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The Changing Representation of Youth in the Film Industry

by

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INTRODUCTION

Movies, through the generations, have reflected society and social changes, in addition to responding to changing technological conditions. In terms of technological changes, like everything else, cinema has continued to develop. Cinema, for some time has been highly reliant, in fact dependant, on society's younger generation, its majority audience as well as a source of subject matter. The portrayal of youth in cinema has changed many times over the past five decades from the idealised to threatening depictions.

"Suddenly in the mid-fifties, there were teenagers everywhere, dancing to 'Rock 'n' Roll' music and dating at the drive-ins; up on the screen, the teenage hero acted out a generation's fantasies" (Lloyd, 1982, p.75). Through the discovery of the 'teen-problem', cinema of the 1950s made a significant gesture towards the ever-evolving youth culture. The music and the movies of this time represented a world caught up momentarily in hedonism. For older generations there was the fear that civilised order, as they knew it, was about to end forever because 'Rock 'n' Roll' represented "a host of concepts and images that fired the public's ideas of youth: delinquency, adolescent gangs, motorcycle worship, ballroom dance halls, jazz clubs, melody bars, teddy boys and similar phenomena" (Lloyd, 1982, p.75). From this period on we can follow a huge diversity of films directed by a wide variety of directors, all with one thing in common: the portrayal of teen life on the big screen. The themes and plots of these films cover vast subject matter including: social deprivation that leads to delinquency, youths being confronted with the inability of adults to comprehend their lives and the exaggerated problems of being a teenager. Within any teen film from the 1950s to the present day the general consensus, as Cynthia Rose writes, is, " The teenagers' deliberate gestures of individuality were interpreted as stances of defiance, aimed at

their elders" (in Lloyd, 1982, p.16). A cross section of films from the 1950s to the 1990s can give a general reflection of the position of youth in society. *Rebel Without a Cause* directed by Nicholas Ray in 1955 offered an existential view of directionless youth. In the 1960s *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) depicted two youths, who were alienated from their families, as well as society, and highlighted the "difficult irony of the twisted and inseparable fates of individuals and their society" (Grant, 1995, p.242). The 1970s and early 1980s also showed films in which the youths had equally twisted and ultimately doomed fates, such as *Rumble Fish* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1983) and *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971). The above films all portray the extreme difficulties of being young. However, the second half of the 1980s took a completely different angle on adolescence. Films like *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (John Hughes, 1986) and *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deuth, 1986), among many others, represent the eighties' celebration of youth culture and the trends of particular times and places. These films still portrayed the lives of young people and many teenage problems, but with less anxiety and a greater sense of celebration. The problems experienced are not as serious, the characters' portrayal of real teenagers is that of the easy going, carefree nature of being young, the 'just out to have some fun' attitude is brought to the foreground in these films. The main messages which these films give off are those of young people getting themselves into all sorts of awkward situations, but order is restored at the end in true Hollywood fashion.

In the 1990s, the awareness of an expanding youth culture, with all the difficulties and problems of teen life in general is as strong as ever. Films from the 1990s, such as *Kids* (Larry Clark, 1995), *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995) and *Gummo* (Harmony Korine, 1997) are just a few of a much larger amount that depict very different aspects of the lives of teenagers in society in the 1990s. These three films are direct opposites of each other, showing everything from different class structures, the behaviour of children and young adults in different social classes, the deprivation and alienation experienced within different areas of teen-life, along with the celebration

of youth and the shadowy side of teen life. An overall general feeling from these films, is that whether they (the teenagers) are in an urban or rural environment makes very little difference to many of their situations. *Clueless* is very typical of Hollywood's rich American upper class kids, whereas I am more concerned with the teen portrait that *Kids* and *Gummo* offer.

Within this cross section of films there is the question of how realistically teen life and reality in general are portrayed on the big screen. Most of these films have their roots in reality and the media. Whether the actual stories of these films are based in reality or not, it is through the making and editing of the films that stronger impressions of reality are given, especially in examples such as *Kids* and *Gummo*. French film director, Jean Luc Godard is a significant figure here because his rupture with classic narrative in the early 1960s has been a major influence for many directors since, and in particular Clark and Korine, who like Godard are concerned with achieving the sensations of life in film. There is also an argument over who the potential viewers of teen films are. *Kids* was the controversial movie of 1995, depicting teenage sex, drugs and the extremely easy going lifestyles of thirteen to fifteen year olds in New York City, but in most countries it was given a certificate which allowed persons only over the age of eighteen to watch it. As Jon Savage argues;

There is a deep hypocrisy here. Our society promotes a vision of the teenage years as the most desirable of all, with all modes of consumption - records, books, clothes, cosmetics - that fuel large sections of our economy. This is the teenage sex fantasy reinforced by successive generations of Hollywood movies. Yet at the same time, actual adolescents in the US and the UK are marginalised, indeed penalised; real-life teenage sex is taboo [Savage, 1995,p.7].

Basically the certificate given indicates that although this may be the lifestyle of these 'kids' in New York, the rest of the world may not be ready or indeed not want their young people to experience it.

This thesis' basic concern lies with the representation of youth on the big screen. In Chapter 1, I will discuss the break French filmmaker Jean Luc Godard made with classic narrative, in order to work primarily on the representation of the real world in film. Godard is of major importance in connection with the realistic aesthetic of film making which was developed mainly in Europe, but has had a phenomenal influence on many Hollywood directors from the 1960s on. Chapter 2 will look briefly at some 'problematic' teenage films made between the 1950s and the late 1980s. Chapter 3, the final chapter will look at the movie representation of teenagers in the 1990s. Films including *Kids* and *Gummo* portray the more problematic, violent, and in a lot of ways alienating side of 1990s youth. Along with the media these films reflect society's shortcomings and lack of responsibility towards these youths. These films also reflect Godard's influence, mainly seen within the settings, type of filming (hand held cameras, location shooting, etc.) and editing which like Godard's films are highly important as they are carefully employed to enhance the illusion of reality.

**CHAPTER ONE : GODARD'S RUPTURE OF
CLASSIC NARRATIVE**

Within the historical development of the motion picture we can distinguish that it was in France in the late 1950s, early 1960s with a group of young, enthusiastic directors that the beginning of a 'New Wave' in cinema was established. They opened the doorway to a cinema which questioned everything (a lot of their questions are still valid today). The questions they asked came through not only in written criticism but also in their films, through the narrative (in the films when a narrative as we know it was used) and the visual aspect, neither being in any way conventional. The main director within this counter cinema was Jean Luc Godard. Pam Cook's definition of counter cinema describes the basis of Godard's work as a director;

Counter Cinema may be defined as film practice which challenges dominant cinema usually at the levels of both form and content
[Cook, 1985, p.220].

In order to acknowledge Jean Luc Godard's huge break with classic narrative, the opposing factors of the two must be set out. Most of these opposing factors come through a direct comparison with Hollywood's genre cinema of the 1950s and 1960s enabling us to see how different these two types of filmmaking were and still are.

