

**"A place that has its own identity": Boston  
and New England as filmic imagined  
community**

by William David Sayers

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I, William David Sayers, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.



# THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the imagination and construction of the New England region in American audiovisual media, and the resulting filmic identity of the region and its people. As a result of this presentation, filmic New England can be understood in audiovisual media as a type of imagined community that can stand as an analogue for the idea of a nation.

Primarily, this thesis examines the ways the American film industry, through filmic cues in narrative, dialogue, and image, temporally imagines and spatially constructs a filmic New England identity. American audiovisual media seems to create this identity as a byproduct of a larger negotiation of an American national identity. Importantly, this thesis argues that specific “local” films, produced in the last two decades, subvert this imagined otherness by presenting an identity that allows citizens of the region to imagine their own community. Examining this constructed identity through the varying theoretical lenses of otherness and identity, history, memory, and space, this thesis argues that the filmic representation of New England exists as a type of imagined community.

Organized in a chronological manner, this thesis first focuses on early American films depicting an epochal event in American pre-history, the Salem Witch Trials. It next examines a group of films from mid-century in which New Englanders travel throughout the US. Finally, the thesis follows the filmography as it turns towards urban space, and focuses primarily on *Good Will Hunting*, a turning point in both the presentation and construction of the New England filmic identity.

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# “BOSTON IS STILL A PLACE THAT HAS ITS OWN IDENTITY, ITS OWN FLAVOR.”

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The film *Good Will Hunting* (1997) follows a young, troubled, self-taught mathematical genius from a Boston neighborhood, the eponymous Will Hunting, as he attempts to reconcile his childhood abuse through therapy, to find love, and to build a future for himself. In a pre-release interview with the local newspaper, the *Boston Globe*, one of the starring actors and writers of the film, Ben Affleck, explained the motivation that he and his fellow star and co-writer, Matt Damon, both native Bostonians, had for writing this film:

So much of what we want to do is present Boston the way we knew it growing up here. Because we feel like it has never really been done. Everything from the dialect to the specific kinds of culture, the way people live. It's very particular, and interesting, especially at a time when so much of the country is becoming generic....[sic] Boston is still a place that has its own identity, its own flavor. Often when that's attempted in the movies it comes off as either caricature or cutesy.<sup>1</sup>

Affleck, in this interview, seems to assert a perceived unique otherness of his own regional identity that arises from what he believes is a flawed imagining by the American film industry of Boston and its people. In this way, Affleck identifies something critical to the understanding of New England and its people in American audiovisual culture: that the region and its people have been imagined as a distinct, and perhaps separate, region by the same nation of which they are supposedly a part, though this may not necessarily be a situation that is entirely unique to Boston or New England.

As Affleck notes, Boston seems to, or is understood to, have its own distinct “flavor.” It is perhaps as a result of this self-identified uniqueness, or for a number of

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Affleck quoted in Matthew Gilbert, “Ben Affleck Grabs His Big Dream This Cambridge Kid Now



other reasons that will be explored in this thesis, that the American film industry has, throughout its history, maintained a focus on the region and its people. This enduring interest of the American film industry over more than one hundred years of cinema and television has exposed American film audiences to a repetition of images of Bostonians and New Englanders, allowing these audiences to conceive of a collective identity for people from the region, which is then continually reinforced in their minds through its repetition over time. More, because New England, the six state region in the northeast corner of the United States, has such clearly delineated and recognized historical and geographic boundaries that separate it from the rest of the United States, film audiences are able to easily locate this conceived filmic identity within a specific geographic landscape.

Perhaps because of the critical and the commercial success of *Good Will Hunting* after its release in 1997, and its subsequent recognition at the 1998 Academy Awards Ceremony, the American film industry seems to have developed a heightened awareness of and interest in Boston and New England since then. In the twenty years following the breakthrough in mainstream American audiovisual culture of the specific type of Bostonian identity proffered by *Good Will Hunting*, the American film industry appears to have developed an interest in continuing to present a certain type of representation of the area in American audiovisual culture, perhaps in an attempt to recapture the runaway commercial success of *Good Will Hunting*. In many ways, this conscious mimicry of a perceived understanding of the identity of *Good Will Hunting* has been successful, as films such as *Mystic River* (2003) and *The Departed* (2006) earned global box office receipts of more than three times and six times, respectively, their production budgets,<sup>2</sup> with each also being recognized for their critical success with multiple Academy Awards. *Ted* (2012), meanwhile, earned nearly five hundred and fifty million dollars in global box office receipts, more than ten times its production budget of fifty million dollars,<sup>3</sup> though still well short of matching the return on investment that *Good Will Hunting* earned, nearly twenty-two times its estimated ten million dollar budget.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these films, Boston and New England also seems to be gaining in prominence on American television screens as well, as shows such as

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<sup>2</sup> “Mystic River,” *Box Office Mojo*, last modified August 14, 2015, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=mysticriver.htm>; “The Departed,” *Box Office Mojo*, last modified August 14, 2015, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=departed.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> “Ted,” *Box Office Mojo*, last modified August 15, 2015, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=ted.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> “Good Will Hunting,” *Box Office Mojo*, last modified August 15, 2015, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=goodwillhunting.htm>.; “Good Will Hunting,” *IMDb*, last modified August 18, 2015, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119217/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119217/?ref_=nv_sr_1).

*Boston Public* (2000-2004), *Boston Legal* (2004-2008), *Fringe* (2008-2013), *Rizzoli & Isles* (2010-2016), and *Ray Donovan* (2013-present), among others, have all had extended series runs since the premiere and the success of *Good Will Hunting*. Anecdotally, then, it would seem as though *Good Will Hunting* allowed for the American film and television markets to be inundated with products focused on Boston and New England. Further, as comedy troupes have begun to produce short parody trailers for internet audiences that highlight what is perceived to be a sameness in all of these films and television shows, it now appears as if the film and television markets have almost become saturated with these types of films and television series.

## **2. THESIS FILMOGRAPHY**

Yet, it is appropriate to wonder if the American film industry developed an appetite and a desire to represent the Boston and New England region seemingly overnight, especially since the focus on the region since 1997 has noticeably, or at least anecdotally, increased in American audiovisual culture. Indeed, the foundation for this thesis was initially based upon the incidental noticing of the increased visibility of Boston and New England in audiovisual media in the twenty-first century, and the sense that many of these films had a certain sameness about their characters and narratives. Although a focus on this particular set of films could have produced some illuminating insight, its scope would have been far too narrow to deduce anything more meaningful than the recognition of recent trends in American film production. As a result, I then proceeded to investigate whether or not the American film industries have had a longer, enduring preoccupation with the area as a filmic subject. In fact, the region, its people, and their identity have been a consistently recurring theme throughout the history of the American film industry. Consequently, this thesis aims to explore the longer history of the American film industry and its focus on Boston, New England, and its people in order to interrogate the ways in which the space and its people have been imagined in relation to a larger, national, American identity.

The two primary databases used to conduct this research were the film catalog of the American Film Institute, and the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). By searching through location-specific metadata tags in both databases,<sup>5</sup> I compiled a filmography of four hundred and eighty, and a further forty-eight television series.

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<sup>5</sup> Specifically, this thesis searched for the metadata tags: “Connecticut,” “Maine,” “Massachusetts,” “New Hampshire,” “Rhode Island,” “Vermont” (the names of all six New England states), “Boston,” “Bostonian,” “New England, and “New Englander.”

This filmography begins in 1914, with the film *Yellow Traffic*, as this is the first feature length film produced by the American film industry that focuses on the region and its people. In order to more narrowly focus the examined materials, and in order to prevent this filmography from becoming too unwieldy, I set strict parameters when searching through both databases. Although searching through these metadata tags returns results that include audiovisual materials beyond what may be traditionally understood as a “film” or a “movie”—such as telefilms, documentaries, and individual television episodes set within the region that are part of a series that is normally set elsewhere—I focus only on American produced and released feature films that specifically take the region or its people for their subject, as well as on American television series that are normally set in or take the region and its people for their subject. These strict parameters on what types of audiovisual material would be included in the filmography were established for several reasons. First, as the primary thrust of this thesis is to explore the imagined filmic identity of Boston and New England in relation to an American national identity, it makes sense to only consider American films and television productions, rather than productions by other national film industries. This parameter has been set because American produced films are more likely to be circulated within the United States and to be viewed by American audiences, and how Americans imagine and tell stories about themselves and their communities is the primary point of study under consideration here. In this way, I can focus on and explore the ways in which the filmic identity of Boston and New England functions within the context of a national American identity, and within the nation-state of the United States.

Second, I only include feature length films that received a theatrical release, rather than documentaries or telefilms, because of their ability to more fully penetrate the cultural consciousness of American film audiences. That is, while documentaries, telefilms, and other audiovisual materials are important cultural documents in imagining filmic identities, the high visibility of theatrically released feature length films, as indicated by box office receipts, means that they are the primary ways in which American film audiences consume audiovisual material. Finally, this filmography is limited to whole television series that are entirely set in or focus on Boston, New England, and its people. As a result, this eliminates single television episodes from series that are not normally set in or focus on the region and its people, as these episodes may serve more of a purpose as a special attraction, and are therefore not invested in an ongoing process of imagining a regional filmic identity.

By cataloging all the feature length films and the television series that were returned by the metadata tag search, I compiled a thorough, if not a complete, list of Boston and New England films that spans more than a century of American cinema and television history, and continues to expand. As a result, several different trends are identified in the filmography that indicate a number of ways in which the American film industry imagines a filmic identity of Boston and New England. Breaking down the filmography into several different component parts allows for the analysis of several different moments throughout film history where Boston and New England has been imagined by the American film industry. This, consequently, provides a structure where each chapter focuses on one of these specific moments of the filmic imagining of New England, and in this way, the changing image of New Englanders and Bostonians in American audiovisual culture can be tracked. Further, with the important exception of the one previously mentioned example (*Good Will Hunting*), the films under consideration in each chapter have been chosen at random in order to ensure a representative analysis of this changing filmic identity, and to avoid any possibility of confirmation bias when trying to track this filmic identity.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The filmic analysis included in this thesis is the result of a close reading of a representative selection of the films included in the constructed filmography. I have chosen to engage in a close reading and a textual analysis of these films because, as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson state in their indispensable *Film Art: An Introduction* (2008), “Films are *designed* to have effects on viewers.”<sup>6</sup> Based upon this reasonable assertion, and upon my main argument that the films under analysis are affecting and influencing cultural imagining, it is my position that closely reading and examining the text of these films allows for a full and rich analysis. Practically, the close textual readings of these films stems from an analysis of not only the filmic narrative and the character dialogue, but also from the *mise-en-scène*—the setting; the costuming and makeup; the lighting; and the staging, movement, and performance of the characters—which, “...governs not only *what* we see but *when* we see it, and for how long.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, “...many of our most sharply etched memories of the cinema turn

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<sup>6</sup> David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 2. Original emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 150. Original emphasis.

out to center on mise-en-scene [sic].”<sup>8</sup> Further, this textual analysis also places the constructed and the presented filmic identities that are observed within a larger context of national social and cultural understanding. It is important to do this because, “As a fully matured art, film is no longer a separate enterprise but an integrated pattern in the warp and woof of our culture.”<sup>9</sup> That is, because I explore the ways in which American audiovisual culture imagines a regional identity, it is crucial to situate the films under consideration within a broader social and historical context, and to understand the ways in which these filmic images and identities circulate throughout American audiovisual culture. Thus, in order to explore the effect that these filmic identities and images have on the national imagination, if any at all, my analysis “...seeks to understand the relationships between the texts of popular culture and their audiences....”<sup>10</sup> From this reading and analysis, I argue that American audiovisual media imagines and constructs a filmic identity for Boston, New England, and its people that exists as a distinct, and perhaps not-American, filmic identity against which American film audiences can negotiate and understand a larger, national American identity. That is, the constructed and imagined otherness of filmic New England, which will be explored in more depth in later chapters, arises not from a deliberate project of exclusion, but rather through the positioning of filmic Boston and New England as a distinctive foil against which an American identity can be constructed. This, however, results in creating and imagining an identity for filmic Boston and New England that then seems to exist apart from a larger, national American identity.

With this filmic analysis in hand as evidence of the ways in which the American film industry imagines an other identity of filmic Boston and New England, I then apply a theoretical framework to this analysis in order to present an argument that this observed regional identity is actually constructed. The first chapter of this thesis discusses the theoretical approaches that are applied to the filmic analysis in more depth. Primarily, this relies upon theories of nationalism and national identity, and how these concepts are constructed both spatially and temporally. Although the first chapter of this thesis will explore these concepts in more detail, I will argue that American audiovisual culture has imagined an identity of filmic New England through its failure to establish an imageability of the physical geography of the (filmic) region, which then forces the imageability of the region to be inscribed upon the bodies of certain character

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>9</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, and Multimedia; Language, History, Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York, NY, USA: Oxford University Press, 2000), 424.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 424.

who, within the narratives of these pieces of media, are often shown to be specifically other and distinct from a larger, national American identity. In the latter part of the filmography, however, which will be explored in the final two chapters, this otherness becomes constructed through the establishment of a real-but-imagined thirdspace of the region that is being represented in these films, as local Boston and New England audiences begin to recognize an experientially authentic version of their region and lives on film. That is, these latter films focus on a unique regional distinctiveness that has a basis in reality, but is in fact imagined because of the previously established otherness of the filmic region.

Finally, due to the large number of films and television series that meet the parameters for inclusion in the filmography, and which thus guide this research and analysis, it would not be possible to include even a brief discussion of all of the included titles. As a result, I structure my analysis around a representative sample of films that best highlight the various ways that Boston and New England have been filmically imagined during each moment of study. With the exception of the fourth chapter, which focuses almost exclusively only a single film, *Good Will Hunting*, each chapter analyzes a group of films in order to understand how the filmic identity of Boston, New England, and its people was being constructed, imagined, and presented by the American audiovisual culture. Rather than focusing on a single film or a single instance of this filmic identity from each other moment under consideration, I examine this identity over the course of several films in order to demonstrate that the process of imagining it as other is continual and continuing. It is because of this continual and continuing imagining of the filmic New England identity that this identity has been imagined as other and separate from a larger, national American identity.

#### **4. KEY TERMS**

Before continuing further, several key terms and concepts that appear throughout should be more clearly defined. It is important to concretely define the ways that I will use these terms in order to prevent confusion or slippage, as several of these terms can be understood or applied in different ways than I use and intend them.

Primarily, I would like to clarify the usage of the word “nation” and the decision to use “Boston” and “New England” as somewhat interchangeable terms. It is crucial to note that the New England region does not exist, nor has it ever existed, as a sovereign nation-state. Rather, the region remains fully integrated and functioning as six separate

states within the federal structure of the larger nation-state of the United States. As a result, I have chosen to not use the term “nation” when referring to filmic Boston and New England in order to avoid accidentally making the argument that the region exists as a sovereign nation-state, when that is plainly not the case. Instead, the rather clunky phrasing, and several variants thereof, of arguing that filmic Boston and New England exists as “the type of imagined community that is analogous to the nation” has been adopted from Benedict Anderson and his *Imagined Communities* (first published 1983, revised edition 2006). As the analysis undertaken involves the imagining of a (filmic) community and the way in which it is defined against (or is used to define) a larger, separate, national identity, theoretical frameworks interrogation nationalism and the nation are necessary to perform this analysis, though care has been taken to avoid the term “nation.”

Further, in order to avoid rote repetition, I also occasionally use Boston and New England, and their demonyms, Bostonian and New Englander, as interchangeable terms for each other. This decision has been made from the understanding that if it the argument to be made that the region of New England exists as a filmic imagined community, then the city of Boston—the economic, social, and cultural hub of the region—can necessarily be understood as serving the role of a kind of capital city. In this way, as one can use “Washington” as a semaphore when talking about the United States, I similarly use Boston for New England, and New England for Boston, on occasion. It is important to further clarify the decision to utilize these terms interchangeably (and their demonyms, “Bostonian” and “New Englander”) because much of the early part of the thesis focuses on an identity that oscillates between being rooted geographically in the city of Boston and one that is representative of the more general region. It is not until the latter part of this thesis that the filmography makes a sudden turn to focus on the urban city of Boston, and begins to elide more general regional representations in favor of a specific urban identity. Yet, I argue that the urban focus in the latter part follows directly and logically from the earlier imagined identity that moved fluidly between a less specifically defined New England and the specific urban landscape of Boston.

A second term that must be clarified is the use of “the American film industry” in its discussions of who (or what) is imagining of this filmic identity of Boston and New England. The phrases “the American film industry” and “American audiovisual culture” have been adopted in order to avoid causing confusion between the actual industry that produces and screens these films for American film audiences, and the

term “Hollywood,” which has certain received and perceived understandings and connotations. When used in discourse, “Hollywood” signifies more than just a location in California where movies are produced, as it can imply “...a distinct mode of film practice with its own cinematic style and industrial conditions of existence.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, “...the Hollywood mode of film practice constitutes an integral system, including persons and groups but also rules, films machinery, documents, institutions, work processes, and theoretical concepts.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, I avoid using “Hollywood” when referring to the overarching industry and its production mechanisms throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, and instead relies on the unfortunately repetitive phrase “American film industry” and “American audiovisual culture” to avoid any unnecessary confusion.

## **5. THESIS OUTLINE**

The first chapter of the thesis presents a discussion of the various theoretical frameworks that have informed the analysis and the viewing of the materials located in the filmography. Principally, this first chapter examines and defines several theoretical girders that inform the exploration of filmic Boston and New England as a type of imagined community that could be analogous to the nation. One of the principal ways that the American film industry has imagined Boston is through the negotiation and construction of it spatially, in both narrative and imagined space. This results in the creation of a new, liminal space of the region that is simultaneously both real and imagined. In turn, this allows American film audiences to consider New England and its people as existing in both space and across time in relation to their specific New England-ness, rather than as part of a larger, American whole. Specifically, this chapter will examine concepts such as “imageability,” as defined by Kevin Lynch in his *The Image of the City* (1960), and “thirdspace,” as defined by Edward Soja in his book of the same name (1996), in an attempt to understand how filmic New England has been imagined both as a space, as well as in space. This chapter then pivots to finish with an analysis of the concept of “imagined communities,” as defined by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities*, in an attempt to formulate a definition of the nation and of national identity that can then be consistently applied throughout the body of the thesis.

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<sup>11</sup> David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), xvi.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.



Yet, because the New England region does not meet any standard definition of what a nation is, I am immediately confronted with the potentially insurmountable problem of arguing that the American film industry has imagined, created, and presented a “national” identity for a non-autonomous region that is not a nation at all. In order to fully explore what, precisely, I will be arguing about this constructed filmic identity of Boston and New England, this first chapter chooses to examine the work of Benedict Anderson from both his *Imagined Communities* and his *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (first published 1998, paperback edition 2000), in which he attempts to trace the rise and the creation of nationalism and national identity. In order to engage in his own analysis of the history of nationalism, Anderson begins by defining the nation, when he proposes that the nation is “...an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>13</sup> It is from this definition of the nation that the term “imagined community” arises, which can then be broadened and expanded to be applied more usefully when studying regions and communities that do not quite rise to the level of the traditional idea of the nation-state, but do satisfy the way that Anderson theorizes the idea of the nation. Because, “The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of a nation”,<sup>14</sup> I adopt the term “imagined community” when discussing Boston, New England, and its people, specifically in relation to the way that it has been (re)presented in American audiovisual culture.

This thesis is roughly organized in chronological order, both in terms of the historical timeline of the events depicted in films and in terms of the order in which these films were produced. I begin by examining a group of films that focus on characters who are witches, either during the time of the Salem Witch Trials or during a period contemporaneous with the release of the film (Though the films in this section are not necessarily discussed in the chronology in which they were made, the events they depict are chronologically first in an historical timeline of events). The first identified film in the larger filmography of this thesis, *The Yellow Traffic*, about a New England ship captain and an immoral merchant, was released in 1914, yet, only two years later in 1916, the American film industry shifts its focus away from tales of New England seafaring and instead began to focus on one of the most notorious moments in the early post-contact history of the region, the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 and 1693, in

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<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 2006), 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

which twenty people were accused, tried, and executed for being witches. The appropriately titled *Witchcraft* (1916) establishes an image and an identity for New Englanders that the American film industry then seizes upon and continually repeats in many subsequent witch and horror films set in the region.

These witch films, which have remained a constant film subject throughout the production history of American audiovisual culture, primarily imagine the New Englander as a blonde woman who lacks agency and who exists on the margins of her community, who is confined to a geographically specific region that is then stripped of any sense of place, and thus deprived of a claim to being part of a broader American landscape. Indeed, this characteristic otherness of filmic New England first emerges chronologically in these witch films, and continues as a thematic element throughout the focus of the American film industry on the region and its people. Further, because of the geographic rootedness of the Salem Witch Trials, these filmic New England witches are bound to a specific area, which allows American film audiences to associate the visual otherness of these women as also being indicative of their geographic origin. By so vividly and publicly highlighting her otherness, and then binding that otherness to a place that is marked as not-American, this group of witch films imagine New England and its citizens as occupying a place that exists somewhere outside the boundaries of traditional conceptions of the American nation and of an American identity.

