejudiced police force. Ultimately, frustrated by his inability to better his situation, Frankie finds solace in heroin.

In a candid and graphic scene that troubled the PCA, and no doubt truly angered Anslinger by unashamedly opposing his “head-in-the-sand” attitude toward on-screen depictions of drug abuse, Frankie is seen receiving a shot of heroin. In the scene, Frankie enters the home of his drug dealer whilst removing his suit jacket and rolling up his sleeve. He snatches at a tie hanging from the wall and uses it as a tourniquet on his left arm. He pays his money whilst his dealer “cooks” the heroin in a spoon and fills a hypodermic needle with the drug. Significantly, emphasising Frankie’s complete submission to both his addiction and his predatory pusher, it is not he who administers

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<sup>66</sup> Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Narcotics to the President (Washington D.C., 1956), p.11.

the shot, but his dealer. As he receives his dose, the camera moves in tightly to frame his eyes. As the shot is administered, Frankie's wide eyes begin to relax and his blinking increases, his face twitches rapidly as his body relaxes, and he slumps low in his chair and closes his eyes. By choosing to shoot this significant moment of the film in this way, *The Man with the Golden Arm* further humanises its outsider protagonist beyond clever casting. Although the viewer is not encouraged to support Frankie's decision to return to a life of heroin abuse, through Sinatra's subtle performance and the tight framing of his eyes viewers are afforded an understanding of *why* he does. Cinema audiences were asked to confront heroin addiction "eye-to-eye." The viewer thus directly witnesses the dissolution of Frankie's pain and frustration as the heroin enters his system.

Just as the film forces the viewer to look directly into the eyes of an addict in order to gain an understanding of his motivation for using heroin, it also asks that they confront the harsh reality of heroin withdrawal. In scenes that for Anslinger amounted to "Hollywood hokum," audiences are ostensibly locked in a room with Frankie as he suffers this terrifying process. He writhes in constant pain, his body twisting in spasms of agony as he clutches his stomach. He tears the room apart looking for a "fix" and is only seconds away from jumping to his death from the window of his high-rise "prison" when interrupted by his "captor" Molly. Anslinger had objected to the idea of a film suggesting that self-withdrawal from heroin was an easy process, but his criticisms were made without viewing Frankie's torment. With hindsight, it seems apparent that what Anslinger really objected to was the idea that an audience would be

asked to sympathise with a confessed addict and that they could “witness” for themselves the sickening and uncontrollable medical effects of heroin addiction.<sup>67</sup>

Although these stark scenes ensured that *The Man with the Golden Arm* failed to receive the Production Code Seal of Approval, it became the first film without the Seal not to be condemned by the Catholic Legion of Decency, and the film’s success with critics and at the box-office forced the PCA to significantly revise the Code. Despite Anslinger’s championing of the Code and criticism of drug-themed films, these revisions, implemented in December of 1956, substantially altered the rigid taboos that had previously prohibited any screen depiction of narcotics, kidnapping, abortion or prostitution. An out-and-out ban on the depiction of the traffic and use of narcotics was replaced with the following disclaimer:

Drug addiction or the illicit traffic in addiction-producing drugs shall not be shown if the portrayal:

- (a) Tends in any manner to encourage, stimulate or justify the use of such drugs; or
- (b) Stresses, visually or by dialogue, their temporarily attractive effects; or
- (c) Suggests that the drug habit may be quickly or easily broken; or
- (d) Shows details of drug procurement or the taking of drugs in any manner; or
- (e) Emphasizes the profits of the drugs traffic; or
- (f) Involves children who are shown knowingly to use or traffic in drugs.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Indeed, the reviewer for *Variety* found “nothing pretty or happy” in the film, even praising its “powerful condemnation of the use of narcotics,” its “merciless...display of the cruelties of the habit.” In direct opposition to Anslinger, the reviewer claimed that the film’s message was one which “should be spread, not suppressed.” See Jerold Simmons, “Challenging the Production Code: *The Man with the Golden Arm*,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, (March 22, 2005), p. 45.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Bresler, *Us or Them: American Political and Cultural Conflict from WWII to Watergate* (New York: Roman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 174 – 175.