Within the structure of any classical narrative film from the 1920s to the late 1950s and even today, we can see a basic construction of a plot and its characters; a disruption in this occurs, which is then followed by a chain reaction of events until finally a new equilibrium is restored. As stated already this is still the case in many contemporary Hollywood films but not to the same degree. In those contemporary films where we do not find this equilibrium at the end of the film it is usually due to the director leaving the film open to the possibility of a continuation, as is the case with many blockbusters (eg. *Scream* and *Scream 2* along with all the *Die Hard* films). However, Godard's narrative construction (and deconstruction) creates "a random

and unconnected series of incidents " (Wollen, 1982, p.80), placed one after the other giving the film a feeling of disjointment and inconsistency. But what appears to be random scenes at first have obscure connections which become evident as the film unfolds. With most of his films Godard continuously introduces new characters (although always focusing on the main characters) and scenes, cutting all the time. The purpose of all this confusion is, as Peter Wollen writes "to represent the variety of ups and downs of real life " (Wollen, 1982, p.80).

Godard's break with the narrative structure of the time automatically disrupts the flow of the film; a flow that audiences did not have to contemplate in any film which used the classic narrative system. This was at the same time something most audiences did not appreciate which explains why many people expecting entertainment from cinema have walked out during screenings of his films. This process of montage like film forces the viewer to refocus their attention, question what is actually going on, on the screen, as well as behind it. Godard's work has never been as simple as just storytelling, although it still is storytelling, with very subtle underlying messages which would come to the foreground at times during the film and then retreat again into the background. The primary theme of Godard's early work was its desire to obtain a space between reality and fiction, documentary and imagination, these were the established opposite poles of cinema. Godard wrote "Beauty and truth have two poles: documentary and fiction. You can start with either one. My starting point is documentary to which I try to give the truth of fiction" (in Brougher, 1996, p.68). Godard always relied on spontaneity, flexibility, improvisation and using ideas brought to his sets by others. Hollywood relies hugely on audience identification with a time, a place and characters. Godard, on the other hand, rarely sets these things out for us, we do know the temporal setting, it's always the here and now with his films, but any other identification is disrupted if not demolished from the outset. All this is done through such actions as the mismatching of voice and character, the introduction of 'real-people' instead of actors or even 'stars' and also the staging of films within his

films. His cinema also relies on knowledge of cinema, literature, the arts and social politics to name a few references we see. The characters constantly address the audience directly, and tell us of time settings, *La Chinoise* (1967) is a major example of this "So France in 1964 is like dirty dishes". The audience also has to acknowledge the appearances of the camera, the crew and the whole workings behind the film at the time of filming, which make many appearances in the edited feature itself. The most obvious differences between these two types of film (and the audiences' identification with them), is between the world of fantasy Hollywood creates and tries to present as realist and the fantasy world Godard builds which is more realistic yet he is constantly reminding the viewer that this is still just a film. The situations he picks, the people he uses, the sets, lighting and documentary feel all add up to a more realistic understanding for the viewer. This understanding of the nature of the film encourages the viewer to look beyond the screen and question the whole filming process rather than wait to be entertained.

Godard's admiration of Hollywood cinema is extremely prominent in his work, along with literature and painting, Hollywood movies were a major influence on his early work. But he did not want to make Hollywood-type films. Godard questioned the fantasy, the planning and the consistency that characterised classic narrative cinema and still does. His films had low budgets, were shot in very short periods of time and in some cases even editing was eliminated altogether. He simply shot scenes back to back, often only taking one shoot of a scene in order to capture a certain mood or feeling and then still used it even if the lighting was not perfect or the characters not perfectly positioned. All this gave his films a strong documentary feel. What he did take from Hollywood was the ideas genres had based themselves on and in particular the ideas of the hero in the western and the gangster films; Ferdinand in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) and Michel in *A Bout de Souffle* (1959) are prime examples of this. Overall his approach was to take these basic structures of cinema along with cinema's realistic qualities and push them onto a new level, not to 'copy' them or demolish

them. It has been stated that if you follow Godard's films, he repeats himself. Gilles Jacob states that he doesn't have anything new to say "but what he says seems so important that he must repeat it over until he is satisfied....." and from his films "the same images assault and solicit our imaginations. The familiar obsession remains" (in Kline, 1992, p.186).

Instead of using the usual single narrative Godard used a multitude of interlocking and disjointed narratives to convey and accentuate his visions and personal views on the subjects he decided to portray. And even within the film itself he continues to explore the complex composition and situations he has made. His films, as complex as they are with all the different layers, hiding and exposing different elements of the narrative and the characters, are still extremely audience reliant (as are most films). Godard of course recognised this, as most directors do. Films are mostly a single vision but to be successful they have to reach and be comprehensible to the audience. In his early years as a filmmaker reaching the audience was a priority, but towards the end of the 1960s through his abandonment of narrative, his filmmaking had taken a completely new direction. Along with a new experimental combination of using video and film simultaneously in the 1970s, his total abandonment of any form of narrative gave way to the production of many very unwatchable films.

In recent years cinema has been described as becoming 'self conscious' in contrast to the 'innocent' days of Hollywood
[Wollen, 1982 , p.8].

This 'self conscious' cinema is fully evident in Godard's work. There is a huge expectation of the audience's intelligence, hence the frequent use of quotes from previous films, literature and art. Godard borrowed freely from various sources which is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of his films, giving the audience some structure for the purpose of understanding his films better. Godard recognises all the great directors, artists, writers, etc. that have come before him and sets out his

appreciation and admiration for them all, within his films. From his earlier films an endless list could be drafted showing the significance of the quotations within these films, *Une Femme est une Femme* (1961) shows an obvious derivation from the Hollywood musical, as *Le Mepris* (1963) and *Pierrot le Fou* show how influential directors such as Rossellini and Hitchcock were.

From cinema's beginning, the documentary footage of real scenes in the late 19th century, through footage of World Wars I and II which ensured the dominance of the 'realist' mode of filmmaking, to the heyday of Hollywood classic narrative, cinema is the "medium that has provided the visual means most technically suited to represent 20th century reality" (Boarini, Nov 1986, p.111). It was with all Godard's breaks from Hollywood and classic narrative, and the input of his own very strong style that brought the documentary quality cinema had at its beginning back to the foreground in the 1960s, without demolishing the escapism of cinema. The New Wave's most characteristic techniques were essentially documentary for which they are forever indebted to the Lumière brothers. The Lumière brothers projected the world's first moving picture in 1895, they called their films "*actualités*" or documentary views which is exactly what they were at this period. At the turn of the century they adopted the studio-bound staged performances of film recording as well as continuing to record the actualities of life. Godard's cinema is essentially *Cinéma Vérité* "the chief documentary mode of the sixties and seventies, which constitutes an application of New Wave shooting and recording practices to real events rather than staged ones" (Cook, 1981, p.463). Godard's films are open-ended (true *vérité* style), the questions they ask and the problems and answers they pose are always open to questioning and continue well beyond the rolling credits. Through all the filming and editing qualities, use of real people as well as 'stars', and the pushing of audience reaction and involvement, the "result is realism in a new dimension: we forget we are looking at a picture, and feel the living breathing presence of the characters" (Williams, 1980, p.199).

The attack on 'entertainment' cinema is part of a broader attack on the whole of 'consumer society'. Cinema is conceived of as a drug that lulls and mollifies the militancy of the masses, by bribing them with pleasurable dreams thus distracting them from the stern tasks which are their true destiny [Wollen, 1982, p.87].

Godard, along with many other filmmakers, has questioned the entertainment factor of cinema, it is obvious with his films that there is a struggle between the 'reality' and 'pleasure' principles of cinema. But as long as films are being made on whatever level, entertainment or more 'real life' depictions, the use of images make it impossible to eliminate the fantasy, fictional, 'drug-like' world of any type of cinema. Godard's characters, however, are not really living pleasurable dreamlike lives, more often than not their lives are ultimately doomed, and not extremely attractive to the viewer who can anticipate the character's ultimate fate.