After having examined the initial imaginings of New England otherness in the American film industry, the third chapter surveys a group of films produced and released in the 1950s and the 1960s. In this group of films, American film audiences watch the adventures of New Englander characters as they leave their traditional and geographically specific homes, and then travel abroad, throughout the United States and the world. Utilizing the iconography of New Englander otherness as a base template, these films further imagine this group of characters as other by placing their constructed identity in direct contrast to non-geographically specific Americans. This group of films constructs an identity for Bostonians and New Englanders that is specifically other by presenting these characters with certain traits that can only be read as distinctly not-American within the landscape of these films. This most clearly happens through the direct dialogic mention of the Irish ethnicity of these New England women. Most often, the male, American characters of these films will accuse the New England women of having an “Irish temper.” Racializing the New Englanders in this way ties that New England identity to a distinct nation that is specifically not-American.

In addition to these New Englanders being specifically geographically defined by other Americans through filmic dialogue, rather than being allowed to simply exist as someone from an area of the United States, these films also present their New England characters as being inheritors of a large family fortune. This possession of inherited wealth codes the New England characters in two ways. First, it asks viewers to understand this wealth as belonging to a period in time before the historical founding of the United States, similar to the connection of the Salem Witch Trials to that pre-history. Second, casting these characters as having inherited their fortunes, rather than having worked to create it for themselves, deprives these New Englanders of access to a critical part of the creation myth of American identities, specifically the idea that hard work and self-reliance will allow any American to pull themselves up to wealth and respectability. In both of these ways, this group of films presents its Bostonian and New England characters as being fundamentally separate from an American identity, and thus as existing within a separate, not-American community. These films also highlight the otherness and not-American-ness of these characters through either direct dialogic mention or narrative circumstance of the Irish ethnic identity of the New Englanders, which serves to add further separation between New Englanders and an American identity as these New England characters are presented as being definitively linked to a separate, sovereign nation. Finally, this group of films utilizes several instances of aggressive and unwanted sexual advances by male, American characters upon the female New Englanders to demonstrate that these films imagine New England to be analogous to an internal colony, there to serve the wants and the desires of the metropole (the larger American national identity). The effect of this othering of New England in direct contrast to non-geographically specific Americans is that it allows American film audiences to imagine a negative set of characteristics of what an American identity is not, specifically not one from New England, and to thus begin a process of negotiating what an American identity could be.

Although Boston and New England remained a visible presence in audiovisual media for American audiences during the years after the end of the “abroad films” cycle, the release of *Good Will Hunting* in 1997 marks both a breakthrough and a turning point in the imagining of the region and its people in American audiovisual culture. The fourth chapter of this thesis focuses exclusively on this film and on the ways in which it redefines the imagined identity of Boston and New England. Prior to the release of *Good Will Hunting*, the identity of New England was primarily imagined for the people of the region as other by the American film industry. Yet, the native

Bostonian writers and stars of *Good Will Hunting* sought to produce a film with a version of Boston and its people that they inherently knew to be accurate and authentic. And indeed, much of the pre-release press dedicated to the film emphasized this authenticity as both Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, the native son writers and stars of the film, often stated their desire for authenticity very publicly, as discussed at the beginning of this introduction. This film marks a watershed moment in the filmic imagining of Boston and New England because, instead of asking non-local film audiences to understand this identity as other and as contrary to their own American identity, *Good Will Hunting* utilizes its experiential authenticity to allow for native Bostonians and New Englanders to understand the specific idiosyncrasies of their own otherness. I have defined “experiential authenticity” as the understanding or the conception that locals have of the place in which they ordinarily live their lives that is neither time-limited nor mediated, and that is grounded in their daily experience of that place. This self-definition of otherness in *Good Will Hunting*, then, allows local film audiences to imagine themselves as part of a deep, horizontal comradeship with others who speak and act similarly, which Anderson believes is crucial to the formation of the imagined community. More, *Good Will Hunting* differs from earlier films as well because it does not present this identity as other in comparison to something else.

*Good Will Hunting* manifests its experiential authenticity through its radical decision to shoot the entire film in the distinctive Boston accent, something that had essentially never been heard on American film screens before. Crucially, this decision to present Bostonians in such a way would make them less intelligible to non-native viewers, and thus further exacerbate the imagining of otherness in the minds of those film audiences, but would also allow local film audiences to situate this film within a landscape and a soundscape that very nearly matches the one that they would experience on a daily basis. This creation and presentation of an experiential authenticity that local Bostonians recognize creates an opportunity for those local viewers to imagine the community that they share with other local Bostonians, even though they, “...will never know most of their fellow-members [sic], meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>15</sup> *Good Will Hunting* further redefines this imagined identity of Bostonians because it shifts the gender of its point-of-view characters and its protagonists from female to male. Previously, the American film industry had imagined Bostonians and New Englanders to be almost exclusively blonde and female. Though the eponymous Will

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 6.

Hunting maintains the archetype of New England blond(e)ness, or at least of lighter hair, the film continues to strip away components of the imagined identity in its redefinition by resituating certain elements from that previously established filmic identity within the authentic experience of both the writers and stars, and of the local film audiences. Specifically, as with previous films, *Good Will Hunting* embraces the sociological reality of the region by foregrounding the Irish ethnicity of its characters, yet also treats this ethnic identity as something that is neither all encompassing, nor definitional, nor other.

Previously, the American film industry had used Irishness as a cudgel to other its New England characters, as this ethnic identity was consistently flagged up in both dialogue and narrative as a characteristic that was definitional and determinative, as well as not-American. *Good Will Hunting*, however, presents an experientially authentic version of Irishness in Boston where those who possess the identity do not live in a vacuum without space for separate ethnicities, nor are they ruled by this specific ethnic identity. Rather, the Irishness of *Good Will Hunting* merely exists as one possible ethnic identity among others, and as something that has very little, if any at all, bearing on the ways in which these characters live their lives or function on a daily basis. More importantly, this Irishness is never highlighted, either as a marker of otherness or as a symbol of membership in the imagined community of filmic Boston. Because the Irishness of *Good Will Hunting* exists as a background feature for these characters, local film audiences can conceive of their deep, horizontal comradeship in the imagined community of filmic Boston through an accurate representation that they know to be experientially authentic, rather than through a number of arbitrary signals and markers defined and chosen by outsiders.

Throughout the history of the American film industry, Boston, New England, and its people have been consistently used as film subjects. The primary representation of the region and its people on film has been to imagine its identity as being other and separate from a larger, national American identity. Although the release of *Good Will Hunting* in 1997 importantly shifted the primary imagined identity of the region to one that more accurately resembled the experiential authenticity of local and native New Englanders, it still allowed for American film audiences to imagine the region as specifically other. Thus, because of a long tradition within the American film industry of imagining and (re)presenting Boston, New England, and its people as other, filmic Boston and New England functions as the type of imagined community that is analogous to the nation.

## **6. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

As the compiled filmography demonstrates, Boston, New England, and its people have been an enduring focus of the American film industry throughout its history. This consistent focus on a particular regional identity throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries in American audiovisual culture has resulted in the creation of a filmic identity and imagined community of New England. Yet, despite this large corpus of films with such a specific focus, there exists very little scholarship on these films or television series as a collective whole. What scholarship does exist focuses narrowly on either individual films or television shows, or on individual moments, and does not account for the broader historical imagining of the American film industry, nor does it necessarily analyze the ways in which these materials are constructing a regional New England identity in relation to a national American one. This thesis, then, is an attempt to interrogate the changing ways in which filmic New England has been represented in American audiovisual culture throughout the course of American film history. Doing so potentially illuminates the ways in which American culture has attempted to understand its own national identity, and its focus on the distinct and other nature of a specific region within that nation has the effect of seemingly forcing that region out of these larger discussions of national identity. Filmic Boston and New England, then, while seemingly a part of a project to negotiate American identity, ends up existing in a liminal, not-American state and is imagined as an other community. As a result, I argue that it is possible to usefully examine regional filmic identities through the rubric of nationalism and national identity.

The concept of the imagined community functioning as analogously to the nation can be, and has been, applied to non-independent or non-autonomous national communities, such as Scotland, as their clearly expressed political desires to become a nation allows them to easily fit into the definition of the imagined community. Whereas Boston and New England have no specific claims to independent nationhood, have not expressed a political desire to achieve nationhood, and are fully functioning within the nation-state of the United States and the culture of the American nation, the application of those theories to this particular case study represents an original contribution to this field of study.

For Anderson, the primary way in which the type of community that is analogous to the nation is imagined happens through print media, specifically through the novel and the daily newspaper. My analysis takes the ideas of Anderson, who

focuses more on the communities that had legitimate claims to national status, and applies them to a sub-national region and the ways in which audiovisual media has both imagined that community, and how audiovisual media has allowed that community to imagine itself. Further, I combine the medium specific usage of the idea of the imagined community with several concepts from the field of cultural geography in an attempt to more usefully analyze the ways in which communities can be imagined. That is, the analysis within later chapters of this thesis attempt to situate the filmic representations of Boston and New England within an understanding of the concept of the imagined community and its focus on temporality by examining the ways that this filmic community has been represented spatially. Specifically, I examine the imageability and the thirdspace of filmic Boston and New England as a way to imagine representations of a community. Thus, I attempt to further push the understanding of how communities can be and are imagined through its spatial and temporal analysis of the filmic representations of a sub-national American community.

## **7. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Before proceeding with the body of this thesis, I would like to pause briefly to make a short autobiographical note. Having been both born and raised in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts, I have a deep, personal connection to the subject matter of this thesis. This personal connection has proven to be both a strength and a weakness in the writing of this thesis. One result of having grown up in a place with such a distinct and a unique regional identity, in a place that has its own “flavor,” is that I have been able to apply my own local knowledge to help enhance the academic study of the ways in which Boston and New England have been imagined on film. Primarily, this local knowledge has proven itself to be most useful in being able to discuss and to analyze the local accent and its idiosyncrasies, something that would perhaps be closed off to non-local scholars. My connection to New England, however, has also biased my analysis of the constructed filmic identity, as it would be impossible for me to be completely objective in examining the identity of the region when, as a local, there are things about it that, to borrow from Renan, I “doit avoir oublié.” Indeed, I have a vivid memory of the first time that I encountered the otherness of this New England identity, and the ways that other Americans viewed the region as other, when, as a young child on a family vacation to Florida, a stranger jokingly exaggerated the local accent in which myself and my family speaks. Before that moment, I had yet not realized that we

sounded differently from other Americans. It is this kind of moment, being forced to recognize and to confront a heretofore unknown otherness, that allowed me to undertake the writing of this thesis and to apply the idea of the imagined community in a unique and medium-specific way, but that also biases some of my writing and analysis, such that it may at times appear to be polemical. Cognizant of my own personal investment in the subject matter, I endeavored to be as objective as possible in my analysis while also exploiting my unique position as a local to enrich that same analysis.





## **“NATIONS MAY BE IMAGINED, BUT THEY ARE NOT ‘IMAGINARY’ OR ENTIRELY ‘FABRICATED’”: HISTORY, FILM, AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter identifies, defines, and explains the major theoretical frameworks that support the overall argument of the thesis. The first section of this chapter begins by first exploring notions of space, and how those ideas of space can relate to both audiovisual media and to representations of collective identities in audiovisual media more generally. These ideas and concepts are foregrounded by examining them first because they provide a crucial foundation for the analysis of how audiovisual media (re)presents regional space to its viewers, and, specifically in the context of this thesis, how American audiovisual media has asked its audiences to understand and imagine New England as a filmic community. Primarily, this section explores the varying ways in which ideas of space, something that is itself mediated, negotiated, and imagined, inform or help to create collective representational identities. This section begins by attempting to trace the seemingly fluid and indefinable concept of space, and ends by stating the way in which this idea will inform the later filmic analysis. Next, the section then pivots towards a more specific aspect of the concept of space, “thirdspace,” in an attempt to interrogate the interconnection between the reality of the region under study and its representation on film. Finally, this section of the chapter ends with a discussion of a previous case study of the geography and the regional planning of the same urban region that this thesis utilizes, and analyzes the concept of “imageability” in relation to understanding urban and regional spaces.

The following section of this chapter then focuses on themes of temporality. Primarily, this section will look at the notions of historiography and national narrative, and examines the ways in which various historical textbooks explain their historiography. It is the writing of historiography and national narrative that is crucial

to the creation of imageability, the vividness and clarity of a place that allows one to create a stable and memorable mental image of that place, and of thirdspace, the real-but-imagined space of an imageable space, and thus to the imagining of filmic communities. That is, the historiography and national narrative constructed or told about a region influences the imageability of that region in such a way that people are able to create and to hold a solid mental image of that region. The interconnectedness of these concepts then combines to erect a real-and-imagined thirdspace of this region. Next, this section surveys how “mimicry,” as argued by Homi Bhabha in his article “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” can be used as a powerful tool by the colonizer in the colonial situation in order to highlight the othered identity of the colonized, and thus reinforce that othered and colonized status. Yet, it is this forced production of mimicry that reinforces the concepts of imageability and thirdspace, as mimicry helps to metastasize mediated and imagined representations of communities into fixed images, and thus creates the simultaneous real-and-imaginary images and understandings of these communities in the minds of audiences. It is important to note, however, that while Bhabha focuses his interrogation of mimicry on its effect on colonial and colonized spaces, (filmic) New England is definitively not a colonized space. His work on the effects of colonialism nonetheless provide a useful frame in which one can consider how the American film industry has approached spaces and people it considers other, though they may not necessarily be colonized spaces.

In the final section, this chapter turns towards a foundational text in both studies of nationalism and studies of national cinema, *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson. This text reorients ideas of the nation and how it is understood and is constructed in both time and space. Importantly, I argue that the situating and representation of communities, and specifically filmic New England, in space is as important to their imagining as understanding them temporally. This argument goes beyond identifying hard geographic boundaries, as Anderson believes that these imagined communities are understood as inherently limited by and in space, and instead asserts that the representation of the space and place of these communities effectively fixes their imageability and iconography so that they can be understood through and across time as a community. This section begins with an overview of the way in which *Imagined Communities* has been utilized in various ways in the field of film studies since its publication, and considers its foundational importance to the field. Next, this section turns to the text itself and attempts to provide a reasonable working definition

for of what is meant by the term “imagined community,” and how that term is then applied to the filmically imagined Boston and New England.

## **2. SPACE AND REPRESENTATION**

As this thesis focuses on a geographically specific region within a larger, established, and internationally recognized nation-state, it is natural that an examination of spatiality is one of the theoretical frameworks through which I explore the imaging and imagining of this region in American audiovisual media. That is, I analyze both the ways in which New England has been represented on film and in audiovisual media, and the connection of that representation to the ways in which the region exists as an imaginary filmic construct separate from larger imaginings of a national, American identity and community. The purpose of this section is to, first, begin by defining the two terms “place” and “space,” and to provide an overview of how these terms have been used in general academic discourse, and how they will be used within the body of this thesis. Further, this section analyzes alternative concepts of space and their role in the formation of the collective identities of imagined communities, specifically the concept of “thirdspace,” as presented by Edward Soja. Finally, this section will interrogate a (non-recent) case-study of the same urban region (the city of Boston, Massachusetts) on which this thesis focuses. This specific case study of Boston, Massachusetts, by Kevin Lynch in his *The Image of the City* (1960), demonstrates the viability of these concepts both in this particular regional case-study, and also as an important lens through which one can analyze broader concepts of collective identities and their representational images in audiovisual media.

### ***2.1 Towards an Understanding of Space***

In 1986, the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, noted the difference between the nineteenth century and what he called “the present epoch.” For Foucault, “The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history...”<sup>16</sup> while “The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space.”<sup>17</sup> Foucault thus identifies a shift away from history, which is necessarily focused on temporality and events within time, and towards a focus on space and place. Yet, Foucault also notes that, “We are in an epoch of simultaneity....”<sup>18</sup> As we are now in an “epoch of simultaneity,” then, it is

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<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

perhaps no longer possible to focus solely on either space or temporality, but one must rather focus on the interconnectedness of these two concepts, and the ways in which function together and influence each other at the same time. It is with this sense of simultaneity that the imagined community of filmic New England, as a construction and a representation that exists in both time and space is examined.

Writing in the introduction to their edited volume, titled *Thinking Space* (2000), Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift immediately identify a difficult and persistent problem with the concept of space, and its deployment in various academic disciplines. For them, the notion of space is a particularly thorny issue because it "...is the everywhere of modern thought. ... It is an all-purpose nostrum to be applied whenever things look sticky. ... It is flexibility as explanation: a term ready and waiting in the wings to perform that song-and-dance act one more time."<sup>19</sup> For them, then, the notion of space seems to be a fluid and indefinable concept that is often deployed as a parlor trick at which writers can gesture in order to find their way out of a rhetorical corner. Crang and Thrift then proceed to list the various ways in which different disciplines deploy and define space, each of which are related, but seem to have an asymptotic relationship to each other, in that each definition approaches a similarity to the other, though their definitions and uses never quite meet and overlap in the same meaning. Thus, the goal of their volume is to provide an opportunity for an exploration of the different ways in which space is used across academia. Yet, it would be impossible to do so without even a basic understanding of what, precisely, is meant by the term "space," even if it is only "...a representational strategy",<sup>20</sup> as Crang and Thrift note.

The authors of the *Oxford Dictionary of Human Geography* provide a concrete definition of the term "space," which they define as "The geometric container in which life takes place and matter exists."<sup>21</sup> Although this understanding of space is at once too specific and too nebulous—as it allows for comprehension of what a space is (somewhere where life takes place and matter exists), but does not explain what a "geographic container" is, or what constitutes "life," or even what is meant by "takes place"—it is a useful starting point in an understanding of space. It is, therefore, perhaps necessary to build a definition, or at least try to create some kind of

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<sup>19</sup> Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, "Introduction," in *Thinking Space*, ed. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

<sup>21</sup> Noel Castree, Rob Kitchin, and Alisdair Rogers, "Space," In *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1744>.

understanding, of “space” from the varied and competing meanings and definitions of the term, and how this term will be specifically utilized in relation to audiovisual media and the filmic regional identities of the imagined community under study.

Early in her book *For Space* (2005), Doreen Massey makes three propositions for approaches to the concept of space. Firstly, she proposes that space is “...the produce of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny.”<sup>22</sup> By this, Massey asserts that space does not, and cannot, exist in a vacuum. Rather, for Massey, space directly results from the continually occurring, quotidian social relations that happen at all times on levels of importance. As a result of this first proposition, Massey secondly proposes that space is “...the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality...”<sup>23</sup> Or, that is, because space results from social interaction, which can never be one sided, space is also necessarily plural and multifaceted. This, then, means that space cannot have a fixed truth to it, as each side of these social interactions will experience and understand the created space in different ways. Space, therefore, as Massey proposes thirdly and most importantly, is “...always under construction.”<sup>24</sup> It is these three propositions, taken together, that inform the way that I attempt to interrogate space and its role in imagining communities in audiovisual media. Specifically, the interaction between film production and audience consumption functions as a social interaction in which the region of New England is (re)presented as a space constantly being negotiated and constructed within this social interaction.

I argue that number examples of audiovisual media under examination for the specific case study of this thesis exist as the types of social actors that would negotiate and construct space, not just through their interactions with each other, but also through the social interactions that occur as a result of their being viewed and consumed. For example, later chapters will examine how the American film industry deploys a specific, iconographically fixed image of a filmic New Englander (wealthy, blonde, and female) that serves as an important reference point for the imageability of filmic New England. That is, American audiovisual media works to make not the place of filmic New England imageable, but, rather, inscribes that imageability upon the iconographically fixed image of the bodies of filmic New England characters so that film audiences are more easily able to negotiate questions of American national identity.

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<sup>22</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2005), 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Because the audiovisual media here focuses on a specific place, this media must necessarily also construct the space of that place. More importantly, though, the films under consideration here construct and negotiate a space across the linear timeline of American history with a focus on a regional identity. The result of this negotiation of space across time is the imagining of the (fictional) social actors in this space as a somewhat separate community within a larger American identity. Or, rather, the construction of a separately imagined community within the larger national, American identity against which American audiences can understand their own American identities.

## **2.2 *Thirdspace***

It is, however, important to momentarily step back from abstract discussions of space in audiovisual media to forthrightly reiterate what it is, precisely, that I propose to analyze. While interrogations of how space is understood or how it is theoretically negotiated are useful in establishing how I plan to undertake my own examinations, it is an incontrovertible fact that the region of New England and the city of Boston, Massachusetts are both very real places, which inhabit very real spaces, and are home to very real people and social actors. In addition to the physical reality of both New England and Boston, it is also important to note that the medium specificity of audiovisual media requires indexical recording of real, physical spaces and places, often in service of fictional narratives. Yet, my analysis focuses on non-documentary audiovisual media, and in fact argues that this media then in turn further imagines the space and the community and the social actors of New England, thus creating a third degree separation from reality, albeit as a space that is both real and simultaneously imagined, thus seemingly situating it as a real-but-imagined space. Thus, it is perhaps instructive to here turn to the writings of Edward Soja in order to determine the relationship between “real” New England, “filmic” New England, and the resulting negotiated space that emerges from the meeting of these two entities.

