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Screening Male Crisis: A Comparative Analysis of the Alternative Coming-of-Age Motion Picture

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Screening Male Crisis: A Comparative Analysis of the Alternative
Coming-of-Age Motion Picture

By

Matthew Tesoro

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in
satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Advisor: Robert Singer

This thesis will identify how the principle male character in select film narratives transforms from childhood through his adolescence in multiple locations and historical eras. The primary film narratives include Satyajit Ray's *Apu Trilogy: Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956), and *Apur Sansar* (1959), François Truffaut's "Antoine Doinel" cycle: *Les Quatre cents coups* (1959), *Antoine et Colette* (1962), *Baisers volés* (1968), *Domicile conjugal* (1970), and *L'Amour en fuite* (1979), and Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* (2014). These images of experience/maturation in motion are all intended to exemplify how the boy physically and psychologically changes over an extended period of time. The concept of the time-image will be shown to be an essential principal in passages from innocence to experience. I will establish how traditional characterizations of the young male as aggressive, unruly, and power-oriented individuals are refuted in alternative "takes" in these coming-of-age films, as a counter- genre cinema.

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Introduction

The coming-of-age tale is one that predates the history of cinema by quite some time. As old as Telemachus' journey and discovery of himself (and his father) in Homer's epic, the story of an individual's maturation has been revisited in countless expressions. Growing up is a universal human experience. However, as times change so do societies and the standards with which development is appropriated and (attempted to be) understood. Motion pictures have presented the psychosocial changes of children and adolescents for decades and have focused their gaze primarily on the male subject. Despite the natural drama that ensues with growing up and changing hormones, cinema in the early days was generally not catered to the youth of America. In the emerging twentieth-century, what it meant to be a child was contestable; adolescence was hardly included as a life cycle stage until G. Stanley Hall's 1904 publication on the topic,¹ and consistently, children “often left school by the age of 14 to begin jobs.”² As a cultural institution, the cinema was initially looked down upon. Promoted by ideological reformers to be of lower prestige than its stage relatives (traditional theater and vaudeville), the cinema was a moral battleground in American society.

According to William Pollack, dating back to the nineteenth-century a code of ethos he terms the “Boy Code,” was implemented.³ This code instituted gender assumptions, models, and rules for boys to abide by. Protested as both outdated and egregious, this “Boy Code” promotes behaviors fostering mental strength and physical reservation. Boys have been expected to limit or

¹ Kenneth Keniston, “Youth: A ‘New’ Stage of life,” *The American Scholar* 39, no. 4 (Autumn 1970): 631.

² Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 3.

³ William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, (New York: Owl Books, 1998), 6.

withhold emotional expressions like crying or “natural feelings of love,”⁴ while embracing qualities like brute force and sexual aggression, which have long been assumed to be masculine inclinations. While these assumptions about males in general are hardly the sole property of American habitude, the cinematic promulgation of stereotypical models within U.S. productions has exacerbated the long-standing and almost inevitably adopted wider associations of gender roles. As Laura Mulvey writes about the classical Hollywood system of the 30s, 40s, and 50s, the American cinematic industry reflected a dominant ideological concept of the cinema that saw women as, "signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions."⁵

Instead of merely reflecting societal customs, repetitious cinematic representations of masculine behavior magnify gender roles for men and women. The effect this mentality has on boys may be even greater. Many studies have examined how certain imagery, especially violence, affects youth. As Eugene V. Beresin says, “The typical American child will view more than 200,000 acts of violence, including more than 16,000 murders before age 18.”⁶ If boys are encouraged to be strong and not display weakness then they may comprehend violent media depictions as verification that aggression is the primary emotional component of masculinity. As Johanna Oksala writes, "Whether we look at violent (...) the gender difference itself."⁷ The prevalence of violence in our culture is reflected in mass media imagery. The affect this has upon our society helps to create gender norms. In the case of cinematic representations of aggression,

⁴ Pollack, *Real Boys*, 13.

⁵ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Pleasure,” *Film Theory & Criticism*. 7th ed., edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 712.

⁶ Eugene V. Beresin, “The Impact of Media Violence on Children and Adolescents: Opportunities for Clinical Interventions,” *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, accessed May 3, 2016, https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Medical_Students_and_Residents/Mentorship_Matters/DevelopMentor/The_Impact_of_Media_Violence_on_Children_and_Adolescents_Opportunities_for_Clinical_Interventions.a_spx.

⁷ Johanna Oksala, *Foucault, Politics, and Violence* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 73.

there is a possible disproportionate influence on males because feature films are often about male subjects and are targeted towards male audiences, despite females being half the “moviegoing public.”⁸

Therefore, in mass media boys commonly observe men and the ways in which society dictates they (should) behave. Boys, who are raised witnessing societal indifference, acceptance, or promotion towards male aggression, may be predisposed towards the trait as adults. This supposition is applicable with other assumptions of masculinity such as male dominance and reticence of feelings. But what about the cinematic coming-of-age rendering, the migration course from boyhood to manhood, does it offer a different aspirational representation for boys? Maturation is a quintessence of the coming-of-age genre. Aspects of the transition from adolescence to adulthood (e.g. aggressive behavior, sexual relationships, witnessing death) are consistently visited in boy-to-young man films. However, a handful of features have taken unique, if not anti-cinema (anti-Hollywood) approaches, demonstrating the cognitive and physical developments and experiences of masculine youth.

In exploring coming-of-age motion pictures it is important to look at the treatment of time, which separates traditional films like *Stand by Me* (Rob Reiner, 1986), *The Sandlot* (David M. Evans, 1993), and *The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes, 1985) from unordinary productions like Satyajit Ray’s *Apu Trilogy*, François Truffaut’s “Antoine Doinel” cycle, and Richard Linklater’s *Boyhood*. Time is the crucial aspect of differentiation because the traditional films of the genre that follow conventions (i.e. short time scale, flashbacks) revolve around the “anthropological concept ‘rite of passage’,” that are “dramatically outside the institutional frames of adolescence...which imagine adolescence as a long transition in need of guidance and

⁸ Brent Lang, “Study Finds Fewer Lead Roles for Women in Hollywood,” *Variety*, last modified February 9, 2015, <http://variety.com/2015/film/news/women-lead-roles-in-movies-study-hunger-games-gone-girl-1201429016/>.

discipline.”⁹ Atypical coming-of-age cinema focuses upon the banalities of everyday life and captures adolescent transformation over an extended period of time, both contextually and through production; emotional, intellectual, and physical metamorphosis are recorded in an elongated fashion stretching years.

Catherine Driscoll says that, “Many teen films symbolize coming of age with a formal ritual, but this is rarely a literal passage to adulthood.”¹⁰ Even less formal social markers or activities not at all ritualistic, like witnessing a dead body in *Stand by Me* or detention in *The Breakfast Club*, are not actual transitions into adulthood, but instead, they “open up new possible experiences.”¹¹ I question the effectiveness representations like these have in demonstrating the experience of entering maturity. Films like *Stand by Me*, *The Sandlot*, and *The Breakfast Club*, also inadvertently cultivate the “Boy Code,” by reinforcing masculine stereotypes such as acts of bravery in *The Sandlot* and rebelliousness in *The Breakfast Club*. Adversely, the aforementioned coming-of-age pictures by Ray, Truffaut, and Linklater, which detailedly examine the process of boyhood through adolescence into adulthood, offer an alternative insight into personal transformation. By lengthily displaying the evolution of the male protagonist and employing other aberrant cinematic techniques to the genre, like tracking shots and non-professional actors, Ray, Truffaut, and Linklater seek to capture the boy in his environment in documentary and Neo-realist capacities. Therefore, these atypical coming-of-age films exhibit the male experience of unsuccessfully conforming to the norms of masculinity embedded and enforced in cultures influenced by Western ethics.

⁹ Catherine Driscoll, *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 66.

¹⁰ Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 66.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

Chapter 1

The primary theme of the coming-of-age genre is the moment of any transformation where the discovery of such is implicit.¹² Conventions of this metamorphosis manifest through reflection and epiphany (via dialogue and physical display of emotions). In *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995), Cher realizes love for her stepbrother Josh through an inner monologue. After an argument with her friend Tai, Cher decides to go for a walk where she comes to the conclusion that she is “totally clueless” in terms of how she perceives the relationships around her. Cher narrates about Tai’s incompatibility with Josh, as well as Josh’s overall poor bachelor viability. When Cher realizes her own affection for Josh with the words, “I love Josh. I am majorly, totally, butt crazy in love with Josh!” corresponding recollections are shown on-screen of previous instances in the film, further supporting Cher’s moment of discovery. Similarly, the time period for the change usually is short in nature in conventional coming-of-age films: a memorable summer, a semester at school, a handful of days or even a few hours.¹³ For example, *The Breakfast Club* is set over an eight-hour period. Due to the brevity of both production and story, physical growth of the actor (and character) are undetectable and do not garner much concern. In numerous instances what is made further apparent by the duration is how the shorter span of time corresponds to the greater impact of the event that brings about the cause for transformation.

As the mode of conveyance, the importance of “the event” is evident for a number of reasons. The event almost necessarily unearths fight-or-flight responses for the protagonists. Their (re)actions to the event will correlate (either positively or negatively) to their

¹² Anne Hardcastle, introduction to *Coming of Age on Film: Stories of Transformation in World Cinema* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholarly Publishing, 2009), 1.

¹³ Sarah Casey Benyahia, Freddie Gaffney, and John White. *AS Film Studies: The Essential Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 271.

characteristics. Temperaments may alter in moments of adversity or may resort to the initial disposition, with a potentially increased measure. In *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (John Hughes, 1986), Ferris describes his best friend Cameron as a very anxious person. Cameron, who unlike Ferris is genuinely out sick from school, expresses pleasure that his mother is not home. When Ferris convinces Cameron to take out Cameron's father's Ferrari, Cameron states that his father "loves this car more than life itself" and would be apoplectic if it was driven or damaged in anyway. Later, Ferris addresses the audience by breaking the fourth wall and says that the reason why Cameron is uptight and sick constantly is because "his home life is really twisted." The viewer does not witness first hand the family dynamic of the Frye's and more specifically, how Cameron's father treats him as opposed to how he treats the car. Providing the means for psychological growth necessarily becomes the event due to the conciseness of Cameron's exposition. After the truant excursion in Chicago with the Ferrari, Ferris, Cameron and Sloane (Ferris' girlfriend), try to roll back the odometer so that it appears the car was not driven. Once their rouse fails, Cameron decides that he will "take a stand" and confront his father about using the car.

The event that brings about transformation for Cameron is the inability to hide the miles on the odometer, followed by the accidental destruction of the car. His tense demeanor is not reinforced by the event but is instead rejected. Since the emphasis is placed on the turning point occurrence, the mannerisms, beliefs, and nature of Cameron, is given abridged treatment. In the case of Cameron, his uptight personality is primarily indicated to the audience by Ferris's description. Furthermore, Cameron's insecurity is only empirically evident to the audience in opposition to Ferris' rebelliousness. Cameron is "uptight" through Ferris' judgment of him. What is thus established is the premise of clichéd personalities; Cameron is uptight as Ferris is

rebellious. Cameron serves as counterpoint to the protagonist Ferris, which is even confirmed early on in the film by the fact that Cameron is genuinely sick while Ferris lies about being ill. Cameron transforms and finds courage to face his father once the plan for the car fails. However, his maturation is enacted by the defiant nature of Ferris. Similarly, the realization Ferris has that, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it," only truly happens when his sister Jeannie covers for him with Rooney. Ferris was otherwise caught by the Dean of Students and faced another year of high school as punishment for unacceptably skipping school. These two instances of male metamorphosis in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* declare that through disobedience and mendacity, personal growth and success are achievable. For Jeannie, she comes to terms about Ferris' luck and her misfortune regarding skipping school, during her conversation with the delinquent in the police station.

What may be taken away from these exchanges in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* is that for females, discovery happens by way of discussion, while males experience moments of elucidation through action. This postulation has some scientific credibility. Men and women appear to listen differently as revealed in a neurological study by Michael Phillips. While one gender is not better than the other at listening, men's brains tend to utilize only the left side while women show activity in both hemispheres.¹⁴ What this data indicates is that, "males tend to be action-oriented listeners (those focused on listening to information pertaining to completing a task at hand), whereas females tend to be people-oriented listeners (those concerned more with how listening affects relationships compared to content)."¹⁵ An initial question that may arise is whether or not these results are innately sex-based (i.e. biological) or are societal constructs of gender. In a study conducted by Daphna Joel of Tel-Aviv University, MRI scans of male and

¹⁴ Sandra D. Collins, *Module 5: Interpersonal Communication Listening and Responding*. 2nd ed., ed. by James O'Rourke, IV. (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2009), 31.

