KINDRED AMBIVALENCE:

ART AND THE ADULT-CHILD

DYNAMIC IN AMERICA'S COLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

The pervasive ideological dimension of the Cold War resulted in an extremely ambivalent period in U.S. history, marked by complex and conflicting feelings. Nowhere is this ambivalence more clearly seen than in the American home and in the relationship between adults and children. Though the adult-child dynamic has frequently harbored ambivalent feelings, the American Cold War era—with its increased emphasis on the family in the face of ideological struggle—served to highlight this ambivalence. Believing that art reveals historical and cultural concerns, this project explores the extent to which adult-child ambivalence is prominent within American art from the period—particularly, the coming-of-age story, as it is a genre intrinsically concerned with the interactions between adults and children.

Chapter one features an analysis of Katherine Anne Porter's "Old Order" coming-of-age sequence, specifically "The Source" and "The Circus." Establishing Porter's relevance to the Cold War period, this chapter illustrates how her young heroine (Miranda Gay) experiences ambivalence within her familial relationships—which, in turn, comes to foreshadow and represent the adult-child ambivalence within the Cold War period.

Chapter two expands its scope to include a larger historical context and a different artistic mode. With the rise of cinema during the Cold War period, the horror film became a genre extremely interested in adult-child ambivalence, frequently depicting the child as a destructive force and the adult as a victim of parenthood. Attempting to identify models of ambivalence within these horror films, this chapter considers whether said models might provide readers with new ways of understanding classic coming-of-age texts.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all of my teachers, official and otherwise. For all of your past and continued instruction, I am deeply, deeply indebted.

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INTRODUCTION

"What harm is it while you are kissing your child to say

with a lisping voice: 'Tomorrow you will die.'?" (Epictetus)

In 1983, in a speech on the subject of morality and the status of family life in the United States, President Ronald Reagan recounted an experience he'd once had, hearing an anonymous father address a crowd about his relationship with his children:

> It was during the time of the Cold War, and communism and our way of life were very much on people's minds. And [the father] was speaking to that subject. And, suddenly, though, I heard him saying, "I love my little girls more than anything—"
>
> And I said to myself, "Oh no, don't. You can't—don't say that."
>
> But I had underestimated him. He went on: "I'd rather see my little girls die now, still believing in God, than have them grow up under communism […]"
>
> (Reagan)

What a strange story and a strange response. Why such surprise from President Reagan at the father's initial claim to feel the utmost affection for his children? Why such admiration for someone who would rather see his own children dead and in the grave than see them live under a different type of government? Such a curious word to use: "underestimate."

This story is compelling for a couple of reasons. First, the story briefly captures the sentiment of many Americans during the Cold War period, when personal, individual anxiety

stemmed from a collective or national adversary (real or imagined) in the form of communism and the Soviet Union. In conjunction with this collective anxiety, widespread fear and uncertainty surrounded the American domestic ideal, particularly in regards to the family dynamic—whether such an ideal could survive and flourish in the nuclear age. Indeed, Cold War concerns and familial concerns were linked in the minds of many Americans during this time. Secondly, President Reagan's story reveals an ambivalence at the heart of the adult-child relationship, one in which adults experience complex and frequently conflicting feelings toward their children: both admiration and jealousy; the desire to protect coupled with the tendency to control; physical dominance over children and emotional fear of them. As the man in President Reagan's story unwittingly illustrates, real love for one's children is very often accompanied by a death-wish. The relative ease with which we may hear and even understand the father's sentiments only serves to indicate how deeply rooted this ambivalence is within the larger societal framework.[1] The overwhelming and undeniable ideological nature of the Cold War brought the family dynamic to the forefront and, in the process, shed light on an adult-child ambivalence that has been, in reality, a recurring social phenomenon. As such, the purpose of this project is to further explore this adult-child ambivalence within the context of America's Cold War period.

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Social myth and representation—the process of (re)remembering the past—can make an investigation of the Cold War somewhat difficult. On one hand, social memory portrays this

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[1] Our reaction to the father's sentiment may be inconsistent. From a critical standpoint, one might come to the conclusion that, thought the Soviet Union was not an idyllic place and though communism may not be one's chosen political party, the prospect of either seems better, by comparison, than the prospect of death or non-existence. However, one's emotions, one's experiences with his/her own children might very well lead one to believe the opposite—that there are alternatives worse than death (though, personally, I am hesitant to believe that communism is one such alternative). Perhaps this is something of a paradox: seemingly strange but also seemingly understandable.

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period, particularly the years immediately following World War II, as a time of noted tranquility in the home, illustrated by the proliferation of suburban life, the propagation of Cleaver-esque iconography, and increased economic security. However, many of the Cold War's most distinct images are those in which the period's undercurrent of political unrest, rampant paranoia, and state-sanctioned violence are on full display: the McCarthy hearings, for example, or the shocking footage of police dogs being loosed on Southern civil rights demonstrators. A tendency towards historical polarization might lead us to see the Cold War as being only one or the other: either a great period in American history or a tragic one. In reality though, as Charles Dickens so effectively reminds us, history often encompasses both the best and worst of these memories. In this sense, the Cold War period, with its nervous balance between war and peace, may be seen as one of the most ambivalent eras in American history. It seems rather appropriate then that a project on ambivalence should find its way to such a period.

An added benefit to investigating the Cold War, aside from its ambivalent nature, is that its temporal boundaries are relatively tidy for a historical period. Historical periodization is, even under the best conditions, a messy business. The inability to establish timelines often gives credence to the argument that historical periods are rather fluid and arbitrary in interpretation, even misleading. Fortunately, while there are some peripheral issues to consider, historians typically agree on an approximation of the Cold War period: from the early-to-mid 1940s through the early 1990s—when American-Soviet relations were clearly in their most volatile state.[2]

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[2] Though much of the Cold War is interpreted as a byproduct of Allied victory in World War II, American nervousness toward anti-capitalism can be seen earlier: in the aftermath of the Haymarket Riot in 1886 and the Russian Revolutions in 1917, for instance. Although many believe that the Cold War began in 1945 when the United States dropped the atomic bomb (or perhaps in 1947 with Truman's "containment doctrine"), William Tuttle Jr. suggests that America's Cold War might actually have begun shortly after Pearl Harbor, when air raid drills and news footage made real, for many Americans, the threat of an "absolutely evil enemy" ("America's Children in an Era of War, Hot and Cold" 14-16). In the story that begins this introduction, President Reagan speaks of the Cold

Though some uncertainties surround the Cold War, it is certain that much of American culture during this period was linked to and, in fact, defined by its perceived differences with another national entity situated halfway around the world: the Soviet Union. For many Americans, these differences between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were ingrained repeatedly from an early age. Buffeted by any number of educational films and publications outlining the evils of communism (and the Soviet government by extension), Americans felt strong notions of competition, anxiety, and even hatred directed toward a rival superpower and its political ideologies. In response to such emotions, passionate displays of nationalism swelled.

Highly rhetorical and highly pathos-driven in nature, "informative" sources, often screened in American schools by businesses and government organizations, revealed the theoretical threat of the Red enemy and championed Americanism to a captive and non-critical audience of children; and this young, receptive audience was considerably large following the "baby boom" in America. Exaggerated statements and manipulative iconography—hallmarks of many informative films of the period—depicted Karl Marx and all of his ideological followers as corrupt, violent, and utterly immoral revolutionists, bent on world domination and posing an imminent threat to what many Americans held closest to them: personal life, personal liberty, and personal property. "Under communism, virtually everything belongs to the State," one informative film from 1952 notes, showing footage of women working feverishly on the assembly line of a military manufacturer and slaving away in large hayfields, men imprisoned

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War in the past-tense, as if it has concluded by 1983 (but, to be certain, he propagates Cold War concerns in the same breath, as if the Cold War was still going on). But it isn't until 1989, following a meeting between the two superpowers at the Malta Summit, that President George H.W. Bush and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev declare an end to the Cold War military competition ("1989: Malta Summit"). Interestingly enough, some might even argue that American fears of Russia are still prevalent today, most notably embodied in current Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. As Peter Kuznick and James Gilbert write, "While the Cold War lasted until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, much of what is usually thought of as Cold War culture outlasted the Cold War itself and likely will be with us for a long time" (1). Because of these examples, it seems more prudent to establish a broad timeframe for the Cold War period rather than an exact start/end date.

behind barbed-wire fences resembling those of Nazi concentration camps. "The individual has little right to own property or plan his own life" ("Communism").[3] According to these educational films, the U.S.S.R., seen as the most complete and thereby most frightening instantiation of Marxist thought, was a brutal and calculating enemy to other nations as well as to its own people—evidenced by political and military leaders like Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin. Undeniably effective in their own time in spreading this message, today these propagandizing materials seem hokey and cartoonish in retrospect (charmingly so to some viewers), representations bizarrely impressive in their fear-mongering capabilities.[4]

But lest we forget, such propaganda serves a vital function because war is more than just an enterprise between physical forces. Rather, war is also a symbolic act, an ideological practice.[5] To understand warfare as simply the expansion of national boundaries, the production of armaments, the development of technologies, and the advancement of troops is to underestimate what each of these things represents: perceived ideological supremacy and the propagation thereof. Because of the relative absence of direct physical confrontation between these two superpowers during these years, the Cold War conflict between America and the Soviet Union is a particularly clear example of the prevalent ideological dimensions of modern

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[3] "Ever hear of Karl Marx?" the same short film asks its young audience ("Communism").

[4] This should not suggest that the U.S.S.R. was an idyllic country—quite the contrary. In his book The Culture of the Cold War, Stephen J. Whitfield outlines some of the more gruesome elements of the Soviet Union during this Cold War period (2). However, while the U.S.S.R. was undoubtedly a horrible place in many regards, this does not change the fact that these highly rhetorical films operated primarily by means of sensationalism and fear rather than even, unbiased reporting.

[5] War reporter Chris Hedges writes that war "dominates culture, distorts memory, corrupts language, and infects everything around it, even humor, which becomes preoccupied with the grim perversities of smut and death. Fundamental questions about the meaning, or meaninglessness, of our place on the planet are laid bare when we watch those around us sink to the lowest depths. […] The enduring attraction to war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living" (3). Later, in the same book, Hedges notes the preterphysical consequences of war: "The cost of war is often measured in physical destruction of a country's infrastructure, in the blasted buildings, factories, and bridges, in the number of dead. But probably worse is the psychological and spiritual toll" (162).

warfare. How such an ideological dimension on the national stage might affect the family unit deserves attention.

A focus on ideology should not suggest that the Cold War was without physical casualties. Historians like Andrew Hammond are correct to vehemently criticize an understanding of the Cold War solely in terms of ideological struggle, decrying such a view as being narrow and ethnocentric, ignorant of the multiple coups and civil wars that took place during that period, largely in the Third World, largely as a result of American-Soviet discord. "Understanding a historical time period exclusively through the Western experience of that time period partakes in the same hegemonic Euro-Americanism that defined the conflict itself," Hammond writes of the Cold War, "privileging a limited range of subjectivities and relegating all others to insignificance" (1). Domestically, the Civil Rights Movements, which certainly had its share of casualties, was seen by some of its most prominent participants (Martin Luther King Jr., for example, who was opposed to the Vietnam War) as being intrinsically linked to Cold War concerns and perhaps as even an extension of the Cold War itself. When asked to explain his opposition to the war and his refusal to enlist after being drafted, Muhammad Ali responded:

> Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go 10,000 miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam, while so-called negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights? No, I'm not going […] (Marqusee 214)[6]

Even from a Western perspective on foreign relations, to understand the Cold War as solely an ideological exercise seems to ignore America's involvement in not only the Vietnam War but also the Korean War and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion—events that produced casualties and

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[6] Not only did Civil Rights supporters draw connections between Cold War concerns and Civil Rights concerns. Whitfield points out that many white supremacists (and even government agencies like the FBI) had a "convenient way to smear the movement" by linking the Civil Rights movement to the Communist movement (235).

were, again, largely extensions of America's campaign against communism. In this sense, the

Cold War was anything but cold. As former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara,

who served under President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson, once stated: "In

my seven years as Secretary, we came within a hair's breadth of war with the Soviet Union on

three different occasions! […] Cold War? Hell, it was hot!" (<u>Fog of War</u>).

Despite the need to acknowledge the validity of these arguments and the personal

testimonies pertaining to the violent immediacy of the Cold War for much of the world's

population, our concern here remains its ideological aspect and the ways in which that ideology

affected familial relationships during the Cold War and how, as we shall see, those relationships

are depicted in American art.[7] Ideology was certainly at the forefront of America's previous

conflicts, whether it was the philosophy of national freedom in the Revolutionary War or of

restoring the union and individual freedom in the Civil War. But during the Cold War,

advancements in media and military technology, modernist fears and anxieties of warfare, and a

powerful foreign (and perhaps most importantly, in terms of general fears of Otherness) non-

Western adversary brought ideological concerns to a fever-pitch for many Americans. In turn, in

the face of such a philosophical struggle, because the enemy was one of ideas, the Cold War

consumed the family dynamic and the home like never before.[8]

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[7] In some sense, this project seems like yet another passive participation in re-enacting what Hammond's Cold War critique detests: an ethnocentric intellectualizing or prioritizing of ideological struggle over that of physical, visceral struggle. However, this critique may venture too far in separating ideology and physicality from one another. In reality, the two are intrinsically linked. It seems that nearly any ideological war would result in physical casualties. Similarly, even the most physical of confrontations, as pointed out earlier, has an ideological dimension. Though this project is primarily interested in the ideological dimension, this should not be confused as an implication that physicality is somehow absent or somehow less important. To be certain, I agree with Hammond that a closer look at the Cold War's effects on the Third World is undoubtedly needed, but such a project deserves a substantially larger canvas than can be provided here.

[8] According to Kuznick and Gilbert, the threat of nuclear annihilation, the rise of covert warfare, the opposition to all ideological enemies, and the rise of the military-industrial complex during the Cold War period drastically altered the American psyche—so much so that the authors suggest that "the principal effect of the Cold War may have been psychological […] persuading millions of Americans to interpret their world in terms of insidious enemies at home and abroad who threatened them with nuclear and other forms of annihilation. Seeing the

Examples abound of the American family's importance in the Cold War effort. In 1959, when Vice President Richard Nixon visited the Soviet Union and openly debated Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, the conversation did not revolve around tanks, rockets, or nuclear weaponry. Instead, Nixon and Khrushchev "argued over the relative merits of American and Soviet washing machines, televisions, and electric ranges—in what came to be known as the 'kitchen debate'" (May 16). For Nixon, America's victory in the Cold War "rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of suburban homes" (May 18).

In the years leading up to the Cold War, the importance of the family's contribution to the national interest was reaffirmed time and time again. During World War II, men were prodded by major media outlets that frequently published sensational, eye-catching stories of whirlwind romances to marry quickly and start a family at a young age. Such was the duty of an American man. Likewise, housewives during that time were told that a jar of cooking fat "contained enough glycerine to make a pound of black powder," that tin cans could be melted down and converted to tank armor and that lipstick holders could be converted into rifle cartridges, that "30,000 razor blades contained enough steel to make fifty machine guns" (Mintz and Kellogg 154, 160). Children were expected to do their part as well. By collecting scrap rubber, tin cans, and old newspapers, by selling war bonds door-to-door and distributing government pamphlets on issues like food rationing and civic awareness, children were seen as key contributors to the war effort. So crucial were children to civil defense efforts, one critic has referred to all American children born between 1930-1945 as "cohorts" in the war effort (Tuttle Jr. "America's Home Front Children in World War II" 227, 230).

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world through this dark, distorting lens and setting global and domestic policies to counter these fanciful as well as real threats was and is, then, the largest impact of the Cold War" (11).