As impossible as it seems to create or represent reality within cinema, Godard's counter cinema is credited with pushing cinematic ideas as far as possible without destroying cinema, which never was the intention. "Godard's movies cut across genre distinctions, combining documentary realism, stylised tableaux, propaganda, whimsical digressions on art, culture and sociology in a bizarre and often bewildering mixture" (Giannetti, 1974, p.20). All of the French New Wave directors liked to push their techniques to the precipice of incoherence, Godard's films in particular are constantly flirting with chaos. The audience, although thrown by it, can relate to the chaos on the screen as it resembles life in many ways. And although associated with a 'realistic' looking style Godard never proclaimed his films to be anything other than films. Made up of a montage of action, snap shots, jump cuts, painting and many different news paper cut outs, characters talking directly to the camera which gives the impression of direct address to the audience, all contained together make a film with too many 'realistic' qualities to disregard. Through all this a connection is made in which the viewer may feel it easier to relate to the characters. The actual acting makes a diversion at times when the audience are been addressed directly, which may

only be for a fleeting moment as Godard's films never dwell for long periods in what appears to be 'reality', instead they jump between it and the fictional film world.

In films like *A Bout de Souffle* or *La Chinoise* along with most of Godard's 1960s movies we can see many thematic connections between the different films namely, social, political, and extremely high on the list, the relationships between men and woman. Godard's cinema at this time could also be considered a cinema of and for a younger generation. The actors/actresses are, for the most part young people, the problems and questions put before the audience appear to be coming from bewildered viewpoints searching for answers. The films of the French 'New Wave' centred around modern French life and in particular the young living in bourgeois Paris, capturing all that was to be seen, heard and understood by the generation of the time.

**CHAPTER TWO : YOUTH FILMS FROM THE
1950s TO THE 1980s.**

The depiction of teenagers in the movies represent some of the many subcultures of youth culture. The films I have chosen lie along the darker side of these subcultures portraying the more nihilistic aspects of the teenage years. Films, however, have to have roots somewhere, they are of course influenced by the society from which they originate. In looking at films made in previous decades we realise "that films have the ability to evoke the authentic tone of a society and a particular era" (Quart, Auster, 1984, p.2). This is a significant statement for all types of films, historical, fictional and documentaries all function as historical documents. The teen movies of the 1950s onwards "assimilated contemporary events and attitudes, so that every fad and fetish of society served as raw materials" (Lloyd, 1982, p.75).

The films written about here dealt with current social issues which were reported by waves of shock stories featured in the newspapers and on television. The stories of major interest were those concerned with the supposed downward direction of teenage morals. This downward direction is how every successive generation sees the next. Following the release of James Dean's second major movie *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) in which he played the protagonist Jim, he became an idol for every angst ridden teenager in America "and to this day has remained the ultimate symbol of adolescent pain and rebellion born of despair" (Lloyd, 1982, p.80). He was famous for his intense, brooding portrayals of discontented, rebellious young men, and after his death he became an idol because the characters he played symbolised the frustrations of young people. The action of *Rebel Without a Cause* is all contained within twenty-four hours of the lives of some 1950s teenagers. It tells the complex and compressed story of the conflicts between parents and their children, teenagers amongst themselves, romantic involvement's and their added problems, society's narrow-mindedness towards problem teenagers and its lack of interest in trying to understand them. Jim's father is the exception here, and although the film suggests that he has totally forgotten what it was like to be a teenager, he wants to be there for

Jim.

When premiered in Britain, in January 1956 it received mixed reviews. The Spectator stated: "Its solemnity is rather irritating seeing that a few good spans would settle a lot of its problems"(in Lloyd, 1982, p.78). This kind of review is a response to the 'realistic' qualities of *Rebel Without a Cause* in relation to its portrait of teenage delinquency. Nicholas Ray (director) and Stewart Stern (screenwriter) went to great efforts to research the teenage issue, including interviewing and spectating at juvenile court sessions. They "made determined efforts to accommodate a documentary feel within the parameters of the high-gloss, A-feature production values required at Warners" (Lloyd 1982, p.78). As much as *Rebel Without a Cause* is about juvenile delinquency, Nicholas Ray's main aim was to show how desperate these teenagers were to find and build themselves a world outside the corrupt society in which they lived.

Rebel Without a Cause is probably the teenage 'problem picture' of this century, as well as being a highly melodramatic and definitely artificial, staged movie. Scenes like the 'chicken-run' and the final planetarium scene are obviously staged and dramatised. But the point is that the underlying tensions between teenagers and adults and their lack of communication, which makes such events inevitable, are the focus of the film. This is evident when Jim tries but fails to get advice from his father, and so joins Buzz (Corey Allen) at the rendezvous. For these teenagers adulthood is never viewed positively, any answers searched for look unlikely to be answered there. The title and the film caption itself *Rebel Without a Causeand they both came from 'good families'* (Fig. 1), further underlines the breakdown in the social order and the lack of interest in understanding the lives of these youths and what goes on in them. The adult perspective in the majority of cases is that it's unexplainable that they should have problems, seeing as 'teenage days are the best of one's life'. The film suggests that the adults should take an interest as when the teenagers are left to their own devices, without any real discipline or supervision, two fatal accidents occur.

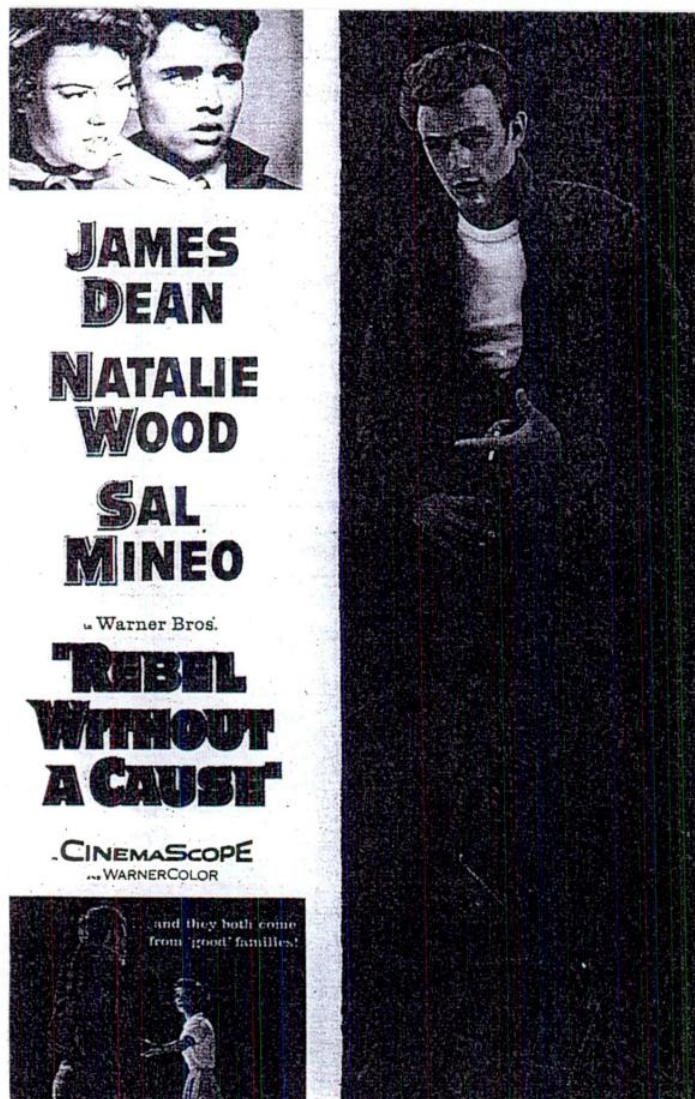


FIGURE 1

Advertisement poster for :