In an attempt to reconcile the negotiated relationship of spatiality and reality to its imagined representations, Edward Soja proposes the use and the idea of the term “thirdspace.” He writes that, “*Thirdspace* too can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the ‘real’ material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality

through ‘imagined’ representations of spatiality.”<sup>25</sup> Boiling down the constituent parts of his thesis, Soja seems to be arguing that the negotiation of space between the real world of daily life (the firstspace) and the representations of that space (secondspace, which in this thesis mean the fictional images and narratives that appear in audiovisual media) combine to create thirdspace, which is “... a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency.”<sup>26</sup>

It is this idea of the third perspective of “real-and-imagined” that can perhaps be most usefully applied to understanding how American audiovisual media imagines the space of filmic New England and its separate regional identity. Real events of history (the Salem Witch Trials, which come under consideration in the following chapter) and authenticity of both language and space (which will be examined in later chapters) inform the filmic imagined space of Boston. The interaction and collision of these two things in turn creates the thirdspace of real-and-imagined Boston and New England in, for example, the film *Good Will Hunting* (1997), where much of the critical focus is on its authenticity, and young men from the area describe acting out scenarios that are eerily similar to those they see on screen.<sup>27</sup> It is this thirdspace of real-and-imagined that filmic Boston and New England, then, that comes to exist as both a part of but separate from other images and understandings of (perhaps filmic) American identities. Firstspace, real New England was understood or imagined in secondspace as being wholly different from American identities such that it was used as a way to negotiate American-ness by being a stand-in for not-American-ness.

Further, it may also be useful to adopt this idea of thirdspace when discussing the ideas of memory and history with which these pieces of audiovisual media engage. That is, where the firstspace of history combines with the secondspace of imagined filmic New England to create the thirdspace of reactions to it, discussions (and worthiness) of authenticity, and the new, general understanding of filmic Boston and New England and its real counterpart being indivisible. I, then, will aim to integrate the idea of space, and specifically thirdspace, with an analysis of the ways in which these pieces of media function in and as a result of time.

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<sup>25</sup> Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell, 1996), 6. Original emphasis.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell, 2000), 11.

<sup>27</sup> Brian MacQuarrie, “Southie Sees Itself,” *Boston Globe*, December 27, 1997.



### 2.3 *The Image of the City*

With both of these key concepts, and their role in this thesis, having been introduced, and which will be further examined in later case studies, now it would be instructive to turn to a prior case study conducted on the urban image of the same region as this thesis. Published in 1960, Kevin Lynch uses three separate American cities, including Boston, as case studies in his analysis of the ways in which people understand and visualize the city. Specifically, Lynch proposes to study “...the mental image of th[e] city which is held by its citizens”,<sup>28</sup> with a more particular focus on, “...the apparent clarity or ‘legibility’ of the cityscape. By this we mean the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern.”<sup>29</sup> That is, Lynch essentially proposes to investigate how citizens of particular cities (or social actors who interact and negotiate space) create and imagine a mental image of their city and its relation to the actual, physical reality of the city. Lynch argues that this mental constructed in the minds of citizens arises from what he calls the imageability of a particular city or space. He defines imageability as, “...that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment.”<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, Lynch identifies that this imageability of a firstspace, which seems to rely on some effervescent idea of a boldness or vividness, allows for the creation of a thirdspace existing in the minds of citizens. Lynch, therefore, does not account for any kind of interaction between reality and textual representations of space, and their role in imagining a space. Thus, while Lynch and Soja write in two different eras about separate topics, it is useful to consider the ideas of thirdspace and imageability together in order to examine how American audiovisual culture has imagined and constructed the filmic space of New England and Boston.

From the answers of his respondents in his study of Boston, Lynch concludes that Boston is a unique case study. Primarily, this is because while respondents are able to conjure specific images of Boston, they have no cohering quality and thus leave Boston in some sort of limbo as a city that has imageability but does not exist as space. Lynch notes this imageability:

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<sup>28</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA, USA: The M.I.T Press, 1960), 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

For almost all the persons interviewed, this Boston is a city of very distinctive districts and of crooked, confusing paths. It is a dirty city, of red-brick buildings, symbolized by the open space of the Boston Common, the State House with its gold dome, and the view across the Charles River from the Cambridge side. Most of them added that it is an old, historical place, full of worn-out buildings, yet containing some new structures among the old.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note here that the images that Lynch lists here as being indicative of Boston in 1960 are essentially identical to the secondspace images that typify the imagining of Boston in audiovisual from 1997 onwards once the American film industry turns from rural and pastoral New England to urban Boston, which I address in the latter half of this thesis. Clearly, the firstspace of Boston impresses itself quite vividly upon the minds of the citizens who Lynch interviewed. They were able to provide him with consistent and clear images, but nonetheless failed to imagine the city as a whole and coherent space.

Yet this thematic vividness is typically associated with formlessness or confusing arrangement. If Boston districts could be given structural clarity as well as distinctive character, they would be greatly strengthened. In this failure, incidentally, Boston is probably quite different from many American cities, where areas of formal order have little character.<sup>32</sup>

Again, Boston vividly exists in the thirdspace of its citizens, but fails to exist as a coherent, spatial city, which, Lynch notes, makes it somewhat unique. For Lynch, this is important because, "...if the environment is visibly organized and sharply identified, then the citizen can inform it with his own meanings and connections. Then it will become a true *place*, remarkable and unmistakable."<sup>33</sup> Boston, then, would seem to not be a true place, as human understandings of the city and interactions with it tend to not create any kind of coherent sense of imageability, due in part, Lynch argues, to the odd physical design and layout of the city. Yet, I argue that the secondspace of both Boston and New England that American audiovisual media has imagined throughout its history not only positions the area as a "true place," but that this imagining is part of the socially interactive process through which spaces are negotiated and constructed. More, it is precisely the imagining of this secondspace, and the creation of thirdspace Boston and New England that positions the region and its people as a type of imagined community. By creating and imagining these second- and thirdspaces, film audiences

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 92. Original emphasis.

are able to view filmic New England in “...a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present”<sup>34</sup> as their apprehensions of the reality of the area come up against imagined representations, and therefore forge new understandings of the region. Audiovisual media, with its ability to create these thirdspaces, then, acts as “...the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the...imagined community...”<sup>35</sup> Yet, these thirdspaces of audiovisual media are only able to be imagined because they play on the expectations that audiences already have of the region and its people. These expectations, as they are rooted in reality, necessarily butt up against the daily, lived-in, authentic reality of those who live in the region.

#### ***2.4 Imageability and Authenticity***

Both the social sciences and the humanities employ words such as “striving”<sup>36</sup> and “quest”<sup>37</sup> in their discussions of the term “authenticity,” which gestures towards a perceived asymptotical distance between an ostensibly objective lived-in reality and the subjective, mediated representation of that reality. That is, “tourists,” who can only visit for a period of time, consume a mediated representation of the authenticity of a place or an experience that may be similar, and perhaps even identical, to the experiential and quotidian authenticity that “locals” live (in) in perpetuity. This representational authenticity, however, is not the same as experiential authenticity, and can never be anything more than a simulacrum of the experiential authenticity known to “locals.” Yet, it is perhaps useful to consider this mediated, representational authenticity as the kind of vividness of a city that Lynch believes is crucial in creating the imageability of a place. That is, if mediated, representational authenticity tends towards broad, unique, recognizable depictions of a place, this can potentially serve to replace the physical vividness of a city—“...a clear image [that] enables one to move about easily and quickly...”<sup>38</sup> which Lynch identifies as being a key component, in establishing the imageability of a region and elevating it to becoming a place.

This “almost but not quite” tension most accurately describes the representational authenticity that tourists can view, visit, or experience through some sort of mediation: the authenticity for tourists approaches the experiential authenticity

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<sup>34</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 2006), 24.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Yarwood, “Miniaturisation and the Representation of Military Geographies in Recreational Wargaming,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 16, no. 6 (2015): 667.

<sup>37</sup> Rodanthi Tzanelli, “Reel Western Fantasies: Portrait of a Tourist Imagination in *The Beach* (2000),” *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (March 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Lynch, *Image of the City*, 4.

of locals, but it can never be that same authenticity and can only ever be a progressively similar facsimile. This is because authenticity seems to be vastly different for those locals who live the reality of a thing or a place on a daily basis, and the tourists (be they film audiences, readers of novels, or actual travellers) who only experience that reality for a brief moment and through some sort of mediation. Authenticity appears to be an affective, individual, and experiential thing. Yet, the understanding of each group of what is authentic about a place arises precisely because of its imageability.

Tourists searching for their conception of the authenticity of a place thus highlight the “almost but not quite” asymptotical distance between the experiential and representational versions of the authentic. It is this distance and tension between the two that creates a feedback loop, where those who are on a quest to find the authenticity that they know only through mediated representation begin to influence the quotidian routine of experiential authenticity, which in turn will then influence the idea and the representation of what is authentic for those tourists. The terms “representational authenticity” and “experiential authenticity” have been adopted in order to distinguish between these two separate modes of authenticity. What is meant by the term “representational authenticity” is the asymptotic perceptions that tourists have or create of a place that is mediated and time-limited. I define “experiential authenticity” as the quotidian understanding that locals have of a place in which they are ordinarily resident that is neither mediated nor time-limited. The identity of *Good Will Hunting*, with its nuanced treatment of Irishness as part of an ethnically heterogeneous city and its use of the local Boston accent, highlights the ways in which films can present an experientially authentic identity. While these concepts of space and place will be useful to the specific case study of this thesis in examining the representation and imagining of filmic New England and Boston in American audiovisual media, they are also found in other extant scholarship on regional studies across disciplines in the social science and humanities.

### **3. THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY**

Up until this point, this chapter has primarily focused on interrogating notions of space and its construction, and on examining the various ways in which different American regions and cities have been previously studied. In this section, however, I turn towards an examination of how communities are grouped together as coherent units that would allow for them to withstand study in the first place. That is, this section focuses on what it is that allows these places to be imagined as distinct communities. One of the foundational texts in the study of how regions and their people are imagined

as logically arranged places with a specific reason for existing together is *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson. The unit of study that Anderson chooses is the nation, and he argues that modern nations are a modern construct that have arisen through a result of specific historical processes. Yet, his thesis, as the title of his book implies, is that these communities are imagined. It is this notion that communities are imagined, in a number of differing ways, that informs much of my analysis of filmic New England and Boston in American audiovisual culture, and that the (filmic) region exists as a distinct and separate community from a larger, national, American identity.

### ***3.1 Defining an Imagined Community***

Benedict Anderson begins his *Imagined Communities* by emphatically stating that, "...nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."<sup>39</sup> Yet, despite his insistence on the importance of nation-ness (and everything that is implied by that: nation, nationality, nationalism), Anderson paradoxically finds that, "...unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers..."<sup>40</sup> It is from this paradox, the overwhelming and undeniable importance of nationalism contrasted with its "...philosophical poverty and even incoherence",<sup>41</sup> that Anderson manages to shift the paradigmatic and established thought on nation-ness by instead proposing a new definition of the nation. Anderson thus defines his conception of what the nation is: "...an imagined political community..."<sup>42</sup> Importantly, this newly refined definition of the nation, and thus of nation-ness, elides references to notions of the state, and to the political and the bureaucratic structures that are based in lived, experiential reality, rather than in the imagination of those would consider themselves members of the nation. As a result then, because of Anderson and this shift in definition, the understanding of what the nation is ceases to be something that can be defined within a political reality with physical structures at which one can point. Instead, according to Anderson, gesturing to what the nation is becomes infinitely more cloudy as its definition moves towards something that is conjured up and agreed upon by its members, and something that lives in their imaginations.

Anderson then proceeds to further sharpen his definition of the nation by stating that this imagined political community of the nation is "...imagined as both inherently

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<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

limited and sovereign.”<sup>43</sup> The nation, then, despite existing as an imaginary construct, also has restrictions placed upon it, perhaps in order to make the imaginary slightly more tangible. Anderson does this by next defining what he considers to be the key terms in his new understanding of what the nation is. For him, the nation exists as a community that is imagined, “. . .because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>44</sup> This logical observation is crucial in understanding the idea that the nation is a construct that resides in the imagination of its members (and also of those who would conceive of the nation), as this imaginary communion with other, unknown fellow-members of the nation is what produces the sense of the nation. Indeed, this idea that the nation is imagined echoes an earlier, more effervescent, definition of the nation, provided by Ernest Renan in 1882:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day [sic] consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen [sic], does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours [sic], sacrifice, and devotion.<sup>45</sup>

It is this definition of the nation as being imagined, or imaginary, that is critical to the understanding of what nation-ness is, and how national identities are formed and function. Those who conceive of the nation imagine it, and agree upon it as something that exists on a plane beyond the realm of socio-economic and political reality. The nation is both imaginary and imagined, rather than an identifiable set of political, bureaucratic, and geographic constructs and systems that would govern the lives and interactions of those members of the nation.

Yet, Anderson continues by writing that, “The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.”<sup>46</sup> Anderson concedes that in order for a nation to be imagined as a community, it must end at some point. He does not, however, argue that a nation can only be defined by hard geographic and political boundaries. The imagined

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ernest Renan, “What Is a Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 19.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7. Original emphasis.

community of the nation, for Anderson, does not end at River X and begin again at Mountain Y, but is instead only imagined as having boundaries, such that it can be imagined in the first place, rather than blending in to any other, surrounding communities that may be imagining themselves (or being imagined by others) as national. Further, crucial to this new understanding of the nation is the choice of Anderson to refer to these “imagined political communities” as “sovereign,” rather than mention their sovereignty. This is because for Anderson, by “sovereign,” he merely means that “...nations dream of being free...”,<sup>47</sup> and are therefore able to simply exist. Of course, while “The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state”,<sup>48</sup> it is not the determining factor in imagining the nation-ness of any community. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for Anderson, though, the nation, “...is imagined as a *community* because...the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”<sup>49</sup> Or, more obliquely, “The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.”<sup>50</sup> The nation, then, is not a nation-state, with its clearly demarcated borders and political machinery that other nation-states recognize as having a right to exist. Rather, the nation exists as something agreed upon and understood by the fellow-members of that community who merely desire to exist as the community of their imaginations. It is thus necessary to make a clear demarcation between terms such as “nation” and “nation-state,” as they signal two very different constructs, and, more importantly, this thesis focuses on “...the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation”,<sup>51</sup> rather than on more traditional concepts such as the nation-state, or even on something such as a national imagined community.

With this understanding of the nation, or of the kind of imagined community that is the nation, it is important to consider the importance of nation-ness and nationalism as a subject of inquiry, and also why Benedict Anderson and the imagined community can and should be applied to audiovisual culture, as well as why it should be applied to an entity that is not a nation-state. Writing in 2005, Thomas Elsaesser echoes the earlier sentiments of Anderson when he plainly states that “...nationalism has become a major phenomenon of contemporary politics and a focal point in cultural

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 7. Original emphasis.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 25. Original emphasis.

debate.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm rather wryly notes that, “...the last two centuries of the human history of planet Earth are incomprehensible without some understanding of the term ‘nation’ and the vocabulary derived from it.”<sup>53</sup> For all three men, the idea of the nation is a foundational organizing concept for any theoretical interrogation of history in the modern era. This belief in the importance of the concept of the nation, of nation-ness, and of national identity in the modern era has led to an exponential growth and transformation in the study of these concepts such that there has “...developed an extraordinary proliferation of historical, literary, anthropological, sociological, feminist, and other studies linking the objects of these fields of enquiry to nationalism and nation.”<sup>54</sup> If one accepts that this nebulous idea of the nation is a lodestone in the modern era, then it should hardly be surprising that it has also dominated, and in some ways has foundationally transformed, many fields of academic study in the modern era.

### ***3.2 The Role of Imagined Communities in Film Studies***

Benedict Anderson bases his theory of the nation, and of the emergence of modern nationalism, on a thorough analysis of the novel and the daily newspaper. Because of this focus, as well as his assertion that modern nationalism arose in a period that predated the invention of film and the moving image, Anderson elides the role of audiovisual media (as well as other non-traditional modes of communication) in imagining a community, and instead focuses his attention on nation-states that emerged as such from various colonial situations. Yet, it is in the study of audiovisual media cultures that this theory of the nation and of the imagined community has perhaps been utilized most often. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie emphatically write that, “...Anderson’s work is seminal and [that it] can be extended from print to cinematic cultures is undeniable.”<sup>55</sup> Andrew Higson asserts that, “...the parameters of a national cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as at the site of production of films...”<sup>56</sup> which is clearly an argument in favor of the nation being imagined by its members. Indeed, “By co-ordinating [sic] time and space...”, audiovisual media has a

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 58.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, xii.

<sup>55</sup> Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie, “Introduction,” in *Cinema & Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 2.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” *Screen* 30, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 36.



unique ability to “...address and imagined national community even before it had been formed into a nation-state.”<sup>57</sup>

Thomas Elsaesser, however, while writing about European cinema, makes the case for the importance of the idea of the imagined community in the study of nationness while taking a rather dim view of its seemingly convenient application:

Anderson’s slim book on colonial and post-colonial nation-building and identity formation in what became Indonesia answered the problem, barely posed, about the status of the media in the national identity debate, by making a convincing case for constructivism as a method, and by unequivocally giving the media—in Anderson’s case, the print media—a crucial role in narrating the nation. Conveniently for scholars, Anderson also emphasized the power of pedagogy (teachers, bureaucrats, people of the word) in fashioning the nation as an imaginary, but nonetheless effective scaffolding of personal and group identity. According to Anderson: “nations” are constructed by intellectuals, journalists, pedagogues, philologists, historians, archivists who were “carefully sewing together dialects, beliefs, folk tales, local antagonisms into the nationalist quilt.”<sup>58</sup>

Here, Elsaesser seems argues only for a produced imagined community. In his analysis of the nationalist novel, Anderson reinforces what Elsaesser believes about the importance of pedagogy and production (as the novel is written by an intellectual), while also arguing that pedagogy and production only have importance and work as a result of consumption: in the nationalist novel, “...we see the ‘national imagination’ at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside.”<sup>59</sup> It is precisely this simultaneity of the national imagination that allows for the type of imagined community that is the nation to form, as the nation that is being produced in some form of media can only inculcate that necessary deep, horizontal comradeship if it is consumed, and therefore imagined, by fellow-members of the community in homogenous, empty time.

Most studies of national audiovisual media cultures, however, tend to focus on only one side of this equation, even while acknowledging the importance of both to the creation of an audiovisual imagined community. That is, studies will interrogate the production means and methods employed by certain national audiovisual industries, or will instead analyze the ways in which these imagined communities see their supposed

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<sup>57</sup> Phillip Schlesinger, “The Sociological Scope of ‘National Cinema,’” in *Cinema & Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 23.

<sup>58</sup> Elsaesser, *European Cinema*, 65.

<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 30.

national culture reflected to them on screen. What all of these studies have in common, though, is that they are intensely focused on the ways in which national imagined communities produce, consume, define, and imagine themselves. I, however, will investigate the ways in which a national audiovisual media industry produces, consumes, defines, and imagines its own national imagined community through the lens of its focus on a specific subsection of its population. Further, the result of this is the production (or, the imagining) of a community through audiovisual media that is best understood as the type of imagined community that Anderson describes. This differs from more traditional applications of Anderson and his thesis of the imagined community as:

...it is now conventional to define the nation as the mapping of an imagined community with a secure and shared identity and sense of belonging, on to a carefully demarcated geo-political space. The nation, from this perspective is first forged and then maintained as a bounded public sphere. That is to say, it is a public debate that gives the nation meaning, and media systems with a particular geographical reach that give it shape. Those who inhabit nations with a strong sense of self-identity are encouraged to imagine themselves as members of a coherent, organic community, rooted in geographical space, with well-established indigenous traditions.<sup>60</sup>

While this is the more traditional approach and application of Anderson and his thesis, I argue for the establishment of the kind of imagined community that may be potentially national from a rather different standpoint. The area under study may in fact exist within clearly delineated geographical boundaries, but does not exist as a demarcated geo-political space. More, the establishment of this audiovisual imagined community does not encourage viewers to understand themselves as members of a community, nor does it present or engage with any indigenous traditions, but rather forces viewers to consider their own identities in contrast to the otherness of that community.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The primary purpose of this chapter has been to explore and to analyze a variety of different theoretical approaches that will hopefully prove useful to an extended analysis of audiovisual representations of a specific region of the United States. Because the object under analysis within this thesis is the filmic representation and imagination of a specific American region, it necessarily makes sense to first attempt to

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<sup>60</sup> Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema & Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 64.

find useful theoretical approaches to interrogating place and space. In this vein, then, this chapter identifies two different theoretical concepts of space that can be usefully combined to analyze indexical audiovisual representations of a real, physical space: imageability and thirdspace. Kevin Lynch originally defined the term “imageability” in his study on how residents and citizens construct mental images of their cities. For Lynch, imageability, or the vivid distinctiveness of a place, was a crucial component in this mental construction. Thirdspace, though it differs in many respects, comes from a similar position as imageability in that thirdspace is a sort of imagined apprehension of a real, physical space. The difference between these two terms, however, is that imageability is a specific understanding of how distinctive features of a place allow that place to be mentally reconstructed and imagined with a certain verisimilitude, while thirdspace is a notion that allows for a space to exist simultaneously as real and imagined. In the following chapter, I will explore how early twentieth century films of a specific genre created a type of imageability for filmic New England. Crucially, this imageability was divorced from the physical and geographic reality of New England, and was instead inscribed upon the bodies of filmic New England characters. With this imageability of an imagined filmic New England now iconographically fixed, American audiovisual media is then able to situate filmic New England as a type of real-but-imagined thirdspace. The effect of this bodily imageability and establishing filmic New England as a thirdspace is to, when these characters are presented in a certain way, position filmic New England and its citizens as something other than and distinct from a larger, national American identity.