¹⁵ Collins, *Module 5*, 31

female brains show that, “human brains cannot be categorized into two distinct classes: male brain/female brain.”¹⁶ Diametrically opposed, Sandra Witelson of McMaster University says there are, “hundreds of anatomical and chemical differences between the brains of men and women...at the tender age of five weeks, male embryos get doused in testosterone, changing them and their brains forever.”¹⁷

To be concluded from the work of Phillips, Joel, Witelson is that while human brains may or may not be structurally indiscernible between the sexes, interaction with the environment undeniably causes chemical components to act differently for men and women. Aside from physical person-to-person interactions, there may be reason to assume that mass media imagery correspondingly affects men and women differently. As Thomas Blume writes, “Violence is strongly associated with gender; males not only commit more violent acts, they also are the primary consumers of entertainment with violent themes.”¹⁸ Violence and anger are the extremes of aggressiveness. The emotion of aggression is an assumed male characteristic, which again, has some scientific basis; higher testosterone levels have been shown to correlate with increased levels of violent crimes committed.¹⁹ However, do cultural assumptions about masculinity perpetuate the attitudes and behaviors of boys and men?

The answer seems to be “yes.” In *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, Timothy Shary address Hollywood’s fascination with juvenile delinquency in teen film.

¹⁶ Daphna Joel et al., “Sex beyond the genitalia: The human brain mosaic,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 50 (December 15, 2015): 15468, accessed May 5, 2016, doi: 10.1073/pnas.1509654112.

¹⁷ David Kattenburg, “Neuroscientists explore differences in male, female brains,” *CBC/Radio-Canada*, last modified March 3, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/men-women-brains-difference-1.3473154>.

¹⁸ Thomas W. Blume, “Social Perspectives on Violence,” *Michigan Family Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 9-23, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4919087.0002.102>.

¹⁹ Menelaos L. Batrinos, “Testosterone and Aggressive Behavior in Man,” *International Journal of Endocrinology Metabolism* 10, no. 3 (2012): 564, accessed November 22, 2015, doi: 10.5812/ijem.3661.

Shary highlights various studies conducted by Scott Snyder and Charles Acland, on the affect the aspect of delinquency has on teenagers in cinematic representations:

The most specific (if clinical) research on teen film delinquency in the 1990s was in three articles by Scott Snyder (1991, 1995a, 1995b), who illustrated the ramifications of Hollywood's ambivalent tendency to hype JD violence, arguing that youth may be too influenced by the dramatically thrilling aspects of delinquency films to appreciate their moral messages. Thus, even when positive and negative options are presented, the lingering impact on youth remains the excitement of delinquency itself. This argument would gain further credence with studies such as Charles Acland's *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of "Youth in Crisis"* (1995), which argued that not only do youth movies such as *River's Edge* (1987) and even *The Breakfast Club* (1985) serve *adult* authority, worse yet, they delude youth with a false sense of power. In more blatant terms, youth are sold the entertainment of their deviance, which arises from the defamation of their images and the degradation of their own authority. In depicting delinquency onscreen in dynamic and dramatic ways, most teen films are artificially providing rebellion for youth who are told that what they do outside the theater will be of little consequence.²⁰

It is reasonable to surmise that depictions in films other than delinquency and rebellion similarly influence youth. Shary writes that, "by the 1980s, many school films (...) (stereo)typecasting in *The Breakfast Club*."²¹ The apex of exhibiting multiple school characters was reached in John Hughes' film, which "feature the five basic characters of school films that permeate the subgenre."²² Shary classifies these five personifications as nerds, delinquents, psychologically distraught rebels, "popular" types, and jocks.²³

Cinematic athletes (jocks) are "often stereotyped as being stupid and preoccupied with their sport, since their abilities in that sport may be their main means to success at school, or even later in life."²⁴ An example of the "dumb jock" is Ricky from *Boyz N the Hood* (John Singleton, 1991). Ricky, one of the three male protagonists of the film, is a star running back on his South Central Los Angeles high school football team. Ricky's athletic prowess finds him being recruited by the University of Southern California. During the scene in which a USC

²⁰ Timothy Shary, "Bad Boys and Hollywood Hype: Gendered Conflict in Juvenile Delinquency Films," *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, ed. by Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 24-25.

²¹ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 30-31.

²² *Ibid.*, 31.

²³ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

representative comes to Ricky's home for an interview, Ricky's educational ineptitude is displayed for the first time. The recruiter asks Ricky about what type of major he would like to pursue and states the, "strong possibility that you won't go into the N.F.L. after college." Ricky's response of, "Yeah. I heard that before," along with the uncertainty of fields of study he lists, demonstrate the lack of consideration Ricky gives to his education. When contrasted with his delinquent brother Doughboy, Doughboy expresses that when you go to college, "Your black ass supposed to be learnin' somethin'." Therefore, even the drug-dealing criminal understands that the primary function of attending college is for learning, and not for other curricular activities.

Ricky gives little thought to the possibility of success in life outside the avenue of sport due to his intellectual inferiority. Tre, the main protagonist in *Boyz N the Hood*, is not athletically gifted and relies on educational salvation; Doughboy is neither smart nor athletic and sees no way out of his situation. Charlene Register proclaims that there is a, "commodification of the image of Michael Jordan who presents the false ideal that success is achievable for blacks in America, when the reality is that most blacks will not find ready access to such success."²⁵ Therefore, the stereotype of the (dumb) jock is amplified when observed by black youth because of the racial, political, and economic obstacles many blacks face. Regardless of complexion, the application of being an intellectually inferior athlete affects males more than females.²⁶ The cultural perception of masculinity as viewed through athleticism can also help create a

²⁵ Charlene Register, "The Feminization and Victimization of the African American Athlete in *Boyz N the Hood*, *Cooley High*, and *Cornbread, Earl and Me*," *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, ed. by Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 334.

²⁶ Annie Murphy Paul, "The Dumb Jock Stereotype Can Be a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," *New York Times*, last modified April 24, 2014, http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/24/the-dumb-jock-stereotype-can-be-a-self-fulfilling-prophecy/?_r=0.

“stereotype threat;” when real life students feel themselves belonging to a group generally conceived as inferior in any way, they can be negatively affected social-psychologically.²⁷

In tandem with the usual perception of jocks being stupid, when the level of masculinity is determined by athletic ability, a young male athlete may be put under additional pressure of wanting to prove such stereotypes wrong while also attempting to not diminish the appearance of his manliness by being *too* intelligent. The classic (stereotypical) representation of the extremely smart character is the nerd. Male nerds, like male jocks, are discernable by their physical and behavioral depictions; male nerds generally possess a lack of physical presence and assumed social ineptitude, compared to their jock counterparts.²⁸ In an early scene in the film *Heathers* (Michael Lehmann, 1988), the nerds or “geek squad” are seen congregated at their own aloof table in the school cafeteria. When “Heather Number One” looks and gestures briefly at the table, one of the boys splatters milk over himself in disbelief that she looked at *him*. Compared to the table of affluent, preppy-looking students that Heather and Veronica previously address, the four boys at the geek table are dressed unfashionably wearing suspenders, glasses, and/or braces. Shary writes that, “The irony of nerds’ oppression is that they excel at the very practice that school is designed to promote—learning.”²⁹ However, the emergence of the digital age and Internet revolution may render this supposition as inaccurate.

According to Jack Myers, “An alternative male role model (...) cool to be a geek.”³⁰ Because of their intelligence and proficiency with technology in today’s economy, nerds like those represented on television shows like CBS’s *The Big Bang Theory* and HBO’s *Silicon*

²⁷ “Stereotype Threat Widens Achievement Gap,” last modified July 15, 2006, <http://www.apa.org/research/action/stereotype.aspx>.

²⁸ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 33.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰ Jack Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century* (San Francisco: Inkshares, 2016), Kindle edition.

Valley, are now “highly esteemed member(s) of society.”³¹ Nevertheless, despite their economic and social progressions, the physical appearance of the male nerd is still expected to be less virile. Aside from the aforementioned television shows whose characters are presented to fit the traditional look of the nerd, critical responses to the casting of Michael Mann’s film *Blackhat* (2015), indicate the popular expectation of such stereotypes. In *Blackhat*, actor Chris Hemsworth portrays Nicholas Hathaway, a hacker that is furloughed out of prison to assist the FBI in apprehending another hacker. In an in-depth examination of the thirty-eight accessible reviews of *Blackhat* on the aggregator website *Metacritic*: twenty-one reference Hemsworth’s physique; eleven of the twenty-one explicitly deride the casting of Hemsworth as a hacker simply because of his appearance.³² Only one review, Peter Rainer’s piece in *The Christian Science Monitor*, defends the possibility of a statuesque nerd saying, “Do cyber whizzes look like Chris Hemsworth, best known for playing Thor? I’m sure some do.”³³ It should be noted that months before the film’s release, Hemsworth was named *PEOPLE*’s “Sexiest Man Alive” for 2014,³⁴ substantiating that his physical appeal was well established in the public sphere.

As demonstrated by the majority of *Blackhat*’s critiques, the common perception of a hacker or someone who is proficient with computers (i.e. the nerd) still does not coincide with the perception of masculine physicality. However, is an *attractive* female nerd easier to accept? In the same analysis of reviews, the female lead and computer aficionado Tang Wei, has her physical appeal mentioned four times; only once is her attractiveness explicitly declared

³¹ Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century*.

³² “Blackhat.” *Metacritic*. Accessed May 8, 2016. <http://www.metacritic.com/movie/blackhat/critic-reviews>.

³³ Peter Rainer, 'Blackhat' shows it isn't easy dramatizing cyber intrigue,” *Christian Science Monitor*, last modified January 16, 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Movies/2015/0116/Blackhat-shows-it-isn-t-easy-dramatizing-cyber-intrigue>.

³⁴ Julie Jordan and Antoinette Y. Coulton, “Chris Hemsworth Is PEOPLE's Sexiest Man Alive,” *PEOPLE*, last modified November 19, 2014, http://www.people.com/people/package/article/0,,20315920_20873901,00.html.

unlikely. It is worth pointing out that the improbability of Wei's beauty, according to the *New York Times*' Manohla Dargis, may be linked to the film's coupling of her with Hemsworth.³⁵ In another film to come out in 2015, *Furious 7* (James Wan) also features a female hacker. In the film, Roman expresses to Tej that hackers like Ramsey (Nathalie Emmanuel), the one whom the group just liberated, "don't supposed to look like that." Roman goes on to say that, "they (hackers) normally wear them little weird glasses that's all crooked, pimples all over they face from drinking soda? I mean, trust me, with a body like that, ain't gonna park it behind a computer."

Despite the dialogue presenting the topic, in an analysis of forty-three various critiques of *Furious 7*, Ramsey's physical appeal was addressed only twelve times. Jamie Graham's "Fast & Furious 7 Review" piece for GamesRadar+ was the sole review objecting to the female hacker's attractiveness. Graham writes that Emmanuel's character, "rivals *Blackhat*'s Chris Hemsworth in the 'unfeasibly beautiful hacker' stakes."³⁶ What may be concluded from the examples and opinions of male nerds in cinema verses female nerds is that intelligence is not a masculine trait. Like the delinquent and jock stereotypes, the nerd application can be damaging to people associated with the group by causing a stereotype threat. The continued commodification and sale of such images to all youth may be equally injurious. As Crystal Smith declares, "As boys get older, stereotyped behaviours become further entrenched (...) The situation does not improve for grown men."³⁷ How stereotypical behaviors become enriched in boys and the effect that has upon them grown up must somehow reflect and be reflected in cinematic portrayals of the

³⁵ Manohla Dargis, "Unshackled Hacker Dons a White Hat," *New York Times*, last modified January 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/16/movies/blackhat-a-cyberthriller-starring-chris-hemsworth.html?>

³⁶ Jamie Graham, "Fast & Furious 7 Review," *gamesradar.com*, last modified March 24, 2015, <http://www.gamesradar.com/fast-furious-7-review/>.

³⁷ Crystal Smith, *The Achilles Effect: What Pop Culture is Teaching Young Boys about Masculinity* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011), Kindle edition.

coming-of-age process. The coming-of-age film has overwhelmingly depicted the male experience. Smith has commented on the multifaceted effects of male (over) exposure:

This emphasis on the male experience lowers girls' self-esteem and occupational aspirations. But I would argue that a males-only focus also has an impact on boys. The imbalance between male and female characters gives boys a "biased representation of the social world" that promotes gender inequality while reinforcing many of the stereotypes discussed earlier: men are the stronger sex and, as such, cannot betray signs of femininity or weakness; men are protectors and must show their strength and aggression when needed; and men are natural leaders who must aspire to be in charge."³⁸

Because gender assumptions are shaped by culture, the representations of social-psychological and biological maturation of boys in patriarchal societies are extremely significant.

³⁸ Smith, *The Achilles Effect: What Pop Culture is Teaching Young Boys about Masculinity*.