Rebel Without a Cause



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NO TENDRIS

The first one is during the 'chicken-run' scene between Buzz and Jim in which Buzz gets his sleeve cuff caught on the door handle, is unable to open the door to jump from the car and so goes crashing tragically over the cliff. The second has a build up over a number of scenes, beginning with Plato (Sal Mineo) producing a gun he has acquired and intends using for protection against Buzz's gang; after they beat him up in an old deserted house he shoots one of the gang and then flees to the planetarium. Putting their own lives at risk Jim and Judy (Natalie Wood) follow Plato and persuade him to give himself up. Their desire to protect and help Plato shows the loyalty and honour these mixed up teenagers posses, but in the end Plato is shot dead by the police which Jim ultimately feels responsible for. Basically *Rebel Without a Cause* offers us three teenagers, each living in dysfunctional families, searching for role models. Being the first real 'Teen' movie it was and still is responsible for the representation of teenagers in the 1950s. At the end of the 1950s teenagers were:

No longer seen as a threat to civilised life, however many hi-jinks they might perpetrate. At the beginning of the Sixties, the movies saw the teenager as an energetic creature in need of advice and guidance, but meaning no real harm to society [Lloyd, 1982, p.77].

This may well have been the ideal, but in the case of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) (Fig.2) society still had a lot to be wary about. Even the film's advertisement caption stated:

".....They're Young, They're in Love and They Kill People"

[Cook, 1981, p.627].

This is hardly believable at the beginning of the film when we get our first glimpse of Miss Bonnie Parker (Faye Dunaway), beautiful yet an obviously frustrated young woman. We are made aware of her frustrations through the opening series of



FIGURE 2

Touched-up publicity shot from:

Bonnie and Clyde



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CONTROL

very abrupt shots of her in her shabby room. There is also an underlying premonition of entrapment and imprisonment as she lies caught behind the bars of her headboard. As she contemplates her unhappy rural life, her attention is distracted by some noise outside her window. A young man Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty) is standing in her yard also contemplating something, stealing Bonnie's mother's car. She calls out to him, they make eye contact and she quickly dresses to go down to him.

At this early stage in the film we are aware of Bonnie's need to escape. She is extremely restless, stuck in an era of depression, however "when she steps off the porch and into Clyde's world she sets into motion an adventure neither she nor we can predict will end in misery and death" (Lloyd, 1976, p.97). This image of Bonnie although set in the 1930s was quite comparable to that of the youth population of the 1960s. Penn's intentions were ;

To make a modern film whose actions take place in the past
[O' Connor, Jackson, 1979, p.241].

which would appeal to a younger generation, who were experiencing the same alienation from society and were caught in the throws of rebelliousness and the challenge of being young at such a time. From the character's first, quite self-conscious conversation as they walk into town we, the audience, can establish more of a picture of the depressed society in which they exist. The landscape is barren and empty. At this point in the film Clyde sets up a pretence of his own quite daring, exciting life and belittles Bonnie's. Later however, persuaded by Bonnie, Clyde proves his courage by holding up a grocery store from which they roar off in a stolen car announcing the beginning of the end for them.

This, their first hold up, highlights the sexual excitement that stems from their criminal actions, and also represents the excitement that was searched after and found

in the rejection by sixties' culture of the mundanity of everyday life. Bonnie now throws herself at Clyde only to discover that he's 'no ladies man', emphasising the real connection between the characters, as Bonnie realises that Clyde is her only real hope of escape from the cage that is her job and her home life and in return, Bonnie is Clyde's only hope of becoming the man he longs to be. This first hold-up and the two that follow act as proof that "Bonnie and Clyde don't want to hurt anyone, they are lonely people trying to escape their loneliness, their sexual dysfunction and their economic oppression" (Kolker, 1988, p.37). Their interests lie in the excitement of rebelling against the system, another representation of youth during the 1960s, and not in deliberate malicious actions against individuals. By adopting a life as professional criminals as a means of escaping from a narrow-minded, economically depressed society they expose the limitations of their actions. Society does not and never will accept such actions as those of Bonnie and Clyde, so in the end they are hunted down and killed.

The relationship of Bonnie and Clyde is based on the fantasy of becoming legends, showing the need they had for fame and recognition, along with their strength of character and their will to escape from society's restrictions. For a short period of time they are heroes on the big screen fulfilling their own needs of escapism and those of the audience's. However the film's moral backbone is always protruding, allowing for a lot of narrow escapes, but in the end Bonnie and Clyde are not merely killed but totally destroyed. This film simultaneously celebrates and destroys its protagonists.

The brutality of their execution exceeds anything done by the gang and the film closes, as it had opened, with the audience been drawn to the principals [O'Connor, Jackson, 1979, p.245].

Ultimately they are betrayed when they are at their least violent and their most humane, by CW's father who represents the hypocrisy and cold rigid double standards

of the adult world.

At the time of the making of *Bonnie and Clyde* Hollywood was in dire need of rejuvenation. This film provided a blend of action, romance, comedy and political allegory all influenced of course by the techniques of the French New Wave. Combined with the re-emergence of Film Noir as a genre this period reflected the new found desire to explore the darker side of life, from which a potentially threatening realism was achieved. The influence of Film Noir can mainly be seen in the films' desire to expose audiences to the dark and dismal realities of contemporary American society. As the critic James Agee wrote in 1947, "One of the best things that is happening in Hollywood is the tendency to move out of the place - to base fictional pictures on fact and, more importantly, to shoot them not in painted studio sets but in actual places" (in Cook, 1981, p.403). Film Noir relied on the controlled environment of the studio as well as real locations in order to depict the dismal pessimistic underside of post-war American life. Some of these films went to the extreme in their portrayal of the absolute corrupt society and the people in it. *Bonnie and Clyde*, provided the proof of a corrupt society in the 1960s and was the first real effort since *Rebel Without a Cause* to articulate the frustrations felt by young Americans on screen. These films acted as social commentary and because of newer more realistic techniques in filming, such as using actual location shooting, they had much stronger appearances of reality, which made them more frightening to watch.

The third and last major pessimistic youth film I will write about is *Rumblefish* directed by Francis Ford Coppola in 1983. The film is shot mainly in black and white with a few colour inserts supposedly representing the only realism within the film. Jon Lewis states that although based on a S. E. Hinton novel and filmed in Tulsa, Oklahoma where the novel took place some twenty five years previously:

Coppola's interests lay in the creation of a pointedly anti-realist, ethereal, ahistorical space, frantically allusory to expressionism

and film noir while at the same time chronicling a familiar wild teen romance [in Sharrett, 1993, p.136].