The emphasis placed on familial responsibility during World War II carried over to the Cold War ideological effort. For instance, in "The House in the Middle," an infomercial co-sponsored by the U.S. Federal Civil Defense Administration, Americans witnessed the effects of a nuclear blast on three American-style homes, lined up side-by-side. The house on the right—very rundown and littered from years of disrepair and an utter lack of housekeeping—is quickly destroyed from the heat blast following the atomic explosion. The house on the left—relatively dingy from a lack of general maintenance—burns less slowly than its counterpart on the right but is nonetheless destroyed. However, the house in the middle—properly maintained, carefully painted and kept clean of litter by its family—survives the blast, damaged but still standing. What is the lesson gained from this test blast? According to the film's narrator, the lesson is simply this:

> A house that is neglected is a house that may be doomed in the atomic age […]
> The dingy house on the left, the dirty and littered house on the right, or the clean
> white house in the middle: it is your choice. The reward may be your survival.
> ("The House in the Middle")

Truly, in the Cold War, the frontlines were re-drawn on the front lawns of America's homes, and the American family became a military company of sorts, ground troops for ideological warfare. But what about the family asked to engage in this brand of warfare? What kind of strain does the fear of an ideological enemy put on the bonds between parent and child? What kind of family dynamic might spring from such an uneasy, uncertain environment?

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The ancient Greek philosopher and notable advocate of Stoicism, Epictetus, is believed to have once posed the following question to his students while discussing the complex relationship

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between parents and children: "What harm is it while you are kissing your child to say with a lisping voice, 'Tomorrow you will die'?" (3.24). The great Stoic believed in familial bonds of affection between parent and child. He also believed, however, that such affection must be accompanied by a certain amount of disregard or dispassion for the child's welfare, if the adult was to enjoy a happy life and cultivate an unbreakable stoic will.

Throughout much of human history, the most prominent and oft-overlooked feature of the adult-child relationship has been such ambivalence, marked by adults' complex and conflicting feelings about children. A basic reason for this ambivalence is that seemingly all societies—by their very nature, regardless of time, region, etc.—are adult-centric in their power structures. At the same time, however, each of these adult-centric societies must, at some point, be mindful of how to treat the younger generation. After all, eventually the younger generation will always make the older one obsolete. Because of this impending obsolescence, the older generation must determine which form of childrearing will simultaneously produce the most advantageous environment for themselves, both in the present and in the future.

Another common reason for adult ambivalence towards children comes from the fact that children are primarily symbolic creatures—meaning that very rarely do they represent themselves in the literal sense. Rather, children and their issues are frequently understood as indicative of all manner of adult-centric issues. Concerns over orphaned and illegitimate children may represent nothing more than an interest in finances (i.e. "Who is set to inherit what from whom?"). Concerns about the effects of violent video games on children may be the means by which adults can discuss issues of gun-control, personal liberty, and criminal liability (i.e. "To what extent is the parent responsible for the child's actions?"). Concerns about teenage pregnancy have often signified nothing more than an adult-centric society's sexual curiosity (i.e.

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"Who is sleeping with whom?"). Of course, in some ways, all people, regardless of age, are subject to symbolism. However, whereas the adult may press against his/her imposed symbolic function in hopes of establishing him/herself as a literal individual, the child in the adult-centric society cannot.

America is no exception when it comes to this conflicting dynamic. On one hand, Christian emphases on childrearing gave children an importance that was not always present in antiquity[9], as seen in the writings of Puritan leaders like Cotton Mather, who certainly advocated (for better or worse) an increased interest in childrearing.[10] In more recent years, the expansion of the progressive childcare movement, which has not always shared a connection with its religious counterparts, has frequently sought to inject philanthropy and government into childrearing by funding schools and other childcare facilities (with varying results).[11]

On the other hand, while some belief systems and political programs have sought to improve the lives of children, the adult-child relationship is also historically marked by practices of infanticide, abortion, and child-abandonment. Despite the perception to the contrary, America has not been immune to these recurring practices. In fact, although abortion has been a

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[9] Interestingly enough, even Christian ideology seems somewhat ambivalent towards children. Perhaps the two most famous Biblical passages about children come from Proverbs 13:24 and Matthew 19:14. The former encourages the corporeal punishment of children, while the latter speaks to their innocent (even divine) nature.

[10] The oft-demanding practice of childrearing in Puritan society is sometimes interpreted as evidence that Puritans viewed children as miniature adults. However, critics like David Stannard and Ross Beales Jr. disagree. Stannard notes that Puritan journals, manuals, and legal documents suggest clear distinctions between adults and children of various age groups (qtd. in Beales 10-11). Furthermore, Beales notes that several examples seem to indicate that Puritans and other early Americans did have a notion of adolescence—a period between childhood and adulthood (17-20). This is in contrast to what some critics seem to suggest: that adolescence (and the adult fear associated with it) is primarily a product of Freudian thought (Crowley 165-166; Massé 150).

[11] Barbara Finkelstein traces the financial involvement of the American government in the lives of its children—from the early 1800s when teachers were paid to instruct Native American children to the 1980s and the "Just Say No" anti-drug movement. According to Finkelstein, however well-intentioned such programs may be, the government is ill-equipped to take on such a role. Still, while government interventionism has failed in her estimation, she notes that Congress "will continue to create family policy" (266).

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controversial topic in contemporary politics, infanticide and child-abandonment have,

historically, played an equally prevalent role in American society's treatment of its children.[12]

Childrearing theory and practice during the Cold War period exhibited similar

ambivalence in the adult-child relationship. Influenced by many of Sigmund Freud's

psychoanalytic tenets and reacting against John B. Watson's behaviorism model, pediatrician

Benjamin Spock's The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care (1946) became the seminal

advice book on childrearing during this period. Whereas Watson promoted a rigorous (almost

draconian) adherence to habit and scheduling and an Epictetus-like emotional detachment in

childrearing, Spock assured parents that they already knew instinctively how to raise their

children—that natural love and "common sense" (and not strict regimen) were the keys to

successful childrearing. As Joseph Illick notes, "Spock's genius was to inspire confidence by

making it clear that the parent not be a laboratory scientist to succeed; the democratic family

could be run by its own citizens in the spirit of love and trust" (113).[13] Interestingly enough,

both Watson's behaviorist techniques and Spock's Freudian techniques agreed implicitly on one

thing: parents were ultimately responsible for how their children turned out and that an

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[12] Lloyd deMause reminds us that such practices were not limited to Eastern cultures or ancient antiquity—that "illegitimate children continued regularly to be killed right up to the nineteenth century" (25). John Walzer notes the ambivalence within the adult-child dynamic in eighteenth-century America—where, "if cases of outright infanticide were rare […] the reverse was true of putting out," a form of culturally approved, passive abandonment in which parents forfeited their childrearing responsibilities to someone else, often family members or servants. Yet, Walzer also notes that parents from the period demonstrated a bizarre desire to maintain control over their children and were "genuinely interested" in their lives, if not their rearing (353, 357). On a related note, Paul Gilje discusses child-abandonment in early America, concluding that the rise of the market society "left poor women subject to the fickle winds of economic change" (112). Surprisingly though, by the 1780s in America, because of the romanticization of motherhood, the general public and, more importantly, judges were empathetic toward mothers who practiced child-abandonment and believed that these women had altruistic motivations behind their actions (113). Such a sentiment—the belief that parents ultimately have their children's best interests at heart—is similar to the one illustrated in President Reagan's story at the beginning of this introduction.

[13] Illick is quick to point out that Spock's "homespun prose" was, at the core, Freudian in thought. He writes: "Behind Spock's plain talk about day-to-day matters were sophisticated psychoanalytic ideas known to an American elite but not popularized in terms of child rearing in the United States until he broadcast them in 1946 […] Few readers were apt to connect Spock's treatment of thumb-sucking to Freud's concept of oral sexuality. Similarly disguised are sibling rivalry and Oedipal conflict, the castration complex and penis envy. In dealing with bed-wetting, nightmares, masturbation, and nudity, Spock relied / on Freudian formulations of the unconscious, regression, and childhood sexuality, which had not appeared in earlier child-rearing literature" (116-117).

individual's problems could, in the end, be traced back to failures in parenting.[14] There can be

little doubt that this notion—and the necessary importance and strain that it placed on familial

relationships—contributed in some measure to an ambivalent adult-child dynamic during the

Cold War period.

     If America's historical perspective and ambivalent treatment of children varies little from

that of other nations, what does differentiate America is a perception to the contrary. For many

Americans, perception dictates that America has a naturally affectionate stance towards children.

But perception and reality do not quite match. While tracing American childhood as a historical

phenomenon, Steven Mintz outlines what he sees as the considerable myths at work within the

traditional view of childhood. According to Mintz, one of the most prevalent of these myths is

that America is a child-friendly society—that America, more than any other nation (past or

present), cares deeply and unconditionally for its children:

> In actuality, Americans are deeply ambivalent about children. Adults envy young
>
> people their youth, vitality, and physical attractiveness. But they also resent
>
> children's intrusions on their time and resources and frequently fear their passions
>
> and drives. Many of the reforms that nominally / have been designed to protect
>
> and assist the young were also instituted to insulate adults from children. (Huck's
>
> Raft 2-3)

     As history illustrates, the American ideal of domestic life has never quite coincided with

its execution. In many ways, the Cold War period, being a time of pervasive ideological

confrontation, has served only to demonstrate this. Perhaps when the individual American

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[14] See: Nancy Pottishman Weiss's "Mother, the Invention of Necessity" and Rachel Devlin's Relative
Intimacy for further discussion of how modern childrearing theory portrayed (im)proper parenting as the root cause
of a plethora of childhood, adolescent, and even adult problems. The former source focuses on the role that
motherhood played in these childrearing theories, while the latter source focuses primarily on the role that
fatherhood played.

family became defined primarily by its ability to contribute to the national interest and defense of American ideology, the natural ambivalence within the family dynamic was heightened to something of more consequence. Susceptible to nuclear blasts, to atomic fallout, to communist infiltration, the family became "metaphorically fragile, permeable to the creeping anxiety of the age"—most clearly demonstrated in heightened ambivalence in the adult-child relationship (Cordle 71). Ambivalence towards "the Bomb" transferred to ambivalence towards one's family—both flowing in and out of each other, both feeding off the other. These were key components in the ideological conflict of the Cold War and have since become the markers of an entire age of American history.

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If Mintz and other critics are correct, if Americans have historically had an ambivalent relationship with their children, then such a dynamic should manifest itself in American art (i.e. adult ambivalence toward children in the Cold War should be visible in Cold War artwork). The reasoning behind such an assumption is simple: creative worlds frequently imitate real ones. Even counter-cultural, rebellious, or avant-garde art is historically grounded and culturally motivated. Moreover, art allows, perhaps more so than any other avenue, the means by which to illuminate real world concerns—especially when said concerns seem contrary to social perception, as is the case with adult-child ambivalence in America.[15]

For the purposes of this project, the focus will be on the American coming-of-age story. A slippery genre, the coming-of-age story means a multitude of things to a multitude of people—

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[15] Some would disagree with the assumption that we might learn more about a culture by looking at its artwork. For instance, deMause criticizes literary historians who "[mistake] books for life, [who] construct a fictional picture of childhood, as though one could know what really happened in the nineteenth century American home by reading Tom Sawyer" (4). It should be noted, however, that deMause's concerns are primarily connected to the idealization of American childhood, which is not the purpose here. Rather, we hope to take a realistic look at American childhood—to strip away the idealized veneer and investigate the realistic complexities of it.

a literary carryall of sorts, encompassing everything from the "boy book" to novels of

instruction, from children's literature to travelogues, from the memoir to allegorical fiction.

Others have seen the genre as being the literary equivalent of a sleight-of-hand[16], a form

promoting social change[17], or even a culturally approved form of oppression.[18] Still, others have

defined the genre primarily by its complexity or even its inability to be fully defined within the

culture that produces it.[19]

The clearest way of thinking about the American coming-of-age story may be to consider

it primarily as a form of initiation rite—a process by which the child encounters an adult-centric

society and its ideals, and must ultimately decide to accept or reject that world, with certain

consequences (sometimes humorous, oftentimes violent). Bruno Bettelheim outlines the

initiation rite quite effectively as the anthropologist might understand it: "a *rite de passage*

which introduces the young into adult society / […] to separate the initiate from his old group,

and after a period of relative isolation, to introduce him more effectively into the new group"

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[16] In Huck's Raft, Mintz writes: "American children's fiction placed recognizably realistic children at the heart of the narrative and explored the process of growing up. / […] These books allayed children's fears while providing them with fantasies of escape and empowerment. They allowed middle-class children to imagine adventures and challenges no longer attainable in real life" (185-186).

[17] Daniel Rodgers notes that the coming-of-age story is frequently defined by its conflict with culture. Rodgers argues, for example, that the late nineteenth century was a time in which children's literature was at odds with social protocol. Children experienced "classroom lessons in system, discipline, and restraint on one hand, and storybook codes of heroism, impulse, and spontaneous love on the other"—primarily the result of "progressive child shapers" who sought to encourage children to be more imaginative in a society that seemingly desired the opposite of its youth (128).

[18] Massé argues that "the child" is perhaps the most malleable of social constructs—a "construct we continue to insist is natural and essential while we scrutinize the other cultural imperatives once considered 'natural,' such as race and gender" (150). Consequently, the coming-of-age story and children's literature (in general) is, for Massé, nothing more than the "culturally authorized fiction of voice throwing" in which an author can force the child to substitute for or symbolize anything. After all, as alluded to earlier, "no other group presents so minimal a chance of contradiction and is so unlikely to launch a challenge that might topple the authority of the inquisitor" than the child in the adult-centric society (153).

[19] Speaking about the European *Bildungsroman*, Franco Moretti writes that the form "could indeed exist, not despite but by virtue of its contradictory nature" (9). As with Charles Darwin's evolutionary model, the fate of the *Bildungsroman* depended on its "respective 'purity': that is to say, the more they remained bound to a rigid, original structure, the more difficult their survival. And vice versa" (10). Though Morettie argues that there is no American *Bildungsroman* per se (at least not as it would be defined in comparisons to the English-German or French-Russian models), the American coming-of-age story undoubtedly shares many characteristics with its literary cousin.

while also exposing the initiate to tribal lore (16-17). Essentially, the initiation rite puts both the initiate and the initiator on display. More than any other genre, the American coming-of-age story serves a similar function because it participates in the interplay between the child and the adult-centric culture—potentially initiating the child while also propagating certain societal beliefs and traditions. In fact, compared to the science fiction novel or the romantic novel or the mystery novel, the coming-of-age story must perform this initiation rite between child and adult. The American coming-of-age story will serve as the focal point of this project—both as a means by which to investigate the initiator (the adult culture of the Cold War period) and the potential initiate (the American child).

Grounded in the Cold War I period ranging from the 1940s through the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, chapter one of this project features an analysis of one of the most vibrant—and, unfortunately, overlooked—American coming-of-age tales: Katherine Anne Porter's "Old Order" sequence of short stories. By establishing Porter's importance and relevance to the Cold War time period, this chapter will illustrate how the young heroine of Porter's sequence (Miranda Gay) experiences ambivalence in her familial relationships and how such a dynamic comes to simultaneously foreshadow and represent the adult-child ambivalence present in the Cold War's nuclear family.

Chapter Two shifts gears slightly, expanding its scope to include both a larger historical context and a different artistic mode. During the Cold War, particularly in the Cold War II period from the early 1960s through the early 1990s, the expansion of film as a viable art form certainly served an important role in the artistic exploration of cultural concerns—particularly regarding the adult-child relationship. The horror film, a genre very interested in the ambivalence in this relationship, frequently depicted the child as a destructive force and the adult

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as a victim of parenthood. This chapter will attempt to identify models of ambivalence in Cold War era horror films and will consider whether these models can be transplanted to help us better understand traditional American coming-of-age stories in a different way. Rather than being anachronistic, such a cross-genre, cross-historical consideration may provide us with new eyes for looking at old texts.

I am reminded of the popular saying: "Everything is an argument." In a sense, this cliché (like most clichés) is, in many ways, true. And while it may be true that any type of communication is underpinned by certain argumentative warrants, the aim of this project is not to make an argument per se (though certain assertions will be made throughout). The goal of this project is simply that of curiosity, exploration—to dive through the cultural and historical waters and emerge, not necessarily with a definitive answer to life's questions but, rather, an ardent appreciation of what lies beneath the surface, just beyond view.