Chapter 2

Deportment has been instructed, indoctrinated, and prescribed in coming-of-age tales since the ancient Greeks encouraged young boys to follow in the footsteps of the warrior Achilles and not the explorative discoverer, Telemachus.³⁹ The hero/warrior ideal is a hallmark of masculinity. It is this concept, which like Pollack's Boy Code, "teach boys to equate manhood with dominance, physical strength, and a decided absence of vulnerability."⁴⁰ Let us now further examine a few examples of conventional films within the coming-of-age genre, which address adolescent transformation, and reinforce traditional views of masculinity. In *Stand by Me*, a group of twelve-year-old boys set off to witness and conspicuously alert authorities about the deceased body of a missing kid. The film opens with a middle-aged man sitting in a truck on the side of an empty road. The audience discovers it is the well-known actor Richard Dreyfuss. He is pondering, glances at a seemingly recent Oregonian newspaper dated September 4, 1985, and then watches two youths pass him while simultaneously riding their bikes and conversing on the road. As they advance farther into the distance his head turns and the camera slowly begins to zoom in. While the frame is in motion Dreyfuss' narrated voice states the opening lines of the film: "I was twelve going on thirteen the first time I saw a dead human being."

The zooming in to a medium close-up shot of the man from within the car dissolves to a shot of cheap, old crime publications being purchased by a young boy. Indirectly the narration and dissolve infer that the boy, Gordie, is Dreyfuss when he was twelve, (played by actor Wil Wheaton). The narration continues and informs us that the setting is 1959 Castle Rock, Oregon (a fictional small town). In less than two minutes of running time what has been established is

³⁹ Jessica Wissman, "Athena's 'Unreasonable Advice': The Education of Telemachus in Ancient Interpretations of Homer," *Greek, Roman & Byzantine Studies* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 2009): 448-49.

⁴⁰ Smith, *The Achilles Effect: What Pop Culture is Teaching Young Boys about Masculinity*.

that the story is told retrospectively, first-person narration will be communicating knowledge of the character's thoughts and emotions, and understanding and maturation occurs with critical surveying of the past. By setting *Stand by Me* in a fictional small town an "anywhere" conception is engendered. However, this generic sense is limited due to the film taking place within the United States, the state of Oregon, depicting 1959, and seen from the eyes of a male protagonist. Furthermore, the entire cast is Caucasian, which potentially lessens the range of spectators who may be able to relate to the characters.

The moment of transition has already been alluded to by Dreyfuss' voice-over about observing a dead body for the first time, indicating that it is this standalone event that signifies his coming-of-age. Supporting this notion is the fact that the processes for setting up the protagonist's moment of transition, meaning the events that bring about the moment of transition, occur within a relatively short duration that is less than two days time. Occasions that do not have relevancy to the transformation like daily routines do not appear in the film. The only instances shown of Gordie as boy before the expedition are through two flashbacks (i.e. memories), with his recently deceased older brother Denny. While packing for the adventure with his friends, Gordie reminisces over a baseball cap he was given by Denny to use on a fishing trip. In the second memory, Gordie recalls a family dinner where Denny extolled his younger brother's writing skills. Because the context of the memories focuses on Gordie's dead brother, the memories supplement the set-up of Gordie's transformation, which is fulfilled by the event of seeing a dead body.

The major themes of *Stand by Me* are friendship and the confrontation with death. Over the course of the two days, the boys undergo internal and external conflicts. For Gordie, it is coming-to-terms regarding Denny's passing. For Chris Chambers it is about being "one of those

low-life Chambers kids,” and his lack of options in life. Teddy Duchamp is the kid with psychological problems like his institutionalized father, while Vern Tessio deals with being the fat boy subject to constant ridicule. The boys also face being bullied by a group of older teenage males, who similarly wish to flaunt *discovering* the body. Due to the catalyzing agent of the event, together the boys experience the bonds that grow between friends amidst physical and psychological confrontations. However, *Stand by Me* is also exhibited as a masculine coming-of-age tale because the two days are fashioned as a heroic adventure. Korinna Csetényi evokes Arthur W. Biddle’s assertion of the odyssey, “as the quintessential example of the mythic journey in which the hero has to undergo different trials in order to return as a new man.”⁴¹ The trials for Gordie include outrunning a junkyard dog, avoiding an oncoming train by jumping off a bridge, removing leeches from his body, and confronting the missing boy’s corpse. Even the path the boys take to reach the body, symbolized by the train tracks, works as a metaphor towards their coming-of-age.

Gordie initially breaks down and cries after seeing the dead body. Chris comforts Gordie and as he regains his composure, Gordie is able to come-to-terms with the concept of death and “his maturity is achieved.”⁴² However, Gordie’s masculinity cannot be similarly demonstrated by the conversation that he and Chris have because crying is a prime factor of Pollack’s first “Boy Code *Injunction*.” The “sturdy as oak” imperative declares that, “boys are not to share pain or grieve openly.”⁴³ Once the older boys arrive at the scene, there is a clash for who holds sway to the corpse. Csetényi describes how the hero’s journey is fulfilled through trial and competition:

After some verbal insults, the fight is decided by the firing of a pistol, which Chris had stolen from his father. With the help of this phallic gun, the young ones succeed in making the older boys retreat. Thus,

⁴¹ Korinna Csetényi, “Fall from Innocence: Stephen’s King’s *The Body*,” *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2009), accessed January 12, 2016.

⁴² Csetényi, “Fall from Innocence.”

⁴³ Pollack, *Real Boys*, 23.

they prove their masculinity. Though later they decide against carrying the body back with them, they clearly depart the scene as the victors. The hero's initiation phase is completed, and now he can return home.⁴⁴

Gordie's face, originally sad and teary, is now dry and stoic while holding the gun and staring down his threat. The emotional look of the *boy* is supplanted by the hardened and indifferent look that embodies manliness. The heroic treatment in *Stand by Me* indicates that in fulfilling the hero's journey, by overcoming the obstacles that lead to Gordie's self-discovery and displaying dominance over the older boys, his "masculinity is unquestioned."⁴⁵ This notion is problematic because it exemplifies Ellen Jordan's "warrior discourse," which as Crystal Smith describes, "is the source of most boys' understanding of masculinity."⁴⁶

As Leonard Heldreth writes about the character of Gordie in Stephen King's novella *The Body*, from which *Stand by Me* is adapted, Gordie comes to realize that, "understanding the self requires understanding the past."⁴⁷ The prime example of this assertion is at the very end of the film when the narrative returns to the present. Gordie (Dreyfuss) is seen on the screen typing on a computer, "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?" Immediately before Dreyfuss composes these thoughts, the camera is situated where the computer is and creates a shot-reverse-shot with Dreyfuss, who is looking directly into the camera. The placement of the camera and where Dreyfuss focuses his gaze makes it feel like he is directly addressing the spectator. The wisdom that Gordie has discovered for himself through understanding the past is now being imparted to the audience. In other words, the mentorship of Dreyfuss' narration helps the spectator (mentoree) understand the experiences of the boys on-

⁴⁴ Csetényi, "Fall from Innocence."

⁴⁵ Smith, *The Achilles Effect: What Pop Culture is Teaching Young Boys about Masculinity*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Leonard G. Heldreth, "Viewing 'The Body': King's Portrait of the Artist as Survivor," In *The Gothic World of Stephen King*, ed. by Gary Hoppenstand and Ray B. Browne, (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), 71.

screen. Another issue of how the narration acts as a mentoring role is the way in which Gordie's recollections of the two days are presented visually. Gordie (Dreyfuss) stages what happened in 1959 as one big memory or flashback. Memories are faulty. However, numerous occasions in *Stand by Me* reinforce a common misperception that memory, "works like a video camera, recording the world around us onto a mental tape that we can later replay."⁴⁸ The most troubling example is of four instances where the audience witnesses the actions of the older male teenagers. They are seen driving around in cars knocking off mailboxes with baseball bats, fishing, listening to music and drinking beer. On these four occasions where the narrative follows the older boys, Gordie is not present nor is any information about the older boys relayed to him by a second-hand source.

Displaying the older boys in this fashion likens Dreyfuss to an omniscient narrator. However, Gordie could not know exactly what transpired independently between the older boys, yet what is shown on the screen is never considered to be fabrication. As a result, this leads us to question Gordie's memory being *accurate* like a camera. *Accuracy*, as utilized here, is an understanding that images in films (with or without synchronous sound) representing past, remembered, dreamed, or imagined events, infer the same practical reliability, as do the images in films portraying the present diegetic world. Gordie's memories as an adult (which include the memories of Wheaton's Gordie) are represented almost identically as is the depicted action of Dreyfuss's physical reminiscing and retelling. Wheaton's memories do show some possible unreliability: his first recollection about Denny is cued in by a sentimental non-diegetic melody and echoing of Denny's foreshadowed voice. Nevertheless, there is otherwise no distortion or failings of Dreyfuss' recount.

⁴⁸ Katherine Harmon, "4 Things Most People Get Wrong About Memory," *Scientific American*, last modified August 4, 2011, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/4-things-most-people-get-wrong-about-memory/>.

The opening and closing scenes of *Stand By Me* show the protagonist Gordie as an adult. His flashback(s) work as an exhibition unlike a recreation, which intends to acutely display him as a boy in 1959. Narrating the events and composing them on a computer indicate how it would appear to an audience reading or listening to the descriptions sans, or having limited, visual cues. Hence, the flashbacks possess far less ambiguity. Becoming witnesses to Gordie's recollections (both of the diegetically present and past), the viewer sees with impeccable clarity the chronicled situations. Numerous studies demonstrate how people tend to think of photographs (analogue and digital) as inexpugnable and trustworthy depictions of past occurrences.⁴⁹ In the case of *Stand by Me*, the spectator can look upon the images of Dreyfuss' flashback and judge them to be not necessarily factual or truthful retelling of events but rather a rationale and plausible recount. The problem with people not critically objecting to this sweeping procedure is the spurious precept, which is received willingly and continuously re-established: memories/flashbacks in films being deemed historically calculable (diegetically at least), in a conventional conception likewise to photographs.

Corroborating these propositions is the flashback and audile conveyance throughout *The Sandlot*. The film is about "A new kid in town is taken under the wing of a young baseball prodigy and his team."⁵⁰ Over the course of a summer in 1962, the boys go through a number of adventures including trying to retrieve a baseball signed by Babe Ruth from a vicious guard dog. The motion picture is told through the eyes of the adult Scott "Scotty" Smalls (actor Arliss Howard) and is voiced by the director David M. Evans, heard distinctly from the actor portraying elder version of the protagonist. In the first scene, Evans' opening lines recite the proclaimed

⁴⁹ Kimberley A. Wade, Maryanne Garry, J. Don Read, and D. Stephen Lindsay, "A picture is worth a thousand lies: Using false photographs to create false childhood memories," *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 9, no. 3 (2002): 597-98.

⁵⁰ "The Sandlot," *IMDB*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108037/>.

sole "all-time greatest moment in the history of sports," the 1932 World Series where Babe Ruth's famously called a home run shot. The movie's reporting of the blast is riddled with inaccuracies.⁵¹ It is true that even to this day no one definitively knows whether or not Babe Ruth verily declared that he would hit a home run, but the tale being presented is heavily mythicized. Why make that decision and what is its effect?

The fabling of Babe Ruth's feat by the director indicates an additional chronicler to *The Sandlot*: The auditory narrator (Evans) joins the avatar of the narrator (Howard) and the enactor of the recollected (ten-year-old Smalls played by actor Thomas Guiry). By separating (or transubstantiating) the character of Smalls into three embodiments, the story and message(s) of the flick exist in a trickle-down state. As observers to young Smalls' (Guiry) and his friends' adventures, which are staged through a flashback from Howard's reminiscing, and is disclosed by the Evans' vocal insights, we can construe that which is being imparted comes straightway from the director. Evans, who co-wrote the screenplay, drew from personal experiences to serve as inspiration for part of the film's premise. Unlike the historical actualities, Evans "edited and polished the memory for his movie script," and by his own admission, "made it a bit of a hero's story."⁵² In limning the heroic trope, the spirit of the greater coming-of-age genre is recycled and reimagined. In Homer's epic the *Odyssey*, the goddess Athena "took on the image of Mentor, and, as Mentor, provided Telemachus with 'earthly' guidance."⁵³ Babe Ruth serves as mentor both through Evans' mythicized commentary and later in his pictorial fulfillment by actor Art La

⁵¹ Gabe Costa, "By The Numbers: Babe Ruth's Called Shot, Eight Decades Later – Part 4," *CBS New York*, last modified September 12, 2012, <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/09/24/by-the-numbers-babe-ruths-called-shot-eight-decades-later-part-4/>.

⁵² Kristen Gaydos, "'Sandlot' inspired by true story," *Citizens' Voice*, last modified June 7, 2012, <http://citizensvoice.com/arts-living/sandlot-inspired-by-true-story-1.1325928>.

⁵³ Susan M. Tauer, "The Mentor: Protégé Relationship and Its Effects on the Experienced Teacher" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York, April 8-12, 1996).

Fleur. Yet, because of the faulty charting of Ruth's exploits, the historical entity becomes essentially fictional and his function for the movie turns into a mediating voice for the director.