Although not trying to create a realistic vision of youth culture and teenage years, *Rumblefish* like many teen movies does focus on the breakdown of authority and the outcome of that breakdown. It presents yet another crowd of American teenagers bored and directionless, whose pastimes include violent 'glorious fights for the kingdom' underage drinking, taking drugs and living their lives through the life of one ultimate hero, who in this case is 'The Motorcycle Boy' (Mickey Rourke). Within youth gangs there is always the need for one main leader. Rusty James (Matt Dillon) is one of those leaders who also needs direction himself. He looks towards 'the Motorcycle Boy' his brother, who in turn refuses to be the authority figure he seeks. The broken family, unlike that of *Rebel Without a Cause*, is never mended, the father remains a hopeless alcoholic, the runaway mother doesn't return, Rusty James continues as lost as ever in a world he may never understand and 'the Motorcycle Boy' gets his suicidal wish in the end. The alienation, corrupt social order and breakdown of authority are focused on, which thematically links these three films and what sets them apart from most Hollywood productions. *Rumble Fish* is set apart again because although all three films are concerned with the same issues of bored, aimless youth, it dismantles the teen film narrative in every way possible, and in the end it is by far the most pessimistic. Rusty James' inability to seize the day and become the ultimate hero suggests that eventually drugs will take over the leaderless teen world. And so "the film ends unambiguously in boredom, suicide and hopelessness" (Lewis, 1993, p.144).

Moving just a couple of years on from the making of *Rumblefish* we are hit by a bombardment of films celebrating being alive and being young. The films I refer to are the likes of *Ferris Buellers Day Off* (John Hughes, 1986), *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deuth, 1986) and *The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes, 1986) all made towards the end of the 1980s and definitely directed towards the highly profitable teenage market. There are a certain number of elements which unify these films and set them

apart from the previous films I have been writing about. For the most part the characters are white middle class rich kids attempting to get in with the cooler elements of society, but who have 'uncool' parents whom they desperately try to be the total opposite of. Quite a lot of teen plots include a conflict of interests between parent and teenager which, for the most part, results in them coming to terms with their differences. This encounter with adult problems eventually serves as a growing up experience. All in all, these characters get to fulfil fantasies that most normal teenagers are too scared to attempt. These films are comical and entertaining and the teenagers in them never really appear to be a threat to themselves or society. They present the more simplistic typical Hollywood problems of growing up.

**CHAPTER THREE: YOUTH REPRESENTATION IN
INDEPENDENT MOTION PICTURES OF THE 1990s**

The main concerns of this chapter lie with independent motion pictures and their representation of teen life and society in the 1990s. The films I have chosen show how the influence of Godard, and his strong desires and attempts to get closer to the sensations of reality are still highly relevant to filmmakers today. The desire to engage with a more realistic portrayal of teenagers along with the question of the potential audience separates them from the average Hollywood release.

In the 1990s the topic of youth culture in society is still high among the priorities of media coverage. The film industry itself and Hollywood in particular rely enormously on the younger generations of society for support. This has been the case for the past five decades, as it is within the youth population that most films have found their sources of inspiration and the majority of their potential audience. Tom Doherty states that:

The Nineties teenpics display a generous, good natured attitude rejecting the in-group smugness and revelry in humiliation that typified their predecessors. Oppressive adults and violent peers are banished, or peripheral, and, in a socially significant burst of wish fulfilment, one of the quainter conceits holds that notwithstanding absent, inattentive, or neurotic boomer parents, the kids are well-adjusted and responsible, everything Mom and Dad aren't [Doherty, 1995, p.14].

The films he is referring to are the mainstream 1990s Hollywood releases; however, this statement couldn't be further off the mark in terms of the likes of Larry Clark's *Kids*, or Harmony Korine's *Gummo*, both of which display the exact opposite of the above statement. It is true that in *Kids* (1995) and in *Gummo* (1998), adults are indeed peripheral but the kids in both of these films are definitely not, and very far from being 'well-adjusted' and 'responsible'.

Kids, Larry Clark's, depressing, fascinating and troubling examination of New York's street kids is a bleak, dingy, (with the inclusion of a lot of underage use of

drugs and alcohol) social commentary on the lives of today's youth, within a certain social community. Is it realistic? many argue that it is most certainly not. *Kids*, like any other teenpic tells the tale of one side of youth's many subcultures; however, unlike most other teen movies which are directed for teen audiences, it has been decided that *Kids* should not be viewed by young eyes. This would put *Kids* in the category of teen films made about but not for teenagers and acknowledging it as a controversial movie. Greeted by a lot of bad reviews *Kids* was not the feel good movie of 1995, but it definitely had and still has a lot to say. It is an issue based movie, mainly concerning corrupted teenagers, lacking parental supervision in modern society. There are an awful lot of scenes which are extremely hard to stomach, which makes one appreciate the realistic qualities of Larry Clark's probing camera and editing techniques:

Clark has an extraordinary skill with his young cast: there is little sense of them making out for or up to the camera. He succeeds in being a fly on a variety of apartment, disco and subway walls, never flinching from showing the activities of the pleasure seekers always competing to go one further [Moore, 1995, p.14].

The use of documentary type filming and editing for *Kids*, natural light when at all available, and location shooting, all strongly suggest Godard's influence. Unfortunately, these influences are not as powerful as they were, on site location shooting is not as extraordinary as it once was. Here there is a great attempt to get closer to the sensations of life as was the case in most of Godard's early work. On the subject of the film's plot and narrative Amy Taubin writes: "The narrative has a barebones minimalist feel. Rich with incident, dialogue and behaviour, it's almost devoid of plot" (Taubin, 1995, p.16). This statement proves how influential Godard still is, along with summing up most of his 1960s movies. However Tom Doherty insists that *Kids* is just another conventional film based on its visual elements: "Clark's visual style expresses the seriousness of the substudio feature film: available lighting, long takes, unobtrusive camera work devoid of film-school flourishes, and location

scenes where street extras really do look like random passers-by. For all its outre subject matter, however, *Kids* is formally conventional " (Doherty, 1995, p.5). The 'minimalist feel' and so called 'conventional' structure of *Kids* suggest that it is the moral issues of the film which are of greater importance. I feel, that although it may appear conventional on the surface, if it was a totally conventional film then it wouldn't have received the amount of hype and bad press which it did.

Eighteen year old Harmony Korine took three weeks to write the script for *Kids*. The film is not a documentary although it is set within a time zone of twenty-four hours, which gives it a documentary feel. *Kids* is a movie with strong realist aspirations, and although not actually set in reality but lying so close to it, that it gives the appearance of the real thing. Korine has stated the impossibility of doing the ultimate teen film, but with this script his intentions were to write of adolescence from every aspect: 'I wanted *Kids* to be just about kids', (in Womack, 1995, p.69).

What makes 'Kids' so startling is that the story is told from the inside: the film stays in the heads of the teens themselves from the first frame to the last. Despite the presence of a few stray grown-ups, there's no adult consciousness to disperse advise, to give warning, to save the day: the kids are alone, it's their existential condition [Dargis, 1995, p.5].

Basically this sums up the story of *Kids*, and to an extent real life delinquency, which is said to come about through the lack of adult supervision and control. This is not a new theme within the teen picture. Teen delinquency has been a major topic for some time but within this movie the more violent aspects of delinquency and the lack of respect for human life are highlighted. This film is so disturbing because it is so frank in describing the 'actualities' of teen life in the 1990s as well as exaggerating them, as were *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Bonnie and Clyde* in their time. Although all three are undeniably scripted films and not documentaries, they all possess many different factors which are responsible for making them shocking to the viewer. Whether it be the exaggerated scripts or the visual aesthetic of these films, they are

shocking because they give the appearance of been truthful in their depictions. Through their use of documentary techniques and their assumption of an audience's familiarity with 'real life' issues, these films could be mistaken for documentaries. The question that arises though is why not just make an actual documentary? Previous to even getting the script written for *Kids*, Larry Clark spent a lot of time hanging around New York's parks meeting teenagers and finding out what was actually going on in the skateboarding culture of New York. What he found out was;

Like kids do, they'd come up with these elaborate schemes to stay out all night. No supervision, fucking, taking acid, getting into trouble. Then, once they got to know me better, the kids told me no one uses condoms on a bet. Safe sex for these guys was finding virgins, and to hell with the girl [in Womack, 1995, p.66].