CHAPTER ONE

At War With Herself:

Ambivalence in the Writings of Katherine Anne Porter

In her 1950 essay on the atomic bomb entitled "The Future is Now"—one of the numerous essays that she wrote during her career regarding predominant issues of her time—author Katherine Anne Porter reflected on what it was like to live in the atomic age and the expert advice recommended for surviving a nuclear attack. Porter writes:

> Not long ago I was reading in a magazine with an enormous circulation some instructions as to how to behave if and when we see that flash brighter than the sun which means that the atom bomb has arrived […] but at the end, the advice dwindled to this: the only real safety seems to lie in simply being somewhere else at the time, the farther away the better; the next best, failing access to deep shelters, bombproof cellars and all, is to get under a stout table—that is, just what you might do if someone were throwing bricks through your window and you were too nervous to throw them back. (196)

For those unfamiliar with Porter's work, the tone here may seem a bit peculiar. After all, there is a certain detachment in her analysis, though the dire prospects of her conclusion, however sardonically framed, seem to bother her on some level. Her attitude here is simultaneously fatalistic in its tone—that there is, as Samuel Beckett reminds us, "Nothing to be

done" given the uncertainty and ambiguity of everyday circumstances[20]—and humorous in its

acceptance of life's consequences. She speaks matter-of-factly about the absurdity of her

situation as an individual in the atomic age; indeed, she speaks to the situation of all individuals

living during the Cold War period in American history.[21] In doing so, Porter also highlights the

absurdity of American-Soviet tensions during the Cold War ideological conflict, when the threat

of nuclear war and potential nuclear holocaust was a very real, very dreadful possibility.[22]

Responding to Porter's sentiments in "The Future is Now" is difficult. In certain

contexts, such levity and directness might be very well and good—one might even suggest a

particular brand of courageousness at work, a speaking truth to power. After all, she is critiquing

the entire atomic culture—from the political and military leaders responsible, to the so-called

experts, to those who so wholeheartedly follow their advice. On the other hand, however, one

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[20] I am referring, of course, to Beckett's seminal existential play, Waiting for Godot. The phrase above, which begins and comes to represent the play's "action," also represents its existential philosophy in the face of life's overwhelmingly difficult conditions. Speaking of both the atomic age and Existentialism in his essay, "The White Negro," Norman Mailer writes that "in a world of absurdities the existential absurdity is most coherent" (342). In many respects, the sentiments of both Beckett and Mailer can be seen in Porter's own analysis of survival (or the lack thereof, the likelihood against) in the nuclear age.

[21] Again, there are connections to Mailer's "The White Negro" in Porter's lament of the absurdity of the world in the atomic age. For Mailer, such absurdity ultimately leads to, perhaps out of necessity, the creation of the Hipster—who is, more or less, the offspring of the white juvenile delinquent and "the Negro," marginalized from society, born in the shadow of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ready for death at every turn—who realizes that only through the deliberate, psychopathic, and ever-present (i.e. existential) lifestyle can one attempt to cope with life in the atomic age. Mailer defines the Hip as those who realize that "our collective condition is to live with instant death by atomic war" (339). To suggest that Porter was a Hipster would be an overstatement, at least by Mailer's definition, for she is much too concerned with the past to live unabashedly in the present. However, her recognition of the Cold War's absurdist elements serves as a precursor to the phenomenon that Mailer will later outline. At the very least, Porter helps mark historically a growing cultural trend of the Hipster way of living and thinking—what Mailer will later identify as primarily a youth movement.

[22] As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this project, many examples illustrate the likelihood of nuclear war during the Cold War period. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara discusses in-depth the high probability of nuclear attack during the Cold War years in Errol Morris's documentary, The Fog of War. At the beginning of his chapter entitled "Deathboats and Lifeboats," historian John Lewis Gaddis outlines the hypothetical and frighteningly realistic possibility of nuclear escalation during the Korean War (48-49). See also: David Hoffman's "I Had a Funny Feeling in My Gut," which details how one man—Lieutenant Stanislav Petrov, a Soviet officer—ignored a computer software glitch that falsely indicated that the United States had fired nuclear missiles at the Soviet Union. Petrov's (in)action, his decision to ignore the false warning, likely averted the outbreak of nuclear war between the two superpowers.

might find Porter's thoughts on nuclear war, with its imminent threat and ominous effects, to be wry and sarcastic to an inappropriate degree.

For those familiar with Porter, such ambivalence—this willingness or even compulsion to be both serious and sarcastic in the same breath, this tendency to be impressed by and irreverent towards the same subject matter—is the hallmark of much of her best work. Furthermore, her tone here captures the overall ambivalent tone of the Cold War period: an atomic age when many Americans experienced mixed feelings of both admiration for brilliant scientific breakthroughs and fear of the potentially catastrophic results. With no subject is this clearer than with the atomic bomb. As critic Toni Perrine notes, the atomic bomb is the very epitome of Cold War ambivalence because of the "simultaneous fascination and horror that a mushroom cloud elicits" (vii). Porter's sentiments regarding survival from an atomic blast, however strange, shocking, or even humorous they may seem today, are doubly emblematic: representative both of the ambivalence of her work and of America's ambivalent consciousness during the Cold War. Katherine Anne Porter's relevance to the Cold War period deserves renewed attention along these lines—particularly her "Old Order" sequence of short stories (otherwise known as the "Miranda Sequence"), which documents the fictional coming-of-age of a young girl named Miranda Gay.[23]

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[23] Writing about the "Miranda Sequence," S.H. Poss effectively contextualizes the coming-of-age story and how Porter's work fits into that genre: "The stories collectively form a quasi-*bilgungsroman* (or perhaps even *kunstlerroman*) pattern, for they manifest that typical structure of the genre which may be described as a secular version of the medieval notion of life as a pilgrimage from Babylon to Jerusalem: the young hero grows up, leaves home (to seek, in the fairy tale sources, his fortune), ventures into a world he has not made that is notoriously indifferent to his sensibilities, flounders about in this new, cold and alien milieu, wastes inordinate amounts of time and effort learning what it is he needs to know, and so on, finally (if he is lucky) to get straight on a road he has been destined to travel all along. During this dialectic of disorientation and re-integration, the hero seeks always to define himself, to grow up, to find out who he is and what he needs to become. At first he attempts to define himself within the present, within the society into which he is born: later, when he finds this definition inadequate to his own deep-lying though sometimes unarticulated idea of what he needs to be, when he cannot find the present—and he almost never can—an image of himself that is as attractive as the one he carries in his heart, he asks that question which distinguishes the genre as much as its characteristic form: 'Where are my own people and my own time?'"

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Establishing Porter's importance to her own time—and, more fundamentally, to the Cold War time period—is necessary. While much of Porter's fiction is grounded in the beginning of the twentieth century, she herself was an intra-and-post World War (i.e. Cold War) writer. Oft-neglected during the analysis of a literary text is when a text is collected/edited for organizational purposes (as is almost always the case with short story collections, essay collections, poetry collections, etc.) and when a text reaches cultural prominence and/or importance. Frequently unnoticed by the casual critic, these factors oftentimes reveal intriguing rhetorical dimensions related to the text, its author, and, perhaps more importantly, its audience. For Porter, though the Miranda stories are set at the dawn of the twentieth century and though many of these stories were composed prior to World War II, their formation and arrangement as a cohesive unit—which is how these short stories should be interpreted[24]—did not occur until well into the Cold War period.[25] Moreover, these Miranda stories reached their pinnacle of cultural importance in the mid-1960s, when Porter received both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for her collected stories, in which the "Old Order" sequence is the most lasting, most vibrant part. This is the heart of the Cold War. Considering the rhetorical dimensions at work, what might this tell us about these stories, about Porter herself, about her reading audience? Essentially this: though Porter's work is rooted in an earlier time period, though it was written at an earlier time

(21). For Poss, Miranda—like Dickens's Pip, like Mann's Hans Castorp, like Salinger's Holden Caufield—undertakes a journey in which she is ultimately compelled, out of necessity, to ask that very question.

[24] Harry John Mooney Jr. summarizes this assertion well in his book, The Fiction and Criticism of Katherine Anne Porter. Mooney Jr. claims that each of the Miranda stories is "a fragment" and that only through piecing them together do readers get a full picture of the characters, the time period, and the recurring themes (16).

[25] Many of the "Old Order" stories are included in Porter's The Leaning Tower and Other Stories, which was published in 1944, around what is traditionally understood as the beginnings of the Cold War. But it was not until 1965, with the publishing of The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter, that the final ordering, editing, and content of these Miranda stories were established. For a brief (but very helpful) timeline regarding the composition and publication of these "Old Order" stories, see chapter three of Darlene Harbour Unrue's Understanding Katherine Anne Porter.

period, its cultural relevance was not fully realized until the Cold War period, precisely because her "Old Order" stories speak to the spirit of the times—simultaneously foreshadowing and representing both the ambivalence of the modern age and the concerns of the Cold War, especially in relation to all things familial.

Porter's lifetime and career correspond largely with the years leading into and the years constituting the Cold War, specifically the period that some historians refer to as Cold War I, which lasted from 1945-1962.[26] Born on May 15, 1890 in a Texas log cabin, Katherine Anne Porter[27] was the daughter of a lower-middle-class dirt farmer. As her first biographer Joan Givner writes, she was "one of four motherless children, raised on the bare bones of privation by an ailing grandmother" (18). A once aspiring actress and occasional teacher, Porter eventually settled into a career as a writer in her late twenties and, upon doing so, thrust herself into the artistic pursuit with all of her considerable talent and determination—eventually earning recognition as one of America's foremost thinkers, artists, and literary celebrities.[28] Indeed, Porter was that rare breed of writer who achieved, in her own lifetime both popular adulation and

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[26] Cold War I is typically interpreted as the period post World War II (circa 1945) through the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Cold War II is typically interpreted as the years immediately following the Cuban Missile Crisis through the late 1980s or early 1990s—though it reaches its peak during President Ronald Reagan's administration. Daniel Cordle discusses a similar breakdown of the Cold War period in his essay, "Beyond the apocalypse of closure," as do Peter Kuznick and James Gilbert in "U.S. Culture and the Cold War."

[27] Porter's birth-name was actually Callie Russell Porter, which was the name she went by for the first dozen years or so of her life. It wasn't until after her grandmother's death that she changed her name to Katherine (in honor of her grandmother, Catherine Porter). "Later she would claim that Callie was only an 'infant nickname,' and her full given name was actually Katherine Anne Maria Veronica Callista Russell Porter. She was not consistent, however, claiming on another occasion that her 'true natural-born name' was Katherine Anne Porter. On yet another occasion she said that her 'real name was Callista Russell'" (Stout 7). Porter's inconsistencies here point to an uncertainty and ambivalence towards her own family and her own personal history—something that comes across in a great deal of her writing.

[28] Referencing one of Porter's many letters, Givner notes that Porter vowed to her sister that she would become the best writer in America—that "what she really wanted [in life] was glory" (17). According to Givner, Porter is a prime model of the American Dream ideal so prevalent in American history, literature, and folklore. "She belongs to the same tradition as Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Lyndon Johnson, and Jay Gatsby, who dreamed of what they wanted to be and never rested until they had transformed themselves accordingly" (17).

critical acclaim.[29] Her career as a force in American thought and art lasted nearly half a century,

as she was a popular writer, lecturer, and social critic from the 1930s through the 1970s.

As a result of her long life—she lived from 1890 to 1980—Porter observed the rise of

many of the technological advancements that defined the modern age, advancements that made

the Cold War and its concerns possible: particularly the proliferation of electricity in the home

(and the modern comforts it provided) and the developments of modern transportation (notably

the automobile and airplane). Porter also had a well-publicized and thoroughly baffling knack

for being present for pivotal moments in modern history, a "capacity for gravitating always

toward the center of historical events" (Givner 15).[30] Given her constant travels and her

penchant for attending historically significant events, Porter interacted directly with many of the

influential social, political, and artistic figures of the period.[31] By virtue of her long life and

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[29] Citing the overwhelming success of Porter's fiction and the sheer amount of praise heaped upon her work by literary critics, Mooney Jr. reflects on what made Porter's work so immune to criticism. He writes: "None of our eminent contemporary critics of any school has successfully elucidated, or even written about, Miss Porter's work. Each of them seems to content himself with short statements of the highest praise containing no specific critical analysis. Why is this so? What is the element of her work that leads her to be praised so extravagantly? […] Why is indiscriminate praise, and this only, the particular portion of this extraordinary American writer?" (3). Mooney Jr. eventually chalks up Porter's critical success to the overarching theme of all her work, what he calls "the diverse and baffling conduct of man" (5). In her book, <u>Truth and Vision in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction</u>, Unrue also discusses at some detail the typical "unanimously praise-filled" language of critical response to Porter's work (1-3). Interestingly enough, and in contrast to the typical critical response, of all her readers, perhaps Larry McMurtry— another Texas writer—had the most intensely negative reaction to Porter's fiction, writing of her work that "the plumage is beautiful, but plumage, after all, is only feathers" (qtd. in Brinkmeyer xiii).

[30] A few examples: Porter lived in Greenwich Village when the area transformed into the leading center of American art, particularly bohemianism, modern film, and the burgeoning New York literary scene. Porter found herself amid the protest marches during the now infamous trial, conviction, and execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. She lived in Mexico City when Álvaro Obregón rose to power, effectively ending the lengthy Mexican Revolution. Her time in Berlin coincided with the ascension of Adolf Hitler in German politics (coincidentally, she once attended a party in which her date turned out to be Hermann Goering). She lived in Paris until shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the city being occupied by German forces soon thereafter. Porter was even present at Cape Canaveral for one of NASA's early space voyages.

[31] Janis P. Stout captures this aspect of Porter's character nicely: "She met Ernest Hemingway at Sylvia Beach's book shop in Paris, was probably snubbed by Gertrude Stein in the same city, and was lifted and held aloft, as if a kind of effigy by Dylan Thomas at a party in New York, […] and enjoyed the White House hospitality of Lyndon Johnson. […] She knew Hart Crane, Malcolm and Peggy Cowley, Glenway Wescott, Ford Mattox Ford, Eudora Welty, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, Josephine Herbst and John Herrmann, Robert Penn Warren and Eleanor Clark—and sooner or later quarreled with most of them or savaged them behind their backs" (xvi). She also knew Diego Rivera, Miguel Covarrubias, Miguel Gamio, and Carl Van Doren (among others). Her

storied career, Porter bore witness to much of the Cold War period and enjoyed being one of its most valued commentators. Essentially, because she lived for so long, because she witnessed firsthand so many pivotal events, because she knew so many influential people and because she had such a powerful, persuasive voice in popular and critical culture, Porter holds an interesting position among cultural analysts during the atomic age. As such, her work deserves closer attention as distinctly Cold War period texts.

Porter's relevance to any Cold War study also rests in her recurring attraction to and preoccupation with social and cultural issues. Indeed, Porter was not just a famous artist who knew other famous people; rather, she was a social artist, who spent a great deal of time and effort thinking about, talking about, and writing about her opinions regarding a number of controversial topics. Porter was fascinated by cultural issues regarding both racial and ethnic prejudice—exhibited by her protest of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, which she later wrote about in her book, <u>The Never-Ending Wrong</u> (1977). Largely a result of her time spent in Mexico and Europe, she was fascinated by tensions between capitalism, communism, and other political ideologies.[32] She was intrigued by gender roles in the modern American landscape, as seen in two of her most lasting essays, "The Necessary Enemy" and "Marriage is Belonging." Her essay "The Future is Now" illustrates her interest in the role that scientific development could play in the lives of modern individuals, for better or worse.

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aforementioned party encounter with a drunken Dylan Thomas inspired Karl Shapiro's poem, "Emily Dickinson and Katherine Anne Porter," which is a very good poem in its own right (Stout 11).