Therefore, as Ruth's general conception facilitates the story's purport, the instruction and encouragement of the hero/warrior ideal arises. Romanticizing (male) behavior now has a blueprint. This course of action determines what things and how they are represented on the screen through Smalls' (Howard) flashback. Introduced with a ripple effect transition is Benjamin "Benny" Franklin Rodriguez's dream of the Great Bambino. Lights flicker, walls shake, the sound of a crowd cheering is heard along with faint echoing chimes, and Ruth (La Fleur) exits a closet surrounded by smoke. La Fleur's appearance is initially distorted: grainy, black and white, scratched film look. Technical challenges for pictorially instantiating Babe Ruth aside, this sequence is one of the prime examples of the children's perceptions demonstrated as something that is created and unlike the purest of reproducible veridical documents. The film does not have to show Benny's dream unfold. Evans narrates that he too has a dream the same night as Benny in the immediately preceding shot, and all that is displayed is Smalls' (Guiry) inability to fall asleep. In the shot directly after the imagined scene, Benny knocks on Smalls' window and informs him of the dream.

Similarly in the camp out/tree house sequence where Michael "Squints" Palledorous recites the Beast's origin story as a dissolve/ripple transition mixture enacts the account. Squints' tale is presented comparably to Smalls' (Howard) inasmuch as it can also be considered a flashback. The look of the film for the Beast's beginnings is also shown in grainy black and white stock. The mise-en-scène indicates an exaggerated if not chimerical approach; the dog's physical attributes are grandiose in decorative scale, and on-screen ratio, as is his larcenist-dispatching prowess. Using the flashback device in this fashion not only loosens the restrictions

of the narrative perspective, it distinguishes it from Smalls' (Howard) picturesque recollection which is represented with flawless accuracy; there are no hitches in Smalls' memory consequently displaying a precise and veridical past. In all fairness, the killer guard dog's story happened before any of the kids were alive so it is not a memory like Smalls'. One may argue that the Beast's realization from the kids' imagination to Small's adult telling is continuously disproportionate. For the majority of the film up until the final showdown between he and Benny, the Beast's exterior is only ever partially in view though the area it takes up on screen creates a fabulous manifestation. However, the dog's form for the climatic chase almost necessitates realism for the reason that this is the first time the animal is witnessed by the viewer being experienced by adults on-screen. All other encounters of the Beast are with the kids alone, (including the described and visual adults in Squints' fable).

Subject to Smalls' thirty-year-old anamneses, Benny's dream, Squints' recital, and the kids' dominant vision of the Beast's stature, mutually signify a mentality of adult verification against youthful imagination. The voice over works to validate the events' accuracy despite the narrator being an essentially unreliable one due to the fallibility of memory over the course of many years, in this case, decades. The voice over also works as a mentoring tool when Benny hears in his head, in La Fleur's voice and not his own that, "Heroes get remembered, but legends never die. Follow your heart, kid, and you'll never go wrong." Benny's dream and his recalling of it before "pickling" the Beast are his means for motivation, but because the viewer sees and hears the renderings of Benny's thoughts, the film serves to inform why it is the character does what he does. Interpretation is all but expunged. Benny's triumph over the Beast bolsters the tutoring case because it is only through Ruth's guidance if you will, that the boy's accomplish getting the ball back from the other side of the fence.

The professional athlete, like superheroes or mythical gods, “is a different kind of hero who is also considered super by many young boys.”⁵⁴ Kids look up to these types of beings because they have abilities and perform acts that ordinary people cannot accomplish. Because Evans wanted *The Sandlot* to have essences of the hero’s journey, the path to achieving the hero’s goals must be completed by heroic acts. To out maneuver and outrun the Beast takes bravery and strength that only Benny, the kids’ leader, possesses. *The Sandlot* reinforces typical masculine conceptions though there may be unforeseen consequences to this promotion:

Unfortunately, there is a negative side to current hero narratives. From a young age, boys learn that acts of heroism are always physical—that they involve strength and, often, a good deal of violence (save for rescue heroes who, from what I have seen, lose their appeal after about age four when school starts and animated action heroes enter the picture). Heroism is rarely equated with peaceful solutions or thinking.⁵⁵

Ruth (La Fleur) could have easily encouraged Benny ask the property’s owner, Mr. Myrtle, to retrieve the ball. Smalls (Guiry) proposes this diplomatic solution when the boys initially try to figure out a way to retrieve the ball, but Squints immediately decried the suggestion. When the boys strategically plan to get the ball back in Alan “Yeah-Yeah” McClennan's bungee scene and with "science" (Smalls’ erector set), their efforts fail with increasingly discouraging results. Therefore, only in listening to a mentor and acting gallantry equals heroic success.

Masculinity is also promoted through other associations of gender and baseball. During a verbal exchange with a rival baseball team’s captain, Hamilton “Ham” Porter's insults the boy of "playing ball like a girl." As a result of one’s boys masculinity being challenged the teams must face each other to decide who is dominant group. When Smalls places a decoy baseball in his stepfather’s study in order to not arouse suspicion, Smalls’ mother informs him of Babe Ruth’s story. He becomes embarrassed that his mother, “a grown-up girl,” knows of Babe Ruth, and that he did not. Earlier in the film before Smalls’ is invited onto the baseball team, he has a

⁵⁴ Smith, *The Achilles Effect: What Pop Culture is Teaching Young Boys about Masculinity*.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

conversation of with his mother about making friends. She expresses pride in him being smart. However, in wanting him to make friends she also tells him: “Run around, scrape your knees, get dirty. Climb trees, hop fences. Get into trouble, for crying out loud. Not too much, but some. You have my permission. Now how many mothers do you know say something like that to their sons?” Smalls’ replies that he does not excel at anything and is simply “an egghead.” In examining these two exchanges between Smalls and his mother, it is evident that being a smart boy is atypical and inefficiently masculine. For Smalls’ to be a well-rounded boy he must be rough, get into mischief, or become involved in sports.

In the 1980s, no filmmaker explored and altered the cultural landscape for teen typification more than John Hughes. His seminal work, *The Breakfast Club*, is defined by Shary as, "one of the most important teen films of the entire decade – for its experimentation, character development, and lasting legacy."⁵⁶ Character development is the definitive feature of the coming-of-age genre since an adolescent’s metamorphosis, the moment of transition, is the foremost subject. As stated before, the shorter the duration of the event that brings about personal transformation, the more impactful the event is. *The Breakfast Club* takes place over a nine-hour period, where five diverse students find themselves sitting in detention at 7:00 A.M. on a Saturday morning. The event, in this case, is detention. They are commanded by teacher and supervisor Richard Vernon to each write an essay of at least 1,000 words describing who they think they are. Vernon's justification for the assignment is so that the kids may perhaps discover something about themselves. In the very beginning of the film, a title card on a blank screen shows lyrics from David Bowie's 1971 song *Changes*. The lyrics proclaim that children need no consultation and are aware of their situation. The irony of using Bowie’s words is to demonstrate that it is actually the adult, Vernon, who needs to learn something about adolescents.

⁵⁶ Timothy Shary, *Teen Movies: American Youth on Screen*, (London: Wallflower, 2005), 68.

Following the title card of lyrics is a voice-over by the “brain,” Brian Johnson, who asseverates Bowie's promulgation:

Dear Mr. Vernon. We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was that we did wrong. What we did was wrong but we think you're crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. What do you care? You see us as you want to see us, in the simplest terms, with the most convenient definitions. You see us as a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess, and a criminal. Correct? That's the way we saw each other at seven o'clock this morning. We were brainwashed.

The voice-over seems to exist in a retrospective state since it responds to the task in a past tense.

Brian's words are addressed to Vernon and act as a protest, a condemnation, and an avowal.

During their nine-hour sentence much of the characters' exposition, as well as the action, is executed through dialogue. We learn the reasons why most of the students are in detention and also hear explanations for their behavior. Shary posits that *The Breakfast Club* created multifaceted characters despite each of the teens representing "distinct types of young characters seen in American movies about high school since the 1950s."⁵⁷ Through numerous exchanges on a variety of subjects (e.g. parents, popularity, and sex), and especially during the almost twenty-minute climatic discourse, the kids' thought processes are shown to evolve by the end of the picture. In the film's final lines that are delivered by multiple voice-overs, the students affirm the shared commonality of the diverse group, thereupon, their transformation.

Almost ninety percent of the motion picture's running time (ninety-seven minutes) takes place during the immuring hours (diegetically 7:06 A.M. - 3:00 P.M). Confinement and the rules of the detainment, edicts of silence and immobility, seemingly tempt the group to disobey.

Despite Shary's assessment of how *The Breakfast Club* radicalized the depiction of stereotypical teenage characters, it is delinquent behavior that initiates the transformation for the characters.

Part of the issue of this effect is as stated in the Chapter 1: delinquent behavior being sold to youth as entertainment, which negates the responsiveness to positive messages. The other issue

⁵⁷ Shary, *Teen*, 68.

of delinquency working as the provoking agent towards transformation is how the characteristic becomes masculine. Firstly, the reasons for which the boys are in detention as compared to the girls are dramatically different. Claire Standish, the “princess,” skipped a class to go shopping and Allison Reynolds, the “basket case,” decided to go because she “didn’t have anything better to do.” John Bender, the “criminal,” is in detention for pulling a fire alarm, Andrew Clarke, the “athlete,” physically tormented a fellow student, and Brian brought a flare gun to school that went off in his locker; the gun was to be used to commit suicide. The boys' offences are mired in violence and illegality while girls' acts are victimless or not even offences at all.

Bender is the obvious candidate for instigating disobedience since his character's persona can be quickly defined as unruly. When the students are seen entering the school building, Bender is almost hit by a car; he does not stop walking nor does he even look up. After entering the library he unhooks a telephone and steals a notepad from the checkout counter, and he domineeringly motions to Brian to vacate his seat. When Vernon first addresses the students, Bender makes a joke at the instructor's outfit and is awarded another Saturday of detention. However, because “Bender is the classic delinquent,”⁵⁸ the rest of the group counterpoints his displays of rebelliousness. This effect can be seen even in the students’ wardrobe, hair and makeup. As an example, Bender who is in layered baggy clothes and has uncombed hair, and can be labeled as looking disheveled. Allison, representing Shary's delineation of the psychologically distraught rebel, shares the most resembling look to Bender.

Allison wears mismatched socks, black makeup, and is layered in dark baggy clothes. Her look can be described as unkempt and potentially dirty; she ruffles her messy hair in one scene, producing an extreme amount of dandruff. However, unlike Bender, since Allison is a female her classification is interesting because her appearance is desexualized. Her body is

⁵⁸ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 43.

almost completely covered; her hair often conceals her face. Yet, Allison's gothic semblance is most noticeable after Claire gives her a makeover. Once Allison conforms her look to what is culturally expected of her as a female, it becomes socially permitted for Andrew to unabashedly pursue Allison sexually. Shary says that Allison's makeover, "superficially makes her a more acceptable member of the group, thereby diminishing her previous rebel status and providing simply another false facade behind which she can hide her anxieties."⁵⁹ Despite the glances and more intimate conversations Andrew and Allison previously experience together, she needs to look more like a girl for their pairing to be acceptable. Allison's rebellion to typical gender norms initially restricted her from Andrew, the jock, who is a bastion of physical masculinity by the display of his muscles. It is conformity that makes Allison appear (more) feminine.

In comparison to Allison, Claire is the popular persona, whose manner of dress is unquestionably feminine. Her makeup complements her face instead of hiding it, her hair is impeccably styled, and her clothes are fashionable and formfitting, helping to accentuate her figure. However, what Allison and Claire share is their connection to a diametrically opposite male in the group. Claire's sexual purity, popularity, and pronounced femininity make her an ideal of feminine accordance. Claire is the opposite and romantic interest of Bender, who represents the other assumed aspects of masculinity: unruly, violent, and sexually aggressive. Brian is cancelled out of the equation due to his nerd/geek personification. As Shary writes, "Brian wears khaki slacks and a bland sweatshirt, signifying his lack of fashion sense."⁶⁰ Brian is less physically imposing than Andrew and Bender: Andrew has his strength and Bender his weaponry (he brandishes a switchblade when Andrew challenges him to a fight). Further

⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁰ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 34.

desexualizing his masculinity, “Hall (Brian) has pale skin, pale-blue eyes, and almost milky blond hair; he’s bodiless, almost translucent in this movie—a spirit of pure intelligence.”⁶¹

When Claire asks Brian to write his essay as a group response, she points out that he is the smartest of the group. He confidently agrees with Claire’s assessment and proceeds to write the essay on behalf of the group. Since Brian ultimately continues his stereotypical nerd comportment, which is “conformity to institutional expectations,”⁶² it can be said that conformity is a feminine trait, while delinquency and rebelliousness represent masculinity. And because it is Bender’s rebelliousness—the unruly boy who is unable to sit still and behave in detention—there is a greater implication of masculinity’s dilemma in school. *The Breakfast Club* is a school film, which as Shary defines is a “subgenre of youth films.”⁶³ Through Bender’s instigations, the film displays a notion that boys have an inability to abide by the rules and structure of school. The problem of having the delinquent being the catalyst for disobedience is the wider assumption placed on boys who act similarly. As written in an *ABC News* article by Adrienne Mand Lewin, “Because they (boys) are unable to follow directions as well as girls do, she (Kathy Stevens) said, “Boys get identified from the get-go as behavior problems, ADD. Maybe he’s just a boy and he can’t just sit still.”⁶⁴ Lewin’s article also notes others’ thoughts including Pollack’s, which come to the conclusion that boys, “are not able to behave as well as girls due to biological and social differences.”⁶⁵ Representations like Bender’s seemingly do not improve upon stereotypes.