These changes allowed filmmakers to openly tackle themes of drug abuse, and they did so in ways that would profoundly alter the public perception of the addict and mark the beginning of the end of Anslinger's 32-year tenure as Commissioner of the FBN.

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The same year that these revisions were made, *A Hatful of Rain* (1956) became the first film dealing with drug addiction to receive formal Production Code Administration approval and, following *The Man with the Golden Arm*, to regard the addict with understanding and sympathy rather than fear and disapproval.

The film tells the story of a struggling family in New York City. Pregnant wife and typist Celia Pope (Eva Marie Saint) struggles to understand the erratic behaviour and mood swings of her Korean War-veteran husband Johnny (Don Murray) and, fearing an affair, she turns to her brother-in-law Polo (Anthony Franciosa) for emotional support. The action takes place over a fraught weekend in which John Pope Sr. comes to visit his sons. His visit reveals the troubled relationship that exists between a father and his sons, with his presence releasing years of unresolved resentments and a shocking truth that threatens to destroy the family entirely.

*A Hatful of Rain* goes to great lengths to subvert the stereotypical view of the addict as a criminal “dope fiend” so restlessly promoted by Commissioner Anslinger. Johnny (the film's addict) is a veteran who bears the scars of a year of torture at the hands of Korean captors. He is nothing but a hero in the eyes of his previously absent father, in contrast to Polo whom John Sr. regards with contempt. He disapproves of Polo's job at a bar and his tendency to drink in the face of adversity (namely his father). Furthermore, Polo has also seemingly squandered \$2,500 of his father's money,

although in truth the money went to pay for Johnny's addiction, a secret that Polo keeps with great loyalty. When John Sr. tells Polo, "You're a bum; you always were and you always will be" the viewer would be forgiven for suspecting that it was the drunken, brawling bar-worker rather than the upstanding war veteran who is in fact the "junkie."

Further subverting Anslinger's approximation of the drug addict's personality, *A Hatful of Rain* demonstrates that Johnny's addiction was medically induced. In Anslinger's view, the "bulk" of the "addict population" was made up of psychopaths created by "infectious contact with persons already drug-conditioned" to "seek the drug for its euphoric value."<sup>69</sup> Johnny is no psychopath and certainly did not "seek" the drug. His year of captivity in Korea resulted in a year in an American hospital in which, as he describes it, "the nurse comes in, and then the doctor and then they roll up your sleeve, one, two, and three!" According to Anslinger, cases of medically-induced addiction were rare, as "a normal, healthy person" receives no specific psychological sensation from an opiate and will regard it simply as "something to relieve the pain." Medical inducement to addiction was supposedly only possible when a "serious flaw exists in an individual's personality such as neurosis, nervous hypertension, psychological maladjustment, or a psychopathic disorder." In these instances, the "victim" experiences a "sensation of happiness, of freedom from all troubles, which make him forget all his worries." This is certainly true of Johnny, who is desperate to forget about the trauma of Korea and can only find a psychological oasis in the drugs used as an aid in curing his physical scars. However, Johnny's "psychological maladjustments" and neurosis are inescapable by-products of his childhood and wartime experiences.

In open defiance of the FBN, *A Hatful of Rain* emphasises the inescapable and tragic reasons for Johnny's addiction. Johnny, never a criminal (he can't bring himself

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<sup>69</sup> H. J. Anslinger and William F. Tompkins, *The Traffic in Narcotics* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1953), p. 223.

to use a gun forced upon him by ruthless drug dealers in order to pay his escalating bill), is a victim of circumstance and a cruel and unforgiving system. The audience is asked to pity rather than condemn him, and the film seeks to cure rather than punish its protagonist. As children Johnny and Polo lose their mother and are subsequently forced into the care system when their father is unable to cope on his own. Johnny is brought up without a mother and the film suggests that his tendency toward heroin use is a direct result of this lack of motherly affection. As elucidated in the *Journal of Law and Contemporary Problems* in 1957, the addict was often seen as “responding to underlying personality problems of great complexity,” and these could often be reduced to their relationship with parents. According to the journal, “identification with the parent of the same sex may be poor, and the parent of the opposite sex is often overprotecting or rejecting or both.” Furthermore:

The addict’s preoccupation with family relationships is seen in his frequent use of “daddy” to talk to or refer to males. The widespread use of “baby” in talking to or in referring to females is another indicator of the addict’s regression and preoccupation with family. The supplier of drugs is often called “mother.”<sup>70</sup>

In the film, Johnny’s predatory dealer is only ever referred to as “Mother,” with one of his associates telling Johnny, “You got it for free in the hospital Johnny, but Mother’s no charity ward. Right, Mother?” and “Every boy belongs to his Mother!” Such terminology reminds the viewer of Johnny’s childlike dependence on “Mother” for a continued supply of heroin, and thus underscores the psychological and medical nature of his affliction.

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Winick, “Narcotics Addiction and Its Treatment,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* (School of Law, Duke University, Volume 22, 1957), p. 20.

Indeed, the film's conclusion is proof that America, as reflected through Hollywood, was beginning to understand the addict as a victim and addiction as a cruel but treatable disease. In the throes of withdrawal and cradled in wife Celia's arms, Celia tells viewers that "There is a place in Kentucky that takes care of people like Johnny." Celia calls the police: "You can't live like this. It's our only chance...I want the police. I want to report a drug addict. Yes, my husband. Would you hurry please?" Celia turns to the police as the only legitimate route through which to provide Johnny with the necessary medical treatment. She does not seek punishment for his "criminal" offences. In this way, the film defies Anslinger, who claimed, "Make no mistake about it – we're not dealing with something that hospitalization alone will cure but a dreaded scourge that penetrates infinitely deeper and requires a much greater effort to uproot." Hollywood was beginning to openly disagree.

At the beginning of a new decade, Hollywood's defiance would manifest itself in the addiction-themed film *Let No Man Write My Epitaph* (1960), a sequel to the juvenile delinquency-themed *Knock On Any Door* (1949) discussed in Chapter 3, that in relationship to its predecessor reveals the dramatic shift in social outlook over the eleven-year gap between the productions. The first film, based on an adaptation of African American author Willard Motley's debut novel of the same name, focuses on the social causes of Juvenile Delinquency, as "hoodlum" Nick Romano goes to trial for the murder of a police officer, and his lawyer is unsuccessful in saving him from execution. In the film sequel, also loosely based on a Motley novel, the themes and narrative focus shift from troubled youth to the flawed adult characters in Nick's life, particularly his mother Nellie Romano (Shelley Winters). The film opens at Christmas with Nick, a fatherless child who still resides in the urban slum, finding a surrogate family in a host of local characters including an alcoholic ex-judge, an ageing, sexually-

permissive spinster, and a heroin-addicted jazz singer played by Ella Fitzgerald. These characters vow to successfully navigate Nick through life in their corrupt slum environment. When the film moves forward to represent Nick's teenage years, it appears that this motley crew has been successful and Nick will be able to escape the slum through a nurtured musical talent. However, as Nellie struggles toward guide Nick to success and out of the slum, her own life falters resulting in prostitution and forced heroin addiction.

As in *A Hatful of Rain*, the drug addiction in *Let No Man Write My Epitaph* is presented as being beyond the control of the addict. Johnny, a war hero, was innocently infected during a prolonged stay in a military hospital, and Nellie, guided into prostitution by her deep love for her son and the need to provide for him, is forced to inject the drug by a drug-pusher when it appears she may be ready to end their "affair." By the late 1950s and into the 1960s, it was the drug-pusher, a non-using but predatory entity in the life of an addict, who was presented as both the criminal and social evil in the drug addiction cycle. The addict was now an innocent victim, trapped by circumstance and unwillingly forced into a dark criminal underworld.