[32] Stout notes that Porter had leanings toward communism in the 1920s and 1930s, though some of her friends and acquaintances—many of whom were outspoken members of the Communist party—believed that Porter was predominantly a superficial communist, riding the wave of popularity that the political ideology had among literary types of the period (38-39). Of course, Porter's interest in the Sacco and Vanzetti trial also had political connections, as both defendants were openly anarchistic in their political ideologies.

The ambivalence that marks Porter's writing has its roots in her conflicted views towards these social issues, in her tendency to vacillate between opposing sides of the same argument. Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. outlines this ambivalence quite effectively:

> Only in the very broadest sense can Porter be seen as consistent in perspective: she possessed an inquiring and dissenting sensibility. While throughout her career she held fast to this sensibility, its focus, methodology, and underlying values underwent profound change. At one time or another in her life—*and frequently at once in the same time*—Porter was (or at least presented herself as) a devout Catholic, an antipapist, a left-wing radical, a segregationist, an ascetic artist, a freewheeling bohemian, and a proper southern lady. (emphasis added, xii)[33]

Porter's unmistakable personal ambivalence—long acknowledged by many critics for its socio-cultural dimensions, interpreted perhaps as a personality defect, perhaps as an artistic benefit—has yet to be truly considered as a distinct marker of historical phenomena, particularly in relation to the highly ambivalent Cold War time period.[34] This is an unfortunate critical oversight. Aside from the fact that her life and career largely correspond with the Cold War

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[33] Porter's ambivalent perspective on social issues is not lost on other critics. Stout notes that, by the end of World War II, Porter's communist leanings had transformed into a "centrist America-first position in which world communism paired with fascism as one of the two primary threats to the republic" (39). Mary Titus focuses exclusively on Porter's contradictory view of gender roles and the Feminine. Titus writes: "In her fictions exploring the questions of gender and sexuality, Porter does oscillate and contradict; her texts are often comic, contentious, and conflicted […] She was not of one mind about new ideas of identity and sexuality. Attracted and repelled, insecure yet often judgmental, she attempted, with fascinating results, to encapsulate it all in her fiction. In this writing, Porter repeatedly confronted interpretations of female experience and representations of female identity in her culture, at times acknowledging their appeal to her, at times attempting alternative / formulations" (8-9). Stout also discusses Porter's regional ambivalence, noting that she rebelled against "all things Texan" in favor of cosmopolitan and international life—only to yearn for the South of her childhood in nearly all of her writing (xv).

[34] Traditionally, Porter and her work have been analyzed through a number of lenses. She is often thought of as a feminist (sort of) writer, a regional writer, an Agrarian writer, etc. While each of these individual lenses is rooted in history and has historical ramifications, no critic to my knowledge has adequately considered Porter as a Cold War writer—despite the fact that this is largely the historical age in which she lived and worked. Such a consideration seems intriguing to me: considering one of America's most ambivalent periods (the Cold War period) through an investigation of one of its most ambivalent figures (Katherine Anne Porter).

years of American history, Porter's own internal conflict, her personal ideological ambivalence, makes her a worthwhile representative of her ideologically ambivalent era. She is, in essence, a symbol of her times.

Lastly, Porter's relevance to the Cold War period can be seen in her fascination with familial life, an interest strongly linked to the topic of adult-child ambivalence. This interest in family life was not limited to her non-fiction but was a regular feature in her fiction as well. In fact, whether it is the Thompson family in "Noon Wine," the Whipple family in "He," or the Gay family in the "Old Order" series, familial concerns are frequently at the center of Porter's work. Porter's stories demonstrate the idea that "literature strives always toward a homily […] about the home and family, […] about tradition and continuity of the individual heart" (Poss 29). Porter's "homily" relies heavily on the ambivalence found naturally within the nuclear family. Though the means of this ambivalence may change, its presence is undeniable. Moreover, for Porter, the ambivalence in her fictional childhoods is often rooted in her own experiences of the adult-child dynamic. This is especially true of her "Old Order" stories, which are considerably autobiographical in nature.[35] Thus, Porter's interest in familial life (and the adult-child ambivalence therein) is not merely a thematic dimension to her fiction; instead, this interest

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[35] Like Porter's own childhood, these Miranda stories are set in Texas. They focus on a lower-middle-class family who, like Porter's own family, has seemingly lost much of whatever fortune and/or reputation that they once had. Like Porter, the Gay children are raised mother-less by a seemingly overwhelmed (and lackluster) father and a strong-willed (and domineering) grandmother. A plethora of criticism exists discussing the similarity between Porter's own childhood and that of her fictional characters, particularly Miranda Gay. Ray B. West Jr. notes that "Katherine Anne Porter's characters possess qualities which have some point of similarity with her own experiences. If they are Irish or Mexican, they are also Roman Catholic—or they are political liberals. They are usually Southerners" (3). Referring to Porter's own statements about authorship, George Hendrick argues that Porter did not create fiction so much as she elaborated on things she actually saw, heard, or experienced in life (15). In chapter one of her biography of Porter, Joan Givner elaborates on Porter's family and her early childhood; and many of those details correspond with the details provided about young Miranda and the Gay family.

reflects a personal concern as well[36], a means by which to investigate the past and speculate on the future.

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A closer look at Porter's work itself—specifically her "Old Order" sequence—is in order to see the extent to which adult-child ambivalence plays a role in her fiction. To these ends, two Miranda stories stand out among the others: "The Source" and "The Circus."[37] Porter's first story in the "Old Order" coming-of-age sequence—"The Source"—is told largely from the perspective of Grandmother Sophia Jane, who is the "source" of influence for much of Miranda's life.[38] In this particular story, readers are presented with an elderly woman who, in the course of imposing her vision of the ways things used to be (and, according to her, how they ought still to be), re-lives her younger days and experiences a type of ambivalence towards both her grandchildren and her own spent youth. In this sense, the Grandmother has a great deal in common with the adult Porter herself (the retrospective writer), as both individuals frequently attempt to recapture and recast their worlds through nostalgia and reflection.

Like the other "Old Order" stories, "The Source" is underpinned by an ambivalence between adults and children. Those youthful characteristics embodied by the children inspire, from the adults, compassion on the one hand and jealousy (or even regret) on the other. In fact,

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[36] In his book, Katherine Anne Porter & the Art of Rejection, William Nance notes the personal connections between Porter herself and her Miranda character and how both author and character illustrate what Nance refers to as the principle of rejection (4-7). Nance writes: "As has already been seen in its personification of Miranda, Katherine Anne Porter's life of art is ambivalent; it is both a quest and an escape / […] Whether viewed as quest or escape, Miss Porter's art is characterized by a strong sense of personal necessity" (240-241).

[37] Looking at only two of the "Old Order" stories will hopefully avoid any unnecessary redundancy, as each of Porter's "Old Order" stories contains varying degrees of ambivalence in the adult-child dynamic. To wade through each here would be dull—especially since "The Source" and "The Circus" are representative of the sequence as a whole. As to the selection of these two stories in particular, there are essentially two reasons. First, "The Source" and "The Circus" are the two Miranda stories in which adult-child ambivalence is clearest. Second, these stories vary in their perspective of the adult-child relationship—"The Source" being told largely from the adult perspective (i.e. Grandmother Sophia Jane) and "The Circus" being told largely from the child perspective (i.e. Miranda Gay).

[38] Again, Porter was raised by her grandmother and heavily influenced by her; thus, the Grandmother figure, is the "source" for both Miranda and Porter's upbringing and development.

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"The Source" begins with a common act of adult-child ambivalence: the ceremonial "putting-out" of children for the summer, which causes the Grandmother to reminisce about her younger days on the family farm and ultimately leads to her decision to accompany the children there.[39] Grandmother Sophia Jane "looked forward with pleasure to a breath of country air […] imagined herself walking at leisure in the shade of the orchards watching the peaches ripen […] clipping the rosebushes, […] tying up the trellised honeysuckle with her own hands." (321)

Upon arriving at the farm with the children, Sophia Jane attempts to re-shape the current farm into its old form. She attempts to re-capture her childhood. Greeting the servants who maintain the farm, her warm arrival "in no way promised exemption from the wrath to come" or prevented meticulous scrutiny of how far the farm had fallen from its past state. Walking through the house, passing through the yards and gardens, past the barns, through the servants' quarters, and into the kitchen, the Grandmother searches every crevice and corner, proclaiming "instantly that everything was out of order." Every aspect of the farm requires re-construction so as to look, once more, like the farm of her childhood. This results in a frenzy of work: "for two weeks this would go on, with the Grandmother a tireless, just and efficient slave driver of every creature on the place." (322-324)

While the workers are feverishly rebuilding Sophia Jane's memory of the farm, the children "ran wild outside, but not as they did when she [the Grandmother] was not there." Here, Porter subtly illustrates a recurring ambivalent view of children, presenting them as the wild thing, the little savage. The children react ambivalently to Sophia Jane's presence on the farm:

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[39] The common practice of "putting-out" is briefly discussed in the introduction to this project as a recurring historical practice illustrating ambivalence in the adult-child relationship. Later in "The Source," we learn about another form of "putting-out" of children—that Aunt Nannie, the family's African-American maid, nursed Sophia Jane's own children. In his essay, "A Period of Ambivalence," John Walzer discusses the various historical manifestations of "putting-out"—how children were frequently "put to a nurse, a school or a relative"—as an example of adult-child ambivalence (53-55).

> The hour came in each day when [the children] were rounded up, captured,
> washed, dressed properly, made to eat what was set before them without giving
> battle, put to bed when the time came and no nonsense…They loved their
> Grandmother; she was the only fixed authority or refuge, since their mother had
> died so early that only the eldest girl remembered her vaguely: just the same they
> felt that Grandmother was a tyrant, and they wished to be free of her; so they were
> always pleased when, on a certain day, as a sign that her visit was drawing to an
> end, she would go out to the pasture and call her old saddle horse, Fiddler.

The children's attitude—simultaneously affectionate toward and annoyed by Grandmother Sophia Jane, reverent of her protection and repelled by her power[40]—perfectly exemplifies the conflicting adult-child dynamic. (324)

Each year, Grandmother Sophia Jane concludes her visit by riding her old horse, Fiddler. Walking out to the pasture, Sophia Jane is greeted by the "weary, disheartened old hero, gray-haired on his jaw and chin […] almost a gleam in his filmy eyes." There is a connection between the elderly Sophia Jane and the elderly Fiddler, their histories linked by a past that no longer exists—Sophia Jane's past is recalled through the mind, Fiddler's through the body. Mounted by Sophia Jane, "Fiddler would remember his youth and break into a stiff-legged gallop"—the two old creatures briefly riding around the pasture until Fiddler would slow in exhaustion. For Grandmother, the yearly ride with Fiddler symbolizes her own spent youth, which she is stubborn to surrender. The ride "proved her strength, her unabated energy. Any time now Fiddler might drop in his tracks, but she would not." While she might comment on Fiddler's age

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[40] Interestingly enough, this seems to be a particularly tidy symbol for nearly all relationships of a power dynamic—meaning, the children's attitudes toward Grandmother Sophia Jane could easily be said to be the people's attitude towards government, the Cold War American's attitude towards "the Bomb," the believer's attitude towards divinity, the viewer's attitude toward the media, etc. That which provides comfort and security very often elicits underlying skepticism and resentment.

or his dwindling health, "she herself walked lightly and breathed as easily as ever, or so she chose to believe." She must prove her strength, her resistance to time. Again, ambivalence is at work. At the same time that Sophia Jane attempts to reinforce her own youth and vitality, she laments the wild, youthful actions of her grandchildren. In reality, the youthful qualities that she critiques are the same qualities that she fantasizes about recapturing. She cannot help but obsess about youth—both her grandchildren's and her own. She longs for it. (324-325)

Similarly, Porter's "The Circus," the fourth story in the "Old Order" coming-of-age sequence, is probably the most ambivalent of the Miranda stories and may very well be Porter's most ambivalent piece of fiction overall. In "The Circus," readers are presented with parental figures who fluctuate between annoyance with and compassion towards their children; children who might otherwise be thought of as little savages or even monsters; and monstrous circus performers who frighten Miranda by introducing her to aspects of the adult world that, at this point in her young life, she is unable to cope with. Throughout everything, the notion of adult-child ambivalence shines through the characters' interactions with young Miranda, as well as through Porter's narration itself.

Beginning with the arrival of a litany of distant relatives, "The Circus" opens less like a short story than a police lineup or, perhaps more accurately, a convoluted genealogy[41]—set in the bleachers at a large circus performance, "long planks set on trestles [rising] one above the other to a monstrous height and stretched dizzyingly in a wide oval ring, […] packed with people, […]

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[41] "The family, when seated, occupied almost a whole section on one level. On one side of them in a long row sat Father [Harry], sister Maria, brother Paul, Grandmother [Sophia Jane]; great-aunt Keziah, cousin Keziah, and second-cousin Keziah, who had just come down from Kentucky on a visit; uncle Charles Breaux, cousin Charles Breaux, and aunt Marie-Anne Breaux. On the other side sat small cousin Lucie Breaux, big cousin Paul Gay, great-aunt Sally Gay (who took snuff and was therefore a disgrace to the family); two strange, extremely handsome young men who might be cousins but who were certainly in love with cousin Miranda Gay; and cousin Miranda Gay herself, a most dashing young lady […] Miranda hoped to be exactly like her when she grew up. Hanging to Dicey's arm she leaned out and waved to cousin Miranda, who waved back smiling, and the strange young men waved to her also" (343).

the white billows of enormous canvas [sagging] overhead, held up by three poles." Young

Miranda experiences a type of ambivalence prior to her first circus, feeling both intrigued by and

unsure of what a circus performance entails, feeling "most fearfully excited" about the spectacle

that she is about to witness. (343)

Seeking to distract her waning attention until the circus performance begins, young

Miranda notices a group of "roughly dressed little boys peeping up" from beneath the bleachers.

Her eyes meet with one of the boys, who, in turn, gazes back at Miranda, returning a "bold

grinning stare without any kind of friendliness to it." Soon, the other little boys nearby notice

Miranda and also begin staring up at her from beneath the bleachers. Dicey, the family's maid

who has been charged with watching Miranda for the evening, notices the boys below, "[draws]

her knees together and her skirts around her," and scolds Miranda to "stop throwin' yo' legs

around that way […] Plenty o' monkeys right here in the show without you studyin' dat kind."