⁶¹ David Denby, “Snap Crackle, And Pop,” *New York*, February 18, 1985, 95.

⁶² Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 32.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁴ Adrienne Mand Lewin, “Can Boys Really Not Sit Still in School?,” *ABC News*, last modified January 26, 2006, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=1545271>.

⁶⁵ Lewin, “Can Boys Really Not Sit Still in School?”

Chapter 3

In trying to understand and appreciate the coming-of-age works by Satyajit Ray, François Truffaut, and Richard Linklater, it is helpful to examine what inspired the three filmmakers since they have all expressed similar feelings towards cinematic theories and aesthetics. For instance, the spotlighted directors' shared filmmaking approaches countered their own respected nation's predominant film culture's stylistics (by extension, this includes classical Hollywood's far-reaching influence). The prime tenet of the dominant fictional filmmaking tradition, cultivated as "classical Hollywood cinema," presumes action to "spring primarily *from individual characters as casual agents*."⁶⁶ Outside or natural forces (including time) may affect action but are generally subordinate in the cause-effect chain. As an example: "The police interrogation and the quiz-show Q & A format" used in Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), expands the narrative's potential and allows Jamal Malik's thoughts and actions to drive the coming-of-age story format.⁶⁷ Superfluous information that bears no meaning to the questions and answers with the police officers or to the show is generally disregarded. The relative data needed to engender a basic understanding of the events is all that is required.

Ray, Truffaut, and Linklater, subscribed to the ideologies of neorealism and the concept of what Gilles Deleuze declared as the "time-image."⁶⁸ In Deleuze's time-image, time is sovereign to movement. Therefore, unlike classical cinema whose action and editing processes are driven by characters and are usually linked together cohesively, Deleuze's modern cinema contends that the frames of celluloid assembled by the motivation of time are not bound by

⁶⁶ Bordwell and Thompson, *Film*, 94.

⁶⁷ Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, "The Life-Cycle of *Slumdog Millionaire* on the Web," in *The "Slumdog" Phenomenon: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Ajay Gehlawat, (London: Anthem Press, 2014), 194.

⁶⁸ Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, trans., introduction to *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, by Gilles Deleuze, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), xvi.

logically clear and concise activity. This concept may seem counterproductive to exhibiting adolescent transformation since the action does not inherently revolve around the characters. However, by extensively displaying the life of the young boy into adulthood and by detailedly displaying the events surrounding his life, what the audience witnesses is an unpronounced and unexplained metamorphosis. The benefit of such may be a greater amount of relatable representations for young boys. Because the mediating voice of the filmmakers becomes obscure, the films do not feel instructional or as if they are being told to a spectator.

The audience is told by a narrator in *Stand by Me*, *The Sandlot*, and *The Breakfast Club*, how the characters feel, what they think, and their motivations for certain behavior. These traditional coming-of-age motion pictures all make it abundantly clear very early in each who the story is about. Additionally, in implementing heroic-like elements and reinforcing stereotypical characters, traditional coming-of-age films have an inclination to promote long-held gender norms. In the (male) maturation cinema of Ray, Truffaut, and Linklater, their films detailedly investigate personal transformation in a way that offers more opportunities for viewers to create their own interpretations. This effect is accomplished through manipulating time. For instance, Apurba 'Apu' Roy's first appearance in *Pather Panchali* registers fifteen minutes into the running time (as a newborn). We are introduced to actor Subir Banerjee's five to seven-year-old Apu (the advertised audition age set by Ray),⁶⁹ six minutes after that. For the film's first act it is intimately disclosed through dialogue and visual conveyance the world that Apu, (and the audience) find him situated in. However, to someone uninformed of the synopsis, the film could be about Apu's sister, Durga. *Pather Panchali* could also be about the rest of Apu's family and their standing in the village or the affectionate and contentious familial relationships between the three women of

⁶⁹ Andrew Robinson, *The Apu Trilogy: Satyajit Ray and the Making of an Epic*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 48.

the household. These situations as well as the family's financial history and the preparation for Apu's arrival are explored through more than quick verbal exposition. Unlike how the protagonists' backgrounds are elucidated in a film like *The Breakfast Club*, Apu's characterization happens well before he is born and it is constituted by the elements of that environment. These surrounding environmental elements (i.e. his family and the village) are comprehensively shown on-screen. The action does not simply begin once Apu reaches an older, more traditional adolescent age to tell his coming-of-age story.

Therefore, the more that is presented of a character's life, the less that activity necessitates edification. A character's life may include details that seem irrelevant to furthering the plot. Andrew Robinson references a letter of Satyajit Ray's that expresses his perspective on filmmaking and rejecting the classical Hollywood model:

The entire conventional approach (as exemplified by even the best American and British films) is wrong. Because the conventional approach tells you that the best way to tell a story is to leave out all except those elements which are directly related to the story, while the master's work clearly indicates that if your theme is strong and simple, then you can include a hundred little apparently irrelevant details which, instead of obscuring the theme, only help to intensify it by contrast, and in addition create the illusion of actuality better.⁷⁰

One technical way in which Ray accomplished rejecting the Hollywood paragon was by incorporating scenes into all three of Apu's films, which epitomize documentary filmmaking. As an example, *Aparajito*, Apu's second chapter, opens up from the view of a train entering Benares (Varanasi) in 1920 or 1327 in the Bengali calendar. The audience is informed of the setting via an intertitle (the only instance of this in the series). Subsequent shots show the bustling holy city at dawn and its inhabitants, including the pigeons, converging on the banks of the Ganges. The camera floats down the watercourse and views the masses bathing in the sacred river, congregating on the ghats, with some praying, and others fishing. Suddenly the film cuts to see

⁷⁰ Robinson, *Apu*, 24.

Harihar (Kanu Bannerjee), Apu's father, at the river. Despite this film being a continuation of Apu's tale, the camera almost happens upon Harihar as if the following story could just as easily be about another person. Combining what feels real (documentary-like shots) and what is artificial (the narrative) emplaces the spectator inside the imaginative and allows for filmmakers to create narratives, which appear naturally occurring. In addition, this effect permits the inclusion of many seeming immaterial ingredients into a motion picture.

Marcia Landy has written how, “Indian cinema in the post World War Two and Indian post-Independence eras saw a form of realism emerge.”⁷¹ However, Landy insists that too much emphasis is placed on the influence of Western cinematic innovation, and that the Indian form of realism is similar but not identical to Neorealism. As Robinson documents, Ray was deeply influenced by his interactions with French filmmaker Jean Renoir. Having met during Renoir's filming of *Le Fleuve* in 1949, Ray was encourage to cinematically adapt Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's 1929 Bengali novel, *Pather Panchali*. However, Renoir persuaded Ray not to mimic Hollywood pictures saying that, “in America, they worry too much about technique, and neglect the human aspect.”⁷² While working in London the next year, Ray made it a goal to experience as many artistic expressions as he could, especially that of the cinema. He watched hundreds of films in a 5-month time and was particularly taken by Vittorio de Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948) and Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* (1939).⁷³ Ray stressed how he desired to make his film (*Pather Panchali*) like the Italian De Sica; employing unversed actors, shooting on location with natural light and other minimal resources, and animating the film's village.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Marcia Landy, “The Apu Trilogy: Pather Panchali, Aparajito, and Apur Sansar,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 27, no. 5 (2010): 408, accessed May 27, 2016, doi: 10.1080/10509208.2010.494998.

⁷² Robinson, *Apu*, 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

There is an importance to investigating Ray's filmmaking philosophies because it assists in the understanding to how the director molded his characters. As expressed earlier, Ray saw the American tactics as incorrect. For him, to best tell a story the objective of a filmmaker should to include numerous examples of inapposite elements to a story in order to distance them from the motif. This process strengthens the thematic mark through contrast. As Darius Cooper has examined, Ray utilizes Indian culture's aesthetic form of *rasa* in his earliest films, including the trilogy.⁷⁵ Through the second principle of *rasa* theory, constancy of character, Apu's character is said to develop and be constantly affirmed in opposition to the contrary characters and events:

In *Pather Panchali*, Apu's constancy of character is developed and maintained through his essential contrast with his elder sister, Durga. After her death in *Pather Panchali* and that of his father, Harihar, in *Aparajito*, it is Apu's mother, Sarbojaya, (sic) who serves as the opposing character against whom Apu's identity is constantly reaffirmed. After Sarbojaya's death later in *Aparajito*, Apu is contrasted in *Apur Sansar*, the next part of the trilogy, with the two people who exert their strongest influences on him: his best friend Pulu, who protects and guides Apu like an elder brother, and his wife Aparna, who briefly brings order, stability, and love to Apu's life.⁷⁶

Cooper suggests that Apu is altered in each picture due to his interactions with antipodal characters. Robinson inadvertently avers this *rasa* theory by how he analyzes Apu's behavior after his father's demise in *Aparajito*: "Apu's curiosity and love of life are yet again impressed upon the mind of the viewer – in implied contradistinction to the resignation and fatalism of his mother Sarbajaya."⁷⁷

In the final installment of the trilogy *Apur Sansar*, there is a scene where Apu (Soumitra Chatterji) and Pulu walk and discuss a slew of topics. Apu informs Pulu that he has been working on a novel that is part autobiography and part fiction. As Apu is describing the protagonist, who is otherwise him, he states how there will be a "love interest." Pulu objects to "love" being included because Apu has never experienced it. Apu questions, "(Do) you have to

⁷⁵ Darius Cooper, *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.

⁷⁶ Cooper, *Cinema*, 25-26.

⁷⁷ Robinson, *Apu*, 119.

experience everything?” As the scene fades to black, Pulu continues to protest that with love one needs experience in order to be able to write about it. Despite Apu's gift for imagination and storytelling as well as his education, it is in his experiences with his wife Aparna where he learns love. Aparna creates and reaffirms Apu's character and she becomes the source of another moment of transition for him after she dies in childbirth. Apu is inundated with grief for years following her death, which is a very different reaction to the other deaths that have occurred throughout his lifetime. Notwithstanding Cooper's *rasa* theory, Apu's progression is achieved by the factor of time and the multitudinous experiences that shape his life.

Since Apu is constantly being shaped by contrasting elements in each film, it seems fair to contend that Apu has multiple epiphanies over the course of his life. Multiple epiphanies are a stark contrast to the sole transformational moment that is marked by the event in typical coming-of-age productions. Perhaps if only *Pather Panchali* is considered as his coming-of-age tale could it then be stated that Apu changes after Durga passes, and experiences his only moment of transition. Once again, time is the great divider of the two strains of this cinematic genre. There is no prescribed time of Apu's nearing adulthood. Setting the metamorphosis over a longer stretch allows for greater, observable character development. Events lose their gravitas since they are almost unceremoniously incorporated into additional affairs. Because everything is implied and not explicitly clarified, Apu emblemizes maturation due to his process not being forced upon the viewer.

Expedient narratives of personal advancement promote an impression of tuition due to time bracketing. This issue of time is perhaps in its most extreme exemplification in episodic television programs like *The Wonder Years* (1988-1993) and *Boy Meets World* (1993-2000). These coming-of-age sitcoms cover an extended period of time of a character's life and

maturity. Each telecast would run around twenty-two to twenty-four minutes, respectively, within a half hour slot. Unless a storyline was dispersed over multiple episodes, the typical "sitcom code," was applied. The sitcom code can be broken down into a very formulaic structure:

Every sitcom episode has a main plot (story A), as well as one or two subplots (stories B and C).⁷⁸ There are three main acts, divided by two commercial breaks (in most American TV), with 3-5 scenes per act. One of the distinguishing characteristics of sitcoms, as opposed to other forms of television, is that the main protagonist(s) barely change from one episode to the next, let alone from season to season (Maggie Simpson has been sucking on a pacifier for nearly thirty years). Therefore whatever happens in the episode, the situation must end largely where it began. The Wise Sloth points out that 22 minutes is "not even really time enough to tell a full story. The whole story has to be on fast-forward," so simplification is key. Poet Philip Larkin described all plots as "a beginning, a muddle, and an end," which is as good a description as any. Each episode begins with the protagonist stating a goal or problem that must be solved, and which we understand will be solved by the end of the episode.

The Three Act Structure is a mainstay template for Hollywood produced commercial motion pictures.⁷⁹ It makes sense for coming-of-age films whose stories are completed in one production to have a resolution. Resolution, which is heavily determined by the treatment of time, is then a major disparity between typical and alternative representations within the coming-of-age genre. To be clear, resolution happens in the works of Ray, Truffaut, and Linklater. However since no one event effectuates the finalized progression of Apu, Antoine, or Mason, nor are the transitions explicated, the moment is therefore unpronounced but always evident. Without explanation, the spectator is awarded more freedom to question what they see and construct their own personal analysis. Compare the *Stand by Me* boys with Apu: The narrator tells the audience in *Stand by Me* how their (the boys) respective viewpoints had changed after witnessing a dead body. The events that transpire in the film directly correspond to the transition. Because the events that revolve around Apu's metamorphoses appear irrelative, the viewer must piece together the

⁷⁸ Noah Charney, "Cracking the Sitcom Code," *Atlantic*, last modified December 28, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/12/cracking-the-sitcom-code/384068/>.