It is because American audiovisual media establishes the filmic New England identity as something that can be understood as something other than and in opposition to a national American identity that this chapter chose to focus on the work of Benedict Anderson and his theory of the imagined community. Crucially, it is important to note that neither I nor this thesis propose to argue that filmically represented New England should or could be understood as something resembling a nation-state. Rather, building upon previous work within the field of media and film studies, I utilize the language and theoretical understanding of how communities are organized and imagined provided by Anderson to examine how filmic New England has been represented by American audiovisual culture. That is, the following chapters in this thesis intend to demonstrate that American audiovisual media has historically represented and imagined filmic New England as a distinct and separate community within the larger American nation. More, because the imageability of the filmic region has been written upon the bodies of filmic

New England characters, rather than on the geographic space of the region, the otherness of the region and its people in comparison to a larger, American national identity can be easily highlighted within audiovisual media, and thus establish filmic New England as inhabiting a real (inasmuch as it actually and physically exists)-but-imagined (such that its imageable characteristics of otherness are imagined and represented on film) thirdspace. The result of this, then, is that filmic New England and its (filmic) people can be easily utilized as a type of other, perhaps not-American (but instead specifically New England) identity against which American audiences can negotiate questions of their own American identities. Further, while these films and this thesis do not posit that filmic New England meets any criteria for “the nation,” the bodily imageability of the region in American audiovisual media positions the filmic region as an other thirdspace that is, perhaps, outside of an understanding of an American identity, or against which American audiences can negotiate their own sense of American-ness. Thus, representations of filmic New England and its people in American audiovisual media can be understood as situating the filmic region outside of an American identity, which therefore results in filmic New England existing as “...a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time...”,<sup>61</sup> or as a type of imagined community.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 26.



## **“I’M A BLONDE. WOULD YOU RATHER I BE A BRUNETTE?”: ICONOGRAPHIC FIXITY AND THE NEW ENGLAND WITCH**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter begins the analysis of the films produced by the American film industry that focus on New England and its people, and the ways in which those films have come to imagine the region as a type of community that, filmically, seems to exist outside of larger and broader conceptions of the American national identity and culture. This chapter specifically focuses on films that, seizing upon the historical reality of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, present American film audiences with a recurring New England witch character. In both historical fact and in the chronology of the New England filmography, the Salem Witch trials are one the earliest topics in the history of the region, and, as a result, these films establish a template and iconography for filmic New England that influences nearly all depictions that follow these early films. Specifically, these early New England witch films demonstrate how American audiovisual media understands both the filmic space of the region and the region in space, in addition to providing visual cues that would have a profound impact on future representations of filmic New. One of the defining and foundational events in the pre-history of the United States, and of New England, the Salem Witch Trials occurred nearly one hundred years before the founding of the nation-state of the United States, and thus appears very early in the linear, chronological history of both the United States and of New England. Similarly, during the early history of the American film industry, one of the first films that focused on New England was *Witchcraft* (1916), a fictionalized historical reenactment of the Salem Witch Trials.

After analyzing a confluence of historical factors during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, this chapter argues that

destabilized notions of a national American identity, which had only recently been renegotiated following the end of the Civil War and Reconstruction, forced American culture to once more negotiate meanings of what an American identity is. Further, in an attempt to imbue this new sense of an American identity with historical stability, American cultural attention turned to the spiritual and the historical birthplace of the nation, New England. Yet, this New England identity, having failed to adapt to the rapidly changing economic, social, and cultural landscape of the United States, was ill-suited to stand in as an avatar for American-ness. This discovery of the bankruptcy of the New England identity in relation to notions of American identities occurred almost simultaneously with the rise and the maturation of the American film industry as an economically viable industry for artistic and cultural production. Thus, in its earliest moments, the American film industry began producing films focused on the region, in keeping with other artistic movements and mediums of the time, in a climate that was inherently dismissive of that identity. This results in the American film industry adopting a view that matches the prevailing one of the American public, and presenting New Englanders and their regional identity as anathema and other to an American identity. Further, because this view is forged in the nascent stages of the American film industry, it then hardens into stereotype and archetype, which has been repeated and re-presented throughout the ensuing history of American cinema.

This chapter approaches its argument that American audiovisual culture has imagined New England and its people as other by first considering how the specific image of the witch, as first presented in 1916 and continually reproduced thereafter, allows film audiences to understand New England as a type of imagined community. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the work of Benedict Anderson in his *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* the follow-up work to his *Imagined Communities*. Here, the chapter explores the role of iconographic fixity in the imagining of a community, and the ways in which these easily replicable images and icons create a sense of easy imageability of the region, which helps to imagine the region as a space and as a community where filmic representations of the physical landscape sought to erode any stable notions of imageability. From there, the chapter analyzes the connection between genre and iconography in audiovisual media, and then argues that this singular image of the New England witch, through her specific iconographic repetition across the history of American film, acts, in the minds of viewers, similarly to genre. Because of the iconographic fixity of the New England witch across the history of the American film industry, this image, like genre,

conditions film audiences to expect and to understand certain tropes, characteristics, and meanings without any additional narrative explanation. Thus, the appearance of the New England witch on film demands that American film audiences immediately connect her to an understanding of New England and New Englander identity that is outside the larger, national American identity, and therefore imagine New England, through the avatar of the witch, as an “other” community.

Having established the iconographic fixity of the witch, the chapter then examines one of the primary defining features of her iconography: bloneness. In this section, this chapter examines why blonde hair was initially chosen as a signifier of otherness in the early stages of audiovisual culture, and the ways in which economic and practical concerns led to this decision. Further, this section explores several different ways in which bloneness and blonde hair has operated as a mark of otherness in audiovisual media as a way of arguing that the bloneness of this New England witch creates an iconography of New England otherness in American film.

Finally, this chapter concludes by examining several “witch films” throughout the course of American film history, and analyzing the various aspects of the iconography of the New England witch and the ways in which they imagine her, and New England, as a community that is other from a larger, national American identity. Specifically, the films on which this chapter focuses are *Witchcraft* (1916), *Maid of Salem* (1937), *I Married a Witch* (1942), *The City of the Dead* (1960, also known as *Horror Hotel*), and *Hocus Pocus* (1993). These films have been singled out for analysis and inclusion in this chapter because, in addition to their ready and easy availability,<sup>62</sup> each film included highly recognizable female actresses in their leading roles. As a result of the widespread national attention that these films would have received based on their leading actresses, these films provide a useful cross-section of how mainstream American film production and American film audiences viewed New Englanders and New England witches. Further, these films also nearly span the chronological breadth of the focus of this thesis, and are therefore useful in interrogating the changing views of the filmic New England witch.

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<sup>62</sup> With the exception of *Witchcraft*, which is not available in any media format, each of these films have been released on DVD, and are often played on American television stations. *Witchcraft*, by virtue of it being the first film to focus on this subject, warrants special inclusion, and any analysis of it is based upon contemporaneous accounts of the film.



## **2. THE GILDED AGE AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MOVING IMAGE**

### ***2.1 Historical Context: The Gilded Age***

Following the end of the Civil War and the failure of the Reconstruction project in the South, the United States then moved into a new, economically robust chapter in its history. The Gilded Age, which is loosely defined as the years between 1870 and 1900, but also occasionally lumped together with the Progressive Era at the beginning of the twentieth century, "...is remembered as a time of progress in technology and industry, of regression in race relations, and of stagnation in politics and foreign affairs. It was a time when Wall Street grew to dominate the economic landscape, Madison Avenue began to make its mark, and the people of Main Street in small towns throughout the country built thriving businesses."<sup>63</sup> Further, "During those decades the new giants of business embraced and began to shape technology and science to nourish and to serve the culture of consumption that defines modern America."<sup>64</sup> The expansion of industrialization and the emergence of new technologies greatly increased the capacity of the United States to produce wealth for its citizens, thereby lending credence to the aspirational Horatio Alger myth, with "...quintessential 'rags to riches' characters in 'the Work and Win, Upward and Onward' narrative of American rugged individualism, avatars of capitalist triumphalism and the patriotism of laissez-faire."<sup>65</sup> Yet, the Gilded Age was "...a time of boom and bust, and it featured two financial panics that resulted in national depressions",<sup>66</sup> and was "...a time of excess and corruption, of shallowness and show."<sup>67</sup> While this period afforded many Americans with new opportunities to both produce and to acquire wealth for themselves and for their families, the Gilded Age also witnessed an increasing economic gap between the (already) wealthy and the larger, working mass of American citizens.

This tension between the foundational, republican myth of the self-made man and the mounting evidence of class inequality fostered an environment in which the entire American experiment and identity, only recently settled after the bloody Civil War, was again called in to question, as "The real zeitgeist of Gilded Age America (the late 1800s) was its thrust to achieve true nationalism—that is, the quest for a national

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<sup>63</sup> T. Adams Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age* (Lanham, MD, USA: Scarecrow Press, 2009), xxv. Original emphasis deleted.

<sup>64</sup> Glenn Porter, "Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles William Calhoun, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 12.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 113.

<sup>66</sup> Upchurch, *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age*, xxv.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix.

consensus....”<sup>68</sup> And indeed, “The decades after the Civil War were the crucible in which the modern United States came to be.”<sup>69</sup> It was against this backdrop of technological advancement and economic turbulence at the turn of the twentieth century that Americans again engaged in the cultural discussions and arguments that would define the American identity in the modern era. The newly invented moving image plays an important role in these cultural discussions because of its ability to provide “...new access to time or its ‘perfect representation...’”<sup>70</sup>, and thus to structure “...time and contingency in capitalist modernity.”<sup>71</sup> That is, cinema and the moving image rationalized time “...in complicity with notions of the inevitability of a technologically induced historical progress.”<sup>72</sup> This is important because, as will be seen, if cinema was meant to merge rational time with modern technology and historical progress, New England was ill-suited as a subject due to American cultural beliefs of it being rooted in an idealized and static past.

Writing in *Visions of Belonging: New England Art and the Making of American Identity* (2006), the art historian Julia B. Rosenbaum notes that at this same time, the turn of the twentieth century also saw a renewed interest and focus on the New England region and its culture. Rosenbaum argues that this sudden attention was perhaps an American response to the modernization and the urbanization of the United States, byproducts of the turmoil of the Gilded Age. For her, “This fascination with the region speaks to a search for roots, for a sense of belonging.”<sup>73</sup> Because of the integral role of New England in the founding of the United States as a nation-state, it makes sense that wary Americans would (re)turn to the area of its ancestral founding in an attempt to assuage fears and concerns that were arising over the national identity at this time. The fear and the concerns brought about by the changes wrought by the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era perhaps created a space in American culture where Americans could begin to discuss, to negotiate, and to develop a consensus on what, exactly, an American identity could be, in cultural forums such as the fine arts (including the new and emerging moving image), and also in the reception of the audiences to these works of arts. “As immigrant populations swelled, as new industries transported thousands to urban centers, and towns and cities sprang up from one coast to the other, Americans

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., xxix-xxx.

<sup>69</sup> Porter, “Industrialization,” 13.

<sup>70</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Julia B. Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging: New England Art and the Making of American Identity* (Ithaca, NY, USA: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.

struggled to find common ground.”<sup>74</sup> Rosenbaum argues that Americans confronted this fear and unease, which were fundamental assaults on an already unsteady foundation of the recently renegotiated American identity and that were so closely following the end of the Civil War and Reconstruction, through the production of paintings of New England landscapes and other pastoral scenes, and then ascribing to these paintings a mythical idea of an original, national home, where the true identity of America could be found. “Such works of art did more than capture specific people or places. They became identified with social values: self-reliance, order, and respect for heritage and tradition. Audiences hailed these images as much for the ideals of community and nationhood projected by them as for their aesthetic qualities.”<sup>75</sup> Traditional modes of artistic representation, specifically painting, confronted the project of forging a national consensus and a national identity by focusing their attention on the very origins of the American nation. Many at the time believed that a suitable answer to the ongoing question of a national identity:

...could best be found in the old and settled region of New England; the very typography of its landscape—its tended countrysides, lofty mountains, and rocky coasts and soils—seemed to mimetically reflect the character of the industrious men and women of earlier generations. Associated with an Anglo-Saxon Protestant heritage, New England was put forward through the turn of the century as the original national home.<sup>76</sup>

The continual reproduction and representation of the New England landscape, handcuffed to an imagined set of characteristics and ideals, would help to guide the debate over the American identity so that it could hopefully metastasize into consensus. This identity, however, was conjured from an idealized past, and was put forth as a unilaterally decided cure-all, rather than as one that was historically accurate and collectively bargained. In a way the parallels the focus of American painting on New England in a search for an American identity and the broader cultural reception to that, American audiovisual media will also explore this relationship between regional and national identities once it fully emerges as a viable cultural form.

It is important to note that, during times of modernist crisis and assaults on ideas of the national identity seems to be a tradition, American culture has turned to distinct regions of the country, rather than to a overarching conception of national American identity. James Lyons, writing in his *Selling Seattle: Representing Contemporary*

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 3.

*Urban America* (2004), identifies a somewhat similar moment, albeit one nearly a century later, during the early 1990s when much of American fine art and popular culture focused on Seattle, Washington and the Pacific Northwest region. He writes:

However, what also became evident from the perusal of a number of the more popular, critically acclaimed, and influential representations of Seattle in the 1990s was that they seemed to have one important thing in common. This was the way in which they worked to connect Seattle in interesting and original ways to wider debates concerned with the current state and future shaped of America's large urban centres [sic]. In other words, what seemed to be clear was that Seattle's rise to fame was in a fundamental sense tied to more widespread anxieties about the fate of the contemporary American city.<sup>77</sup>

The United States and American culture, then, seems to make use of its many varied regions, each with specific regional stereotypes, quirks, and cultures, whenever larger concerns or debates about the culture and identity of the nation emerge. In the case of Seattle in the 1990s, Lyons argues that the region served as a positive way forward in imagining the role of urban centers in the United States at a time when there was a deep mistrust and concern about them. This is not dissimilar to the reasons that American painting, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, looked towards New England as a spiritual home of the American nation and American culture in an attempt to combat similar fears about assaults on the national identity. Yet, when American culture turned toward Seattle, it found positive attributes to be emulated and carried forward, and thus the region was able to be made part of the larger, national American identity and culture. As Rosenbaum identifies in her exploration of American painting of New England landscapes, New England, however, was found to be a space whose identity and supposed characteristics no longer could be usefully applied to then modern America, and it was thus excised from larger debates over what an American national identity could be. Instead, the region and its identity was confined to a specific geographically demarcated space and left in a position of stasis, where its identity is inflexibly and exists as an obverse image of what a larger, national American identity is.

Film beginning to discover its capabilities as an artistic storytelling medium occurs almost simultaneously and coincidentally with the discovery in the early part of the twentieth century that the idealized New England identity, being used as a stand-in for the ideal American identity, is bankrupt. Coupled with the fulfillment of Manifest

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<sup>77</sup> James Lyons, *Selling Seattle: Representing Contemporary Urban America* (London, UK: Wallflower Press, 2004), 5.

Destiny and the migration of the film industry west to its ultimate home in Los Angeles, California, the conditions were set in which the focus on New England could curdle into something less than favorable. The result is a focus on a separate and regionally defined identity that works to other a region and its people in subservience to a larger national identity project contemporaneously being undertaken and negotiated. From the beginning of the American film industry, then, New England was already imagined as separate and distinct, and it is perhaps because of this that one of the original ways in which American audiovisual media explored this was through the image of the witch, an original community outsider.

## ***2.2 Early Film Technology***

One of the most enduring technological advancements that emerged from the Gilded Age was the ability to create moving pictures, which, in turn, had a profound effect on the artistic and cultural life of Americans and, ultimately, gave rise to cinema. This coincidence of historical timing—the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny, the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, and the artistic and cultural negotiation of a new and coherent national identity—created a scenario in which the nascent American film industry began to exert influence over cultural discussions. While the first decade of film was concerned almost entirely with its own novelty and technology, it soon began to realize its own artistic capabilities. Concurrent with the movement in American painting to explore and to create the American identity in response to the unrest caused by the Gilded Age was the turn of the film industry towards longer form, narrative fiction films, rather than the exhibition of moving images purely for the sake of their own novelty. This move to narrative fiction storytelling on film “...was fully completed by late 1907 to early 1908, by which time Edison-licensed production companies had a regular, weekly release schedule that was filled almost entirely by fiction story films”,<sup>78</sup> just as the other artistic movements were beginning their interrogation of the American identity in earnest. And indeed, “The move to fiction was a response to audience demand, not a conspiracy among studios eager to regularize production.”<sup>79</sup> Armed with new purpose and modes of production, the film industry was then able to join this cultural conversation along with those more traditional forms of artistic expression.

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<sup>78</sup> Charles Musser, “Moving Towards Fictional Narratives,” in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (London, UK: Routledge, 2004), 87.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Yet, because film still lacked the ability to produce narrative audio in conjunction with the moving images, those images were crucial in communicating the narrative. Thus, these early films “...depended on audience familiarity with other forms of popular culture where the same basic story was articulated.”<sup>80</sup> That is, these films required their audiences to be familiar with the basic structure and facts of the presented narrative so that it could be properly communicated, thus causing early film producers to choose stories that were both well known and easily translatable to a visual medium. As a result, then, it makes sense that the American film industry, in its embryonic stages, would choose to produce films with a narrative well-known to many, if not most, Americans, such as the Salem Witch Trials, an important and definitional moment in the early pre-history of the United States. Being able to find a story that allows films to focus on already-known narratives and on the New England area had the added benefit of allowing the film industry to insert itself into the conversation and the renewed interest among American painters in the New England area and its landscapes.

Yet, many of these early films depicting New England chose to focus more on the bodily image of filmic characters, while the landscape of the region was often only briefly seen in establishing shots. This focus on the bodily image of filmic New Englanders manifests most obviously in the conspicuous presentation of New England women as blondes throughout much of film history seems. That this image that has become codified and iconographic is beholden to the indexical constraints of early cinematic technology and to economic considerations.

Since the salts on which chemical photography is based darken when exposed to light, a curious and useful quirk is introduced into the system. Those areas of the photograph that receive the most light will appear darkest when the photograph is developed and put through the chemical baths that fix the image permanently. The result is a negative image in which tones are reversed: light is dark and dark is light.<sup>81</sup>

This multi-tiered technical process of filming, printing, and reproducing images is both time-consuming and costly. Economic and technological concerns further contribute to the choices made by filmmakers in the *mise-en-scène* as:

The fewer the number of shades that the [film] stock can separate, the cruder the photograph will be. At its most extreme limit, only black and white will be seen, and the film will represent all the shadings in between as either one or the other.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>81</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, and Multimedia; Language, History, Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York, NY, USA: Oxford University Press, 2000), 102-103.

The more ability the stock has to discriminate, the more subtle the tone of the photography. ... Tone and contrast are closely associated with grain, so that the best range of tonal values is seen in filmstocks [sic] with the finest grain and therefore the highest resolution power.<sup>82</sup>

Especially in the early days of cinema, when it was not yet clear that this emerging art form would either stand the test of time or even become economically feasible, filmmakers were forced to make artistic choices that were subservient to pragmatic decisions.

In the case of female New England witches, then, the choice to present them as blonde in an effort to indicate their otherness was seemingly made more for economic pragmatism than out of any artistic desire or care for veracity. Specifically, film stock could not capture the full range of human hair color, but was instead limited to light or dark. Indeed, “Orthochromatic film’s main limitation was its insensitivity to the yellow and red areas of the spectrum.”<sup>83</sup> As a result, “...blonde hair photographed too dark...”,<sup>84</sup> and thus, “The use of backlighting on blonde hair was not only spectacular but necessary—it was the only way filmmakers could get blond hair to look light-colored on the yellow-insensitive orthochromatic stock.”<sup>85</sup> As blonde hair would require more lighting in order to emphasize its own lightness so that it did not mix together in a jumble of similarly colored, barely distinguishable hair colors, it was more pragmatic and economical to cast a single blonde opposite dark haired actors and actresses, rather than the reverse. Indeed, before panchromatic film stock became the industry standard, the film industry, in its nascent stages during the beginning of the twentieth century, was relegated to using film in which “...warm colors, such as facial tones, reproduced very poorly...”<sup>86</sup> thus necessitating a need for additional light sources “...in the blue-white range. Besides the sun itself, the only source of this kind of light was the huge, expensive arc lamp.”<sup>87</sup> As a result, early filmmakers were most likely forced into opting for a singular blonde surrounded by dark haired actors, and these economic and pragmatic reasons caused the repetition of this singular image of a blonde New England witch. This repetition of an image then became fixed and static as the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>83</sup> David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 519.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 519.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>86</sup> Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 124.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 124.

only possible image for New Englanders on film as the industry proved to be both economically feasible and artistically relevant.

### **3. ICONOGRAPHIC FIXITY AND NATIONAL IMAGINING**

The early focus of the American film industry on the image of the New England witch allows the presence of this specifically defined and geographically limited image to inform the understanding of the filmic regional identity from the perspective of both the film industry and of film audiences. That is, because this image appears in the earliest moments of cinema, it has a longer filmic historical record than other images, which in turn then positions it as an identity that has become primarily associated with filmic New England. The steady and unchanging repetition of the same image over the historical time of the American film industry builds the New England witch, and the filmic regional identity that she represents, into an iconographically fixed image that functions similarly to the ways in which genre functions. This iconographic fixity thus conditions American film audiences to imagine this othered identity in a certain way, such that the ways in which filmic New Englanders can act and can look becomes limited and replicable throughout film history. Further, it is through this replicated and fixed image, rather than through visual representations of the physical landscape, that filmic New England acquires imageability. Importantly, though, because of the narrative and the filmic position of the audiovisual New England witch as a foil against which American film audiences are asked to understand what is and what is not an American national identity, this imageability reinforces the textual reading of filmic New England as not-American, and therefore as a community that is imagined as separate or apart from the larger, national American identity and community. Thus, it is through the iconographic fixity of the New England witch that process of the American film industry of imagining filmic New Englanders as an other community begins.