Here, Porter's narration itself—her description of the young boys—utilizes a predominant form

of adult-child ambivalence: the child as "little savage." These "little savages" depart, however,

from the classical depiction (related to innocence) in favor of a Freudian one (related to

sexuality). They are poor, dirty, primal, and libidinal, deserving of both sympathy and

condemnation. In the wake of these children, adults are made ambivalent.[42] (344)

Suddenly, a big brass band bursts forth in song, marking the start of the show, startling

Miranda, who cries out in panic, closing her eyes and seizing Dicey's hand. Slowly responding

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[42] Again, the "little savage" has a strong history in the coming-of-age genre. However, the phrase took on different ideas with Sigmund Freud (particularly in <u>Totem and Taboo</u>, which compares modern children to Aboriginals and, in turn, savagery and primitivism). John Crowley aptly notes the shift between the classic "little savage" and the Freudian "little savage." He writes: "In the Freudian view, the shortsightedness of American psychology […] was its tendency to regard children as *noble* savages and childhood sexuality as merely an innocent rehearsal for adult sexuality" (165). Similarly, Michelle Massé adds that the Freudian conceptualization of children (and of the "little savages") is that they are "no longer empty vessels, they are instead interesting, complicated beings fueled by libidinal urges" (150).

to the "roar of laughter like rage," she opens her eyes to see a clown prancing along a high-wire, struggling to maintain balance. Miranda finds the clown to be monstrous,

> […] a creature in blousy white overall with ruffles at the neck and ankles, with bone-white skull and chalk-white face […] a long scarlet mouth stretching back into sunken cheeks, turned up at the corners in a perpetual bitter grimace of pain, astonishment, not smiling […]

At the sight of this gruesome clown, the audience "[roars] with savage delight, shrieks of dreadful laughter like devils in delicious torment," even as the clown, hanging upside-down from the wire, taunts them, "[turning] his head like a seal from side to side and [blowing] sneering kisses from his cruel mouth." At a loss, Miranda cannot comprehend the motivations of the adult-world in which she is a spectator—why the more mature audience members around her can laugh at the clown's apparent misfortune. The child's ambivalence is palpable here. Miranda, perhaps because of the crowd's reaction, perhaps because of her own curiosity, feels compelled to watch the ghastly clown on the wire, and yet this very compulsion to watch frightens, repels, and disturbs her. (344-345)

Terrified by both the clown and the fellow spectators (including her family), Miranda screams and begins to weep bitterly, with "real pain, clutching her stomach with her knees drawn up […] tears pouring over her cheeks and chin." Rather than react compassionately towards the young child, the family's patriarchs—both Father Harry and Grandmother Sophia Jane—instruct Dicey to take Miranda home, to remove her like any sort of distracting nuisance. "'Take her home,' said the father, 'get her out of here at once,' but the laughter was not wiped from his face. He merely glanced at her and back to the ring. 'Take her away, Dicey,' called the Grandmother." (345)

As she is escorted out of the circus, little Miranda accidentally bumps into a dwarf, who "[makes] a horrid grimace at her […] a look of haughty, remote displeasure, a true grown-up look." Miranda knows this "grown-up look" of displeasure all too well—she has seen it time-and-time again from other adults, including her father and grandmother. Miranda attempts to strike the dwarf; however, Dicey intercedes, sweeping the girl away and out of the circus. As with the clown, Miranda's encounter with the dwarf elicits ambivalence; she desires to forget the dwarf's horrid grimace but is compelled to remember. This ambivalence is compounded by the fact that the dwarf, resembling a child in physical stature, possesses an adult, "grown-up" aura that young Miranda herself lacks, being only a child. As Dicey and Miranda travel home, Dicey grumbles her displeasure at Miranda the whole way, chiding her for being immature, for "always ruinin everything for othah folks." (345-346)

When the rest of the family returns from the circus, they describe its events and commiserate over Dicey's absence from the performance. They have seemingly forgotten about young Miranda, who fled the circus in a terrified state. Perhaps they have chosen to ignore her—to let her flounder hysterically. The adult is pitied and the child punished. "Poor Dicey. Poor dear Dicey," the family laments, "[mourning] over her with sad mouths, their malicious eyes watching Miranda squirm. Dicey had been looking forward for weeks to this day!" Eventually, Father Henry, his emotional stance toward Miranda dramatically different from earlier in the night, attempts to comfort his daughter. "'You missed it, Baby,' he said softly, 'and what good did that do you?'" Rather than providing Miranda with relief, however, her father's words only serve to remind Miranda of the traumatic circus, resulting in another outburst of tears, for which she is sent to bed early, without any dinner. (346-347)

Later that night, Miranda cannot sleep. She experiences a myriad of nightmares rooted in what she witnessed at the circus, "the bitter terrified face of the man in blowsy white falling to his death […] and the terrible grimace of the unsmiling dwarf." Miranda relives an evening in which she has repeatedly experienced the ambivalence of the adult-child dynamic—embodied by the adult circus audience, the adult circus performers, and her own adult parental figures. She screams out in her sleep, waking Dicey, who remains bitter still for having missed the circus. At first, Dicey rebukes Miranda's terror: "'I *swear*,' [Dicey] said, in a violent hoarse whisper. 'What's the matter with you? You need a good spankin, I *swear*! Wakin everybody up like this…'" But Dicey soon realizes that Miranda has been "completely subjugated by fears" of the circus and feels pity for her. In the process, Dicey illustrates the range of adult-child ambivalence: adult frustrations with children, coupled with the urge to soothe them. Lying beside young Miranda, Dicey kindly encourages the child: "'Now you jes shut yo eyes and go to sleep. I ain't going to leave you. Dicey ain't mad at nobody…*nobody* in the whole worl'…" She whispers Miranda to sleep. (347-348)

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While "The Source" and "The Circus" are only two of Porter's "Old Order" coming-of-age stories, they exemplify the adult-child ambivalence present throughout the entire sequence.[43] In fact, these two short stories reflect the recurring ambivalence that is present in all of Porter's

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[43] In "The Journey," Grandmother and Nannie frequently lament the youth as being "difficult, disobedient, and tireless in wrongdoing, apt to turn unkind and undutiful when they grew up, in spite of all one had done for them, or had tried to do: for small painful doubts rose in them now and again when they looked at their completed works. Nannie couldn't abide her new-fangled grandchildren […] The Grandmother defended them, and dispraised her own second generation—heartily too" (329). In "The Witness," Uncle Jimbilly threatens to harm the children or anyone else who crossed him: "He was going to skin somebody alive and nail the hide on the barn door, or he was just getting ready to cut off somebody's ears with a hatchet and pin them on Bongo, the crop-eared brindle dog. He was often all prepared in his mind to pull somebody's teeth and make a set of false teeth for Ole Man Ronk" (342). In "The Last Leaf," Nannie frequently manipulates the children, "not [caring] whether they loved her or not"; and though Mr. Henry realizes this manipulation, he is powerless against the woman who nursed him as a child—"being of that latest generation of sons who acknowledged, however reluctantly, however bitterly, their mystical never to be forgotten debt to the womb that bore them, and the breast that suckled them" (348, 351).

work, in Porter herself, and in her time. Explicitly, these Miranda stories feature neither atomic bombs nor political intrigue; however, their complex and contradictory depiction of the adult-child dynamic serves to foreshadow and represent the ambivalent familial relationships during one of America's most ambivalent eras. Heightened by the ideological tensions of the times, the ambivalence within the adult-child dynamic—though a recurring historical and cultural phenomenon—is so clearly seen in the years in which Porter lived and wrote. Displaced from a place and time that she was always trying to regain in her writings, Porter reveals her uncertainty towards the past, the present, and the future by exploring the uncertainty within the family. As readers, it may do us some good to look at such an ambivalent relationship in the context of such a particularly ambivalent age, through the lens of one of its most ambivalent figures.

Exploring the ambivalence of Katherine Anne Porter, it seems appropriate to end back where we started, with her reflections on life in the atomic age in "The Future is Now." Porter confesses that the "lunatic atom bomb has succeeded in rousing the people of all nations to the highest point of unanimous moral dudgeon; great numbers of persons are frightened who never really had much cause to be frightened before" (201). And yet, indicative of the contradictions existing in her life, in her work, and in her time, Porter's perspective shifts sharply at the end. In conclusion, her ambivalence is eloquently revealed:

> And yet it may be that what we have is a world not on the verge of flying apart, but an uncreated one—still in shapeless fragments waiting to be put together properly. I imagine that when we want something better, we may have it: at perhaps no greater price than we have already paid for the worse. (202)

CHAPTER TWO

Little Monsters: The Child as Fearsome Abject

in American Horror Cinema and the American Coming-of-Age Story

"I'll try and be what he calls me, 'a little woman,'

and not be rough and wild…" (Alcott 9)

"What could be wrong with our child, Robert? We're the beautiful people,

aren't we?" (The Omen)

In one sense, it seems bizarre to begin a chapter entitled "Little Monsters" with a quote from Louisa May Alcott's much-beloved 1868 coming-of-age story, Little Women. The contemporary reader, after all, is unlikely to find a work that appears, on the surface, to be more incongruous with monstrosity or the notion of horror. For many readers, Alcott's novel is the very bastion of childhood innocence—synonymous with youthful virtue, largely romantic in its pretense and idyllic in its familial relationships. Little Women seems devoid of the fearsome, but is it? In actuality, despite the familial harmony espoused by Alcott's novel, the aforementioned quote, taken from the opening chapter of Little Women, suggests a deeper, more complex dynamic at work: an ambivalence present in both the self and the adult-child relationship.

Consider the opening scene of <u>Little Women</u>. The March children are gathered together just prior to Christmas, each (except for the sickly, self-effacing, and martyr-like Beth) decrying their perceived poverty during the holiday season. The children lament and moan:

>"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

>"It's so dreadful to be poor!" sighed Meg, looking down at her old dress.

>"I don't think it's fair for some girls to have lots of pretty things, and other girls to have nothing at all," added little Amy, with an injured sniff. (1)

This opening scene reveals a great deal about the March children. Oftentimes, Alcott introduces them or their ideas one after the other, as she does here, in a listing fashion. As readers, we learn about each sister before moving onto the next; we learn that the sisters themselves vary greatly in their attitudes and perspectives. Typically, they are defined by their differences. Here, however, in their lamentation of Christmas without presents, as each sister (again, excluding Beth) mourns the family's financially fallen state, the sisters are not defined by their difference but, rather, by a similarity of perspective that each shares—one of material want.

Immediately thereafter, the children receive a letter from their absent father, Robin March, who is away at war. Mr. March's letter admonishes the children to "work, so that these hard days need not be wasted," to be "loving children," to "do their duty faithfully, fight their bosom enemies bravely and conquer themselves" (8). His hope is that their "work" might serve a double purpose: to rectify their current poverty and buttress their moral standing. The young March girls—drawn to repentance by their father's letter—express desire to fulfill their responsibilities and their father's wishes. Jo, the family's rabble-rouser, confesses that she will try her best to resist her wild, natural inclinations and, instead, be the "little woman" that her

father expects her to be. This dynamic tension within the character of Jo is not lost on literary critics. Jerry Griswold, for instance, discusses the ambivalence inherent in Jo's quest to be a little woman and notes that the novel sets the stage for conflicting feelings, "pitting guilty individuality against the ideal of self-denial" within each of the characters, often within the same scene (158). In this sense, "the bosom enemies" that Mr. March refers to can be understood as an internal ambivalence, an unseen adversary lurking within, pulling each girl in contradictory and potentially harmful directions.[44] Fortunately for the March parents, over the course of the novel, Jo is more or less (though imperfectly) respectful of her father's wishes and relatively well-behaved.

Perhaps even more interesting than the ambivalence of the self within the March children is the ambivalence operating within the adult-child relationship in the March household. The quote that begins this chapter, for example, reveals a potentiality. Upon hearing her father's wishes, Jo proclaims: "I'll try and be what he loves to call me, a 'little woman,' and not be rough and wild" (9). Though Jo is "good" throughout Little Women—indeed, all the March children are "good"—though Jo is not a "rough and wild" child in the truest sense, the implication is that the situation exists in which she could be. Furthermore, this suggests that the March parents are ostensibly aware of the potential threat their children present—that they may not be little women after all, that they may not possess all the manners, submissiveness, and sociability that attend womanhood. Rather, the March parents worry that their children may be,

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[44] Griswold notes that the mindset of each child character in Little Women, like the Hegelian model, is "conflicted, both dualistic and idealistic" (160). According to this account, Alcott herself—aware of these internal ambivalent forces and their effects—sets up a story that frequently relies on "the language of contraries," literal inversions of external events and settings that illustrate or symbolize the constant inversions and contradictions taking place within the characters themselves (162). This recurring inversion or contradiction may be seen in one of the book's most famous scenes, in which Jo sells her hair in order to financially support her family. On the one hand, by doing so, Jo is working towards being a "little woman": she is fulfilling her altruistic duty for her family, forfeiting her individuality (i.e. her long, beautiful hair) in exchange for the family's well-being. However, on the other hand, by forfeiting her hair, she also forfeits one of her most feminine qualities. Thus, the contradiction is that Jo becomes a "little woman" by removing her womanly qualities.

for lack of better phrasing, little monsters: uncontrollable, unpredictable, and ultimately

fearsome.

In his book Huck's Raft, Steven Mintz argues that one of the great myths of American

history and culture is that America is a child-friendly society. In reality, according to Mintz,

Americans are deeply ambivalent about their children—envying their youthful qualities,

resenting their needs, fearing their secret passions (2). As the overarching interest of this project

is to consider the manner in which such ambivalence might reverberate in various social

discourses, our attention turns to American art. Does America's ambivalence toward its children

become manifest in its creative works? The brief analysis of Little Women—again, one of the

more innocuous coming-of-age stories in American history—seems to suggest that it does.

Moreover, the primary period of historical consideration for this project is the Cold War period,

a particularly ambivalent stage in American history.

As such, this chapter hopes to consider the American horror film, a genre of filmmaking

that achieved particular prominence during the Cold War period[45] and is, as it turns out, a genre

especially sensitive to ambivalence in the adult-child relationship.[46] Indeed, when one thinks of

the seminal horror films of the Cold War period—Psycho (1960), Rosemary's Baby (1968),

Night of the Living Dead (1968), The Exorcist (1973), The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974),

The Omen (1976), Carrie (1976), The Amityville Horror (1979), etc.—nearly all of them are

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[45] Robert Solomon notes that war times (and perhaps even times in which war is a realistic possibility) seem to correlate with a rise in horror films. "This suggests to many that art-horror is some kind of compensation or 'release' from real-life horror," Solomon writes (234). This may explain why the Cold War period—where nuclear war was a perpetual threat and a legitimate concern—was such a fruitful time for horror cinema. In his essay, "Trying to Survive on the Darker Side," critic Tony Williams suggests that many 1980s horror films were the result of (or perhaps the repressive reaction against) an over-abundance of conservatism and conservative fears in the political and familial realms (169-170).

[46] See Williams's Hearths of Darkness and/or Vivian Sobchack's "Bringing It All Back Home." Both sources speak to the seeming obsession of all things familial within horror films from the Cold War period.

concerned, at their core, with familial matters, specifically the adult-child relationship.[47]

Moreover, the child is oftentimes depicted as the abject monster—something both attractive and

repulsive, something to be cared for and feared—which elicits ambivalence in the film's adult

characters (and perhaps the audience as well).[48] This chapter will analyze certain models of

adult-child ambivalence at work within horror films of the Cold War II period; by doing so, this

chapter will consider whether models of adult-child ambivalence in the horror film might

provide new tools and considerations for reading coming-of-age stories (a gene that also

frequently features adult-child ambivalence).

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A foundational concern must be addressed from the onset—namely that of genre

definition. How do we define "the horror film"[49] or, more importantly, how do we define

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[47] Another point of interest is that the majority of these films that focus on the adult-child relationship occur in the period known as Cold War II, or the years following the Cuban Missile Crisis. Of course, there are a number of seminal horror films prior to this, including (among others) Dracula (1931), The Mummy (1932), The Wolf Man (1941), Creature from the Black Lagoon (1951), The Thing From Another World (1951), Them! (1954), Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956), etc. However, whereas these earlier films typically feature a monster representing an alien, foreign, or exotic threat, the seminal horror films of the latter Cold War years frequently feature the threat that stems from within the nuclear family.

[48] This ambivalence and horror is oftentimes connected to burgeoning childhood or adolescent sexuality—a result of increased interest and concern about sexuality during this period. Peter Kuznick and James Gilbert outline the sexuality of Cold War America in three parts: the emergence of the Playboy lifestyle in the late 1950s, the sexual rebellion of women in the early 1960s, and the increase of tolerance towards homosexuality in the late 1960s (5). This led to a number of ideological struggles between liberal and conservative forces during the Cold War period—often grounded in the domain of the familial. Though the intricacies of childhood and adolescent sexuality during this time period (and its ramifications: political, familial, artistic, etc.) are too broad to be adequately discussed in this particular chapter, there are fortunately a great number of texts that analyze the issue of sexuality and its prevalence in artistic modes (both literary and cinematic). Among these valuable studies: Ellen Pifer's Demon or Doll, Shelley Stamp Lindsay's "Horror, Femininity, and Carrie's Monstrous Puberty," Tony Magistrale's Abject Terrors, Rachel Devlin's Relative Intimacy, and Robin Wood's Hollywood: From Vietnam to Reagan…And Beyond.