Finding out such cold realities set the ball rolling and Clark began to think about the movie during the summer of 1994. His main aim when he finally started shooting was "sometimes, you have to cut through the bullshit and tell the truth" (in Womack, 1995, p.66). If his aim had been to make a documentary rather than a film it would never have reached as wide an audience or been as controversial, but because of the combination of the two the film established a new benchmark within the motion picture industry, as Godard's cinema had done.

Kids captures the mood of a particular time and place, it has an undeniable scripted story line, in which it portrays some very corrupted young minds and what they get up to on a hot summers day in Manhattan. Telly (Leo Fitzpatrick), the protagonist, known amongst his friends as the 'virgin surgeon', opens the movie in a typically uncomfortable scene to watch, with the 'deflowering' of a very unsure young girl. We are quickly made aware of his sordid ways through a voice over stating "Virgins, I love 'em", along with his quick and happy exit after the deed is done (fig. 3). Moments after his victory, as such, over another virgin he is on the street bragging in the most explicit terms to his friend Casper (Justin Pierce). The action

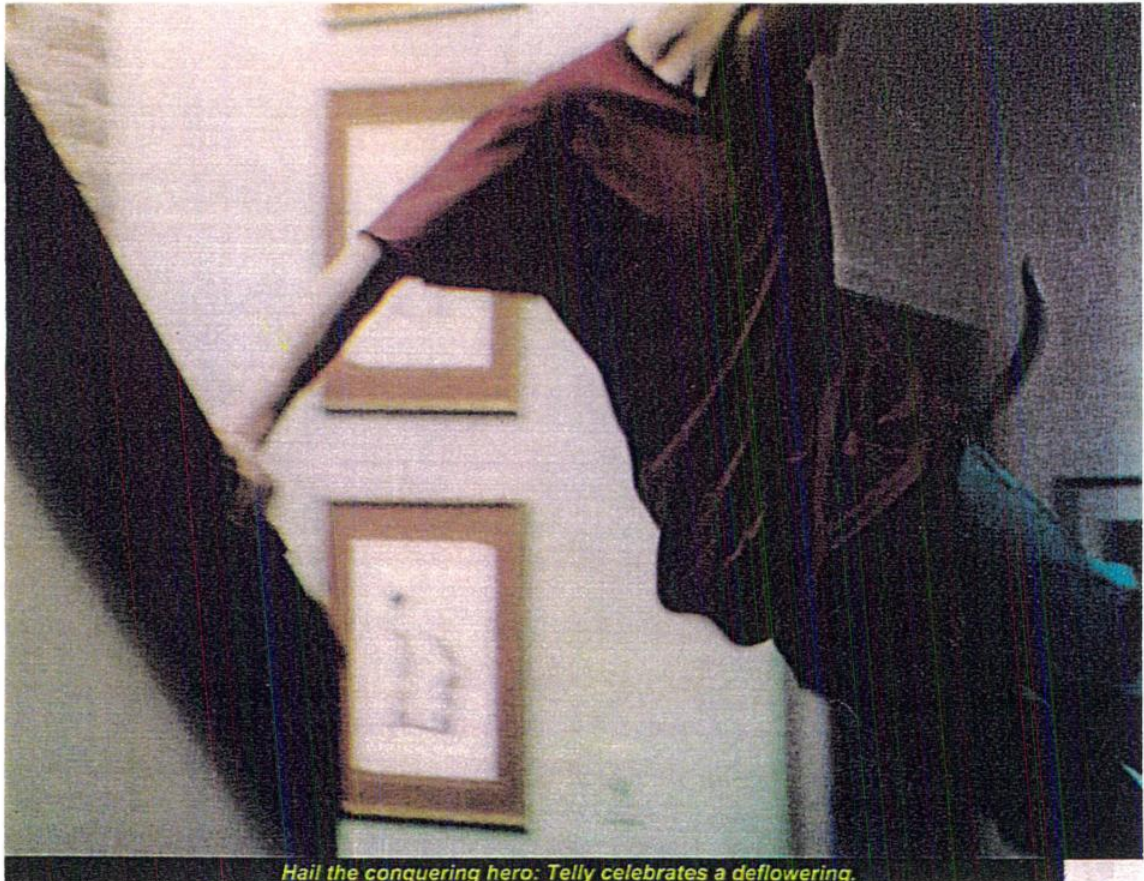
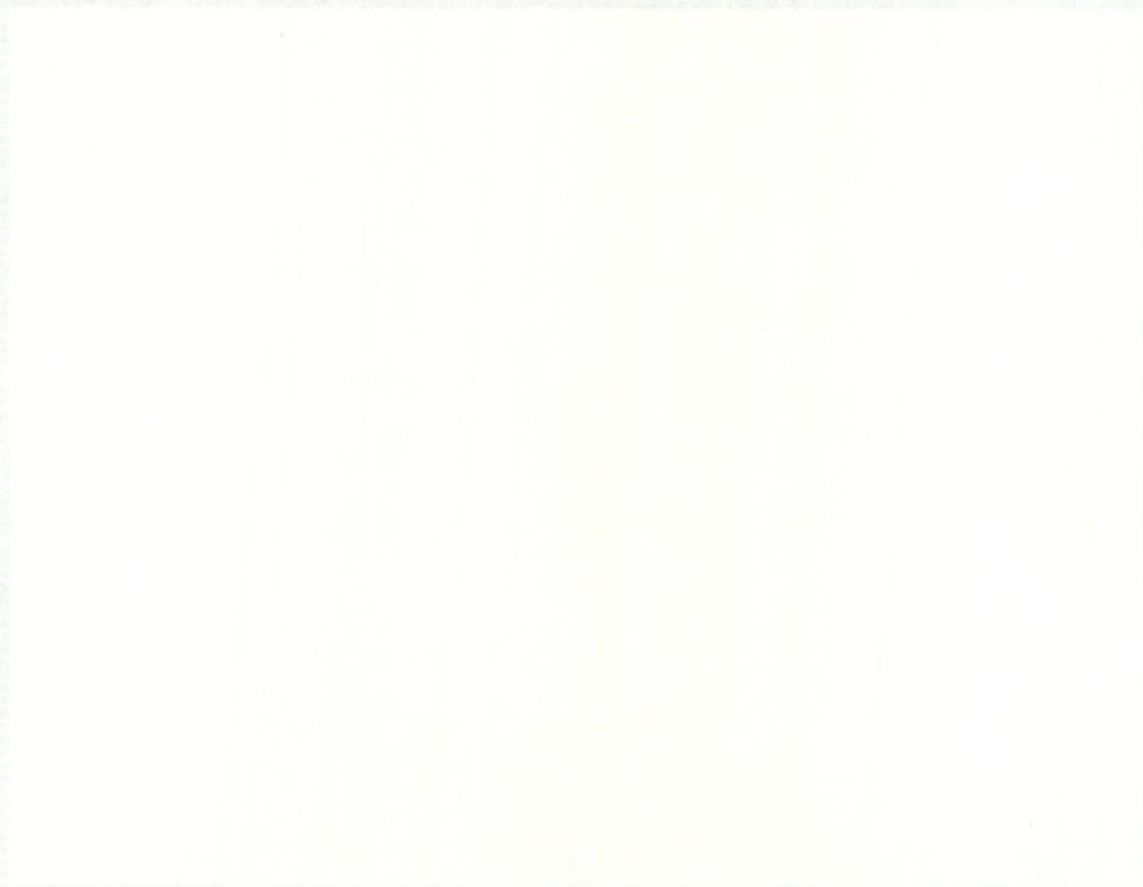