These were more "honest" portrayals of deeply flawed yet sympathetic characters. James Mason's depiction of a family-man driven to acts of criminal insanity by addiction seems "cartoonish" when viewed alongside these later films. For Nellie Romano, heroin is at first a comfort, an escape from her troubled daily existence; as she herself exclaims upon receiving her first "dose," "I feel, not drunk, alive again, alive, I'm happy, happy..." It isn't long before this free supply ends and Nellie is forced to beg for help: "I'm sick, I'm so sick all over. Look at me! I'm like this inside too. You give me a fix!" It takes the death of a close friend to pull Nellie from the brink. Before the film closes with the image of Nick Romano confidently striding arm-in-arm with

his girlfriend, away from the slum and toward a happy middle-class existence, Nellie resolves to “take the cure,” terminology that places addiction firmly within the remit of medical professionals and not the police.

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In 1962, amidst a cultural climate of open defiance, Anslinger retired from his position, the same year that President Kennedy called for a White House Conference on Narcotics and Drug Abuse.<sup>71</sup> Four hundred authorities from the fields of law enforcement, correction, medicine, law, sociology and education were assembled in Washington D.C. for two weeks, with the President asking for “direct guidance” in order to form “a positive basis for much more constructive action by us all.” With Anslinger now retired, Kennedy would claim that “there is no area in which there is so much mystery, so much misunderstanding, and so many differences of opinion as in the area of narcotics.” The conference was self-consciously designed to kick-start new research, develop new approaches, and effect fundamental changes to government policy. Anslinger’s most vocal opponent, Alfred Lindesmith, would herald it as the “Beginnings of Wisdom.”<sup>72</sup>

In 1965, three years after the White House Conference on Narcotics and Drug Abuse, *Life* magazine ran a two-part photo essay that epitomised the seismic shift in attitude that had occurred over the fifteen-year period since Anslinger had sought to vilify and demonise the addict in the immediate post-war years. Over two issues and over forty pages, *Life* journalist James Mills and photographer Bill Eppridge openly and

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<sup>71</sup> It should be noted that Anslinger retired only when reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70, and had he been younger it is possible that he may have retained his job and continued to proselytise his ideologies.

<sup>72</sup> Kennedy and Lindesmith, cited in Wakefield (Ed.), *The Addict*, pp. 14-15.

honestly depicted the day-to-day life of two “typical” New York City heroin addicts. These were not *Bigger Than Life* monsters or crazed “dope-fiends,” but two very troubled human beings struggling to maintain a sense of normalcy whilst in the crippling grip of addiction. The subjects of the article were a “pretty girl named Karen,” and “a pleasant young man named John.” As they move through the city, the essay announces, it is observed that they “could be hurrying to a movie, a supermarket, a college classroom. But they are drug addicts, headed for heroin, for a pusher with a fix.” In startling images that would have angered the retired Commissioner, Karen and John are photographed injecting themselves (even during a hospital stay), buying drugs on the city streets, languishing behind the bars of a prison cell and fighting through the physical and mental torment of withdrawal. The photo essay clearly advocated a medical approach as solution. In the words of investigative journalist James Mills, *Life* claimed that “if he remains in hospital for months of treatment and general drug-free routine he emerges strong and healthy, completely cured of his physical addiction.” However, Mills also highlighted the need for treatment outside of the hospital, for “no matter how often or how painstakingly the addict is physically rehabilitated, his emotional problems have not been touched...Within a few weeks he will be physically addicted again, sick again, desperate again.”<sup>73</sup> By the 1960s, it was more commonly understood that the addict needed more than hospital treatment.

As *Life* magazine acknowledged, there was still much work to be done, more research to be carried out and more medical facilities to be opened. The negative attitude toward those addicted, openly advocated and encouraged for many years, did not simply disappear because of sympathetic cinematic portrayals (however powerful) and the retirement of one man (however influential). This is evident in the *Life* essay

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<sup>73</sup> James Mills and Bill Eppridge (photographer), “Drug Addicts Part 1.” *Life*, (February 26, 1965), pp. 66B-92B.

itself, which talks of the addict's "pathological" and "infectious" behaviour, of public parks populated by "Junkies, Johns and homosexuals," of "wispy addict lesbians" and "tall, lurking, trench-coated Negros."<sup>74</sup> However, by bringing the addict out from the shadows, by naming the addicts and presenting them as real people with *very* real problems, this *Life* photo-essay could indeed be taken as evidence of a "Beginning of Wisdom."