Benedict Anderson explores this idea of iconographic fixity in *The Spectre of Comparisons* when he discusses indigenous stories and stage performances in the colonies of Southeast Asia at the end of the nineteenth century. Prior to the introduction of European stage plays, Anderson writes, the live performances of local stories were “...so thoroughly familiar to audiences, their presentation was iconographically fixed.”<sup>88</sup> That is, the stories that these communities (who functioned in a manner

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<sup>88</sup> Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London, UK: Verso, 2000), 34.



similar to the imagined community for Anderson) told on stage had passed from original narratives and different characterizations into codified genre and icons.

Anderson further states that:

Playbills were unimaginable because the characters were all meticulously differentiated by standardized body types, coiffures, costumes, speech styles, and gestural repertoires. There was only one Indra or Rama or Arjuna, who was recognizable the very second he came into stage view. Since there was no question of *interpreting* such figures, ...the identities of the actors, indeed often their genders, were a matter of indifference. Paradoxically enough, the iconographic rules governing what Rama could conceivably say were so strict that scripts were never thought of, and easy improvisation was the normal order of the day.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, while the specifics of dialogue may change from performance to performance, the narrative and visual iconography of stories had metastasized to the point that the general structure and outcome of any narrative was never in doubt. These figures, characters, and stories functioned in only one, singular way, which was familiar to anyone within the community.

Though in his previously published *Imagined Communities* Anderson argues that it was the novel that first allowed for the flowering of national consciousness within imagined communities (or, perhaps, conversely: for communities to imagine themselves as nationally conscious), his argument of iconographically fixed images and stories in more primordial and non-(Western-)traditional modes of artistic communication, known by heart to all within each community, would seem to contradict his assertion for national identity as a modern construct. Previously, Anderson identifies "...the 'national imagining' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside."<sup>90</sup> Yet, these singular versions of Rama or Indra, who were always instantly recognizable and never open to interpretation to each member of the community, also function in the same way: solitary heroes moving through a sociological landscape fixed in the consciousness of community viewers. As a result, then, communities create this deep, horizontal comradeship that allows them to conceptualize a limited and sovereign community, "...a sociological organism, moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time...."<sup>91</sup> The means through which this occurs may be different and more

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 34. Original emphasis.

<sup>90</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London, UK: Verso, 2006), 30.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 26.

rudimentary than the modern novel, but the end result is still the same:  
iconographically fixed images of the imagined community across linear time.

These communities conform to the definition that Anderson provides of an imagined community that could function as a type of nation precisely because of the fixity of their iconographic images, and because of their ability to create and to control those images so that they are accessible to all members of the community. In this way, the members of the community can envision their community as looming out of an immemorial past and gliding into a limitless future because the iconography that they consume and that they create is the same as it was generations before, and the same as it will be generations hence. The perpetual, unceasing, uninterrupted continuation of the community allows for its members to understand their own existence within "...a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present."<sup>92</sup> The filmic witch of New England functions similarly, as her iconographic fixity limits the ways in which she can act and can look, and thus allows audiences to understand her purpose in any given film without any necessary exposition or context.

In his essay on how to approach genre theory as it relates to film, Rick Altman asks a series of rhetorical opening questions about the definition of genre, and then responds by answering that, "We all know a genre when we see one."<sup>93</sup> Though the purpose of this seemingly flip response is to establish that genre is not an easily identifiable concept or idea, Altman, here, not only demonstrates a fundamentally hollow definition of genre, but also points to the essentially static definition that the word has retained for the millennia during which humans have argued over the written word. Altman begins his *Film/Genre* (1999) with a brief overview of the field of genre theory, and starts, naturally enough, at the beginning, with Aristotle. Altman criticizes Aristotle for the initial definition of genre (which derives from Aristotle's analysis of the activity of poetry) that the latter provides, as Altman writes that, "In order to begin his work, Aristotle must define an object of study. By borrowing an already defined object rather than defining his own, however, Aristotle provides a model for centuries of genre thinkers. Surprisingly, this most careful of thinkers thus opens his thought to whatever Greeks the Trojan horse of 'poetry' might carry."<sup>94</sup> That is, Aristotle engages a rhetorical trick in which he is able to define poetry (or the genre of poetry, and thus, subsequently, genre) by simply not defining it, and instead allows it to already exist in

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>93</sup> Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London, UK: BFI Publishing, 1999), 216.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 2.

the minds of his readers as an a priori piece of knowledge. Poetry, like genre, does not need a definition because it simply is. Altman then questions in response: “Who defined poetry? To what end? On the basis of what assumptions? With what ramifications for the proposed generic breakdown?”<sup>95</sup> As Aristotle thus declined to define poetry, Altman now declines to define genre. Genre simply is.

Yet, where the physical geography of filmic New England actively works against establishing the filmic region as a space, it is this iconographic fixity of the New England witch that provides filmic New England with a sense of imageability, and thus with a sense of space. Kevin Lynch writes that, “A highly imageable (apparent, legible, or visible) city in this peculiar sense would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation.”<sup>96</sup> In this way, the filmic New England witch, with her fixed and repetitive iconography, obviously functions in a way to provide audiovisual New England with qualities of imageability. She is “well formed, distinct, remarkable”, and also invites participation. However, because of the ways in which these films shackle the New England witch to notions of the other and as not being a part of the community through filmic, textual, and narrative means, the participation that the imageability of the filmic New England invites is that of asking film audiences to understand her, and also the region of which she is representative, as being separate and other from the larger, national American identity. Thus, while the physical landscape of filmic New England in these films serves to destabilize its imageability, and therefore position filmic New England as a sort of liminal non-space, the undeniable imageability of the New England witch asks film audiences to hold her and her characteristics in their minds as a semaphore for the region and its identity. The result of this is an understanding that film audiences should negotiate an American national identity as something that is in opposition to the New England witch. Filmic New England, then, exists as a non-place with an unstable physical landscape and as a region with a highly imageable identity that exists as something against which the larger, American national identity is negotiated.

Indeed, “As a visual medium, cinema can also define genres through conventional *iconography*. A genre’s iconography consists of recurring symbolic images that carry meaning from film to film.”<sup>97</sup> Yet, because there is no genre of “witch film”—in the sense that there exist the genres of “Westerns,” or “romantic

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>96</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 10.

<sup>97</sup> David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston, MA, USA: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 320. Original emphasis.

comedies,” or “war films”— and instead only the image and iconography of a witch who appears across multiple film genres, the icon of the witch must bear this historical burden up and down the history of film. The witch must alert viewers to the outsider status of the history of New England through her presence. She must function in a way that demonstrates the otherness of the people of New England. Because of her geographic fixity, she allows her viewers to imagine an inherently limited community, and because that community stands apart from the historical narrative of American history, the witch also allows her viewers to understand that community as something separate from themselves.

#### **4. THE NEW ENGLAND WITCH IN AMERICAN FILM**

One of the first films made by the American film industry about the New England was the 1916 film *Witchcraft*, which is also the earliest film that depicts, in some manner, the subject of witchcraft in New England. An historical drama, rather than a horror film, *Witchcraft* establishes the tropes and the generic conventions of the imagery and the iconography of the New England witch that continue to endure through film history to the present day.

*Witchcraft* tells the story of a young woman, Suzette, who immigrates with her mother to “...the New England colonies in 1692-3, during which time hundreds of innocent people suffered persecution from the horrible delusion of witchcraft.”<sup>98</sup> Suzette is, “...a Huguenot [sic] refugee, who, after the death of her old and miserly husband, is accused of witchcraft and sentenced to hang.”<sup>99</sup> Ultimately, Suzette, who is played by the actress Fannie Ward, is spared from death not through any action of her own, but through a last minute intervention from the man who she truly loves. Suzette, having been accused of witchcraft, exists as an outsider in her community, is a woman and is blonde, or at least appears to have lighter hair than the other actors in the film.

These attributes come to define the image of the filmic New England witch. Continually reproducing and replicating this singular image of a New England witch allows the American film industry to codify these visual attributes and features into indices and symbols of the specific iconography of a filmic New England witch. Further, because of the geographic specificity of this iconographic witch and the ways in which she functions in filmic text and narrative, the image of the filmic New England

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<sup>98</sup> “‘Witchcraft’ at the Strand,” *Moving Picture World* 30, no. 4 (October 28, 1916): 566.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 566.

witch serves to make the region and its people imageable in the minds of American film audiences, and can thus be read as identity of an imagined community of New England, inasmuch as it has become "...a sign in which the signifier [the image of the witch] represents the signified [New England and its people] mainly by its similarity to it, its likeness...."<sup>100</sup> Because this image, with these attributes, is so specifically and geographically rooted, the image appears to have become a filmic synecdoche for the imagined community of New England and its people: witches and witchcraft are from New England, they behave in this manner, ergo, people from New England are this way.

#### ***4.1 The Landscape of the New England Witch***

Before the actual narrative of the film even begins, *Hocus Pocus* manages to echo and combine the visual touchstones of 1692 Salem in its opening scene, though it does eschew the burning of the witch at this stake (understandably, as this is a Disney film made for children and families). Although the film does not explicitly reference any of the other New England witch films that came before it, the fact that this film manages to foreground these visual touchstones indicates their iconographic fixity and their received influence in film as the markers of a New England witch film. The film, as with the others before it, opens with the traditional establishing shot of Salem village. Here, however, the viewer first comes across Salem village from a slightly different vantage point, as the establishing shot is an overhead, high-speed tracking shot. The first images look straight down at the treetops of a forest and a small body of water, which reflects back to the viewer a clear image of a hooded and caped figure riding a broomstick. From here, the shot continues on its track as an almost, but not quite, point-of-view shot in the bluish hue of an early morning to fly over the still sleeping village of what will shortly become, quite obviously, Salem. Whereas previous films had opened with static establishing shots of Salem, *Hocus Pocus* opts for a dynamic, overhead, pseudo-point-of-view shot that only briefly glimpses the actual Salem. More, *Hocus Pocus* manages to combine images of both the pastoral wilderness of the nature surrounding the village of Salem with views of the village itself. This choice allows the film to situate its fictional Salem as neither urban nor rural, and thus as existing in a liminal state somewhere in between and as both. Yet, clearly, neither of these images of Salem are without filmic historical precedent, and neither are incorrect, as both of these

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<sup>100</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, and Multimedia; Language, History, Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York, NY, USA: Oxford University Press, 2000), 164.

images are iconographically fixed as part of the longer tradition of New England witch films.

As Rosenbaum notes in her *Visions of Belonging*, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, during the focus on New England subjects in American painting, “The growing taste for images of the New England countryside connected to broad sociopolitical agendas. At the turn of the century, Americans increasingly looked to rural New England for its scenic and ‘therapeutic’ qualities....”<sup>101</sup> Yet, in addition to these scenes of rural New England, “...a classic image of New England materialized—orderly villages with white, steepled churches among verdant fields and forests.”<sup>102</sup> These two seemingly different images of wild, unpeopled, rural scenes and quotidian village life (marked especially by church steeples), first established in an American painting tradition, but later metastasizing as iconographically fixed images in audiovisual media, would seem to mark filmic New England and its visual hallmarks as a place that is specifically and easily identifiable. Because these two images appear to be in direct contradiction with each other, yet also historically accurate visual representations, it suggests that filmic New England loses any sense of imageability, and is thus destabilized as a place in the minds of viewers. For a space to be made memorable in the minds of viewers, and to therefore transition into being a place, imageability, as Kevin Lynch argues, is paramount. Although he applies his definition of imageability to cities and urban space, it can be easily extracted and applied to wider regions as well.

Lynch suggests that, quite simply, imageability is “...that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment.”<sup>103</sup> Further, Lynch notes that imageability is important in the construction of space because it means that “The perceptive and familiar observer could absorb new sensuous impacts without disruption of his basic image, and each new impact would touch upon many previous elements. He would be well oriented, and he could move easily.”<sup>104</sup> That this corpus of films provide competing and contradictory, though no less historically accurate, depictions of the physical New England landscape asks film audiences to hold

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<sup>101</sup> Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging*, 78.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>103</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 9.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

multiple images of the landscape of the region, rather than one, fixed image, and thus destabilize any spatial imageability.

The result of this lack of spatial imageability, then, positions filmic New England in a liminal state, inasmuch as audiences have no firm and stable visual understanding of the physical region, but instead are asked to process contradictory images. By eliding imageability of the filmic region, and not as an American place or as a place within the United States, these films are able to solidify their explorations of the filmic regional identity as something other than- or contrary to- an American national identity. That is, while the texts of these films attempt to navigate understandings of what a national American identity can or should be by interrogating ideas of what it is explicitly not, it is the focus on destabilizing the region as a place, through competing yet continually reproduced images of the physical landscape, that allows these films to position their understanding of the filmic New England identity as something other and not-American. By flying past Salem village proper in the opening overhead tracking shot in *Hocus Pocus*, and cutting to a secondary character and then following his wild, panicked run deep into the woods, the film gestures at both the figurative and the literal outsider status of the witch in Salem. As in earlier films, the witch is a character who is neither fit to live in polite society, nor welcomed by it.

*Maid of Salem*, a fictional retelling of the Salem Witch Trials that focuses specifically on how a young woman is caught in the dragnet of hysteria that gripped Salem in 1692, opens with an establishing shot of the village of Salem in the middle distance, with a church and its steeple framed by boats lining the harbor of the village in the foreground. An intertitle informs the viewer that the following story is based on authentic records, though it erroneously refers to the setting of that story being in the “Port” (rather than the Village or Town) of Salem. More interestingly, however, this intertitle asserts that Salem is “...a gateway to the vast territories of the new world...[sic].” From there, the film fades into a medium shot of the village common, with a large regiment of soldiers marching, then cuts to several other scenes of daily village life. At this point, a town elder rings a bell and gathers the villagers to read a proclamation decreeing that a townsman has been expelled from office, and relieved of his charge of cattle, for “habitual inebriation.” By informing the viewer in the opening intertitle that Salem is an important shipping port, a gateway, the film seems to want to position the town as an important, cosmopolitan, worldly place within the new world. Yet, this opening sequence juxtaposes whatever assumptions the viewer may draw from being told that Salem is a gateway by, first, featuring the town church so prominently in

the shot, and, secondly, by beginning the film with a scene of intolerance: relieving a man of his official duties and of his livelihood for his failure to adhere to social mores. It is unclear from this slightly peculiar opening intertitle and establishing shot how much foreknowledge of the European settlement of the area *Maid of Salem* expects of its viewers, but this opening sequence establishes Salem as a place where intolerance and small-mindedness rules (and is the rule of law), in spite of its position as a “gateway to the vast territories of the new world,” and all the cosmopolitan privilege and thinking that that might imply. As such, this opening sequence establishes the intolerant and prosecutorial mindset of the village, a theme that dominates the rest of the film, and which it never fully resolves.

Also opening with an establishing intertitle, which informs viewers that the events happened “Long ago when people still believed in witches...”, *I Married a Witch* follows the precedent of *Maid of Salem* and instantly passes judgment on the beliefs of the villagers of Salem, condemns their behavior as deviant and unacceptable, and thus situates Salem firmly outside the boundaries of traditional society. Unlike *Maid of Salem*, however, *I Married a Witch* presents its first view of Salem and of the citizens of Salem in a much more pastoral scene, as the intertitle fades in on a smoking pile of what appears to be wood, which as viewers will soon realize is where Jennifer and her father will be burned at the stake for committing the crime of being accused of witchcraft. The camera then pans to a large crowd of Salem villagers, who appear to have ventured far outside of the established boundaries of the village (which can be faintly made out in the background) in order to witness and carry out this spectacle.

The 1960 film *The City of the Dead*, similarly to *I Married a Witch*, also begins with the execution of a witch, condemned by a town elder to burn on March 4, 1692 for the death of Abigail Adams. Yet, this opening scene of *The City of the Dead* seems to occur in the cramped and claustrophobic center of the village, as the only bit of nature that can be seen is a dead tree in the background of the opening shot. The film utilizes a number of quick cuts, high and low angle shots, and impeded views of the scenic action with bits of housing and other miscellany in the extreme foreground in order to emphasize the intolerance and close-mindedness of this persecution and execution of a woman based merely on accusations of witchcraft.

Unlike the actual Salem Witch Trials, the witch in this film, initially named as Elizabeth Selwyn, though later known as the hotel proprietress, Mrs. Newless, is accused of and then executed for directly causing the death of another human being. The historical Salem witches were tried and executed for accusations of bewitchings



and leading villagers to act in inappropriate ways, and for the loss of crops and livestock, but never for actual murder.<sup>105</sup> Also of note is the name of the victim, Abigail Adams, who was famously the wife of one future American president, and the mother of another future president. Though this filmic Abigail Adams is most definitely not the same historical person, the use of such a prominent name immediately serves to root the film historically and geographically, linking it to the founding of the United States.

Upon then shifting to its present day setting, *The City of the Dead* introduces its nominal viewpoint character and heroine, Nan Barlow. Barlow, taking a class on witchcraft being taught by Professor Alan Driscoll, decides that she must “go to New England” in order to undertake first hand research on witchcraft so that her term paper passes muster and possibly earns her a scholarship. Driscoll sends Barlow to the fictional town of Whitewood, Massachusetts, where, of course, the witch Elizabeth Selwyn was executed in the opening scene of the film. Barlow speaks of wanting to get a feel for the atmosphere of the place, and of how the witches really were, and of wanting to speak to the descendants of the Puritans, as if, two hundred seventy years later, the descendants had not moved beyond the boundaries their small, isolated hamlet and spread throughout the vast continent of North America. These sentiments, combined with the somewhat clunky phrasing of wanting to “go to New England,” paint the area as some foreign, exotic, mystical land filled with the abject horror of witchcraft, so far removed from the daily life of wherever in America this college or university happens to be.

To further enforce this idea of the isolated and foreign nature of the area of Whitewood specifically, and of New England more generally (by association), the film makes every effort to indicate and to state that outsiders never go to Whitewood, nor are they welcomed. While driving herself to the town early in the film, Barlow stops to ask for directions, only to be told by an elderly gas station attendant that “Not many god-fearing folks go to Whitewood.” Given the historical circumstances of both the founding of Massachusetts Bay colony (though reincorporated as the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1691) and of the prosecution of the Salem Witch Trials by religious fundamentalists (god-fearing people), it seems an odd sentiment that those types of people would no longer be welcome there. Once she arrives in town, Barlow often receives the cold shoulder from the townspeople, and remarks that “Everyone I’ve

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<sup>105</sup> Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1-20; George Brown Tindall and David E Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, Volume I, Fifth Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 140-143.

met here acts as if I'm from another planet.” Near the end of the film, as Nan's brother Richard is driving to Whitewood to investigate her disappearance, the same gas station attendant tells him that “They don't like strangers in Whitewood.” The effect of this establishes Whitewood and New England as an isolated and unwelcoming place, and thus as somewhere existing outside the mores of traditional society. This reinforces the tension and the focus on outsider status that was established in *Maid of Salem* and *I Married a Witch*.

While the continually re-presented and reproduced physical landscape of filmic New England erode the imageability of the region, the iconographic fixity of the witches of these films act as carriers of regional imageability instead of the physical environment.

#### **4.2 *The New England Witch and Feminine Agency***

By stripping away her agency, and by placing her in a subservient role, the American film industry seems to unconsciously separate the iconographically fixed image of the New England witch, who stands as an avatar for an imagined identity of New England, from an American identity, and thus asks American film audiences to consider a national American identity against an image of what it is not. This lack of agency and her subservience indicates that the possessor of this identity is there to be exploited by those with agency and power. What is meant by “agency” is that these films purposefully deny their New England witches the narrative power to make independent choices for their own benefit, or, that they do not have “...the free will of an autonomous self...”<sup>106</sup> That these New England witches do not have any “...productive interaction with fate, rather than passive consumption...”<sup>107</sup> indicates their status as passive and acted-upon characters, even though they are nominally the protagonists in these films. As a result of this lack of personal, feminine agency, it may be instructive to consider the filmic female New England witch, serving as perhaps a metonym for the filmically imagined region, as being positioned and imagined by the American film industry as serving a similar role as a colony, inasmuch as she is there to serve the needs of her powerful counterparts. Thus, the way in which the American film industry presents an image of the filmic New England witch allows for the possible development of an attitude of internal colonialism towards the region and its people, as

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<sup>106</sup> Lata Mani, “Multiple Mediations: Feminist Scholarship in the Age of Multinational Reception,” *Feminist Review* 35 (Summer 1990): 36.

<sup>107</sup> D. Travers Scott, “The Postfeminist User: Feminism and Media Theory in Two Interactive Media Properties,” *Feminist Media Studies* 10, no. 4 (2010): 465.

their filmic identity can be understood to be one that should be exploited in order to more concretely negotiate and define an American national identity.