FIGURE 3

Telly celebrating another conquest

Film still from Kids



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continues as they head towards a friend's house, stealing beer along the way. At which point "parallel editing unveils the other side of the gender curtain, where a group of pajama-party-aged girls are talking fellatio, penis size, and sexual positions with the jaded expertise of Sheri Hite interviewees" (Doherty, 1995, p.16). Here we are introduced to Jennie (Chloe Sevigny) the prime female character of the film who activates the plot. She has previously been 'deflowered' by Telly, who has also been her one and only partner. Along with Ruby, who is sexually active, the two go to a clinic to get a check up. Jennie is told that she has tested positive for HIV. This news sets the story in action, from now until dawn of the following morning Jennie roams the city in search of Telly. Telly at this point is pursuing his next conquest, the victim being (although she doesn't know it) the young thirteen year old Darcy (Yakira Peguero) who "represents everything that's holy about virgin". The surprising thing about this whole scenario is how Telly is seen as a hero amongst his male friends which is somewhat understandable, yet amongst the opposite sex little is known about his sordid and disgusting ways and those that do know, do very little, or nothing really, (with the exception of Jennie's sole attempt) to protect potential victims. The moral of this tale is that the only way to find out the realities of life is by finding out the hard way.

"The kids behave as you expect they might out of sight of parental eyes, treating themselves and each other with a lack of respect so appalling that you'd think they were adults. By the end of the film you care more about the characters - even if you dislike some of them - than you suspect their mothers and fathers ever have" (Womack, 1995, p.68). The only parent seen in the whole movie is Telly's mother who is more preoccupied with taking care of her younger child and keeping a roof over her family's head. She denies Telly the money he asks for, which he steals anyway, and asks few questions of where he's been or going to. Even if she was extremely concerned for Telly's welfare, at this point in the film we could see him squealing his way cunningly out of any awkward situation that his mother or any

other adult might put before him.

Clark's personal views of his movie and its viewing are of utmost importance:

There is a strong message in the movie. I made this movie for parents and kids. Ideally, kids should see it with their parents. When people walk out I want them to think 'this is the way it is when you're a kid'. Parents should remember what they did when they were young. Then talk to your kids, in context, when the subject comes up naturally [in Womack, 1995, p.70].

This is very idealistic, as the audience's reaction can never be predetermined. Clark is right in stating how strong the messages within the film are, this is definitely not a film whose concern is just pure entertainment. It is in fact very far from being entertainment. The flashes of anger, violence and lack of respect these teens have throughout the film come to a climax during the brutal park scene in which Casper, "who by now is completely wrecked, goes for a spin on his skateboard and crashes into a black dude who's not part of his crew" (Taubin, 1995, p.16). After the crash and confrontation they brutally beat up their victim and everyone flees not knowing or caring if he's dead or alive, showing the harsh realities of street life.

With a highly deceptive yet deliberate vérité feeling the final party scene sees children as young as ten or eleven getting drunk and high, using vulgar language and talking of things they should know little or nothing about. It is at this party much later on in the night, that the heavily drugged Jennie arrives in the hope of finally finding Telly in order to tell him that he is HIV positive. However, "when she enters the bedroom and watches him 'deflowering' Darcy (who is clearly in pain and not experiencing pleasure) she simply closes the door and weeps. Drugged and practically comatose, she is then raped by Casper" (hooks, 1996, p.63).

One of the many differences between this film and any Hollywood

mainstream release which represents teen life, is its ending. All such films supposedly represent what life is like as a teenager. But in this case the film doesn't come full circle and end optimistically like one would hope, instead the emptiness is still there. The mood the whole way through the film is that these kids are adrift and that there are no role models out there for them. If this had been a conventional Hollywood release, some law and order would have been restored at the end, mainly for the purpose of peace of mind and regained faith in society. But it's not, and so it reflects a pessimistic view of the prospects for these young people. Ending with shots of the aftermath of the party, the screen is full of images of half naked young bodies sprawled everywhere, a brief look at some raw documentation of the streets of New York adding to the films "realistic" look, and the final word coming from Casper "Jesus Christ, what happened?" suggesting maybe a slight insight on his part.

Xenia, Ohio is the setting for Harmony Korine's first feature length film *Gummo*. Written by himself in a relatively short period of time, it is similar to *Kids* in its desire to present a truthful depiction of the lives of a group of people from Xenia in the aftermath of a tornado. *Gummo* has a stronger documentary look and feel than *Kids*, resulting from the use of voice overs, super 8 filming, jump cuts and the insertion of "snapshot" photographic images. The film opens with what looks like actual footage of the tornado and then proceeds to the remains of Xenia after its destruction. A voice over gives a brief account of the setting for the forthcoming tale:

*"Xenia, Ohio, A few years ago a tornado hit this place....
It killed people left and right, dogs died, cats died, houses were split
open and you could see necklaces hanging from branches of trees,
People's legs and neck bones were sticking out, Oliver found a leg
on his roof.
A lot of people's fathers died and were killed by the great tornado.
I saw a girl flying through the sky and I looked up her skirt,
school was smashed and some kids died, my neighbour was killed".*

This prologue is recalled to us by Solomon (Jacob Reynolds) one of the main characters, and acts as the film's historical background. It also gives a sense of how

the film is going to unfold. Although this portrait of small town America and its inhabitants is fictional, it offers the kind of nasty "truthfulness" reminiscent of documentaries from which it draws much inspiration. In Cannes, in 1995, Korine proclaimed that he was "going to make movies like nobody has ever seen before" (in Macnab, 1998, p.25). In *Gummo* the characters are far removed from the typical prom queens and high school football heroes that have dominated teen pictures. Instead, Korine has tackled the capturing of small town America and in particular the adolescents who live there.

Felicia Feaster writes in her essay Chasing Reality: the new Documentary aesthetic:

The snapshot is the ideal metaphor for those filmmakers and photographers who acknowledge the limitations of traditionally detached or fraudulently "connected" storytelling. Snapshots can often feel like the most titillating glimpse of the affections and raw truth of people's idiosyncratic reality; a pornography of private lives [Feaster, 1998, p.29].

I think this is what Korine is trying to achieve through the use of snapshots and dubbed film footage with accompanying voice overs, which are a prominent aesthetic feature of the film the whole way through. The camera work has a strong vérité style, capturing moments that seem spontaneous and private, and the imagery for the most is quite bizarre. The film itself is structured on the individual stories of young adolescents running amok in this small town. The stories and most of the characters seem random and unconnected for quite some time, but as the film continues connections are made within the different stories. The various snapshots and voice-overs allow the viewer to gain some perspective on these people's lives. We gain our information about the characters via the perspective of the other characters. At the beginning of the film, it is Solomon who presents us with the bulk of the information in this way. One of the first "snapshots" is an image of his friend Tummler (Nick Sutton) whom he seems to have great admiration for, "Tummler sees everything, some

say he's downright evil, he's got what it takes to be a legend, he's got a marvellous persona".