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<sup>74</sup> Mills and Eppridge, "Drug Addicts Part 1." *Life*, pp. 66B-92B.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis reveals how, in the 1950s, popular imagery and political rhetoric combined to link a plethora of domestic “deviants,” including juvenile delinquents, homosexuals, “modern” women and drug addicts, with a communist Other, portraying each as an insidious and sickly threat to the health of an idealised American home and family. I have explored how a nation was taught to fear not only an external Soviet enemy but a host of “enemies within,” groups and individuals who lived outside of proscribed notions of “normality.” My archival research has revealed that, whether to the left or right of the political spectrum, even the most ideologically simplistic movies made up just one part of a vast cross-media relay that, when viewed collectively, exposes the significance of mass media cultural forms in negotiating, as well as representing, supposedly deviant groups.

My case-studies, each underpinned by the interaction of cross-media discourses, reveal how specific social subjects were constructed as society’s Others marked by “diseased” behaviours. My study explores the wider political ideology involved in attaching the clinical term “diseased” to pre-existing domestic groups, and uncovers cultural machinations that kept the pathogen of the Other in view – on screen and in books, newspapers and magazines. This study reveals some of the ways in which politics and popular culture combined in the 1950s to form a cultural Panopticon, interconnected and wide-reaching and allowing for the media “surveillance” of the socially disenfranchised. I expose the role of film within this socio-cultural complex, demonstrating how American cinema in particular embraced socio-medical tropes and metaphors of disease, in narratives that delineated friend from enemy and “self” from “Other.”

In my first chapter, I traced the “ghostly epidemic” of Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham’s seminal study *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* through the journalism of *Life* magazine and *Ladies Home Journal*, instructional guides for living, television discussion shows, and ultimately *All About Eve* (1950), *Young Man With a Horn* (1950), *The Goddess* (1958) and *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957). These films formed primary case-studies which represented working, sexually-adventurous and sexually-manipulative women in emotional and psychological crisis. Women in these films are seen to “suffer” from masculinity complexes, frigidity, lesbianism and fractured personalities. The films question, test and extend *Modern Woman*’s central thesis, administering “cures” for those deemed worthy, and punishments for those who are not.

One can argue that, despite having made undeniably huge social, political and economic strides since the 1950s, American cinema still often measures a woman’s success in relation to having or not having a husband and according to her ability to shop and accessorise. *Sex and the City* (2008) epitomises this apparent lack of progress. Based on the hugely successful television show of the same name, *Sex and the City* chronicles the lives and loves of four independent and successful New York women. Although on the surface, the success of these women across the professions (law, journalism, art dealership and media promotions) suggests a vast departure from the films of the 1950s explored in this thesis, *Sex and the City* also represents female happiness and mental well-being in terms of a successful heterosexual partnership and / or a new pair of Manolo Blahnik heels. These are the quintessential neurotic “Women of Fashion” as described by Lundberg and Farnham and detailed in Chapter 1. Tellingly, *New Yorker* critic Anthony Lane would compare Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker), Samantha (Kim Cattrall), Charlotte (Kristin Davis) and Miranda (Cynthia

Nixon) with the four main players of *All About Eve*. Describing *Sex and the City* as a “superannuated fantasy posing as a slice of modern life,” Lane notes:

Almost sixty years after *All About Eve*, which also featured four major female roles, there is a deep sadness in the sight of Carrie and friends defining themselves not as Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, Celeste Holm, and Thelma Ritter did—by their talents, their hats, and the swordplay of their wits—but purely by their ability to snare and keep a man....All the film lacks is a subtitle: ‘The Lying, the Bitch, and the Wardrobe.’<sup>1</sup>

For some critics, *Sex and the City* not only signalled a lack of any real progress in the cinematic depiction of women, but actually represented a step backwards when compared with the 1950s.