In order to more fully explore this role of an acted-upon character who can be read as a passive and subservient identity against which larger, national American identities can be negotiated, it is useful to consider how this role actually functions on screen in audiovisual media. After beginning with a brief establishing shot of its setting, an intertitle to orient its viewers, and a short communal scene among the villagers, *Maid of Salem* introduces its protagonist, Barbara Clarke, to film viewers as she delivers candles to various villagers for her aunt, who appears to be the town chandler and with whom she also lives. The film thus begins with Clarke being shown to film audiences as being fully engaged in the social and economic life of the village of Salem. Yet, *Maid of Salem* quickly establishes Clarke as an outsider, and as someone who poses a threat to the accepted ways of life in the village. Shortly after finishing her duties delivering candles, Clarke goes to the home of Elder Goode, only to find many of the village women crowded around Tituba, the black slave of the Goode family, telling fortunes. That she was the last to arrive, or, perhaps, never invited, to this communal gathering demonstrates the place of Clarke outside of the social fabric of the village. Her status as an orphan further cements Clarke as an outsider, as both of her parents had died before she even came to the New World with her aunt and young cousin. More, one must assume that the aunt is widowed, as the only male presence in the Clarke household is the young cousin. Thus, Clarke not only comes from a nontraditional nuclear family, but she is also independent of any ties, and perhaps filial obeisance, to the male population of the town.

Existing thusly on the margins of her society, it makes sense that *Maid of Salem* then saddles Clarke with an actual, literal outsider as her love interest. This coupling leads to confusion, fear, and ultimately her persecution and condemnation. Her love interest, who is being hidden in Salem by his uncle, introduces himself as Roger Coverman, “of Virginia.” He further introduces himself by stating that he is a “...fugitive, a rebel, and a traitor to the crown.” Coverman, then, is a double outsider, as he lives both outside the law and hails from another colony altogether. His clothing further marks him as an outsider: it is colorful, rather than the darks and greys of the villagers of Salem, and it is highly stylized in comparison to that of the villagers. Indeed, the outfit that Coverman wears when the viewer initially sees him is redolent of a French chevalier or of a Spanish conquistador. His uncle further reprimands him at

one point, telling him that the Puritans may not take kindly to his speech, solidifying the status of Coverman as someone outside of the traditional Salem village life.

Yet, while Coverman and Clarke may both fulfill roles as outsiders in this film, their interactions reinforce traditional gender roles and sexual power dynamics. Upon first meeting, Coverman immediately begins trying to, quite forcefully (though with some jocularly), coax Clarke into meeting him again. This being 1692, she attempts to resist, knowing full well the scandal that would erupt from a young, unmarried woman meeting unsupervised with a strange man. Undeterred, Coverman continues to talk until he gets what he wants, though in this instance Clarke is able to leave the cottage without committing to anything. Later, during the town Sabbath meeting, and with Clarke already drawing attention to herself with her ostentatious dress, outside, Coverman sneaks up to the church window wearing his own outlandish costume, and, upon catching the eye of Clarke, begins to once again insist, cajole, and coax a meeting out of her. Between being distracted from the sermon and being worn down by the persistence of Coverman, Clarke finally shrugs, and acquiesces to his desires, though not entirely willfully.

Once the town has finally been gripped by fear and hysteria over witchcraft, forcing the villagers remain indoors at night, Coverman appears outside a window again, this time at the home that Clarke shares with her aunt and her young cousin, and again insists that she come outside to meet him. Again, Clarke caves into the persistent, unrelenting demands of Coverman, in spite of her initial refusal and resistance.

Her young cousin catches her coming back inside the house, and it is this meeting that ultimately leads to the persecution of Barbara Clarke. Although these are ultimately harmless interactions in a courting ritual between the two, it is instructive to read these scenes as enforcing the traditional roles of men and women in sexual relationships. Specifically, the woman exists purely to fulfill the desires of the man. In these scenes, it is always Coverman demanding interaction for his own benefit, either unaware or uncaring of the harm it may cause Clarke. More, these scenes seem to indicate that Clarke, the protagonist of the film and the titular maid of Salem, possesses no personal agency as she succumbs to Coverman. The film never shows viewers any instance where Clarke chooses to be with Coverman. Rather, the relationship progresses from their first interaction, where he is quite obviously taken by her beauty, to Clarke displaying the initial signs of attraction to him, to Coverman demanding to meet, with Clarke finally relenting. As Coverman is the one responsible for placing Clarke in the situations that cause the citizens of Salem to suspect her of being a witch,

and thus is essentially the source of her persecution, it is only the needs and desires of Coverman that are ultimately met. Much like he is the source of her downfall, Coverman, however, is also the source of her redemption.

In the climactic scene of the film, Coverman, who had been captured as a wanted fugitive but had then subsequently escaped from prison, rides into Salem village in order to save Clarke, just as she is about to be hanged as a witch. Clarke, who had recounted her story of meeting with Coverman accurately to the court, though she had left him anonymous in order to protect him, was still believed to be a witch and to have been consorting with the devil. Once Coverman arrives, however, the confusion is cleared up, the villagers realize their mistake not only in attempting to hang Clarke, but with the entire witch trials, and the film ends with a final scene of the (presumed) governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay giving a firm rebuke to the elders of Salem. Again, Clarke has no agency in her romantic choices, her downfall, or her redemption. All of these events occur as a direct result of the desires of her male counterpart.

That Coverman is from Virginia, a separate colony, adds another layer to how one should read the climactic scene. It is not, ultimately, the people of Salem, or the accused witches, who end the fear and hysteria, but, rather, an outsider who arrives in a blaze of glory. Not only does Coverman fulfill his own desires (saving his love), but he is also able to strongly reprimand a rogue colony. In this sense, then, it is the normative outsider, representative of the rest of the United States (or, as they were at the time, the Thirteen Colonies), perhaps, to correct the aberrant behavior of the colonists of Massachusetts Bay and Salem village. The result of this is that this film seemingly asks its audience to understand its witch character as someone who lacks the ability to act on her own, and is instead passively reliant upon an avatar of American-ness to save her from certain doom. Thus, *Maid of Salem* seems to be positioning Clarke as a kind of not-American, in the sense that she embodies certain principles that would seem to be anathema to an American identity. In this way then, *Maid of Salem* engages in a larger cultural process of exploring what a national American identity is or can be by foregrounding the bankruptcy of what it perceives a New England identity to be, and asking its audiences to build that American identity based upon the negative New England identity.

This theme of lack of feminine agency can also be found in *I Married a Witch*, in which a witch named Jennifer and her father are executed in Salem in 1692, only to return as initially disembodied puffs of smoke two hundred seventy years later in order

to seek revenge. As with her witch predecessors, Jennifer lacks any personal agency to enact her plan, and must ultimately be saved by a man with whom she has fallen in love. Immediately before the execution of Jennifer the witch and her father and the imprisonment of their souls in a nearby tree, she places a curse on the family responsible for her death, the Wooley family. This curse condemns the men of the Wooley family to always marry the wrong woman. *I Married a Witch* then shows the viewer a series of several scenes that illustrate the accurate fulfillment of this curse throughout history, in 1770, 1861, 1904, “and so on...”, with each Wooley man clearly miserable in his marriage, and with it then often ending in calamity for him. The phrasing of this curse is interesting to note, as it condemns the Wooley man to marry the wrong woman, thus eliding any agency the female may have in her own choice in marrying a Wooley. In order to fully enact her revenge on (the engaged) Wallace Wooley in 1942, who is of course descended from the man who condemned Jennifer and her father to death in 1692, the then corporeal Jennifer enlists the help of her father to concoct a love potion to give to Wooley so that he will fall in love with her while still marrying his fiancée, thereby doubly compounding his misery.

When Jennifer first reincorporates herself in order to fully enact her revenge, the body she inhabits has blonde hair. Upon first appearing to Wooley, Jennifer asks him if he would prefer her as a brunette. Although the reason for her curiosity in the hair color preference of Wooley is bound up in her revenge plot, it is important to note that in this moment, the female witch once again suppresses her own personal wants or desires (as Jennifer is quite taken with her own body and appearance) in order to appease the base desires of the male. Further, demonstrating the lack of agency that Jennifer has, a series of mishaps ultimately cause Wooley to unknowingly give the love potion to Jennifer, causing her to fall in love with him, much to the consternation of her father. Yet, the film ends happily enough, with the two marrying and having children, but, importantly, it is Wooley who chooses to fall in love with Jennifer, while her unwitting consumption of the love potion forces her to fall in love with him. In the final scene of the film, the housekeeper of the now happily married Wooley couple bursts into a room and exasperatedly complains of their young (blonde) daughter, who then bounds into the room, running around on a broomstick. Jennifer remarks to Wooley that “We’re going to have trouble with that one,” to which Wooley responds, “That’s impossible. Isn’t it?” The scene seems to imply that the young, nameless daughter will eventually grow into a witch, like her mother. And, much like her mother and her love for Wooley, the young daughter has no choice in her future, and is one more instance of a female

lacking agency. Although, at first glance, it might appear that being a witch in possession of supernatural powers might imbue these characters with a sense of agency and control over their own destinies, these films demonstrate that filmic New England witches are in fact passive and acted-upon by men in roles that can be read as more in line with traditional American notions of identity.

As the narrative roles of Barbara Clarke and Jennifer demonstrate, filmic New England witches have been (re)presented as lacking any sort of agency, particularly in instances where it would be required for them to secure their own fate. Instead, these characters are acted upon by and are steered in a direction according to the desires or needs of the men in their life. Importantly, these men who act upon the filmic New England witch are there to correct her seemingly aberrant behavior. As a result, then, American film audiences consume images of filmic New England and its witches in which she has been removed from and punished by her own society, and has no control over her own destiny. With this image and identity becoming iconographically fixed, these films seem to position these characters as being in possession of an identity that is less than desirable. In this way, the filmic New England witch functions as a way for American film audiences to consider a type of identity, which is also geographically rooted to a specifically defined region, that cannot satisfactorily contribute to any conversations about a larger, national American identity. Thus, the two outcomes of this are that American film audiences begin to negotiate the conversations of what a national American identity is or can be by necessarily excluding a New England identity, while also simultaneously allowing a New England identity to stand on its own, separate and distinct.

### ***4.3 The Blinding Bloneness of the New England Witch***

One of the primary visual indicators in these films that these New England witches are separate and distinct from their larger communities is the focus and emphasis on their blonde hair. Specifically, in addition to her narrative otherness, American film audiences are able to visually identify the otherness of the filmic New England witch through the obviousness of her bloneness on screen. Discovering bloneness through practical and economic necessity as a new and a nontraditional visual shorthand for otherness at the same time as it was discovering its capabilities as a narrative storytelling medium, film was able to redefine the meaning of what female bloneness signified. The result is a symbolism of feminine bloneness with a myriad of different, and sometimes competing, meanings. This is evidenced by the sheer

volume of blonde stereotypes that appear in film as a medium throughout its history, from the traditional and virginal purity of blonde women, to vamps and femmes fatales, to dumb blondes, and to tomboys. Hollowing out the meaning and the symbolism of traditional feminine bloneness in this manner, and replacing it with numerous stereotypes, leaves filmic feminine bloneness unsteady in its symbolic definition, but linked by its enduring bloneness and its gesturing towards otherness (in comparison to other actors on screen). Thus, audiovisual media seems to deploy bloneness as a way to initially indicate the otherness of a character on screen, whose specific type of otherness can then be filled in by the narrative exposition of the film depending on the individual needs of each film. This new and easily recognizable visual shorthand for otherness manifests itself in the imagining of Boston, New England, and its people by the American film industry, as many protagonists in New England films through American film history have been presented to audiences as blonde.

Hilaria Loyo explores the coding of bloneness as otherness through its connection to whiteness, blackness, and performativity of racial masquerades, and formulates the term “blinding bloneness” to describe the conspicuousness of filmic bloneness, a term that I have also chosen to adopt. For Loyo, “...the blinding blonde can be defined as a type of femininity characterized by an excessive and artificial bloneness that makes present precisely those shady aspects it pretends to conceal and that confer upon it such intense brightness.”<sup>108</sup> Here, Loyo asserts that this “blinding bloneness” is so conspicuous on film because of its artifice, as the need to dye hair artificially blonde stems from its status as a somewhat aberrantly occurring natural hair color. Loyo, however, tethers this idea of blonde artifice to a deliberate attempt to demonstrate otherness on film because of its “intense brightness.” That is, this unnatural artifice of the blinding blondness then acts as a beacon for viewers, demanding and commanding their attention. With the attention of viewers thus firmly fixated upon the blinding blonde of film, blonde otherness is fully cemented as, “...the blinding blonde connotes both the purity associated with whiteness and the sexual activity traditionally associated with blackness in a juxtaposition such that even when in the absence of a black element, the intense white brightness makes its absence conspicuous.”<sup>109</sup> It does not matter what specific type of blonde is on screen, whether she is a blonde bombshell or a comedic heroine or a symbol of virginal purity, as their

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<sup>108</sup> Hilaria Loyo, “Blinding Blondes: Whiteness, Femininity, and Stardom,” in *Questions of Colour in Cinema: From Paintbrush to Pixel*, ed. Wendy Everett (New York, NY, USA: Peter Lang, 2007), 186.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.



public performance of bloneness immediately highlights to viewers and audiences their otherness.

Because it is a coded marker of otherness, blonde performativity fits a pattern in audiovisual media and other performance art where normalized or acceptable identity was collectively negotiated in direct contrast to conspicuous aberrance. With both its unnaturalness and its artifice so flagrantly assaulting this normalized or mainstream identity, blonde performativity is “At once more radical and subtle than blackface in minstrelsy, [and] the bleached hair—which, in its outrageous unnaturalness demands attention—simultaneously points to the something beneath: the naturally dark hair that, without treatment, must reappear in a few weeks’ time and, even further down and inside, the contradictory emotions issuing from the ‘gray matter.’”<sup>110</sup> That is, bloneness demands that attention be paid to the quite literal dark matter that appears unless bloneness is properly looked after. Indeed:

On the one hand, the blinding blonde, as defined here, establishes clear common cultural origins and links among various types of blondes, ‘dumb’ and ‘wise’, performing their racial masquerade in either an unconscious or self-conscious way, whether as a defence or an act of defiance, but in every case, these links alert us to the multiple interconnections of gender, class, race, and of the moral and ethnic meanings attached to them. More importantly, the symptomatic character of the blinding blonde also alerts us to the meanings and desires that it represses.<sup>111</sup>

Within this context of scandalous otherness in the face of mainstream identity, the emergence of a filmic New England witch performing bloneness begins to make sense. She is not a type of blonde, though she carries the burden of bloneness throughout filmic history. The deviant behavior in Salem that resulted in the persecution and the execution of twenty innocent (mostly) women and men, something so far outside of the mainstream of accepted values of the American identity, can be given a visual shorthand so that film viewers can quickly make the connection between a geographically specific identity and its otherness in comparison to the rest of the United States.

This blonde New England witch serves this exact purpose, as both she and her image serve to highlight what are and what are not acceptable characteristics of a national identity in the United States. Once the image of the blonde New England witch

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<sup>110</sup> Ellen Tremper, *I'm No Angel: The Blonde in Fiction and Film* (Charlottesville, VA, USA: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>111</sup> Loyo, “Blinding Blondes,” 193.

has been established, and audiences have been conditioned to understand what it connotes and how they should respond, it can be easily inserted at any point when American audiences need to be reminded of what the national American identity is not.

With the film *Witchcraft*, the American film industry first establishes not only the iconography of the filmic New England witch, but also definitively depicts New Englanders as blonde for the first time. Yet, this trope of bloneness was quickly picked up and repeated in the following years, as, for example, Mary Pickford plays the blonde title character in *Pollyanna* in 1920, and Eva Novak and Janet Gaynor both play the blonde female lead in, respectively, *Dollar Devils* in 1923 and *Small Town Girl* in 1936. None of these films fall within the tradition of the New England witch film, but all do imagine and present their images of female New Englanders as blonde. This image of blonde, female Bostonians and New Englanders survives filmically through the “Bostonian and New Englanders abroad” cycle of films to 1997 and the release of *Good Will Hunting*.

It is within the filmic iconography of the New England witch that feminine bloneness being used as a way to imagine a regional identity of otherness can be most instructively considered, as it is within the tradition of the New England witch film that filmic New Englanders are first imagined as other and blonde. Following after *Witchcraft* in 1916, the first appearance of the blonde New England witch, the 1937 film, *Maid of Salem*, is the next film that considers the image and the iconography of the New England witch as an avatar for the filmic imagined community of New England.

While dropping off candles to one of the men in the town, a Dr. John Harding, he presents Barbara Clarke with a new bonnet he had picked up for her in a shop in Boston, from which he has just returned. Clarke, excited by the gift, immediately removes the dark hood she had been wearing to expose a plain, white bonnet covering her light colored hair. She then places this new bonnet on top of her original white one and moves to admire herself in a small mirror. Upon trying it on, Martha Harding, the wife of Dr. Harding, enters the room, tells Clarke that the bonnet is “very gay” in a stern voice, and that she should not let the town elders see her wearing it before the Sabbath meeting. Rebuked in this manner, Clarke removes the bonnet and arranges with the Hardings to hide it until the next Sabbath meeting. In this scene, the dark-haired Harding couple stands on either side of Clarke, framing her in the center of the screen for viewers, and thus highlighting her bloneness, which was also further embellished by her “very gay” bonnet. The framing of this scene, combined with the embellished

blondeness of Clarke and the dialogic rebuke, demonstrates to viewers the status of Clarke and her blondeness as different and other from those in her community.

Later in the film, at the aforementioned Sabbath meeting, Clarke wears her ostentatious bonnet, while additionally dressing in light-colored clothing with a frilly lace collar, when everyone else dresses in somber greys and blacks. Clarke is so conspicuous in her outfit that, upon noticing her, the reverend amends his sermon and warns his flock against women who dress outlandishly and cause the minds of men to wander. The film cuts from a low-angled medium shot of the reverend pontificating from his pulpit to a high-angle crowd shot of the parishioners. A (perhaps non-diegetic) spotlight illuminates Clarke, while everyone else seems to blend together and into the background. Being thus so obviously different, it was only a matter of time before Clarke was accused of being a witch.

The way that *Maid of Salem* highlights Clarke and her blondeness, in this moment, echoes the double image of the blinding blondeness of Jennifer in *I Married a Witch*. As in that film, here, *Maid of Salem* further compounds the blondeness of Clarke by emphasizing and doubling it with a (comparatively) flamboyant white bonnet so that its difference from the other members of the congregation is put into stark relief for viewers. More, the use of the spotlight to illuminate Clarke from directly overhead, amidst a sea of dark-headed individuals, creates the effect of blinding blondeness. As with Jennifer in *I Married a Witch*, *Maid of Salem* doubles (and, with the spotlight, triples) the blondeness of Clarke, thus forcing the homogenous dark-headedness of other members of the congregation outside of the frame of focus. Doing this asks viewers to confront the otherness of Clarke, as her place within the society of the village of Salem is so clearly emphasized as one that exists apart from the villagers. Indeed, accentuating the blinding blondeness of Clarke amidst a darkened and dark-headed crowd of her peers and neighbors suggest that Clarke can never fully be a part of the community, as any trace of the homogenized darkness of Salem has been removed, forced out, and covered up by her blondeness.

Perhaps the apotheosis of the blonde New England witch is in the 1942 comedy, *I Married a Witch*, which clearly emphasizes this outsider status of its New England witch through her “blinding blondeness” and through the direct dialogic mention of her blonde hair. This film follows a witch named Jennifer, played by Veronica Lake, who was executed as a witch and whose soul was imprisoned in a tree in 1692. In her death throes in 1692, Jennifer curses the original Wooley of Salem, who was primarily responsible for executing her and her father (also imprisoned in the tree), and all of his

male descendants, to always marry the wrong woman. Once her soul is freed two hundred and seventy years after her death, Jennifer seeks revenge on the contemporary male descendant of the same Wooley family, and plans to ruin his impending marriage by causing him to fall in love with her.

Once Jennifer manages to become corporeal, having initially existed as only a disembodied puff of smoke once her soul was freed in 1942, and during her first interaction with Wooley, the film immediately delineates her difference for the viewer from other characters through non-expositional visual shorthand, as Jennifer the witch is the only blonde character seen throughout the film. In fact, Jennifer even remarks upon her bloneness upon first inhabiting and seeing her new body, as she asks the target of her revenge, Wallace Wooley, if he likes blondes, or if he would prefer her to be a brunette.

In an attempt to hasten the speed of her revenge on Wooley, Jennifer and her father cause the local Pilgrim Hotel, deliberately named to remind viewers of the geographic specificity of the area and the characters and to also indicate a link to the pre-history of the United States, to catch fire. The local fire department quickly responds, and begins combatting the fire. Yet, their civic duty to fight the fire impedes Wooley and his fiancée from continuing with their planned evening, as they had been driving somewhere for a night out, only to now be blocked by the sudden commotion. Thus stopped and waiting in traffic, Wooley exits his vehicle to ask what is happening. At this moment, Wooley, and only Wooley, hears the voice of Jennifer inside the burning building, and he immediately rushes inside to save who he believes to be a trapped woman. Until the (forthcoming) moment that she specifically asks about her hair color, neither Wooley nor film viewers have seen Jennifer or her new body. Once Wooley does track her down in the burning Pilgrim Hotel, however, she does provide, off-screen, a full accounting of her corporeality for both, as Wooley asks if she is “all right.” Jennifer then teases him that, “You’ll think so. Two legs, two arms, a face, hair. Yes, I seem to be complete.” Following this, Wooley provides Jennifer with his overcoat, as she has no clothes, and he then picks her up and carries her in an attempt to escape the fire, all without either he or film viewers having yet clearly seen her. The two soon become trapped in another hotel room, where Jennifer finally finds a mirror and is able to see herself for the first time.