⁷⁹ "Three Act Structure," *TVTropes.org*, accessed October 14, 2015, <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ThreeActStructure>.

theme(s) by continuously inquiring and inspecting everything. Executing the latter procedure enables a filmmaker to seamlessly adjoin other subtopics like social contexts like gender.

In an interview with Ray, journalist Udayan Gupta proclaims that, “Ray's most outstanding achievement has been his depiction of women in a cinema overpopulated with vacuous sex-objects and silent sufferers.”⁸⁰ One example is Ray's treatment of Durga. Cooper says that Ray makes it painfully clear that, even as a child, Durga comprehends her inferiority as a female in the patriarchal Bengali society.⁸¹ The first image of young Durga is seen negatively through the eyes of a neighbor accusing her of stealing fruit. When Apu takes something that does not belong to him, he is not similarly chastised by Sarbajaya, their mother. Apu uses Durga's foil to make a crown, Durga chases him and the children have a little spat. Sarbajaya, like always, takes her son's side and derides Durga's possessions saying, "what use is your precious toy box?" Also contrasting the children are their responsibilities. Durga is forced to quit "running around all day" in order to help Sarbajaya household chores and religious rites, diminishing her imaginative pursuits. Apu has no such restrictions and is instead sent to school. Even in preparing for his first day, Durga acts as Apu's caretaker: Durga wakes him up, brushes his teeth, combs his hair, wipes his mouth clean after breakfast, and escorts him to school. When Durga rebels against her responsibilities, (e.g. running around, playing, and even stealing), she is not behaving as a woman should; she is behaving like her brother. Since Durga acts as the main contrasting character to Apu in *Pather Panchali*, the one who constantly reaffirms the boy's persona, the basic social standing of both genders is presented.

However, Ray uses the film(s) to challenge the customary dynamics of men and women, and not reinforce them. After Durga's death, Apu secretly throws a necklace she had denied

⁸⁰ Udayan Gupta and Satyajit Ray, "The Politics of Humanism: AN INTERVIEW WITH SATYAJIT RAY," *Cinéaste* 12, no. 1 (1982): 24, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41686766>.

⁸¹ Cooper, *Cinema*, 31.

stealing into the pond adjacent the home. What is witnessed by this action and moment of personal transition is how Apu holds Durga in higher esteem in comparison to the rest of the family, the village, and as well as society. Concealing the truth of her thievery is also designed to equate Apu's behavior with that of his deceased sister's. The perspective belongs exclusively to Apu and the viewer in this scene, which humanizes Apu's actions without judgment. Gupta notes that Ray often expressed that it is incorrect, unimportant, and unnecessary "for an artist to provide answers or make judgments, to say that this is right and this is wrong."⁸² Another example of metamorphosis and gender issues being presented without directorial judgment is how Apu matures through education. In *Aparajito*, Sarbajaya acts as the opposing force that reaffirms Apu's character. The primary fissure between the mother and son is education. His family, and especially Sarbajaya, encouraged Apu to follow his father's footsteps and become a priest. Their livelihood was secure in the village of Mansapota as long as Apu continued working as the village's Brahman. Apu wished to go to school. Sarbajaya paid for him to attend a school nearby as long as he could do both throughout the day. He excels at his studies and impresses a visiting educational inspector, standing out amongst the crowd of fellow students. Through a montage sequence, we see Apu's desire to share his perpetually acquired erudition with his mother, who does not easily comprehend.

Visible by a single cut transition, we see that some years pass as the fourteen-year-old actor Smaran Ghosal is now playing Apu. The headmaster of the school calls Apu into his office to let him know that he came in second place in the district and inquires if he will go to college in Calcutta (Kolkata). Apu answers affirmatively but ponders how to approach Sarbajaya. Notwithstanding her initial worries over financial security and fear over her own well-being, Sarbajaya permits Apu to pursue higher education. Until this point, education has been merely an

⁸² Gupta and Ray, "Politics of Humanism," 26.

intellectual divide between Apu and his mother (by extension family/village) and with other students. With Apu leaving Mansapota, the divide becomes a physical one as well. Even in *Pather Panchali* education separated the boys from the girls; Harihar was a scholar and Apu went to school while Durga and Sarbajaya were to be in the household. Nevertheless, Ray again challenges the traditional norms by exhibiting how Apu goes against the grain. During a break from school, Apu returns to Mansapota for a few days. On one of the days, he finds himself amongst a crowd watching a boy perform acrobatic tricks while an older man sings and drums an accompanying tune. The lyrics of the song go: "Build your bodies, my friends – Make them strong – Be flexible and limber, my boy – Amaze us with your feats." Apu quickly loses interest and delivers a scowl regarding the spectacle.

What this image suggests is not only the protagonist's disapproval of conforming to what is popular, but also the director's; Ray was simultaneously rejecting the classical narrative structure of Hollywood and the popular Hindi cinema of big budgeted productions with elaborate song and dance sequences, and extreme melodramatic acting by superstars.⁸³ For the character of Apu, what is displayed is a young maturing male embrace education and knowledge over physical ability. At the end of *Aparajito*, Apu again embraces education over what is expected of him from society; his great uncle Bhabataran, tells Apu that after Sarbajaya dies alone in the village, "Now you should perform the *shraddha* and then stay on here. You'll earn enough as a priest." Nevertheless, after the scene fades to black it is seen in the immediate shot that Apu is packing up his belongings and heading back to Calcutta for school exams, and to perform the ceremonial rights for his mother there. Apu is a bit of an outsider because of his intellect and his appearance and success with the females romantically could arguably be considered by some as

⁸³ Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*. 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2013), 25.

nerd-like. Typical coming-of-age representations of nerds “often attain their liberation through some abandonment of academics (...) but they always reaffirm the value of learning as a way of life.”⁸⁴ However, in witnessing Apu’s continued devotion to his studies and while maintaining restraint towards coherence with popular male gender associations like strength, dominance, athletic prowess, or sexual aggression, Apu’s maturation can be understood as an alternative exposition of the male in the coming-of-age cinematic genre. Furthermore, because Apu's story is told over three films, his metamorphosis from adolescence into adulthood is demonstrated as a process that happens over an expansive duration.

⁸⁴ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 32.

Chapter 4

Male dominance in nonhuman social species is primarily determined by the capabilities of an individual to inflict or withhold force (characterized by the threat of it).⁸⁵ Ancestral humans were extensively dictated by this behavior in order to compete for survival resources.⁸⁶ Natural selection fine-tuned the evolutionary tool into anger. Anger is an output of aggressive behavior: "a natural and physiological element that rules animal life, driven as it is by the instincts of survival and the preservation of species through reproduction."⁸⁷ Human society has tried to repress and channel this atavistic trait by various means, (i.e. sublimating dominance into prestige and other forms of organized violence, like sports).⁸⁸ And despite the American Psychological Association saying that, "anger can be a good thing,"⁸⁹ it has also been contested to be the main cause for extremely violent behavior.⁹⁰ As referenced earlier, Johanna Oksala argues that there is a male monopoly on violence that is culturally reinforced. Therefore, along the spectrum of aggressiveness are dominance, violent behavior and anger, societally promoted masculine characteristics with assigned degrees and outlets for their execution.

The assumption of males being biologically inclined towards anger and violence is difficult to refute as aforementioned studies show. However, aggressive behavior is sometimes

⁸⁵ Daniel M.T. Fessler, "Madmen: An Evolutionary Perspective on Anger and Men's Violent Response to Transgression," in *International Handbook of Anger: Constituent and Concomitant Biological, Psychological, and Social Processes*, ed. Michael Potegal, Gerhard Stemmler, and Charles Spielberger. (New York: Springer Street+Business Media, 2010), 362.

⁸⁶ Maeve McDermott, "10 Facts About How Our Brain gets Angry," *National Geographic*, last modified August 15, 2014, <http://tvblogs.nationalgeographic.com/2014/08/15/10-facts-about-how-our-brain-gets-angry/>.

⁸⁷ Batrinos, "Testosterone," 563.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ American Psychological Association, "Anger," accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/topics/anger/>.

⁹⁰ Laura L. Hayes, "How to Stop Violence," *Slate*, last modified April 9, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2014/04/anger_causes_violence_triggers_it_rather_than_mental_illness_to_stop_mass_murder.html.

communicated to be a forgone conclusion for certain adolescents transitioning into adulthood. These particular youths have been cinematically represented as juvenile delinquents and possess their own sub-genre of the teen/youth film.⁹¹ As Driscoll writes, "The j.d. (juvenile delinquent or "JD") film is often associated with the 1950s but it emerged gradually across previous decades."⁹² Christopher Franzi's paper *The Portrayal of Juvenile Delinquents in Film (1988-1997)*, explores precursors to the JD motion picture. The first film of Franzi's analysis is William Wellman's *The Public Enemy* (1931), which as he describes, "follows the transformation of two young white, male JDs, Tom Powers (James Cagney) and Matt Doyle (Edward Woods), into full-blown gangsters."⁹³ As it has been surmised, *The Public Enemy* "emphasized how the early developmental environment clearly contributed to an evolving life of adult crime - and his inevitable gruesome death."⁹⁴ Effectively, what *The Public Enemy* and other films of the gangster genre that emerged in the 1930s convey is that juvenile lawlessness can lead to far worse adult behavior.

Criminality links the gangster genre archetypes to the juvenile delinquent motion picture. The presented commonality of these two cinemas reflects cultural traditions promoted to discourage youthful lawlessness. The 1816 British *Report Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in The Metropolis*, differentiated boys under seventeen years of age engaging in miscreant behavior with "professed thieves of mature age,"⁹⁵ as a way of restoring morality, stopping recidivism, and protecting the young from the most

⁹¹ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 8.

⁹² Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 16.

⁹³ Christopher L. Franzi, "The Portrayal Juvenile Delinquents in Film (1988-1997)," (Thesis diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2009), 14.

⁹⁴ "Crime & Gangster Films: Part 1," *Filmsite.org*, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.filmsite.org/crimefilms.html>.

⁹⁵ Committee. *Report Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in The Metropolis*, (London: J.F. Dove, 1816), 10.

atrocious of offenders. In the early days of U.S. film, social reformers and moral custodians saw the cinema as a dangerous place for young people (and women, with or without family), due to its atmospheric constitution including the darkness of venues. Miriam Hansen evokes Jane Addams remarks on the blackness of the environment saying, "(it) is an added attraction to many young people, for whom the space is filled with the glamour of love making."⁹⁶ Content was also an issue for conservative crusaders and by the time the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 was birthed, children had two established positions in film: preadolescent (e.g. Shirley Temple) or pre-adult (e.g. *The Dead End Kids*).⁹⁷ If the only representations of youthful (male) behavior were either of prepubescent saints or adolescent sinners then it is simple to understand why most films of the juvenile delinquent sub-genre presented rebellious and resentful behavior (composed of sex, drugs, and violence), as an inevitable fact of (male teenage) life: deterrence.⁹⁸ Shary points out how the cinematic iconography of the juvenile delinquent has long been exploited to warn if not instruct adolescents how to comport:

Like their roles in films since the '50s, delinquents are used to demonstrate that crime is not a proper means of acceptance, and unless the delinquent reforms, he or she is destined for a life of misery (or else the delinquent dies before the end of the film).⁹⁹

Like the rise and downfall trope of the gangster, youthful lawlessness was cinematically discouraged. The rationale behind these artistic encouragements has been to veer children, and in particular adolescent males, in the right direction, so to speak. However, the continued perpetuation of young males displayed on-screen as angry and violent counters the effectiveness of such provocations. As expressed earlier, society has tried to redirect the inherent animalistic

⁹⁶ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 65.

⁹⁷ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 3.

⁹⁸ Vivian Koenig, "Review: The J. D. Films: Juvenile Delinquency in the Movies by Mark Thomas McGee, R. J. Robertson," *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (July 1, 1983): 56, accessed January 12, 2016, doi:10.2307/369712256.

⁹⁹ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 41.

properties of aggressiveness. Since males exhibit the behavioral traits associated with aggression with more frequency than females, it may be assumed as instinctual. This acceptance of what is perhaps a biological inclination for typically masculine behavior becomes expected; “boys will be boys.” Nonetheless, through trying to redirect the behaviors associated with aggressiveness (i.e. violence and anger) that are otherwise positively endorsed as masculine (i.e. dominance and strength), the emotion becomes embraced. Perhaps, the most socially accepted (and championed) rechanneling of male aggression is not through prestige or athletic games, but through sexuality. Based on his studies of male-defined characteristics, Alan E. Gross concluded that the overriding constituent to men's gender identity is sexual behavior.¹⁰⁰ And while this conception may be considered by society to be a masculine propensity (that commences in youth), which is merely being reflected through all forms of mass media, the promotion of such doesn't traditionally account for individual experiences and results that are deleterious.