My second chapter charted the construction of homosexuality as a disease and traced the movement and transmutation of the “pathogen” using Dr. Edmund Bergler’s *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* as a primary reference. Examining *Tea and Sympathy* (1956), *Compulsion* (1959), and *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959) alongside Bergler’s exposé, sensationalist tabloid journalism, television discussion shows and government reports, I was able to demonstrate how 1950s American cinema marked out the symptomatic manifestations of homosexuality as an undetectable yet infectious “disease” and the homosexual as a predatory danger.

By the mid-1960s, even with cold-war paranoia subsiding, homosexuality suffered a new set of “symptoms,” as gay men and women began to seek an open and equal existence (leading to the Stonewall riots in 1969). In a response to their visibility, *Life* journalist Paul Welch and photographer Bill Eppridge were able to expose the “problem” in their 1964 photo-essay “Homosexuality in America.” According to Welch, Eppridge’s photographs revealed a “sad and often sordid world,” and he

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Lane, “Carrie: Sex and the City,” *New Yorker* (May 29, 2008).  
[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2008/06/09/080609crici\\_cinema\\_lane?currentPage=all](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2008/06/09/080609crici_cinema_lane?currentPage=all)  
(Accessed 21/06/09).

concluded that no legal procedures could possibly change society's "basic repugnance to homosexuality as an immoral and disruptive force that should somehow be removed."<sup>2</sup> Such heightened feelings have continued to dominate debates over the validity / lawfulness of same-sex partnerships in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In 1973, the American Psychiatric Society removed homosexuality from its official list of disorders, although textbooks continued to describe homosexuality as an illness. Sadly, as recently as November 4 2008, the high-profile passing of Proposition 8 in California, outlawing same-sex marriage within the state, revealed to the world that some forty-five years later, Welch's words could still ring true.

However, with the restrictions of the Production Code having lapsed in the 1960s, and a more self-conscious and open treatment of homosexuality made evident down the decades, in 2008 the American film industry saw the release of *Milk*, Gus Van Sant's biographical account of the political rise and the assassination of Harvey Milk. As one would expect from an openly-gay filmmaker, *Milk* is hugely sympathetic towards the homosexual cause and its release reveals how far Hollywood has moved in supporting and representing the homosexual community, whilst simultaneously exposing the limits of political progress made since the 1970s. *Milk* was well-received critically and attracted little controversy—especially in contrast to Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) which was accused of "raping the Marlboro Man," prompting Robert Knight, director of the Culture and Family Institute at Concerned Women for America, a far-right advocacy group, to claim that "The constant promotion of homosexuality in the media has lowered resistance to the idea that homosexuality is normal and healthy."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Welch and Bill Eppridge, "Homosexuality in America," *Life* (June 26, 1964), p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing, same-sex marriage was legal in only three of fifty States (Massachusetts, Connecticut and Iowa) with Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire scheduled to follow suit by late 2009 / early 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Boehlert, "Cowboy Controversy: The battle over Oscar front-runner *Brokeback Mountain*," [http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/9257407/cowboy\\_controversy](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/9257407/cowboy_controversy) (Accessed 26/06/09).

*Milk* and *Brokeback Mountain* were both nominated for eight Academy Awards each with *Brokeback Mountain* winning for direction and *Milk* for both lead actor Sean Penn and screenwriter Dustin Lance Black. In his tearful acceptance speech, Black would proclaim to all young homosexuals that, despite ongoing persecution from the American religious right and local and federal governments, he believed that they might soon look forward to equal federal rights across the nation; it was a proclamation that resulted in a standing ovation for the young screenwriter.

My third chapter explored how cold-war metaphors of disease were co-opted by the proponents of the moral panic surrounding juvenile delinquency. Using *New York Times* Education Editor Benjamin Fine's *1,000,000 Delinquents* (1955) alongside *Time* and *Life* magazines, the words and writing of J. Edgar Hoover and federal government documents, I traced the spread of the delinquency pathogen from the "alien" environment of the inner-city slum in early film representations such as *City Across the River* (1949) and *Knock on any Door* (1949), to the idyllic suburban landscape of middle-class America in later films such as *The Unguarded Moment* (1956), *High School Hell Cats* (1958), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and the Ed Wood-scripted *The Violent Years* (1956). In the latter films, pathology supersedes poverty as the cause of both male and female delinquency.