[49] To be sure, exploring the boundaries of the coming-of-age genre is also important. However, as the introduction to this project provides a definition (or, rather, a list of common possible definitions), a brief summation should suffice here. The coming-of-age story is a fluid genre, defined by tensions between the world of adults and children, typically featuring a metaphoric journey of knowing (often accompanied by a literal journey) in which the child faces initiation into larger culture, all while trying to establish a self in relation to said culture and its dominant ideologies. As indicated in the introduction, many critics define the coming-of-age story by its ambivalent, contradictory nature. Discussing the European Bildungsroman (a literary cousin of the American coming-of-age story), Franco Moretti argues that the genre, in light of inherent contradictions, advocates

"horror"? And what, if any, connection does horror have with ambivalence? A casual definition might conclude that "horror" is anything that inspires fear, repulsion, anxiety, or even terror. But such a definition alone seems unsatisfying. What is it about the horrible that elicits these feelings? In her seminal work, The Powers of Horror, Julia Kristeva presents the most thorough consideration of horror by identifying it as a result of what she calls "the abject."

Influenced by Freud's notion of the Uncanny and by tensions between the Ego and the Superego, Kristeva claims that abjection exists as ambiguity or ambivalence related to what society deems perverse. The abject is ambiguous in that it blurs the borders between the Subject ("I") and the Object (Not "I"); it is perverse because, in doing so, it transgresses boundaries, positions, and rules established by society. In fact, the abject exists in the space between the Subject and the Object—wholly different from both, yet sharing qualities of each[50]—and serves to illustrate the connection between Subject and Object, like the force between two magnets: attracting the two together and/or repelling them, depending upon alignment. Kristeva writes that the "'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again—inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject" (18). The abject signifies ambivalence.

Improper and unclean, the abject at first causes physical repulsion and retching on an instinctual, pre-lingual level. Interestingly enough, it is not improperness or uncleanliness (per se) that marks the abject but, rather, the ways in which these characteristics violate society's propriety, the way they muddy clear waters.[51] The most fundamental abject form is bodily—defined as either excremental or menstrual. "Contrary to what enters the mouth and nourishes,"

"compromises among distinct worldviews," that these stories propose negotiation of ambivalent forces rather than strict assimilation (xii).

[50] Like the Subject, the abject is spawned out of the Self—what Kristeva calls the "narcissistic crisis" (14). Like the Object, the abject shares the quality of being "opposed to I" (1).

[51] Kristeva writes that the abject is the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4).

the excremental "goes out of the body, out of its pores and openings […] signifies, as it were, what never ceases to be separate from the body in a state of permanent loss" (108). The excremental is illustrated in substances like vomit, bile, puss, blood, feces, and urine—those mechanisms of the body, though "impure," that demonstrate that the body is alive, that the Subject ("I") is still intact. For Kristeva, these excremental substances represent the danger of outside forces and the reality of death: "the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death" (71).[52] Conversely, the menstrual—being unique to a particular population—symbolizes "danger issuing from within […]; it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and […] the identity of each sex" (71). Because of the close association biologically, historically, culturally, and philosophically with menstruation and its perceived uncleanliness dating back even to Biblical times,[53] women are, by association, likewise considered unclean and improper in the patriarchal society. They are themselves made abject, horrible.[54]

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[52] The corpse is utterly abject in that it does not signify death so much as it reveals death for what it actually is. The corpse is the body fully excreted or extinguished. Whereas excrement is "what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death […] Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver [meaning: "to fall"]" (3). For Kristeva, the corpse is the jarring representation of the Subject ("I") entirely emptied. This utter deprivation of the "I" within the image of the corpse is reminiscent of Adam Smith's reflection on the same subject matter in The Theory of Moral Sentiments—though the two come to different conclusions regarding the corpse. Thinking of the dead and of corpses, Smith writes: "It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shutout from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the affections, and almost from the memory, of their dearest friends and relations" (12). For Smith the sight of the corpse—the Subject fully extinguished—elicits sympathy (or "fellow-feeling"); for Kristeva, it elicits abjection and, in turn, horror.

[53] In his essay, "From a 'Pot of Filth' to a 'Hedge of Roses' (And Back)," author Jonah Steinberg notes this phenomenon in Levitical code, which specified the menstruating woman as "*t'me'ah* (impure)" (372). Along with others—like lepers, ejaculants, and carriers of corpse impurities—menstruating women were forbidden from entering the Temple. However, Steinberg notes that, while the (im)purity connotations surrounding other groups dissipated in subsequent years, the stigma surround menstruation did not. Steinberg writes: "Unlike the laws concerning other impuritites, the practices and regulations surrounding menstruation did not fade in formative rabbinism but proliferated and endured, and continue to do so" (372).

[54] Marie-Hélène Huet discusses the historical connections between horror and femininity in the form of "the monster"—particularly in Renaissance art. Huet observes that "monstrous progeny resulted from the disorder of the maternal imagination […] bore witness to the violent desire that moved the mother at the time of conception or during pregnancy" (1). Rather than replicating the image of the father, monsters mimicked the horror within the

Curiously, though Kristeva considers abjection in the woman, the transsexual, the criminal, etc.—those who challenge and pervert the boundaries set forth by society—she gives little consideration to the relationship between children and abjection. For the woman in particular, the child (once birthed) would seem to represent another form of bodily abjection, existing in the space between the Subject ("I") and the Object (Not "I"). Though once existing inside of the mother's womb as an arrangement of cells and nearly indistinguishable from the woman herself (the "I"), the child eventually separates and becomes something existing wholly outside of the woman (the Not "I"). That which was once a part of the woman comes apart from the woman. Therefore, in a sense, the child is doubly abjectified, being the abject (cast-off) of an abject (woman). What can the child signify if not some brand of horror?

The American horror film is, in some respects, difficult to define because of the measure of self-awareness that the genre has achieved in recent decades, oftentimes offering up self-lampooning manifestations. When reading about contemporary theories of the horror cinema, it's nearly impossible, for better or worse, to avoid Noël Carroll's seminal work, <u>The Philosophy of Horror</u>. Through a methodical analysis of the genre, Carroll proposes that the horror film exists as a particular type of artistic form—what he calls "art-horror" and distinguishes from real-life horror[55]—and should principally be understood for its intended affect, stating that "the cross-art, cross-media genre of horror takes its title from the emotion it characteristically or

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mother. For all intents and purposes, she willed the monster into reality by some impropriety within herself and her imagination. Alluding to Aristotle's ideas on procreation, Huet insists that women and monsters are linked in that both have been understood as deviations from the normative (male) form. However, whereas women are considered a necessary corruption of the male for the purposes of species preservation (as according to Aristotle), monsters are a further deviation—an unnecessary failure of normative male likeness (3).

[55] As with any seminal text, not everyone agrees with Carroll's assessment of "art-horror." For instance, citing horror film responses following World War II, the Vietnam War, and the September 11th attacks on New York City, Robert Solomon argues that Carroll's notion of horror is problematic, noting that "pretend horror […] is derivative" of real or natural horror that we may encounter (230). Solomon suggests that much of the attraction to the horror film is an attraction to its film aspects (its production, direction, acting, etc.) rather than its horror aspects—going so far as to say that there is "no question of enjoying or getting pleasure from horror. There is no 'paradox of horror pleasure.' Horror is not pleasurable" (254).

rather ideally promotes" (14). When human characters encounter the "monster"—which is an absolute requirement for Carroll, who believes that the horror film is essentially entity-based[56]—they react in somewhat predictable ways, seeing the monster as being both threatening and impure (28).[57] More fundamentally, monsters are seen as threatening and impure because they are interstitial: "categorically contradictory, incomplete, and formless" (Carroll 32).[58] As an audience, the emotions of the film's human characters are meant (ideally) to trigger our own emotions. Our emotions are meant to roughly correspond with theirs.[59] We too are meant to feel threatened and repulsed. Adding that the horror film genre is one that trades principally in repression and oppression as signified by the monster, notable film critic Robin Wood notes that horror films represent "our collective nightmares"—something repressed that is regarded as being so terrible, while conscious, that "it must be repudiated as loathsome […] so strong and powerful as to constitute serious threat" ("Introduction" 174). Essentially, horror films feature a monster that is strange and frightening; and it is strange and frightening precisely because it represents the space between society's rules. The monster is abject.

What seems most strange is our reaction to the horror film. Why do we purposefully watch if we are meant to be horrified? Perhaps the answer, as Wood seems to suggest, is as old

[56] Again, critics disagree with Carroll's emphasis on entity-based horror. Matt Hillis, for example, argues for a more narrative-based understanding of horror cinema rather than an entity-based understanding. He writes that "cinematic horror can be more effectively defined and philosophically addressed not through an analysis of fictional entities but rather through an 'event-based' definition" (138). Essentially, according to Hillis, it is the plot and not the monster that drives the horror film.

[57] Interestingly enough, these same two adjectives—"threatening" and "impure"—might very well be used to describe Kristeva's abject, that thing which elicits horror.

[58] Huet provides a similar understanding of the monster. She writes: "Monstrosities are doubly deceptive. Their strange appearance—a misleading likeness to another species, for example—belies the otherwise rigorous law that offspring should resemble their parents. By presenting similarities to categories of beings to which they are not related, monsters blur the difference between genre and disrupt the strict order of Nature. Thus, though the monster was first defined as that which did not resemble him who engendered it, it nevertheless displayed some sort of resemblance, albeit a *false* resemblance, to an object external to its conception" (4). Again, this idea of interstitiality—of existing in the space between recognizable and acceptable categories—harkens back to Kristeva's abject.

[59] The notable exception to this would be the self-lampooning films of the horror genre, which, as mentioned earlier, have risen in popularity over the course of the genre's evolution.

as Aristotle's answer to the same question about tragedy, with a modern Freudian twist: because on some level, we enjoy a cathartic release upon watching others suffer (and sometimes survive) the horrors that we ourselves fear and because we enjoy the brief collapse of surplus repression that the horror film symbolizes.[60] Robert Solomon argues that horror films are effective and important in that they provide audience members with a measure of control that they do not or would not have in the face of true trauma—to "prove their mettle or to prepare themselves for some future potential horror or to satisfy their curiosity" (249). Perhaps we watch simply because we desire entertainment at all costs, even at the expense of our comfort and peace of mind.

Our complex feelings for the horror film are no doubt a result of our complex feelings for the monster. Carroll aptly notes that we are threatened and repulsed to some degree by the monster because it is an interstitial and abject being. However, we are also made curious by the monster and are sometimes sympathetic to its cause. The monster's abjectness is the very thing that attracts us. We are made ambivalent. We experience complex and contradictory feelings. Speaking of the principle of ambivalence in the horror film, Wood notes that the ambivalence elicited by the monster represents our ambivalence towards societal norms. Wood writes:

> Few horror films have totally unsympathetic Monsters [...] in many (notably the
>
> <u>Frankenstein</u> films) the Monster is clearly the emotional center [...] The
>
> Frankenstein monster suffers, weeps, responds to music, longs to relate to people
>
> [...] Ambivalence extends to our attitude to normality. Central to the effect and

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[60] Wood outlines that there are basically two forms of repression: basic repression and surplus repression. The former is more-or-less inescapable and necessary if we are to evolve from an uncoordinated, unintelligible, uncontrollable, "rough and wild" animal into a recognizable human being in the midst of other human beings. However, the latter—surplus repression—makes us into a card-carrying believer: a capitalist, a heterosexual, a monotheist, etc. ("Introduction" 165). It would appear that the horror film, when successful, allows a brief respite from surplus repression in the form of the monster, who fails to recognize society's boundaries and rules.

fascination of horror films is their fulfillment of our nightmare wish to smash the

norms that oppress us and which our moral conditioning teaches us to revere.

("Introduction" 177)

Again, the repressive forces—inherent in both life and in the horror film—that provide us with a

modicum of order and comfort are simultaneously crippling: the heavy, strangling yoke from

which we seek (perhaps unconsciously) some small measure of relief.

The complex considerations of genre require a brief working definition: the American

horror film is a historically and culturally situated cinematic genre that frequently utilizes

monstrous, abject entities with the intended effect of horrifying its audience via abjection, for the

purposes including entertainment, pleasure, control, or catharsis. Specific analysis of the child as

fearsome, abject monster within these Cold War horror films will provide models of ambivalence

existing within the adult-child dynamic. Another consideration will be whether these models of

ambivalence might reasonably provide readers with yet another critical lens for which to analyze

other genres—namely American coming-of-age stories—interested in ambivalence and horror in

the adult-child relationship.[61]

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The adult perspective of the child—ruled by abjection and horror, made ambivalent—can

be divide into four recurring motifs or patterns of symbolic representation: 1) the child as non-

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[61] One may wonder: to what extent should one seek to compare two genres that are functioning towards
different aims and in different ways (regarding intent, convention, etc.)? While it would be a mistake to confuse the
horror film and the coming-of-age story as being identical—clearly, they are not—it's entirely feasible to discuss
analogous materials that the two genres might share, even if they only share one analogous aspect, which is, in this
case, the common occurrence of ambivalence within the adult-child relationship. Concerns about anachronism here,
while understandable, are easily avoided. As suggested in the introduction to this project, the ambivalent adult-child
relationship is seemingly as old as society itself. While the causes and consequences of such ambivalence may vary
over time, its existence is nonetheless undeniable. The benefit of looking at one genre through the lens of another,
of looking at older texts with fresh perspectives, is simply that such an approach might enliven our stale
interpretations and open our minds to new possibilities working within said texts—particularly regarding elements
such as characterization and plot.

human creature, 2) the child as deranged sociopath, 3) the child as evil incarnate, and 4) the child as parental failure.[62] The first of these representations, and a very common one, may be succinctly summarized as the child as non-human creature. Perhaps the broadest of the four categories, this particular understanding can be seen in a number of manifestations: child as animal, child as alien, child as monster, etc. Essentially, in this motif, the outward and physical form of the child contrasts with what is understood to be the normal biological and physiological human form—similar, again, to what Huet notices recurring in the art from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment and to the Romantics. The most widely referenced and influential example among contemporary readers would probably be Mary Shelley's <u>Frankenstein</u>, in which the brilliant Victor Frankenstein (fueled by an obsession) utilizes science to "father" a monstrous-looking, murderous (as it turns out), and not entirely unsympathetic creature. Carroll's definition of the classic monster seems entirely relevant here, as Frankenstein's son/creation is threatening and impure precisely because he is interstitial and abject and transgresses society's "normative" form. In this case, Frankenstein's creature does have a form; however, its contradictory constitution is that of mismatched body parts, recycled from deceased humans. The monster—who frequently exemplifies childlike qualities despite his enormous size—frightens Frankenstein and others because it exists in a realm outside of or, really, in-between categorical understandings of what humans ought to be.[63]

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[62] It should be noted that Wood identifies five motifs in the contemporary horror film (dating back to the 1960s) in his essay, "An Introduction to the American Horror Film." Wood's patterns overlap with my own to an extent; however, only one of Wood's models deals explicitly with children, which is the focal point of this project. As such, the patterns within this chapter might best be thought of as necessary sub-divisions within Wood's "The Terrible Child" motif. Interestingly enough, though the adult-child dynamic is not made immediately evident in Wood's patterning, he later recognizes that "these apparent heterogeneous motifs are drawn deeper together by a single unifying master-figure: the Family" (181).

[63] An interesting note: though <u>Frankenstein</u> would seem to be a counter-example to Huet's investigation that monsters have traditionally been associated with a failure of motherhood. But Huet insists that it is, in fact, one of the last powerful examples of "parental singularity and of wild likeness obscurely moved by hideous desires," with a renewed emphasis placed on the relative success of paternal resemblance in one's progeny (130).