One story that shows the pitfalls of aggressive behavior diverting to culturally appropriate modes is the coming-of-age saga of Antoine Doinel. This cycle of films is an alternative depiction on the purpose and outcome of the juvenile delinquent. Often Antoine's maturation tale is limited to the first motion picture, *Les Quatre cents coups*, when the character is thirteen-years-old and experiences many cinematic JD motifs: truancy, unruliness, substance use.

However, as J. Yellowlees Douglas aptly states:

Remember the apparent finality of Antoine Doinel's face, arrested in the freeze frame at the end of Francois Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*? But this freeze is the "end" of nothing; *The 400 Blows* is one of a series of Truffaut films about the same character played by the same actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud. Doinel's future was far from certain at the end of *The 400 Blows*.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Alan E. Gross, “The Male Role and Heterosexual Behavior,” *Journal of Social Issues* vol. 34, is. 1 (1978), doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1978.tb02542.x.

¹⁰¹ J. Yellowlees Douglas, "Where the Senses Become a Stage and Reading Is Direction: Performing the Texts of Virtual Reality and Interactive Fiction," *TDR (1988-)* 37, no. 4 (1993): 28.

It is only over the course of the entire set of films spanning twenty years, where we see the true transformation of Antoine's personality. Similar to Apu's trilogy, locating a single instance of self-realization isn't easily accomplished. And as others have theorized in examining Antoine Doinel, the character never reaches that point of maturation saying, "his (Truffaut's) alter ego, even as an adult, remained a child."¹⁰² However, in analyzing how the youngest iteration of Antoine, the most physically aggressive and angry version, morphs into the sexually charged older adolescent and adult, Antoine's transformation is manifested, though, it may not be positive or fully understood by the character himself.

It is made aware early in *Les Quatre cents coups* that Antoine has a contemptuous perspective towards authority. He is introduced in class getting caught by "Sourpuss," his French teacher, for having/passing a picture of a pinup girl. Initially, the scene opens up with other boys looking at the image and passing it around the classroom; Antoine has the misfortune of being apprehended. Punished by Sourpuss to stand in the corner behind a chalkboard, he remains there while the rest of the class is permitted recess. Intercut shots are shown of Antoine writing on the wall about his unfair castigation, along with the other boys playing outside. When the class comes back into the room Antoine's artwork is tattled upon and he is further reprimanded. As the school segment continues, the audience witnesses more injustice from the teacher: He scolds an innocent student for causing a ruckus, and another student who destroys his own notebook and is observed only by the audience, escapes derision. What Truffaut aims to convey by this school segment is that there is a disconnect that exists between adults and adolescents. This disparity between the two is not about maturity, but rather about age; what adults are allowed to do and what adolescents cannot do. There are numerous instances of Antoine getting into increasingly

¹⁰² Juan Carlos González A., "François Truffaut," *Senses of Cinema*, last modified July 2003, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/truffaut/>.

destructive trouble, suggesting incorrigibility and even violence. He runs away from home for a few days, lies to his parents and teachers repeatedly, and steals a typewriter from his stepfather's (Julien) office, to name a few of his offences. Yet, adults do similar or exactly the same things as he without facing repercussions. His mother lies to Julien about remaining faithful in their marriage and stays out at night to any time she pleases; his parents fight about it but she is not held accountable for her actions. When Antoine and his friend René try to sell the stolen typewriter to an older individual on the street, he tries to rip them off. The presence of a police officer keeps the criminal at bay but he is not arrested like Antoine is soon thereafter.

Thematically it can be estimated that *Les Quatre cents coups* is about a boy's rebelliousness and desire of becoming an adult as soon as possible, so he may do as he pleases. Yet when juxtaposed against the themes of the other films in the series, which primarily concern sexual relationships, *Les Quatre cents coups* turns out to be a telling indication of Antoine's alteration of his aggression. Few occasions exist in the first film that stress sexual content. When he receives the pinup picture, he defaces the image by drawing on the woman's face and body, indicating indifference to its sexual nature. During the scene when he runs away, a girl loses her dog in the street in front of Antoine. As he attempts to genuinely help her, a man comes up and dismisses Antoine in order to court the young woman. When Antoine is in his own separate cell after being arrested for stealing the typewriter, we see an older male adolescent in the larger cage with a group of girls who were brought in (perhaps for prostitution). A POV (point-of-view) shot is employed of Antoine's vantage point looking at everything from his confinement; the girls are not gazed upon specifically. Lastly, at the Observation Center For Delinquent Youth, a psychologist questions him if he has slept with a girl. Antoine responds with a story of a missed opportunity that is not treated differently from his other answers.

Immediately in the second film, the short *Antoine et Colette*, a third-person omniscient narrator informs the spectator that Antoine is now seventeen-years-old and, "finally realized his adolescent dream: to live on his own, earn his own keep, and depend on himself." Antoine has developed a fond admiration for music, indicated by posters on his bedroom wall and records stacked on a shelf that he plays incontinently after waking up. The audience is also clued in to unsuccessful reformatory efforts that transpired during the time between the films. Antoine's violent past is but a memory, which is reminded through stylized, Iris-like flashback sequences and in conversations with his childhood friend from *Les Quatre cents coups*, René. Antoine has a job at the Philips record company (he clocks in with a suit and tie), and René, who was equally anarchical in youth, now works in the stock market. Thus intimated early in the second picture is how Antoine (and René), have not become the full-blown criminals that the JD sub-genre still pontificates such characters are destined to become. Furthermore, Antoine's feelings towards the opposite sex are as indifferent in the beginning of *Antoine et Colette* as they were throughout *Les Quatre cents coups*.

While at a youth musical concert which Antoine never misses, he sees a girl sitting in the aisle across from him. Throughout the performance, his attention increasingly oscillates from the musicians to the girl. It is in this fixation reassignment that Antoine begins his sexual pursuits, which shape his persona and behavior for the rest of his saga. What is interesting about this development for both the fictional Antoine and the creator, Truffaut, is how the male gaze is characterized. Antoine actively looks for the girl at ensuing performances. When she does make an appearance, at various shows he'll only stare at her and not focus on the music. Sometimes Antoine courses her home. Eventually, he confronts the girl, Colette, and they become friends. As is narrated, "Colette treats Antoine like a friend. He either doesn't notice or accepts it for the

time being." For the remainder of *Antoine et Colette*, Antoine tries to situate himself closer to Colette relationally and physically, (he moves into a hotel opposite her family's home). Colette's feelings are unwavering. Confessing his frustration to René, Antoine acknowledges his failings and that Colette treats him like a buddy, but he is persistence carries on. Antoine and Colette go to a movie where he gives her a specially made gift. Proceeding to make a move, Antoine tries to kiss Colette; she pushes him off and he leaves the theater. The second film ends with Colette leaving on a date with a young gentleman named Albert, and Antoine is saddened by the result.

Antoine's mother, Gilberte, jeered his frequent scopophilic indulgences at the cinema in *Les Quatre cents coups*. Demonstrated by Gilberte's sentiments and the outcome of Antoine's first adventure with love, one may conclude that there is a certain indictment of touching versus looking. Antoine finds pleasure in the cinema but little joy when he encroaches upon what he gazes, (regarding Colette). Subtextually, this proposed notion illuminates a grander appeal of alternative cinema to Hollywood. Laura Mulvey has noted that "technological advances (16mm, etc.) have changed (...) satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure."¹⁰³ The classical Hollywood system subjected women to the male gaze. Inspired by French filmmakers of the 30s, Italian Neorealism, the writings of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc, documentaries, American directors and Noir pictures, television and the 16mm camera, artists like Truffaut and others of *la nouvelle vague* (the French New Wave), created a cinema of personal artistic expression that contrasted with the plutocratic Hollywood armature.¹⁰⁴ In doing such, works like *Les Quatre cents coups* and *Antoine et Colette* display the male gaze as a futile enterprise.

And although the latter films of Antoine's cycle appear after the movement's spell, the theme of "touching versus looking" continues. In *Baisers volés*, after Antoine is dishonorably

¹⁰³ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 712-13.

¹⁰⁴ Michel Marie, *The French New Wave: An Artistic School*, trans. Richard Neupert. (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 30.

discharged from the army, he runs to a brothel to fulfill a request made by fellow detainees in military prison. He pays for a room and the company with the first girl he comes across standing outside. The worker instructs him constantly and tells him all the things she does not permit. Antoine becomes frustrated and leaves the room. He then meets another prostitute in the staircase and we see them go upstairs to complete an intimate transaction. In this simple and otherwise irrelevant scene, Antoine's fervor is in one instance visually shutdown, while his desires are achieved when implied and off-screen. Again, the male gaze is exhibited as erroneous. When Antoine and Christine are in her family's house's basement gathering wine for dinner, they lightly converse about Christine not being able to stay long. Antoine says it is okay and then proceeds to try and kiss her. Christine redirects her face, kisses his cheek and smiles. Then he grabs her face and forcibly tries to make-out with her, pressing her up against the wall in the basement. She resists and he stops; not a word is said. Antoine does not lift a finger in a violent manner after *Les Quatre cents coups*. However, what has now been witnessed twice in as many sequential productions is his rechanneling of anger into sexual aggressiveness, (with Colette and Christine). His reactions to both situations possibly demonstrate a developed anticipation and acceptance towards his behavior being rejected.

Truffaut does not limit the “touching verse looking” theme to his alter ego. A mysterious man shadows Christine throughout the film to a non-diegetically ominous tune. He confronts her at the end and professes his love for her while she sits on a bench with Antoine. The man gives her time to tie up loose ends; he walks away happy that he confronted and confessed to Christine. The scene creates an awkward sensation to which Christine simply states to Antoine, "That man is crazy!" Even men besides Antoine who strive to reach for their coveted aspirations are ultimately unsuccessful. Antoine's fourth picture, *Domicile conjugal*, has multiple occasions

where men objectify Christine, who is now Madame Doinel. Their apartment complex's concierge stares at her legs as she walks up the stairs. Later when pregnant, two men who work in the courtyard of the apartment complex and know the Doinels well, make jokes at how Christine became pregnant. After Christine has the baby, Alphonse, the old concierge watches her walk away and says to himself, "I'd lay her badly but I'd lay her gladly!" In these short instances in *Domicile conjugal*, the objectification of Christine is not only accepted, it becomes embraced by being comedic. Truffaut utilizes comedy to point out the creepiness of the men's studious attention and thought process.

Compared to the shadowy figure in *Baisers volés* that ghosts and eventually confronts Christine, the men who look upon and make their comments from afar act accordingly by societal standards; even favorably. Antoine is also perceived by the patriarchal culture to be in the clear when he visits a brothel in *Domicile conjugal* after he and Christine separate. Lucien, Christine's father, runs into Antoine at the brothel and tells him, "nothing like a good house to complete a happy home!" It would seem at the end of *Domicile conjugal* where Antoine and Christine are reunited and seemingly in love, that Antoine's typified, hypersexual male behavior has not been detrimental in his life's fate. However, it is demonstrated in *L'Amour en fuite* that Antoine's sexual aggression has indeed lead him into (cyclical) ruin. Antoine is now in love with the young Sabine, and is in the final stages of divorcing Christine. After the divorce is finalized and while he and Sabine are having issues, Antoine happens to run into Colette aboard a train. He speaks to Colette about why his marriage to Christine failed, which was due to his persistent infidelities.

While they are talking inside Colette's train cabin, an argument ensues after Antoine accidentally steps on a garment of hers and she lashes out at him for his carelessness. Colette

scolds Antoine telling him that he has not changed after all these years. Antoine responds to Colette's anger by attempting to kiss her. She adamantly rejects him and says that he learned nothing from their affair and that, "It takes two to kiss (...) But you tried to force me to love you." This exchange should be the catalyst for Antoine to realize how his mentality and behavior has not changed over the course of his life regarding women as objects. This should be a/the moment of transition. At the end of the film when Antoine tells Sabine of how he discovers her, the audience is made aware through a set of flashbacks that Antoine persists in lying. In a way, flashbacks are alternatively used as veridical documents in *L'Amour en fuite*. Unlike their usages in *Stand by Me* and *The Sandlot*, Antoine's flashbacks are meant to display how he has become subject to typified masculine behavior (sexual aggression), and that it is not always possible through retrospection to find positivity or personal elucidation. Antoine agrees with Sabine that they might as well pretend things will work out together, and see where they go from there. The film ends with Antoine and Sabine happily embracing. The viewer knows the current happiness Antoine and Sabine share will not last, as does Antoine; he is still lying as he did as an adolescent. As an adult, his mendacity has proven successful at points though he does not know how to fix truly his problems. Antoine's self-discovery does happen and he has corrected his adolescent delinquency by transforming the adolescent "acting out," into the male mantra of "deny, deny, deny,"¹⁰⁵ as an adult. Antoine redirects his youthful anger into sexual aggression or hypersexuality, and has conformed to society's standards but remains as isolated from trustworthy, human relationships as the young boy by the sea who stares into the camera at the end of *Les Quatre cents coups*.

¹⁰⁵ Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century*.