The main storylines of the film concern two youths, Solomon and Tumbler, who ride around town searching for cats to kill, which they sell to a supermarket owner. From the outset they are made to seem like victims of poverty and broken homes. Solomon's home life is grim. His house is filthy, with mountains of clothes everywhere and his father is absent, we presume dead as at one point his mother asks does he miss him in an affectionate, concerned way. In another scene, when we see Solomon in the bath, his mother washes his hair and twist it into a peak on the top of his head, something that would be considered a loving action. She also serves him a spaghetti dinner and buys a candy bar for him from the twin boys who call to her door. All these actions reflect maternal love and affection, but her child is bathing in filthy brown muddy water; when he drops his candy bar into it and continues eating, she doesn't bat an eyelid. Basically we soon realise that she is similar to the rest of the adults portrayed. However, I think her purpose is to invest the film with just a little optimism on the grounds that the adults, although totally dysfunctional, do care, but just aren't capable of dealing with their children or any serious issues.

Like *Kids*, *Gummo* received quite a lot of bad reviews. US critics labelled it "the worst film of the year". The Hollywood reporter suggested that "whatever small audiences *Gummo* attracts - and they will be drawn mostly by the prospect of watching something 'shocking' - will wind up leaving the cinema in a state of disgust" (in Macnab, 1998, p.25). I agree with some of this statement, there are many shocking elements to the film that leave feelings of disgust, but it also includes some incredible images which was one of Korine's main aims: "I'm aiming for completely objective film-making, where it's all about the images - about something you can't verbalise" (in Macnab, 1998, p.26). This is one of the main aspects that connects Korine to Godard. Even through the casting which includes a selection of people with bizarre

appearances and physical deficiencies, such as the albino woman, a black midget, and the deaf couple, leaving Korine open to many accusations of exploitation, the shock and disgust one might feel, whether it be at his use of these people or from the actual voyeuristic aspect, don't take from the moral messages of the film. This is similar to *Kids* in that all but a few adults are absent and those present offer little guidance for these socially alienated youths. The film also expresses a belief in the strong need for parental supervision, as when their parents are not around these youths also are experimenting with drugs, but mostly it shows the repeated patterns of dysfunctional families, from father to son as is the case within Tummles's family. In one scene Tummles's father (James David Glass) and his friends have an arm wrestling contest which through male pride ends in violence and the destruction of the kitchen table and chairs.

Most of the characters depicted lead dismal, bleak lifestyles. The film's emphasis is on the lives of the younger generation and how circumstances have made them the way they are. "These two kids I know, these two brothers, they murdered their parents, they both claimed to be raised Jehovah Witnesses.....they seemed to have a wonderful life, I don't know what went wrong". Another story is that of a young girl telling how she has been abused by her father. And at one point Tummles passes the message to us of suicide being the only way out. Later in documentary type film footage of him, in which he is pulling at his hair and clothes with obvious frustration he states: "I've tried and tried to make it here in this fucking world. I think it was a mistake that I was ever born. I don't feel guilty about taking my own life". He doesn't actually do it while the camera still rolls but at the end it still seems a likely event.

Dot (Chloe Sevigny) and her two sisters Helen (Carisa Glucksman) and Darby (Darby Dougherty), make up the characters of the other main storyline and give us a female perspective of life in Xenia. They too express feelings of boredom and seem

to be living independent lives from their parents. When much later on in the film they are looking for their lost cat, a man who claims to know where it is takes them in his car to supposedly find it, but then in a deserted car park tries to molest them. This action happens close to the film's end and sums up most of the adults in the film and how self involved and obsessed they are with pleasing themselves. Dot and her sisters are probably the sanest, most normal teenagers in the film. Not all, but most of their actions are pretty typical of teenage girls. They're self conscious, vain and interested in the opposite sex. They don't seem to have much parental guidance but unlike the male protagonists they don't seem to need it as much.

The whole way through the film we are told tales of the local folk of Xenia from either Solomon's or Tummler's point of view. It is with all these views that we see how worthless they perceive most of the adults to be:

"Clifford Dunken is the fat cocaine addict that lives down by my house, he's into wife swapping and sex parties, he gives girls cocaine and he fucks them in front of different kids in the neighbourhood, every time I see him he's got cocaine all over his moustache".

With both of these movies there is the acknowledgement that real life American adolescents do not lead the 'ideal' Hollywood lifestyles that have been depicted for so long. Korine and Clark, through the influence of Godard's counter cinema, have removed the rose-tinted glass along with the usual conclusive endings, in order to move away from the typical Hollywood teen film. Yet with the use of fictional stories and documentary filming techniques they have proved that an appearance of reality can be achieved within filmmaking. Like Godard, there was also the choice of using real people rather than 'stars'. In *Gummo* there are only four or five professional actors, Korine stated: "I have almost no interest in actors. If I write a script about someone who fights alligators, I'd rather find the person who would fight the alligators for real than ask Tom Hanks to play the part" (in Macnab, 1998, p.26).

They have broken away from the genre of youth films, have had to battle through censorship barriers but have the satisfaction of portraying the aspects of youth that for the most part have been ignored.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion of this thesis I have found that from the outset of the teen film genre, from the 1950s to the present day, the general themes used for the portrayal of teen life have not really changed. The general perception of whom, through films is that teenagers are either ecstatically happy, well balanced yet mischievous people or socially deprived delinquents. And within these two opposite portrayals it is the overall visual techniques of particular movies that have changed and which changes the way in which movies are viewed, along with reflecting the potentially realistic portrait of youth and society. The use of different visual styles enable movies to achieve and enhance the illusion of reality or promote the fantastical fictional qualities. The films I have chosen are separate from the fantasy fictional portrait and for the most part portray teenage delinquency, social alienation and society's lack of support in trying to understand problematic teenagers. Within these types of problematic youth films, some have proved to be threatening to audiences because of their visual styles which strongly resemble real life.

Film started out as reproducing the visual circumstances of life, but became more popular as a form of entertainment in which one could escape from the banalities that are life and so the production of movies which have strong resemblance's of reality are always going to be observed with caution. To view a movie such as *Rebel Without a Cause* in the present day one would not consider its portrait of 1950s youth threatening, in a lot of ways they seem harmless, but in it's day it was perceived to be an extremely realistic portrayal and therefore threatening. As was *Bonnie and Clyde* which "was so popular at the time of its release that its protagonists became cult figures" (Cook, 1981, p.626). Because of the knowledge of it been based on real life events of the 1930s and now open to a wide scale 1960s

audience, society felt threatened at the possibility of easily influenced youths perceiving the actions in the film as the answers to rebelling against the system.

The strong vérité style of Godard has been adopted by many contemporary directors such as Korine and Clark with the main aim being to enhance the illusion of reality in fictional films. Korine uses the visual element of movies to a stronger degree than Clark, with the use of super 8 film and photographs *Gummo* has the appearance of been a documentary in parts where as *Kids* feels like a documentary because of its twenty four hour time zone setting. These films acknowledge the dismal realities of society and have achieved convincing visual portrayals of youth and society with scripted storylines. If the scripts of these films had also been given more fictional visual appearances they would never have been perceived as threatening but because they have a documentary realistic and banal feel, and have for the most part denied the escapism associated with cinema, they are threatening and shocking to audiences.

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