The film initially frames this scene in a full-length medium shot, with Jennifer standing in front of a mirror with her back to the camera, and separated from Wooley, who is standing on the other side of a partition. Jennifer, who has also just found a new

coat to wear, is backlit and appears only in shadows, so that the film still hides her appearance from viewers. This continued obfuscation of Jennifer allows *I Married a Witch* to fully emphasize her blinding bloneness as, in the next moment, the scene cuts to an over-the-shoulder shot of Jennifer looking at herself in the mirror, and a double image (both her and her reflection in the mirror) of her blinding blonde hair engulfs the screen. She then turns to face the camera, and, with a coquettish grin and playfully arched eyebrows, notes her bloneness and asks Wooley for his opinion: "I'm a blonde. Would you rather I be a brunette?"

*I Married a Witch* deliberately inserts the bloneness of Jennifer into the dialogue and the narrative of the film as a plot point at this moment. Differing from the bloneness of the New England witches who will be discussed below, *I Married a Witch* highlights the bloneness of Jennifer by forcing out and removing any other color, or even the possibility for other color, in a delayed reveal to film viewers of the double image of the blinding bloneness of Jennifer. Further, the film continues to blind its viewers with the bloneness of Jennifer by asking them directly how they would prefer her hair, either blonde or brunette, and thus asking them to consider her hair as a commentary on her specifically. Making the subtext of bloneness into explicit text for film audiences has the effect of asking viewers to specifically consider hair and hair color, and its position within the film. That is, Jennifer directly asking if Wooley, and, by extension, film audiences, prefer her as a blonde, she is calling attention to her own difference from the rest of the characters in the film, while also exploiting the awareness of viewers of iconographic cinematic conventions.

What becomes clear across all of these films is that the New England witch has been represented on film in such a way as to mark her as visually distinct from her other onscreen counterparts. Initially, this visual otherness manifests itself in the blinding blondness of the New England witch, which becomes a short and easy visual representation for a filmic New Englander. Though changes in film technology and the turn to color film eventually meant that there was no technological need for the New England witch to still appear blonde on film, it is clear in *Hocus Pocus* that hair color and style is still used as a visual marker of otherness. Combined with the narrative focus on her lack of agency, this visual focus on a clear marker of difference seems to create a character who stands firmly apart from the rest of her society. As a result of this, then, American film audiences consume an iconographically fixed image of this filmic New England witch through linear film history, and therefore only ever witness her, as a stand-in for New England, as being separate and different. This, then, allows

for American film audiences to interrogate their own notions of a larger, national American identity that explicitly removes any image or understanding of a New England identity. The effect of this is the simultaneous imagining of an American identity in specific contrast to a New England identity, and also the imagining of a separate New England identity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the wake of the turbulence caused by a rapidly changing economic and technological landscape at the start of the twentieth century, the quest to (re)negotiate an American identity for the modern era began with an earnest and longing gaze to a particular geographic home of the American nation, specifically the New England region, and its mythologized character. Indeed, Kevin Lynch mentions this longing for an ancestral home in his *The Image of the City* when he is ostensibly studying mental constructions of the legibility of a city. He writes that, “A striking landscape is the skeleton upon which many primitive races erect their socially important myths. Common memories of the ‘home town’ were often the first and easiest point of contact between lonely soldiers during the war [World War II].”<sup>112</sup> Yet, this mythologized New England identity was soon found to be bankrupt and was quickly abandoned. “Claims for New England as a national model or exemplar were easily perceived as illusory and misplaced, a deluded cultural imperialism...”<sup>113</sup> And indeed, cultural commentary at the time began to openly wonder that if, “...New England’s Puritan legacy had proven inadequate to meet the demands of the time...”<sup>114</sup> as it had long been rendered moot as the cultural and economic centers of the United States had moved further away from the geographic origins in Puritan New England, then “...what cultural role could the region play at all?”<sup>115</sup> An instructive metaphor here may be that of the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny: the American nation may have started in the New England region, but Americans soon began pushing further west, “...in order to conquer new frontiers and express their ‘providential destiny’ to subdue the entire continent.”<sup>116</sup> Just as American pioneers found New England to be inadequate for their personal vision of an American life, and thus began to move elsewhere, the reckoning of the American identity in the

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<sup>112</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 4.

<sup>113</sup> Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>116</sup> George Brown Tindall and David E Shi, *America: A Narrative History, Volume I*, Fifth Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 581.

artistic and cultural sphere brought about by the Gilded Age followed the same path, as “...a generation of American writers and artists [began] to look beyond New England to other seemingly more pristine, less developed and less Europeanized parts of the country.”<sup>117</sup> That is, Americans began to seek an American identity elsewhere in America, not the in rigidly defined New England.

At the same time that American society was once again renegotiating its national identity, and also finding the original national identity that was located in New England to be inadequate, cinema was beginning to emerge as a viable artistic and cultural form, and thus began to insert itself into the conversation of national identity. Yet, in the period before both sound and color became standard in film, viewers needed narratives that could be communicated in the easiest and the most straightforward manner. Thus, in its attempt to make a meaningful contribution to this national conversation, the American film industry first focused its attention on the straightforward narrative images that stem from the history of the witch and of witchcraft in New England. Here, it is perhaps useful to once again return to the definition of imageability that Kevin Lynch provided as a way of potentially illuminating these straightforward narrative images in early cinema. Imageability is “...that quality in a[n]...object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images....”<sup>118</sup> Thus, because of the technological constraints in the nascent technology of audiovisual media, creating a sense of imageability was imperative so that viewers could create and maintain strong, useful mental images.

Yet, because this history of the Salem Witch Trials clashes so violently with the accepted and established narrative of American history, and because the prevailing national opinion at the time was to dismiss the regional identity of New England, the placement of New England and its people outside of an accepted and an established American narrative and identity seems to be a natural consequence. Through the image and the imageability of the filmic New England witch, American audiovisual media seems to situate filmic New England as a kind of not-American otherness. If New England history is inextricably linked with witchcraft, which in turn places it outside of American history, then the iconography and subsequent imageability of the witch only serves to reinforce generic assumptions of American viewers vis-à-vis witches, New England, and the United States.

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<sup>117</sup> Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 9.

Further, because film had only visual cues and sporadic, short intertitles to communicate narrative and exposition to its viewers, the American film industry needed a convenient way to visually communicate otherness that was also not prohibitively expensive. For both practical and for economic reason, bloneness and blonde hair was chosen as a way to communicate this otherness to film audiences. And because well-known narratives were necessary for the emerging narratives in cinema to be understood by audiences, and because the ongoing American conversation over the national identity had found the primordial New England identity to be bankrupt and anathema to what many believed the American identity should be, it is entirely appropriate that the blonde female New England witch emerges at this moment in time and sticks as an avatar for all of New England and its people. As a result, this image of a blonde, female witch becomes iconographically fixed in the imagining of the region by the American film industry, and serves to render filmic New England as an apparent, legible space in the minds of American film audiences, albeit one that seems to be positioned outside of and apart from a larger, American national identity.

This iconographic fixity can be seen through the narratives and denouements of *Witchcraft* in 1916 and, twenty-one years later, in the 1937 film, *Maid of Salem*. Though the visual similarity in costuming in both films could be attributed to a desire for historical verisimilitude, the bloneness and the narrative fate of each character is perhaps far less coincidental. Their blonde hair allows them to quickly and easily stand out among the larger cast of dark haired villagers, and thus functions as visual shorthand for viewers to understand their status as societal outsiders, or as being different from the rest, while also making filmic New England imageable as a space in the minds of American film audiences as also being outside or different. That both characters end up on the scaffold, condemned to death, only to be saved by male love interests demonstrates the inability of women to control their own fate. The steady accrual of this same imagery and the same character attributes throughout the homogenous, empty time of film history thus comes to function as visual and narrative indices. And because of the specific geography of these films and their characters, these visual and narrative indices form the identity of one community in the imagination of another, larger community. In the way that, through constant repetition and viewer recognition, genre forms on film, this image of the New England witch accrues the same meaning.

Because of the fixity of her image, the filmic New England witch becomes instantly recognizable across narrative genre and historical time, and her iconography and characterization metastasizes into a sort generic convention, so that she acts as a



signpost, signaling to viewers what to expect of and from her. Unlike other characters, real or imaginary, she has no interiority, and the limitless potential of how she can look and act is poleaxed down into an infinite number of variations, with each one nearly identical to the other. Though Veronica Lake or Claudette Colbert or Bette Midler portray her on film, the filmic New England witch remains yoked to her own constructed iconography. Thus, the image of the New England witch can be thought of as the defining genre of the filmically imagined community of New England and Boston. She, who is blonde and without agency, who is persecuted by society and who is a social outsider, arises from actual historical events. Yet, the American film industry appropriates her image as a way to create (or, perhaps, to codify) an identity for a region. She exists up and down historical time in film, and across generic boundaries, as she is seen in historical dramas, romantic comedies, and horror films. This iconographically fixed image of the filmic New England witch acts as a type of imageability for representations of filmic New England and its people. As Lynch notes “...a distinctive and legible [image] not only offers security but also heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience.”<sup>119</sup> This iconographically fixed filmic New England witch, then, constructs an imageable filmic New England in the minds of viewers. Because the imageability of filmic New England is inscribed upon the body of a character, rather than fixed to the geographic place of the filmic representation, audiences are invited to position the imageability of the region as being inextricably yoked to the highly visible otherness of the character. In this way, the filmic New England witch merges, in the minds of American film audiences, the space of filmic New England with the otherness of its people, therefore imagining audiovisual representations as something against which a larger, national American identity can be negotiated. Indeed, this iconographic fixity of a blonde, New England woman carries forward as a singular marker of filmic New England imageability, as will be explored further in the following chapter.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 5.



**“A VERY WELL-BRED, LADY-LIKE BOSTONIAN  
MATRON”: FILMIC NEW ENGLANDERS TRAVEL  
ABROAD**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Following the establishment, in the earliest days of American cinema, of a nascent filmic identity that imagined filmic New England and its people as a community that existed separately and distinctly from a larger, national American identity, the American film industry next began to codify many of those images and imagined character traits into a more visible and easily identifiable identity for American film audiences. This chapter focuses on a group of films, produced between the years 1950 and 1970 (inclusive), in which a New Englander character travels throughout the United States or the world, and is placed in a seemingly adversarial position to more generically defined American characters. This group of films often juxtapose the character of a wealthy, blonde, female New Englander with a male, American character, and thus allow American film audiences to negotiate an American identity as something that is contrary to the characteristics that the New Englander displays. In this way, this group of films continues to imagine filmic New England as a separately existing community against which notions of American-ness can be negotiated.

This chapter begins by analyzing several concepts of othering employed in the films under analysis in this chapter, and the role that this plays in continuing to imagine a filmic New England community. This section also examines the concepts of Orientalism and internal colonialism in order to explore different concepts of otherness that may be useful in analyzing this filmic otherness.

The chapter next turns its filmic analysis, and to the specific ways in which these films imagine the Bostonian and New Englander identity to be other. One of the foremost ways in which these films imagine Bostonians as other is through the

presentation of these characters as being wealthy inheritors of a family fortune. These films manage to other this type of wealth accumulation by contrasting it with the earned wealth of American characters. Thus, the New Englanders are deprived of access to a crucial piece of an American identity, a self-made fortune. The second characteristic that these films ascribe to New Englanders that marks them as other and separate from an American identity is their ethnic Irish identity. That this group of films imagine their New Englanders as Irish, and allow no space for different ethnic identities, as is the case for their American male counterparts, demonstrates the othering process of the American film industry in these films, as the identity of an entire region is imagined as homogenous and as specifically not-American, as it is linked to a foreign nation-state. Finally, this cycle of films completes its imagining of an other identity of Bostonians and New Englanders as the New England characters of these films are all female, who are then shown to act subserviently to their male, American counterparts. More, the male, American characters often force themselves upon the female New Englanders through some form of sexual aggression. This forced-upon aggression gestures towards the notion of internal colonialism, as one larger, national identity utilizes a specifically and differently marked regional identity for its own needs and desires. It is through this lens that one can most easily see that this filmic New England identity, presented as undeniably other and separate from the larger American identity, is being used as obverse identity against which these films and their viewers can negotiate larger understandings of what a national American identity can or should be. The secondary effect of this, however, is to imagine filmic New England and its people as a separate, not-American community.

Finally, this chapter concludes with an extended analysis of the film *Valley of the Dolls* (1967), the final film of this cycle. This chapter dedicates a large section to the analysis of one film in order to fully examine how these different characteristics of an other filmic New England identity emerge throughout the course of a feature film, and guide viewers to imagine this constructed identity as other. Further, *Valley of the Dolls* proves useful in analyzing the imagined characteristics of this filmic New England identity as the film subverts many of these tropes, which, due to its placement at the chronological end of the cycle, emphasizes the role that they play in the filmic imagining of this identity. As a result of its othering of filmic Boston and New England, the American film industry during this cycle of films constructs an identity for the region and its people that it then places in direct opposition to an American identity. The American film industry is thus able to position the filmic identity of Boston and

New England in such a way so that American film audiences can then imagine these Bostonians as being bound in a deep, horizontal comradeship with each other, but not with their American counterparts.

## **2. OTHERING THE IMAGINED FILMIC COMMUNITY OF NEW ENGLAND**

In the previous cycle of witch films, a specific segment of American audiovisual culture undertook the task of entering into a larger debate about notions of what the national American identity was or could be, but did so through their focus on an identity and a region that was explicitly demonstrated to not be a part of that identity, and was, in fact, contrary to it. By presenting an inverse and negative image of what an American identity should not be, these films allowed their viewers to negotiate American identities while simultaneously imagining a sub-national community as being separate and distinct from those national identities. With the rise to national political prominence and semi-dominance of New England during this time period, it is understandable that another segment of American audiovisual culture would focus on this previously established other (filmic) identity and its role within the larger, national American identity. This cycle of films, therefore, present the New England characters as travelling from the New England region, and thus position the area as a transitory non-place that possesses no imageability. As a result, audiences are then forced to consider the area only through the physical bodies of the New England characters themselves, and it is these bodies that are specifically marked and commented upon as being specifically other than an American identity. Having thus established the otherness of this filmic New England identity, this section next looks at two specific, interconnected lenses through which this otherness can be considered: internal colonialism and Orientalism. Through narrative, text, and dialogue, these films present their New England characters as being both separate from an American identity, and as being useful as a tool for exploitation by an American identity. The effect of this exploitation, combined with the forcing of regional imageability upon the physical bodies of filmic New Englanders, is to create a sense of Orientalism, as the foregrounding and focus upon this otherness of an identity only serves to further heighten it.

Writing in 1975, the sociologist, Michael Hechter, uses the phrase “internal colonialism” to identify one stage of national development. Hechter writes that “The spatially uneven wave of modernization over state territory creates relatively advanced

and less advanced groups. As a consequence of this initial fortuitous advantage, there is a crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups.”<sup>120</sup> He defines these two separate groups as the core and the periphery, and he posits that, “The core is seen to dominate the periphery politically and to exploit it materially.”<sup>121</sup> It is perhaps fraught to assert, in the case of the United States, that New England fulfills this role as a peripheral group and as an internal colony. If one views the situation through purely historical, economic, and political lenses, then one may come to understand New England as being the core region as a result of its long(er than the United States as a nation-state) history, thus giving it a head start in its economic and political development. Yet, it is precisely because of these differences that the region stands apart from and exists on the periphery of the larger American national identity. As these films demonstrate, the vast majority of the United States, and more specifically the American film industry, has the power to imagine both the region of Boston and New England, and the identity of its people. Boston, New England, and its people do not imagine themselves and their identity to be apart from or on the periphery of the United States, nor have they had the power to present that image.

Comparing a feminine, racialized, and other identity of Bostonians and New Englanders to a firmly entrenched, collectively negotiated, and nationally accepted American identity establishes those from New England as possessing an identity that is “not-American,” and, therefore, as being from someplace that is necessarily “not-the-United-States.” In this way, then, this group of films imagines Boston and New England as a separate community within the larger nation-state of the United States, and thus situates the citizens of Boston and of New England as being others and not-Americans from that imagined community. The images from these films serve as an act of Orientalizing this imagined community of Boston and New England because, as Edward Said defines it, “...Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, because a group of outsiders (the American film industry and American film audiences) think, author, and present this image of a nation and its people as an imagined and separate group, it thus constrains and limits the thoughts of film viewers regarding the identity and nature of the New Englanders. The very act of presenting Bostonians and New Englanders as

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<sup>120</sup> Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966* (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 9.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>122</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, UK: Penguin Classics, 2003), 42.

other simultaneously creates and reinforces, therefore limiting and defining, the identity and the image of the New Englander.

This imagining, othering, and Orientalizing of New England is exactly what allows the region and its people to fulfill the role of the periphery group in the internal colonialism model of national development. Orientalism, "...a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power..."<sup>123</sup> allows for large sections of the American film viewing audience to imagine New England, with all of its inherent differences, on the periphery of the American nation. Writing of the actual, geographic Orient, Said argues that "The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be*—that is, submitted to being—*made* Oriental."<sup>124</sup> In the same way, Boston and New England has been imagined to be peripheral, different, foreign, and other not because it actually is, but because it could be, inasmuch as the power to perform this othering rested not in the region, but, rather, in the core region of the larger United States. By positioning Boston, New England, and its people on the periphery, the United States defines, negotiates, and imagines its own national identity through the presentation, in these films, of "...its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."<sup>125</sup> Boston and New England functions as an internal colony because it is Orientalized through these films, and because it is Orientalized, it exists as an internal colony, there to be used by the United States. Existing in this liminal and separate space allows for the region to be imagined as a limited community that also functions as something that is analogous to the nation.

### **3. FILMIC NEW ENGLANDERS ABROAD**

#### ***3.1 The Inherited and Family Wealth of New Englanders***

Throughout this cycle of films, one of the predominant traits that identify a character as being distinctively from New England is their inherited wealth and family fortune. This wealth stands out as a conspicuous and defining characteristic because the characters from New England are not independently wealthy, but, rather, descend from families whose wealth has been well established for many generations. One of the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 5-6. Original emphasis.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 2.

defining myths that is central to the American identity is the Horatio Alger, or Gatsby, myth, in which young boys "...are each recalled as quintessential 'rags to riches' characters in 'the Work and Win, Upward and Onward' narrative of American rugged individualism, avatars of capitalist triumphalism and the patriotism of laissez-faire."<sup>126</sup> Andrew Carnegie, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrialist, perhaps best exemplifies this myth, as he came "...to America next to penniless from Scotland and through combinations of gumption and good fortune becom[es] a tycoon..."<sup>127</sup> In the American imagination, "...those who do indeed turn out to be great men simply soldier on, noses to the grindstone, bootstraps lifted—like, as it were, Horatio Alger's boys: nothing can hold back a striver."<sup>128</sup> By thus defining these New Englanders or Bostonians as coming from an established and secure family fortune, these films strip their New Englander characters of access to a crucial aspect of the American identity.

Depriving these Bostonian and New England characters from accessing one of the foundational myths of an American identity has three primary effects in establishing one part of the separately imagined New England identity. Firstly, denying these characters the right to be independently, rather than filially, wealthy ties their fortunes to a distinctly non-American way of accruing wealth. If this wealth is not American, then it must necessarily be foreign, and, ergo, its holders must possess an identity that marks them as not-American. Secondly, the notion that this money is old or well established ties it to a time and a place from before the traditional and historically agreed upon founding date of the United States. That is, old money comes from the old world, which in turn further reinforces the sense that anyone who possesses this fortune must therefore necessarily be not-American. Finally, the inheritance of an established family fortune, for which these characters never had to work, directly contrasts these New Englanders with those who have either already made their independent fortune, or are working hard toward building it. Writing in 1835 of his travels to the United States of America, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of the peculiar tendency of American wealth to be independent between generations. De Tocqueville states that:

I do not mean that there is any deficiency of wealthy individuals in the United States; I know of no country, indeed, where the

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<sup>126</sup> Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York, NY, USA: Columbia University Press, 2006), 113. It is, perhaps, worth noting that, while this has become the common understanding of the Alger Myth, it is actually a perversion of the typical plot of Alger's novels, in which, generally, "...a boy, seemingly bereft of but possessed of moral character, rises to middle-class respectability and that is all; he does not become a millionaire through hard work." (Ibid., 113)

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 178.



love of money has taken stronger hold on the affections of men, and where a profounder contempt is expressed for the theory of the permanent equality of property. But wealth circulates with inconceivable rapidity, and experience shows that it is rare to find two succeeding generations in the full enjoyment of it.... [sic]<sup>129</sup>

In 1888, the British writer James Bryce also notes the reverence that Americans have for those who accrue their wealth through personal and individual means: “He who builds up a huge fortune, especially if he does it suddenly, is no doubt a sort of hero, because an enormous number of men have the same ambition.”<sup>130</sup> Thus, the inherited wealth of the New Englanders in these films serves to fundamentally mark them as possessing an identity that is separate from the larger American identity, as it establishes those from the area as being from outside of the United States. This occurs because one of the foundations of an American identity, as seen through the Horatio Alger myth and as both de Tocqueville and Bryce note, is the insistence on one individually acquiring their own personal wealth through their own hard work. The role of this specific type of wealth, and the way in which one acquires it, in an American identity therefore situates those who do not have to work for their wealth as being not-American. Indeed, inherited family wealth is anathema to any conception of an American identity where the Alger myth functions so prominently.