A similar sentiment can be seen in David Lynch's Eraserhead (1977), a bizarrely horrific film that seems to (in)directly confront fears of parenthood, particularly paternal responsibilities. The film's main character, Henry Spencer, is surprised to learn that his girlfriend of only a few weeks has given birth to his "child"—a strange creature that resembles an embalmed calf-fetus wrapped in swaddling clothes, conceived perhaps as a by-product of Henry's potent, sexually repressed dreams. Describing her child, Mary X exclaims, "They're still not sure it is a baby!" and eventually abandons the child, leaving only Henry to care for it. Despite the calf-baby's incessant cries, Henry, ambivalent towards the infant, tries to care for his progeny before eventually killing it. Other popular cinematic depictions of the child as non-human creature include the unnaturally aging, malevolently telekinetic, alien children in Wolf Rilla's popular British film Village of the Damned (1960) and the rage-fueled, beak-faced, and navel-less children in David Cronenberg's The Brood (1979).[64]

Of all the horror films in the Cold War era, the most remarkable example of the child as non-human creature is Larry Cohen's It's Alive! (1974). In this particular film, we are introduced to a seemingly normal couple, the Davies, who are expecting their second child.[65] All seems well enough until the Davies' newborn child—brandishing sharp fangs and three-pronged

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[64] According to Wood, The Brood is chiefly a Freudian film that nonetheless illustrates the ambivalence within the family unit. The murderous monster-children in Cronenberg's film—born from sacs sprouting from their human mother like a myriad of phalli, licked clean of their after-birth—represent Nora Carveth's repression, her patriarchy-induced rage, her monstrous imaginations (to borrow a phrase from Huet). But as Wood aptly observes, "that rage is never seen as the logical product of woman's situation within patriarchal culture; it is blamed entirely on the mother's mother (the father being culpable only in his weakness and ineffectuality)" ("Introduction" 195). In her interpretation of The Brood, Lianne McLarty adds that patriarchal preservation is central concern of the film—that both of the prominent families in the film are female-led and subsequently monstrous: "The ineffectual father of Nola's childhood gives way to the totally absent/unnecessary father of the brood. The monstrous children have no father; they do, however, have too much mother" (236). Again, faulty motherhood, weak fatherhood, and ambivalence within the family dynamic are linked to monstrosity.

[65] Over the course of the film, however, it is inferred that, like Henry Spencer in Lynch's Eraserhead, the father figure in It's Alive!, Frank Davies, has exhibited hesitancies about his paternal responsibilities. Shortly before the birth of their monstrous baby, Lenore Davies speaks to her husband: "I'm glad we decided to have the baby. Aren't you, sweetheart? […] It's not going to tie you down, is it, sweetheart? Are you going to feel trapped like you did last time?"

claws—ruthlessly slaughters all of the doctors and nurses in the delivery room.[66] Escaping the

hospital, the Davies baby continues its homicidal spree by murdering, among others, an

unsuspecting milkman, a prostitute (or perhaps a go-go dancer), and various family friends—

leading Frank Davies, the child's father, to proclaim: "We're not talking about a retarded kid

[…] We're talking about a monstrosity of some kind!"[67]

Although the Davies are fearful of their child and its murderous actions, what is

interesting is that a social dimension seems to frighten Frank even more:

> Frank: "I suppose it's going to be in all the medical journals, the history books.
>
> The Davies child. The Davies monster. It's like Frankenstein […] When
>
> I was a kid, I always thought the monster was Frankenstein—Karloff
>
> walking around in these big shoes, grunting. I thought he was
>
> Frankenstein. Then I went to high school and read the book, and I realized
>
> that Frankenstein was the doctor who created him. Somehow the
>
> identities get all mixed up, don't they?"

Here, Frank's sentiments illustrate an understanding of the child as non-human creature, and,

more importantly, his sentiments reveal the complex adult-child dynamic at play. Yes, the

Davies fear their child because he is a monster; but they also fear (perhaps even more so) the

possibility of being intrinsically linked to, and even confused with, their monstrous progeny for

all time in the eyes of society. If, as Aristotle believed, a child should share a likeness with

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[66] Witnessing firsthand her baby's murderous rampage, Lenore Davies remarks: "I wanted a boy so badly. I think he was probably very frightened. You know, he's different. I think he was probably afraid they were going to hurt him. He's not ugly!" Again, Huet's exploration of the monstrous imagination of mothers seems relevant—Lenore Davies implying that perhaps her intense desire for a boy spawned the monster.

[67] Interestingly enough, this quote in context illustrates Frank's ambivalence towards his child, his conflicting and ever-changing feelings. Only moments earlier in the film, Frank rebukes a doctor's claim that his child is an animal or a monster. Frank says, "Whatever it is, you can't classify it as an animal. It's human, Doctor. That's what's disgusting to you, isn't it?" Though, as the quote above reveals, Frank's feelings toward his child are subject to contradictory and ambivalent swings.

his/her father, what would that say about the Davies? Would it indicate a failure of Frank's seed or Lenore's imagination or both? Frank seems to worry that monsters only and always stem from those who are monstrous. Just as he fears the abject monster itself, he fears being associated with it and its actions.[68]

Of course, Frank's own ambivalent feelings toward his child complicate matters. After all, it is Frank—at the urgings of Lenore[69]—who ultimately tracks down the child and saves it from the police. "It can't hurt anybody!" Frank assures the police, cradling his monstrous child in his arm. "Lock it up. Study it, but let it live, please. Put down your weapons! […] If you fellows shoot, you'll shoot me." Ultimately, though repulsed by his child, Frank is sympathetic towards the monster—seeing it as interstitial and abject, existing in the space between Subject and Object, transgressing society's boundaries. His feelings for the monstrous child are complex—symbolic of the feelings that, presumably, all adults feel for their children, monstrous or not.

An intriguing literary example of the child as non-human creature can be found in Maxine Hong Kingston's coming-of-age story, <u>The Woman Warrior</u> (1975). In the chapter, entitled "Shaman," Kingston relates the story of her mother, Brave Orchid, who, as a result of her medical training, serves as a nurse of sorts, helping pregnant women deliver their children. Ambivalent herself (being the abject, interstitial female child of two cultures), Kingston writes:

> My mother was a midwife to whatever spewed forth, not being able to choose as
>
> with the old and sick. She was not squeamish, though, and deftly caught
>
> spewings that were sometimes babies, sometimes monsters. When she helped the

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[68] "Why is everybody looking at me?" Frank cries. "Like it's my own flesh and blood or something. Well, it's not! You understand?! It's no relation to me!"

[69] "Why are you so anxious to be the one to do it?" Lenore asks her husband. "He could have killed you when you were sleeping! He could have killed you. You know why he didn't? He knows you're his father. He knows! He does! He knows you're his father!"

country women who insisted on birthing in the pigpen, she could not tell by

starlight and moonlight what manner of creature had made its arrival… (85)

Unable to decipher exactly what kind of creature had emerged from the womb, Brave Orchid

"counted fingers and toes by touch," aware of the fact that only later, with the benefit of light,

would both mother and nurse know "whether the gods let them get away with something good"

or whether, as they feared, they had witnessed the birth of some monstrous creature (85).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The second representation of the ambivalent adult-child dynamic is the child as deranged

sociopath.[70] From a conceptual standpoint, this particular childhood representation seems nearly

as common as the former; however, whereas the child as non-human creature motif focuses

primarily on the child's physical characteristics, the child as deranged sociopath concerns itself

primarily with the child's cognitive and/or emotional aspects, especially as it relates to

interactions with the predominant adult-centric social realm. The adult fears those internal

qualities of the child—those aspects that may not be visible to the naked eye (in contrast to the

outward physical characteristics of the previous motif).

An intriguing literary example of the child as deranged sociopath can be found in Mark

Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, a book that many regard as the quintessential

American coming-of-age story. At one point in the novel, Huck Finn (the book's protagonist)

and his best-friend/co-conspirator Tom Sawyer discuss the formation of a juvenile posse.

Cultural memory preserves these two boys as being essentially harmless or, at worst, a bit overly

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[70] It should be carefully noted that the purpose of this project (and more precisely, this motif) is not to attune oneself to each and every idiosyncratic definition existent within child psychology, pertaining to the term "sociopath." Rather, this project uses "sociopath" in only the broadest sense: that the child character lacks prevailing modes of morality, decency, and/or empathy set forth by society. In doing so, in transgressing society's rules regarding such things, the child is abject and frightening.

rambunctious. But a closer look at the text suggests a burgeoning and deviant pathological

behavior far beyond that of the conceptualized, idealized innocent child.

While discussing the formation of their juvenile gang, Tom Sawyer makes a pact with the

other boys—one that requires them to murder various individuals and their families, making sure

to mutilate the corpses by "[hacking] a cross in their breasts, which was the sign of the band" (9).

The discussion continues, as the gang attempts to come to grips with their leader's horrific

methods and motivations:

> "Now," says Ben Rodgers, "what's the line of business of this Gang?"
>
> "Nothing, only robbery and murder," Tom said […] "We ain't burglars. That
>
> ain't no sort of style. We are highwaymen. We stop stages and carriages on the
>
> road with masks on, and kill the people and take their watches and money."
>
> "Must we always kill the people?"
>
> "Oh, certainly. It's best." (10)

To be fair, though Tom attempts to rob and murder someone, he fails miserably, thwarted by a

great number of strikes upon the head from an elderly woman. Perhaps it is, therefore,

reasonable to suggest, as some no doubt do, that Tom's goals for the Gang are utterly harmless—

the signs of an over-imaginative boy obsessed with what he perceives to be the proper style,

acting the part of the highwayman without really being one. Indeed, Twain seems, to one extent

or another, to be interested in exploring childhood innocence and portraying said innocence as a

romanticist might (though his story is certainly more complex and nuanced than the typical

quixotic, romantic work).

But one wonders the extent to which we might excuse some style-obsessed, sociopathic

behavior as harmless flights of fancy (i.e. Tom Sawyer), while simultaneously accusing other

style-obsessed, sociopathic behavior as being utterly deranged (e.g. American Psycho's Patrick Bateman). Perhaps it is because Tom is a child and we are apt to view his actions innocently, regardless of whether or not we should. Perhaps it is a question of genre—that we do not expect our young romantic protagonists to act so cruelly. At the very least, however, Tom's sociopathic tendencies, though never brought to fruition, should strip readers of the veneer of innocence surrounding the abject child and force us to re-examine the extent to which we are blinded to the ambivalence of the adult-child relationship in such classic, romanticized texts.[71]

Images of the horrible child as sociopath can also be seen in a number of horror films from the Cold War period. For instance, in Alice, Sweet Alice (1976), Freudian suspicions arise and are focused on young Alice Sprages, who seems always to be connected (in some form or fashion) to the victims of grisly murders, and, in the eyes of the adult-world, there seems to be no better candidate for the fearsome child than Alice. Being conceived out of wedlock, living in a broken home, suspected of murder, Alice also begins menstruating and attempts to conceal this fact from the adults around her. She is dangerous and impure: abject. As it turns out, though Alice is innocent of the killings, the film's adults remain wary of the child and the secret, murderous passions that she may have.[72] Yet another example of the child as deranged sociopath

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[71] Along these lines, Jerry Griswold discusses the prevalence and complex depiction of the adult-child relationship within Twain's novel. Citing previous studies, Griswold notes that the two concepts that appear most frequently within Huckleberry Finn are "family" and "death" and that the two are often connected (45). Furthermore, speaking to the prevalence of family in the novel and the danger inherent therein, Griswold writes: "Consider, for example, the lies [Huck] tells: the two he coins for Judith Loftus (in which he is first "Sarah Williams," seeking help for a poor and sick mother, and then an orphan and runaway apprentice); the lie he tells the ferryman whom he persuades to approach the wrecked steamboat (where he has an invented family stranded in jeopardy); the scenario he invents for the two slave catchers who come near the rafter (where, Huck claims, they will find his family, ravaged by smallpox); his handy improvisation when arrives at the Grangerfords' house (where he is "George Jackson," the last member of a hard-luck family trimmed down by trouble); and his misrepresentation of the Duke and King (in which Huck is again an orphan from another hard-luck family, one baby Ike and his drunk Pap have drowned). His lies are surprisingly consistent: they all present families in distress" (46).

[72] At one point in the film, Alice's psychiatric evaluator says, "Parents, so often, don't know their children as well as they presume." This statement, classically Freudian in its undertones, symbolizes not only the action of the film of course but also the larger thematic issues of uncertainty (and consequently ambivalence) within the adult-child relationship.

in the horror film is the damaged psyche and murderous inclinations of Niles/Holland in Robert Mulligan's The Other (1972), who kills both his father and mother (among others) and who serves as a precursor to the deranged, split-personality motif seen in later mainstream films like David Fincher's Fight Club (1999) and David Koepp's Secret Window (2004).

The most memorable example of the child sociopath from the Cold War era appears in the form of Rhoda Penmark in Mervyn LeRoy's seminal film, The Bad Seed (1956). Though appearing innocent, Rhoda proves to be a remorseless killer—murdering both a classmate and a groundskeeper with the same childish glee that she experiences when tap-dancing or playing the piano. Suspicious of her daughter and curious as to whether suburban children (like her daughter) could be capable of cold-blooded murder, Christine Penmark asks her friend—who coincidentally knows a great deal about criminal psychology—to discuss the prevailing theories as to the origin of sociopathic serial killers:

> Tasker: "Some fellow criminologists, including some behavior scientists have begun to make me believe we've all been putting too much emphasis on environment and too little on heredity. They cite a type of criminal born with no capacity for remorse or guilt, no feeling of right or wrong […] It's just that they are bad seeds, plain bad from the beginning and nothing can change them."

Clearly, from the film's depiction, we are to understand that Rhoda, being such a criminal, possesses the type of deviant cognitive and emotional characteristics seen in other child sociopaths. And like Frank Davies, who fears that his monstrous child may be the result of some fault of his own, the implicit fear of Christine Penmark is that Rhoda's monstrous capabilities are

indeed hereditary—that the child's deeds are evidence of failings within the mother and that she (like her daughter) is monstrous and abject.

<div align="center">***</div>

The third representation of the ambivalent adult-child relationship within the horror film genre is the child as evil incarnate motif. In some ways, this model is a variation of the previous model. Like the deranged sociopath, the child here is understood primarily through matters of interiority rather than exterior appearances.[73] However, while the sociopathic interpretation investigates the child along scientific or psychological lines (as in biological, genetic, cognitive, or emotional defect), the evil incarnate motif proposes something more metaphysical, often spiritualized or depicted as being beyond the scope of scientific explanation. Simply put, here we recognize the child as fearsome not because of a defective brain or a deformed body but, rather, a depraved soul.

To the best of my knowledge, this particular representation seems to have found more of a home in the American horror film than in the coming-of-age story. Though issues of spirituality are frequently discussed in literature as influencing various characters' thoughts and actions, the coming-of-age story seems either less interested in or less comfortable with the depiction of the child as evil incarnate. Of course, a few examples exist here-and-there: in Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street, Esperanza's rumination on her relationship with her mother[74] or Huck Finn's concern that he is hell-bound for his behavior[75] or Henry Fleming's

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[73] An important note: an emphasis on interiority does not preclude exterior characteristics. After all, the child monsters in The Exorcist and Rosemary's Baby—both of whom can be classified under this pattern—exhibit physical characteristics of monstrosity. However, these physical characteristics are understood to stem from within, presented as symbols of a troubled soul/nature/spirit/etc.

[74] "Most likely I will go to hell and most likely I deserve to be there. My mother says I was born on an evil day and prays for me" (Cisneros 58).

[75] "I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray, now. But I didn't go straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking: thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I came to be lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to

supernatural-like fury on the battlefield in Stephen Crane's <u>The Red Badge of Courage</u>.[76]

However, in comparison to the other models of the child as fearsome abject, the child as evil incarnate does not figure as prominently into the coming-of-age genre.

The opposite is true when analyzing the American horror film—a genre that is laced with depictions of childhood evil. Arguably the three most durable horror films from the Cold War II period—Richard Donner's <u>The Omen</u> (1976), Roman Polanski's <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> (1968), and William Friedkin's <u>The Exorcist</u> (1973)—each depict a child that is predominantly, if not entirely, morally wicked. The children in these films are understood in terms of a perceived spiritual depravity. Opposed to the Christian theological worldview that has dominated the West for hundreds of years, their childlike innocence belies their utter immorality. Violating these predominant belief systems, they are abject and horrible.