Juvenile delinquency remains a vital issue in the United States. The Columbine High School massacre of 1999 (the highest profile example of several similar teenage high school shootings) thrust the delinquency "pathogen" back into the cultural and political spotlight.<sup>5</sup> In July of 1999, the FBI organised a summit on school shootings that was held in Virginia, and invited psychiatrists and psychologists to debate the

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<sup>5</sup> The massacre occurred on April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School, Jefferson County, Colorado. Students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed twelve students and a teacher, injuring many more before turning their guns on themselves. It currently stands as the fourth-deadliest school massacre in United States history. In April 2007, Seung-Hui Cho would exceed this total by killing thirty-two people on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in a similarly brutal incident.

issue. In a publication marking the fifth anniversary of the tragedy, it was concluded that the killers were depressed and clinically psychopathic. Not unlike the cases of Judd and Artie in *Compulsion*, the FBI claimed that both killers had a messianic superiority complex and that their crimes were a means of illustrating this to the world. Furthermore, whereas comic books and rock'n'roll would bear the brunt of the blame for delinquent juvenile behaviour in the 1950s, at the turn of the twenty-first century, violent video games such as *Doom*, movies such as *The Basketball Diaries* (1995)—which features a fantasy sequence in which Leonardo DiCaprio shoots six classmates wearing a similarly-styled trench-coat to those worn by the Columbine assailants— and the music of ‘shock rock’ artists including Marilyn Manson, would all be construed as damaging sources of “infection.”<sup>6</sup>

In Chapter 4, *Man With a Golden Arm* (1955), *A Hatful of Rain* (1957), *Bigger Than Life* (1956) and *Let No Man Write my Epitaph* (1960) are positioned within a wider cultural and political debate between the medical community, as represented by the American Medical Association, and federal law-makers as represented by Harry J. Anslinger’s Federal Bureau of Narcotics. This debate continues to rage. In 1969, President Nixon adopted a military metaphor in declaring a “War on Drugs.” The “war” to which Nixon referred was at its core a prohibition campaign intended to reduce the illegal drug trade and thus curb supply and diminish demand for specific substances deemed immoral, harmful, dangerous and undesirable. This initiative included a set of laws and harsh punitive policies intended to discourage the production, distribution and consumption of targeted substances, many of which still exist. However, as reported by *The Wall Street Journal* in May 2009, Gil Kerlikowske, the Director of the Office of

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<sup>6</sup> The film industry has also tackled this issue. Documentary filmmaker Michael Moore’s *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) tackled gun-control in the United States using the tragedy as a primary focal point. Gus Van Sant’s *Elephant* (2003) portrays events similar to those of the 1999 massacre. The moral panic and fear that followed the events of April 20, 1999 were also parodied in the little seen and highly controversial black comedy *Duck! The Carbine High Massacre* (2000).

National Drug Control Policy, signalled that the Obama administration would no longer use the term “War on Drugs.” Kerlikowske argued that the term had become counter-productive and was contrary to the new administration’s policy of favouring treatment over incarceration.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, although my final chapter closes in 1962 with the hopeful announcement of the dawning of an age of “wisdom” and understanding in the treatment - and indeed the depiction - of the socially disenfranchised, this thesis remains relevant beyond its specific historical context. Although the United States’ “enemies,” both foreign and domestic, may have changed since the 1950s, the apparent need to render difference as “Otherness” and “Otherness” as disease has not been eradicated. Understanding the role of popular culture in perpetuating, intensifying or nullifying social fear and anxiety in the context of the Cold War goes some way toward paving the way for an understanding of similar processes at work in the United States today.

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<sup>7</sup> Gary Fields, “White House Czar Calls for End to “War on Drugs.” <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124225891527617397.html> (Accessed: 26/06/09). The *Wall Street Journal* article claims that “the Obama administration is likely to deal with drugs as a matter of public health rather than criminal justice alone.”

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