Chapter 5

The last motion picture to be presented is Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*. The film focuses on Mason Evans Jr. (Ellar Coltrane) through a twelve-year transpiration from childhood to adolescence. The alternative coming-of-age films showcased thus far question and rebut conventional perspectives of gender assumptions in classically patriarchal settings. *Boyhood* takes place between 2002 and 2014 throughout various locations in Texas including Houston, Austin, and Alpine. Texas can be characterized as a traditional region of the United States being that much of it "came from the older South"¹⁰⁶ and a Western frontier mixture. A perfect scene to illustrate the culturally rubric nature of the state amidst contemporary times is when Mason is roughly twelve-years-old. He and his sister Samantha are ringing doorbells to inquire if they may put up campaign signs for Barak Obama for the 2008 presidential election. One resident vehemently rejects the proposal and tells Mason "I could shoot you!" as added incentive to usher the boy off his property. It is noticeable to the audience as well as Samantha, who makes mention of it, that the man has a Confederate flag hanging on his house. The greatest difference between *Boyhood* and the other alternative coming-of-age films listed is the time in which they are made. Ray's *Apu Trilogy* began production twelve-years after India gained independence from the England and Truffaut's *Antoine Doinel* chronicles traversed through "one of the greatest upheavals in French society since the revolution."¹⁰⁷ The periods in which Ray and Truffaut created their projects were undeniable times of transition, but nothing compared to the current digital and Internet era that Mason is situated in.

¹⁰⁶ Adam Gopnik, "United States: Traditional regions of the United States," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, last modified May 20, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/Traditional-regions-of-the-United-States>.

¹⁰⁷ John Lichfield, "Egalité! Liberté! Sexualité!: Paris, May 1968," *Independent*, last modified February 22, 2008, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/egalit-libert-sexualit-paris-may-1968-784703.html>.

Contemporary times are vastly different from the past. Generationally speaking, people born after a certain year (2004) are without appellation. In the *Atlantic's* 2014 article, "Here Is When Each Generation Begins and Ends, According to Facts," the literary magazine sought to correctly denominate those who fall in the age group called, "Millennial."¹⁰⁸ In accordance with Philip Bump's article, a 2012 *USA Today* editorial also goes along with Neil Howe and William Strauss's definition saying that the group consists of those born between 1982 and 2004.¹⁰⁹ What makes the Millennial generation and proceeding generation important is what constitutes the two groups. According to the aforementioned *USA Today* article, the events that shaped the lives of those born in the Millennial years are the "Sept. 11 attacks, rise of the Internet, (and) Columbine school shooting."¹¹⁰ Shary classifies Columbine and the World Trade Center attacks of 2001 as two of the major instances at the turn of the century where male anger was put on display.¹¹¹ Male anger has been shown to be a commonly assumed behavioral trait for the gender, and as such, the school shooting and terror attacks are not outside the realm of tradition or expectation of masculinity. According to Myers, as of publication of this paper, "The last generation of 'traditional' males is now in their late twenties."¹¹² Here the concept of "traditional" can be understood as the principles of masculine dominance that have pervaded throughout human history: strength, aggression, and sexual hegemony. Myers' demarcation is useful because it

¹⁰⁸ Philip Bump, "Here Is When Each Generation Begins and Ends, According to Facts," *Atlantic*, last modified March 25, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/03/here-is-when-each-generation-begins-and-ends-according-to-facts/359589/>.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce Horowitz, "After Gen X, Millennials, what should the next generation be?," *USA Today*, last modified May 4, 2012, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/advertising/story/2012-05-03/naming-the-next-generation/54737518/1?loc=interstitialskip>.

¹¹⁰ "After Gen X, Millennials, what should the next generation be?"

¹¹¹ Timothy Shary, *Millennial Masculinity: Men in Contemporary American Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), Kindle edition.

¹¹² Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century*.

provides a reference point for whom and what constitutes men of our times. Thus, the decisive year is 1990.

Myers' classification for babies born between 1990 and 1996—"the millennial 'bridge' generation"—incorporates the first of those who grew up with the Internet.¹¹³ The Internet and digital age are what seem to really separate the last batch of traditional males from the newer crop. Part of what makes *Boyhood* a fascinating depiction of male maturation is how Mason changes during a period of unprecedented cultural evolution. Much of what constitutes Mason's transformation is determined by the surrounding events of the current time. Originally the name of the picture was going to be *12 Years*,¹¹⁴ based on the amount of time it took to film (the actual length of shooting was thirty-nine days),¹¹⁵ but was switched due to commercial reasons. Despite the narrative of the film following Mason as he ages from six to eighteen, because the shooting of the film takes place annually for only a couple of days each occasion, time is the focus of the production and becomes such for the narrative of the picture. Time is the real protagonist of *Boyhood*.

Like Truffaut and Ray, Linklater was drawn to the essences of Neorealism and more specifically, the understanding of the new/time image not contingent upon movement or the character(s). Linklater evokes Bazin for his idea of "pure cinema," which according to the filmmaker is one where "there's no cutting" and/or "where the lead character is really time."¹¹⁶ Linklater utilizes this philosophy in the camping trip scene with Mason and his estranged father,

¹¹³ Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century*.

¹¹⁴ Justin Chang, "Richard Linklater on 'Boyhood,' the 'Before' Trilogy and the Luxury of Time," *Variety*, last modified June 25, 2014, <http://variety.com/2014/film/news/richard-linklater-boyhood-ethan-hawke-patricia-arquette-1201243485/>.

¹¹⁵ David Bloom, "'Boyhood': 39 Shooting Days, A 4,200-Day Production Schedule," *Deadline.com*, last modified July 10, 2014, <http://deadline.com/2014/07/boyhood-39-shooting-days-a-4200-day-production-schedule-794837/>.

¹¹⁶ Rob Stone, *The Cinema of Richard Linklater: Walk, Don't Run (Directors' Cuts)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), Kindle edition.

Mason Sr. During the camping segment—the father and son pair discuss multitudes of topics—one shot of them talking and walking lasts for almost ninety seconds; the camera is situated at a fixed distance and only pans with the characters as they trek across the plane; the camera otherwise remains stationary. By being one long take, the audience experiences the moment in time with the characters as they do. As Imran Siddiquee puts it, "with a directorial style that suggests documentary, he (Linklater) further encourages viewers to apply their own meaning to Mason's journey."¹¹⁷ Rob Stone's book, *The Cinema of Richard Linklater: Walk, Don't Run (Directors' Cuts)*, acknowledges Linklater's actuality shooting style and how productions like Michael Apter's documentary *Up* series along with Truffaut's pictures on Antoine, were major influences.¹¹⁸ Another example of the "pure cinema" concept in action is in the following year's scene with Mason and Jill. Mason, who is now around thirteen-years-old (denoted by non-diegetic music, Phoenix's 2009 song, *1901*), decides to walk to his mother's (Olivia) college after Samantha fails to pick him up from school. Jill, a fellow student from school, walks beside him for a short while and they converse; she is otherwise "just kinda hangin' out." Consisting of a tracking (dolly) shot that lasts over two minutes, the camera moves with Mason and Jill; there is no editing of their walking and talking together. The trailing/leading and interrupted use of the camera situates the audience within the narrative and conjures a notion verisimilitude by implementing real-time action.

Mason's (including Ellar's) development is subject to time. He is introduced as a prototypical six-year-old boy in 2002, falling within Myers' millennial bridge generation. Throughout the movie, gadgetry evolves, inferring the current setting as well as displaying how technology changes Mason and the social dynamics around him. In the beginning of the film,

¹¹⁷ Imran Siddiquee, "Not Everyone's Boyhood," *Atlantic*, last modified September 10, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/09/the-not-so-relateable-boyhood/379700/>.

¹¹⁸ Stone, *The Cinema of Richard Linklater: Walk, Don't Run (Directors' Cuts)*.

much of Mason's life is active and his sources for learning, education, and entertainment are without digital technology. The audience witnesses Mason performing very traditional childhood actions: daydreaming while looking up at the sky, riding a bike, watching cartoons on the television, fighting with his sister, playing on a swing, investigating a dead bird, and reading a book before bedtime with his mother. As he ages, many of these activities are transmuted through digital applications. As an example, in the first year, Mason is looking at female bodies in a lingerie catalog with a neighborhood friend. Roughly four years later, as alluded to by an earlier Houston Astros baseball game scene,¹¹⁹ Mason is around eleven-years-old and a friend is showing him how easy it is to access pornography on the Internet. Myers proclaims that, "Pornography has become ubiquitous, with even hard-core porn available online for free with no age barriers. The generation that has grown up online has also grown up with porn as their primary source of sex education."¹²⁰ These two instances in Mason's experience demonstrate an evolution of the concept of sexual awakening that goes beyond technological advancements.

Technology is shown in *Boyhood* to be another source of information regarding sexual activity. After the presidential campaign sign scene, Mason Sr. discusses sexual relationships with both his daughter and son at a bowling alley. Embarrassed by the topic of conversation, Samantha is reticent towards her father's inquiries about a boy she is pictured with on her Facebook page. Mason Sr. jokes to Mason saying that, " Uh-huh, you see? I learn more about her through her Facebook page than I do from our scintillating conversation." Previously, in a brief scene within his car, Mason Sr.'s demands that Samantha and Mason and have deep talks beyond "polite conversations" with their father. What is shown by this progression, without directorial

¹¹⁹ Christopher Wilson, "BLS Investigation: Which Astros game did the characters in 'Boyhood' attend?," *Yahoo*, last modified August 5, 2014, <http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/mlb-big-league-stew/which-astros-game-did-the--boyhood--characters-attend-164003306.html>.

¹²⁰ Myers, *The Future of Men: Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century*.

judgment, is that social media has unveiled aspects of Samantha's life and personality which Mason Sr., has found difficult if not entirely illusive to obtain. *Boyhood* does not censure digital technology to be a bad thing but that it is merely a tool that determines a great deal of human interaction. This thought is reflected upon in the road trip to Austin. Mason is in eleventh grade (roughly seventeen-years-old) and is traveling with his girlfriend Sheena to Samantha's dorm for a little getaway. During the car ride, the couple converse about technology's influence: Mason is decisively against the proliferation while Sheena clearly subscribes to what is provided by the tool. Sheena questions the purpose of Mason deleting his Facebook page. Mason responds to her that, "I'm not doing it for attention. I just want to try and not live my life through a screen." Sheena's explanation of technology is that, "It's not an experience, it's just information." Both Mason and Sheena acknowledge how the traditional experience of life without technology is now unpopular and difficult to achieve.

The conversation between Mason and Sheena is interesting because it elucidates something about Mason's progression that is otherwise unexpressed. Mason has become adverse to certain aspects of technology despite accepting its usefulness and implementation. Even though he grew up surrounded by digital technology (Mason has been witnessed enjoying video/computer games since he was seven-years-old), he still finds the desire to not be consumed by devices as an older adolescent. This conflict of convention and contemporary is the crux of Myer's view on masculinity in the twenty-first century. Mason embodies this tassel between the old and new male because his maturation process is shown to be interested in aspects of both lifestyles, though Linklater does not visually value one more than the other. Men of a certain age are shown in *Boyhood* to be confused by a younger generation whose mannerisms are dissociative of long held normative gender associations. Bill, Mason's stepfather for over three

years, disapproves of Mason's long hair and forces him to cut it, so that he may "look like a man, instead of a little girl." Jim, the ex-Army National Guard soldier who the family moves in with around 2010, criticizes Mason for having on nail polish and earrings. Mason says indifferently that a girl at school put the nail polish on him. Samantha defends him by saying, "A lot of guys do that. He's just trying to be cool." Jim retorts that when he was in high school, "having a job, being responsible, being able to afford a car, that was cool." Mason is seen in a darkroom processing film when a teacher (Mr. Turlington) walks in and starts interrogating Mason about not finishing his photography assignments. Turlington questions Mason's work ethic and discipline. Mason replies that, "I feel like I do work pretty hard. I spend the whole weekend taking pictures a lot of times."

Differences of perspectives have occurred between father and son generations before but the permeation of digital technology has provided for many young males a new source of information and form of mentorship. As Myers writes, "The de-emphasis on positive male role models and fathers in American culture has arguably been a major factor in the growing rate of fatherless households. More children are growing up in fatherless homes than ever before, parents are working longer hours, and the public schools are in dire need of a change that responds to this and embraces technology and the Internet as teaching tools."¹²¹ Mason Sr. lives away from his kids though he is a decent father when present. Mason has been undoubtedly affected by his father's absence and the absence of any positive male role models at home. Mason's character is shaped by his relationships with his mother and sister but elements of technology have undeniably shaped his perspective. This point is indicated in the fact that he finds such strong opposition to living his life through a screen. Mason's transitional moment of discovery is never pronounced. Big and small events happen in Mason's life (or have happened

¹²¹ Ibid.

to Mason) and alter his outlook, but Linklater does not directly express Mason's transformation. *Boyhood* exhibits youthful metamorphosis alternatively from other films because it organically records a maturation story. Characters develop gradually, as time develops. The audience ascribes meaning and resolution to the protagonist's journey, rejecting the long tradition of the coming-of-age genre.

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