In <u>The Omen</u> (1976), young Damien—presented as the Anti-Christ—shrieks wildly when approaching a church, drives zoo animals into a frenzy, and seemingly entreats his first nanny to commit suicide. Wood notes that the true interest in the film is not simply resistance against society's repressive and oppressive norms; instead, <u>The Omen</u> seeks the utter destruction of those norms: "Here, 'normality' is not merely threatened by the monster, but totally annihilated: the state, the church, the family" ("Introduction" 186). At the heart of <u>The Omen</u> exists a conflict between the New World (symbolized by the father, Robert Thorn) and the Old World (symbolized by Damien). The New World is the world of politics, science, and reason; the Old

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thinking / over our trip down the river, and I see Jim before me, all the time […] / 'All right, then, I'll go to hell'— and tore [the paper] up. It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head; and said I would take up wickedness again…" (Twain 269-271).

[76] "[Henry] crouched behind a little tree, with his eyes burning hatefully and his teeth set in a cur-like snarl […] / His knowledge of his inability to take vengeance for it made his rage into a dark and stormy specter, that possessed him and made him dream of abominable cruelties" (Crane 94-95). After the fighting is over, Henry confesses that "his flesh seemed strangely on fire, and the sounds of battle continued in his ears" (95). And as his fellow soldiers observed his battlefield behavior, they were amazed "[looking] upon him as a war devil (96).

World is the world of spiritualism and mystery. And yet, the quality that makes the film so

appealing is the ambivalence elicited in both the father-figure and the audience.[77] What should

be done with Damien? When Robert Thorn decides to murder his son in ancient ceremonial

fashion in a church, the audience supports his decision, believing too that Damien is evil

although no real, scientific proof of his belief has been presented in the film. Essentially, we are

persuaded to kill a child with the zealot's reasoning (or lack thereof) and passion—something

that, in our normative way of thinking, we would likely never condone. Young Damien pleads

for his life and, on some level, engenders our sympathy. We recognize Robert Thorn's actions

as ludicrous on the one hand and entirely necessary on the other. Our own ambivalence is

revealed.

In Rosemary's Baby (1968), young Rosemary Woodhouse finds herself betrayed by her

husband (Guy Woodhouse), manipulated by her devious neighbors (the Castevets), and

impregnated by the devil. While many of Polanski's other films from this period discuss the

pressures of city-living on the individual self, Rosemary's Baby is unique in that it looks

specifically at the marital relationship and the bond between mother and child. Critic Lucy

Fischer discusses the complex and ambivalent nature of childbearing and birth—alluding

specifically to the film's rape scene, in which Rosemary is drugged and forced to copulate with

the devil while being observed by a coven of witches and her passive husband. Fischer notes the

traditional forms of abjection on display:

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[77] Here is a point of contention with Wood's assessment of The Omen. Wood argues that "the devil child is the implicit hero" of the film, the character that the audience roots for and hopes to succeed because, if he were to succeed, that would mean the collapse of certain societal restrictions (i.e. family, state, and church) ("Introduction" 186). However, it is my contention that, in actuality, the audience is intended to identify with Robert Thorn and see him as the principal hero of the film. Thorn's journey through the film—from skeptic to believer—is easily the most complex and contradictory. His dilemma (and, indeed, our dilemma as viewers) is what to do with the fearsome child.

> That [Rosemary] is unconscious during intercourse mocks woman's "designated"
> coital stance: passive and undemanding. That Guy is uninvolved with her
> impregnation evokes the primitive beliefs that human males are removed from
> procreation. Finally, the devious denouement of Rosemary's pregnancy assigns
> her blame. It is *she* who has most wanted a child. […] It is *she* who has arranged
> to live in the Bramford. […] It is *she* who has pushed intimacy with the Castevets.
> Thus, the New Eve is charged with Original Sin. (420)

After such a scene, it is little surprise that as the difficult and painful pregnancy progresses, as Rosemary worries that she might be harboring evil offspring, she also worries that she may be imagining the whole thing—that her fears might be completely unfounded—though, as the film reveals, she is not. Her ambivalent feelings continue after the baby's birth, when she experiences both a repulsion from and an attraction to her demon-child, eventually succumbing to the Castevets' urgings to accept abjection, to be mother to the monstrous child.[78]

In The Exorcist (1973), the possessed Regan solicits sex from a clergyman before violently masturbating with a crucifix. Friedkin's film is a particularly interesting example of the child as evil incarnate motif because, unlike the other films, The Exorcist goes to excruciating lengths to show that Regan's strange outbursts and erratic behavior do not have psychological origins. Regan's doctors and medical specialists perform a number of painful tests on the young girl, none of which provide an explanation as to her fearsome demeanor.[79] This

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[78] Virginia Wright Wexman discusses the paranoia, anxiety, ambivalence, and abjection in Rosemary's Baby. Wexman writes: "Polanski makes [Rosemary's] psychological vulnerability more plausible by isolating her from family and from any benign neighbors […] But the triggering mechanism of her breakdown is her pregnancy. Later, when her baby is born, the source of her anxiety shifts from terror that part of her objectified body could be appropriated by others to an ambivalent hatred/affection toward the part of her body that is no longer hers" (37).

[79] In some ways, The Exorcist interestingly combines the fears of an outside threat (as seen in earlier horror and science-fiction movies from the Cold War period) with the fears of a threat from within the nuclear family. After all, though the child Regan is certainly frightening, we understand her actions to be the result of invading and malevolent outside force.

reinforces the understanding that, with these abject children, the matter is neither biological nor psychological but, rather, spiritual: that these children are the literal embodiment of moral evil.

<div align="center">***</div>

The fourth and final representation of adult-child ambivalence in the horror film is the child as parental failure motif. In this model, some level of the horror or abjection that adults experience toward their children is wrapped up in either a perceived or actual failure on the part of the parent. Although the parent feels (or fears) partial responsibility in the other motifs as well, in this particular pattern, the ambivalence is not because of an inherited trait (as Frank Davies and Christine Penmark fear with their children) but, rather, because of a lapse in parenting. They fear that they have failed to provide proper parental guidance. As a result, this particular representation is not solely confined to the interior or exterior characteristics of the child (as with other models); instead, this representation coincides with other negative emotions that the adult feels in relation to the child, such as regret and remorse.

In Zora Neale Hurston's popular coming-of-age story, Their Eyes Were Watching God, readers find an intriguing instance of the child as parental failure, when the elderly Nanny expresses her anxiety towards the young Janie and her budding sexuality:

> "Look at me, Janie. Don't set dere wid yo' head hung down. Look at yo' ole grandma!" Her voice began sagging on the prongs of her feelings. "Ah don't want to be talkin' to you lak dis. Fact is Ah done been on mah knees to mah Maker many's de time askin' *please*—for Him not to make de burden too heavy for me to bear."
>
> "Nanny, Ah just—Ah didn't mean nothin' bad."
>
> "Dat's what makes me skeered. You don't mean no harm…" (12-13)

Nanny's fear of her granddaughter, Janie, stems from her own perceived parental failure in raising Janie's mother, Leafy. When Nanny spies Janie kissing a boy over the fence, she is horrified and reverts to her anxious feelings. Nanny fears that the child's faults might be inherited from the parent—that Janie will be promiscuous as Leafy was, that Janie will abandon Nanny as Leafy has done. More importantly, Nanny fears that she has failed in her parental guidance. Here, the negative feelings of abjection and horror are, in reality, more indicative of the parental figure (Nanny) than the child (Janie). Subsequently, once commingled with anxiety, the parent projects a fearsome image onto the child. The child symbolizes some horror.[80]

Horror films like Nicolas Roeg's <u>Don't Look Now</u> (1973) and Mary Lambert's <u>Pet Sematary</u> (1989) provide parental figures who, because of their negligence, feel directly responsible for the death of their children. In Roeg's film, American architect John Baxter harbors deep feelings of guilt after his young daughter's tragic drowning. This feeling of guilt is transformed into curiosity and fear when, in Venice, he begins to see glimpses of a childlike apparition running through the city, wearing a red coat eerily similar to the red coat worn by his dead daughter. Similarly, in Lambert's film, Louis Creed believes that his brief moment of negligence was the primary cause of his young son's violent death. And again, these feelings of deep remorse are transformed into horror when Creed's son returns from the grave and begins

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[80] A similar sentiment can be seen in Sherwood Anderson's <u>Winesburg, Ohio</u> in the relationship between George Willard and his mother, Elizabeth. Deeply ambivalent about her child, Elizabeth passionately prays: "'If I am dead and see him becoming a meaningless drab figure like myself, I will come back,' she declared. 'I ask God now to give me that privilege. I demand it. I will pay for it. God may beat me with his fists. I will take any blow that may befall if but this my boy be allowed to express something for us both.' Pausing uncertainly, the woman stared about the boy's / room. 'And do not let him become smart and successful, either,' she added vaguely" (40-41). In fact, throughout Anderson's novel (which, in many ways, is a series of coming-of-age stories), there is a recurring ambivalence shown between parents and children—whether it's the father-like Adolph Myers and his young students, Virginia Richmond and her son Seth, Wash Williams's wife and mother-in-law, or the Bentley family. Frequently, these parents experience conflicted feelings toward their children because their children reflect some troubling notion (real or imagined) in themselves. Other examples of this type of adult-child relationship can be seen in Alison Bechdel's <u>Fun Home</u>, Dorothy Allison's <u>Bastard Out of Carolina</u> (Anney's treatment of the "illegitimate" Bone), or Donna Tartt's <u>The Little Friend</u> (Harriet's broken home in the wake of her brother's tragic, unsolved death).

committing terrible acts. A slightly more nuanced example can be found in Jack Clayton's

Something Wicked This Way Comes (1983), a film produced by Walt Disney Pictures.[81] Here,

we find an elderly Charles Halloway who fears his son, Will, not because his son is frightening

(per se) but because Will represents a particularly shameful moment in Charles's life: a moment

in which the father's paralyzing fear prevented him from saving his son from a swift river

current. Compounding the shame that Charles feels from the event and the subsequent unease he

feels around his son is the fact that it was the drunkard Mr. Nightshade—an otherwise unsavory

character by society's standards—who jumped in and saved the boy. Thus, the ambivalence that

Charles Halloway experiences toward his son is an indicator or the ambivalence that he feels

toward himself.

<div align="center">***</div>

Are these motifs or patterns of childhood fearsomeness in the horror film and in the

coming-of-age story meant to be distinct and segregated? Admittedly, presenting anything in list

format implies that the list's items exist separate and apart from one another. Rarely is this the

case in everyday life, nor is it the case here. Instead, these models of childhood fearsomeness are

merely meant to serve as broad starting points, which, upon further investigation could be made

more intricate and complex. For example, the childlike Norman Bates of Psycho (1960) or the

teenage Carrie White in Carrie (1976) likely represent both psychotic disorder and failed

parenting and could be included in either (or both) of the aforementioned motifs. Norman

Bates's overbearing mother has made separation from her impossible and helped foster his

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[81] Interestingly enough, this film also marks a strange trend with Walt Disney Pictures during the Reagan years, where they produced a number of films that were, by their standards, more mature, more horrifying, and somewhat disturbing—films such as The Watcher in the Woods (1980), The Devil and Max Devlin (1981), and Return to Oz (1985). This may serve to indicate that even "family-friendly" companies like Walt Disney were picking up on the ambivalent and sometimes horrifying aspects of the adult-child relationship during this Cold War time period.

psychosis; he becomes the literal embodiment of what Huet recognizes as the connection between motherhood and monstrosity. Carrie White's sudden, traumatic sexuality and her burgeoning supernatural powers are complicated by her oppressively religious mother's childrearing practices—setting the stage for Carrie's sociopathic revenge spree. A literary character who blurs the lines between these motifs is Shannon Pearl in Dorothy Allison's <u>Bastard Out of Carolina</u>. Existing in multiple categories (child as non-human creature, child as sociopath, and child as parental failure), Shannon Pearl is "wholly monstrous, a lurching hunched creature," obsessed with "decapitations, mutilations, murder and mayhem" (155, 157).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

I am reminded of the opening discussion of <u>Little Women</u>—the argument that beneath the romantic, idyllic façade of the March children lies something more sinister, something challenging to our venerable understandings of childhood. Yet, it is important to remember that the March children turn out well enough in the end, that the March parents' fears are put to rest. In exploring the ways in which children may be fearsome, abject, little monsters, I hope I do not suggest that they must be so. Children seem to exceed our expectations as often as they fail them; and generally, they turn out fine, despite our most persistent and (sometimes) accidental efforts to the contrary. By investigating the ways in which this adult-child ambivalence manifests itself through horror and abjection, I do not mean to imply that all children should be feared, all of the time. I am only suggesting, with tongue in cheek: "Be careful."

CONCLUSION

The renowned seventeenth-century poet Andrew Marvell once noted that "had we but world enough and time" we, as individuals, could accomplish much more in life. Of course, Marvell (or his poetic speaker) directed this comment towards his coy mistress in an attempt at seduction, amplifying their potential sexual encounter to something of universal and epic importance. I, for one, am convinced that Marvell's sentiment, however, is applicable to nearly anything in life—especially academic study. Indeed, it often seems that one's principle restrictions in the pursuit of knowledge are space and time. Very rarely does one possess enough of either with which to explore all that one wishes to explore. This is the truest dilemma of learning; and, unfortunately, this project is not immune to this problem.

Limited in scope by certain genre restrictions and by the specter of deadlines, a number of potential chapters were excluded from this project in order to make room for those chapters that are present. Fortunately, an honest and worthwhile conclusion affords one the opportunity to offer confession, to make amends for those chapters left lying so ignominiously on the proverbial cutting-room floor. In the spirit of such candor, this conclusion provides a chance to briefly enumerate those discussions still worthy of future consideration in relation to the ambivalent adult-child dynamic during America's Cold War period. Here, "had we but world enough and time," this project may have included chapters on a number of other topics, including: adult fear of teenage rebellion and adolescent gangs as evidenced by seminal texts like The Catcher in the Rye (1951), The Wild One (1953), Rebel Without a Cause (1955), On the Road (1957) and The Outsiders (1963); ambivalent portrayals of children in the photography of

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the Cold War, particularly in the work of controversial photographer Diane Arbus (e.g. "Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey, 1967," "Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park," and "A Child Crying"); notions of futurism and the child as depicted through American high-concept fashion during the Cold War; and even contemporary portrayals of the Cold War family dynamic, most notably in the critically acclaimed television series, *Mad Men*. Each of these potential chapters would have likely illustrated what this project asserts—that American adults during the Cold War (a particularly ambivalent period in history) frequently experienced complex and contradictory feelings toward their children.

That all of these chapters did not make it into this project is disappointing to some extent. Yet, on the other hand, I undoubtedly feel that the two chapters included here are entirely worthy of discussion—the former because it seeks to shine new light on the work of a great (and oft-forgotten) writer, and the latter because of the intriguing cross-genre and cross-historical dimensions at play. Both Katherine Anne Porter (in chapter one) and the American horror film (in chapter two) illustrate the ambivalence within the adult-child dynamic in remarkable ways. While Porter's work foreshadowed much of the familial ambivalence existing in the Cold War home, the modern horror film revealed that ambivalence to be the most predominant and pervasive feature of the nuclear family. As such, to tell the story of adult-child ambivalence during this time, I cannot imagine overlooking either.

But where exactly does this adult-child ambivalence during the Cold War stem from? There are the usual suspects: concerns about new youth movements (be they political, sexual, musical, or otherwise), anxiety about our own impending obsoleteness, uncertainty about how well we know our children, fear that those who follow us will irrevocably damage what we have worked so hard to achieve. Though this project proposes all of these factors as potential causes

for adult-child ambivalence, special care has been made to prevent an easy, misleading answer. In reality, no definitive and irrefutable answer is known to the question of adult-child ambivalence; and so, no definitive and irrefutable answer has been or will be provided here. Very likely, adult-child ambivalence can be traced back to all of these factors (and others). Or perhaps this ambivalence stems from somewhere else entirely. Unable to fully satisfy our desire to know the origins of this ambivalence within the adult-child relationship, the recognition of its existence may prove enough. Or, rather, it may have to.

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