*The Parent Trap* (1961), about identical twins who were split between their divorcing parents shortly after their birth, demonstrates this clash between a Bostonian fortune and an American fortune. The driving action of *The Parent Trap* is that after the divorce of their parents, each twin grows up and lives with one parent, who each reside on separate coasts of the United States, with each twin entirely unaware of the existence of the other. Splitting this erstwhile nuclear family into two diametrically opposed living situations, each with no awareness of the other, allows the film to highlight the differences between the two lifestyles when the family does eventually reunite. In its opening scene, *The Parent Trap* firmly roots one twin, Sharon McKendrick, as being unmistakably from Boston as her chauffeur drives her into a rustic summer camp in a Rolls-Royce limousine. Once she exits the car, the audience sees McKendrick in a blue-grey suit for young ladies, with a shin-length pleated skirt

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<sup>129</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, “From *Democracy in America*,” in *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Ann G. Serow and Everett C. Ladd (Baltimore, MD, USA: Lanahan Publishers, 2003), 6.

<sup>130</sup> James Bryce, “From *The American Commonwealth*,” in *The Lanahan Readings in the American Polity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Ann G. Serow and Everett C. Ladd (Baltimore, MD, USA: Lanahan Publishers, 2003), 9.

and a matching blazer, buttoned from waist to neck, with long sleeves, despite the shining summer sun and the cloudless blue sky. While McKendrick enters the camp displaying all the trappings of wealth, the other girls are running around in shorts, sneakers, and polo shirts, clothing far more appropriate for activity in a summer camp. And indeed, the film dispenses with the intimation of wealth and of the geographic origin of McKendrick through costuming and presentation when the counselor reads off her exact address: 18 Belgrave Square, Boston. That McKendrick is the only character in the film with such a specific place of origin, whereas the film neither mentions nor implies any specific American home with its other characters, indicates that her conspicuous displays of wealth at the outset mark her as being unmistakably from 18 Belgrave Square, Boston, and from nowhere else. Her twin sister, Susan Evers, on the other hand, appears as a fully formed and functioning member of the camp, blending in both by accent and by costume as a regular camper, though the viewer later learns that her father is wealthy as well. The initial introduction to these characters implies that McKendrick, whom the film quite literally states is from a very specific place, comes from wealth that has no way of expressing itself that does not make it seem as being separate from the rest of the American population, while Evers is as undeniably a part of the larger group as anyone else, regardless of their unmentioned economic status.

The two characters switching places in an attempt to trick their parents into reuniting further heightens this distinction between the Bostonian identity and an American one. During the time the audience spends with Evers-as-McKendrick in Boston, *The Parent Trap* also introduces its viewers to her mother and to her maternal grandparents. Placing three generations of McKendricks in a single home, each one of whom has various charitable and social, though not business, obligations to which they must attend, signals that the McKendrick family earned their wealth not through hard work in the recent past, but rather accrued it through generations, which has allowed the family to ascend to a place of social standing within the community. Although the film informs its audience that the McKendricks live at 18 Belgrave Square, no such address has ever existed in the city of Boston. When Susan-as-Sharon arrives, however, to eagle-eyed audiences with a passing sense of the city of Boston, it is unmistakably Louisburg Square, with its distinctive redbrick townhouses and wrought iron gates surrounding a small garden square in an otherwise urban landscape. Most viewers, however, lack an intimate knowledge of Bostonian neighborhoods and their sense of place would be further distorted as this neighborhood is only ever seen as a passing background through the window of a limousine.

Importantly, however, Louisburg Square is a place where only the established Brahmin families can afford to live. As a mass-market travel book describes it:

Home to millionaire politicians, best-selling authors, and corporate moguls, Louisburg Square is arguably Boston's most prestigious address. Developed in the 1830s as a shared private preserve on Beacon Hill, the square's tiny patch of greenery surrounded by a high iron fence sends a clear signal of the square's continued exclusivity. On the last private square in the city, the narrow Greek Revival bow-fronted town houses sell for a premium over comparable homes elsewhere on Beacon Hill.<sup>131</sup>

In 1999, *The New York Times* begins an article on Louisburg Square by noting that “They call Louisburg Square...the most prestigious property, the most exclusive enclave, the most treasured trophy address in Boston. They call it the heart of Beacon Hill, that slope of brick-paved, gas-lighted lanes once a bastion of Boston Brahminism.”<sup>132</sup> Writing in 1860, the author Oliver Wendell Holmes is the first person to note the existence of the Boston Brahmin class, which he describes as “...the harmless, inoffensive, untitled aristocracy....”<sup>133</sup> For Holmes, “...in New England, [there is] an aristocracy, if you choose to call it so, which has a far greater character of permanence. It has grown to be a caste,—not in any odious sense;—but, by the repetition of the same influences, generation after generation, it has acquired a distinct organization and physiognomy....”<sup>134</sup> More recently, “The term Boston Brahmin [has come] to connote great wealth, political influence, old New England roots, and often all of the above. These Brahmins frequently intermarried, founded and patronized Boston cultural institutions, and had some connection with nearby Harvard.”<sup>135</sup> Importantly, though, “Many of the Brahmin families had descended from the original Puritan settlers of Massachusetts.”<sup>136</sup> Placing the McKendrick family in such a specifically defined geographic location, and then visually presenting its famous and unmistakable real-life analogue, roots the McKendrick family in a particular and narrowly imagined type of New England identity, based on perceptions of a specific type of wealthy Boston individual.

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<sup>131</sup> DK Eyewitness Travel, *Boston* (London, UK: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2013), 44.

<sup>132</sup> Carey Goldberg, “Behind the Curtains of Boston's Best Neighborhood, a New Elite,” *New York Times*, February 18, 1999.

<sup>133</sup> Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* (Boston, MA, USA: Houghton Mifflin Company), 24.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>135</sup> Andy Bowers, “What’s A Boston Brahmin?,” *Slate*, March 1, last modified June 21, 2015, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/explainer/2004/03/whats\\_a\\_boston\\_brahmin.single.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2004/03/whats_a_boston_brahmin.single.html)

<sup>136</sup> “Origin of Boston Brahmin (or Brahman),” *Celebrate Boston*, last modified August 1, 2015, <http://www.celebrateboston.com/culture/brahmin-origin.htm>.

Once McKendrick-as-Evers reunites with her father in California, the displays of wealth do not seem nearly as antiquated and as anachronistic as that of the McKendrick family. Where the McKendricks live in one brownstone building among many others in the square, Mitch Evers lives in an enormous, custom-built house on a sprawling ranch, complete with an in-ground swimming pool. Where the McKendricks are chauffeured around in a Rolls Royce, a symbol of the fabulously wealthy, Evers drives himself and his daughter around in a new convertible sports car. For all the ostentatious displays of wealth from both families, however, the film leaves no doubt about the source of the Evers fortune, even briefly: he works for a living. Several times throughout the film Evers discusses his business dealings or leaves to take a business call. Audiences understand that Mitch Evers, then, embodies the American Dream, having worked hard to earn everything that he now owns. Being thus so obviously American through his fulfillment of the Horatio Alger myth, it is no surprise, then, that the twin daughter he raised, Susan Evers, blends in so naturally with the group of other girls at camp. The McKendrick family, however, can only be seen as relics of another place and of another time as the film holds them in contrast to the new American wealth of Evers. That Sharon stands out among other girls her age outside of her home environment reinforces the notion that her identity, tied so firmly to her inherited New England wealth, is simply not that of other Americans.

Similarly, the film *Donovan's Reef* (1963) demonstrates the bankruptcy of old wealth in connection with the American identity. This film first introduces its Bostonian character through a close-up on a brass sign that reads, in elaborate and antiquated calligraphy, "Dedham Shipping Company, Est. 1763," while "Boston" appears on screen underneath it to specifically plant the viewer geographically. The film then cuts to a series of close-ups of portraits of old, stern, severe looking men, each of whom the viewer then assumes to be the former Messrs. Dedham, who all once ran the eponymous company, only to finish on a close-up of a stern, severe looking woman dressed in a grey business suit, enormous glasses, and a rather dowdy hat. The film soon reveals this woman to be Amelia Dedham, the woman who now runs the Dedham Shipping Company. Exposing the viewer first to the age of the Dedham Shipping Company, and then following it with a long procession of the men who ran it and the woman who now runs it, demonstrates that the wealth of Ms. Dedham in 1963 stems from nothing that she does independently in the present, but rather that it flows from a point two hundred years in the past. More, this point in the past, 1763, predates the

founding of the United States, and thus immediately deprives the Dedham fortune of any claims to be an American fortune. Rather, it exists as a not-American fortune.

Once Amelia Dedham ventures to a South Pacific island in order to track down her estranged father so that he will sign away his rights to Dedham Shipping Company stock, it becomes obvious to the viewer that her family fortune marks her as something other than American, in addition to leaving her ill-prepared to function outside of her Boston home. Upon her arrival at the south Pacific island, a character played by John Wayne, a man who has become the very personification of the American identity, greets Dedham. Indeed, the "...image and name of [John] Wayne...act as shorthand for a nostalgic vision of American, right-wing, white masculinity",<sup>137</sup> and "a patriotic American hero, an always righteous man's man who nostalgically suggests a necessary but benevolent patriarchal and national authority."<sup>138</sup> Viewers should be expected to understand John Wayne as an avatar for a perceived American identity, and thus, his presence and identity should be read as being in direct contrast to the filmic identity of the Bostonians with whom he interacts.

Shortly after her arrival to the island and her welcome from John Wayne, Dedham attempts to leave the boat in which she arrived, and to seat herself in an outrigger canoe so that she can be rowed to shore. What follows is an extended scene of physical comedy in which Dedham is made to look absurd, thus undermining the dignity and the severity that the viewer should associate with her, and, by extension, her family wealth. As she attempts to leave the boat, a series of mishaps causes her to lose her balance and to tumble into the water, only to then splash around and generally make a commotion. With her white linen blazer and skirt soaked through, the group of onlookers begin to laugh at her expense. When one compares this scene with another scene ten minutes later, in which Dedham tells John Wayne that she is "...quite capable of giving instructions to servants...", it demonstrates the effort of the film to depict her particular version of wealth as wholly and demonstrably without merit. This woman, whose wealth was established even before the founding of her country, has been shown to be nothing but a haughty fool.

*Donovan's Reef* perhaps more poignantly demonstrates its belief in the moral bankruptcy of the fortune of Ms. Dedham through its comparison to that of the fortune that her estranged father has built for himself on the island. Though Mr. Dedham did in

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<sup>137</sup> Russell Meeuf, "Shouldering the Weight of the World: The Sensational and Global Appeal of John Wayne's Body," *Journal of Popular Television and Film* 39, no. 2 (2011): 63.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

fact marry the last queen of the island, something that would afford him and his new children, the half-siblings of Ms. Dedham, a certain amount of respect among the locals, he maintains his wealth and status on the island through his tireless work as the local doctor. Mr. Dedham often appears on screen, but only briefly, as viewers watch him being silently paddled about in a canoe, off to another island village to deliver medical care. Indeed, he has no lines of dialogue until well after the halfway point of the film, as, viewers should assume, he has been consistently tending to his patients. As his enormous residence on the island demonstrates, within the context of this South Pacific island, Mr. Dedham is a wealthy man. Yet, the native islanders, the French colonizers, and the Americans on the island all respect his wealth because it is self-made through his endless work. Ms. Dedham, however, merely inherited her wealth.

Though these are just two specific examples, the trope of a member of a moneyed Bostonian or New England family leaving home and venturing out into the United States or the world and clashing with the American identity had been established even before this cycle of films began in earnest at the start of the 1950s. In the 1940 film, *The Light of the Western Stars*, one character, an American girl in a Western town, remarks to the Bostonian character—who had traveled there to retrieve her brother—that “I’m not after your money, we don’t want it. The best thing that ever happened to [your brother] is to have to fight for his bread and butter for me. Please Majesty, don’t try to rob [your brother] of his chance to be a man.” In this moment, it is clear that viewers are meant to associate money, and specifically inherited money, with this type of character, and that this access to wealth deprives them of their chance to be fully integrated into the American identity through hard work. One continues to see Bostonians and New Englanders marked by the non-American trait of coming from family money throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, especially in those films where they go abroad. In *Pardon My French* (1951), a Boston schoolteacher inherits a French chateau, while in the musical *Painting the Clouds with Sunshine* (1951), three Las Vegas showgirls scheme to find husbands, including one suitor who comes from a wealthy family of Boston bankers. In 1967, in the Disney adventure film *The Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin*, the trope is turned on its head as a boy and his sister are left orphaned and penniless once their grandfather dies. As a result, the boy sets off to make his fortune in the California Gold Rush of 1849, trailed by his family’s faithful butler. Yet, the trope still remains as the Griffin children came from a wealthy family, though it was lost through misfortune.

Crucially, these films do not imagine their American characters as an homogenous monolith in direct competition with their New England counterparts. Rather, this cycle of films manages to accomplish two things through its insistence on the inherited wealth of New Englanders. Firstly, the repetition of the inherited wealth as a characteristic common to these Bostonian and New Englander characters links disparate characters from the same region both diachronically and synchronically in the minds of viewers. That is, linking characters in such an obvious, and ostentatious, way allows film audiences to imagine a community where these characters could conceivably interact with each other. Indeed, it is perfectly reasonable to assume interactions between the McKendricks and the Dedhams, given their geographic and economic proximity. Further, the repetition of these similar traits from characters who all inhabit the same limited geographic area allows viewers to imagine these characters as bound in a deep, horizontal comradeship, as Benedict Anderson understands all members of an imagined community to be. Secondly, the repetition of specific characteristics and traits, bound to a specific geographical location, in direct contrast to an amorphously undefined American, creates a situation where the definition of an identity for New Englanders functions only as a negative definition for the American identity: Americans are not that identity as Americans work to inherit their wealth. This specific defining and imagining of the New England identity continues throughout these films in an attempt not to define what, precisely, an American identity is, but, rather, what it specifically is not.

### ***3.2 An “Irish Temper” and Racializing New Englanders***

This group of films further works to establish the otherness of the identity of Bostonians and New Englanders by deliberately racializing their identities through specific references to a non-American, Irish ethnic identity. These films achieve this through both naming conventions and through direct dialogic mention of the racial and ethnic origin of the Bostonian characters. Specifically, the characters from Boston and New England never exist as generically named, ethnically ambiguous, heterogeneous “Americans.” Instead, these films present and describe their New England characters to be of an Irish ethnic origin. The films flag these characters as Irish, never as a hyphenated Irish-American, through the simple act of naming. Character naming conventions in films can be fraught, and it is often difficult to ascribe intentional meaning to the names of characters in films owing to the collaborative process of filmmaking. The name of a character can serve as a meaningful literary allusion

intended to provide depth or context, as a personal tribute to a loved one, or could just be a simple accident with no deeper meaning whatsoever. Yet, that these films continually name their characters with such obviously ethnically Irish names reinforces the notion that these characters are not only not American, but rather a foreign and alien body moving into and throughout the larger United States. That Boston and New England are historically home to a disproportionate number of families claiming an ethnic Irish origin might perhaps explain the tendency of these films to name their characters in such a way. The obvious ethnic origin of their names, and the continual references to their ethnic background, however, reinforces the separateness of the identity of the New Englander from that of other Americans. Indeed, one cannot simultaneously be both foreign and American.

In *The Parent Trap*, the New England characters have the surname McKendrick, while the mother is named Margaret, and referred to as Maggie. When one views these stereotypically Irish names in concert, with the preface “Mc-” flagging the family as originating, at some undefined point in the past, in Ireland, it becomes clear that the film deliberately emphasizes an obvious Irish, but not American, ethnic identity for the McKendrick family. On its own, this is an unremarkable coincidence, but, when held against the names of the other characters in the film, it can be read as an attempt to other these New England characters through a distinct and separate identity. Specifically, Mitch Evers, the estranged father and erstwhile husband has an ethnically ambiguous name in an ethnically heterogeneous United States. Though the John Wayne character of *Donovan’s Reef* is named Michael Patrick Donovan, a perhaps ethnically Irish name, characters throughout the film often only refer to him by his nickname, “Guns,” thereby eliding his ethnic heritage and allowing him to be understood only as American. By contrast, Thomas Aloysius “Boats” Gilhooley, played by Lee Marvin, “...one of the Gilhooleys from Fall River [Massachusetts],” is his chief antagonist and best friend. Where the film omits the perhaps-Irish ethnicity of the American John Wayne by almost exclusively using his nickname, *Donovan’s Reef* continually refers to the Massachusetts character, as the film explicitly notes for its viewers, of Lee Marvin by his surname, occasionally for the comedic effect of the sound of the multiple “l’s” and the long “o” in his name, thus reinforcing his otherness as Irish and not-American. More, it is important to note that the film provides a specific geographic origin for the Irish Gilhooley, while the place of birth of John Wayne remains unmentioned.

This existence as a character from, essentially, Anywhere, USA allows the John Wayne character to stand astride the entire American continent, and to act as a cipher



for any American, though not Irish New England, identity. *The Cardinal* (1963), a loosely fictionalized biopic of Francis Cardinal Spellman, a figure who looms large in twentieth century American Roman Catholicism, and who was born and raised in Massachusetts, also displays these naming conventions. In this film, the central character (the eventual and the eponymous cardinal) is named Stephen Fermoye. And, in case the viewer had any doubts as to his ethnic origin, his parents speak in heavy Irish accents. More, *The Miracle Worker* (1962), a fictionalized biopic of the story of Helen Keller and the woman, Anne Sullivan (her real name), who taught her how to read and write, highlights the distinct Irishness of the New Englander in contrast to the ethnically undefined American family, the Kellers. In order to reinforce the Irishness of the Sullivan character, she too speaks with an historically inaccurate, as well as a stereotypically broad, Irish accent.

Naming these characters in such an ethnically obvious manner, and also giving them historically inaccurate Irish (and, therefore, non-American) accents, may, on the level of an individual film, provide character shading and depth, or just subtly hint at potentially defining background information. Yet, the repetition of Irish ethnic identity as a defining characteristic for New Englanders over a twenty-year cycle of films insures that viewers understand the New England characters within the broader scope of the United States and of American identities as being other, separate, or foreign.

The insistence of these films on making their New Englanders Irish demonstrates the negotiation and the imagining of an American identity through two separate, and obverse, actions. Firstly, through naming, through accent, or through mention of an “Irish temper,” these films ask their viewers to identify a very specific type of identity on film as being explicitly not-American. Secondly, highlighting this other and not-American identity allows these films and audiences to begin a process of negotiating an American identity without having to specifically define what is American. That is, as the Irish New Englanders are not-American, audiences may define an American identity as anything that is expressly not the identity of these Irish New Englanders. For much of American history, the negotiation of an American identity involved the assimilation of other groups into the dominant white, male, Anglo culture of the United States. The sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee note that, historically, the nation-building project in the United States has been a process of assimilation and integration. “Whatever the precise words, conceptions of assimilation have been central to understanding the American experience at least since colonial

times.”<sup>139</sup> The authors follow this with a quote from Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, where he expresses concern over the influx of German immigrants to Pennsylvania, which allows Alba and Nee to explain how the idea of assimilation has influenced the United States: “Implicit here is an early version of what has since become known as Anglo-conformity, the expectation that immigrant groups should swallow intact the existing Anglo-American culture while simultaneously disgorging their own.”<sup>140</sup> Thus, if the history of the United States imagining and negotiating a national identity for itself involves the process of assimilation, the failure of these filmic New Englanders to bend to the dominant white, male, Anglo culture and to allow Americans to define them as expressly female and Irish demonstrates a transgressive otherness of this identity.

In 1990, Alba notes that the assimilation process of becoming American has changed, such that other and ethnic identities are no longer anathema to being American, but rather function as points along a spectrum of American identities. “Ethnic identity can be a means of locating oneself and one’s family against the panorama of American history, against the backdrop of what it means to be American. No longer, then, need there be any contradiction between being American and asserting ethnic identity. Increasingly, they are accepted as the same thing.”<sup>141</sup> Yet, assimilation of other, foreign cultures to the dominant Anglo-American one was still a critical part of imagining the national identity during the 1950s and the 1960s when these films were produced and released.

Importantly, Irishness was often used as a way for American films of this era to negotiate otherness and assimilation narratives. Sean Griffin writes that World War II-era musicals released by the Twentieth Century Fox studio “...employ Irishness in an almost metaphoric fashion, using it to safely cover larger concerns about race/ethnicity and gender.”<sup>142</sup> He further argues that “The struggles of Irish émigrés, though, seem to be used in these films as a sort of safe zone for mediating other contemporary concerns”,<sup>143</sup> and that “In all these films, the Irish easily find success, happiness, and acceptance in America, providing evidence that the country has successfully resolved

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<sup>139</sup> Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 17.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>141</sup> Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 1990), 318-319.

<sup>142</sup> Sean Griffin, “The Wearing of the Green: Performing Irishness in the Fox Wartime Musical,” in *The Irish In Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture*, ed. Diane Negra (Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press, 2006), 65.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

whatever racial and ethnic inequity may have once existed.”<sup>144</sup> Further, it stands to reason that the American film industry utilizes Irishness as its symbol of unassimilated otherness because it is geographically specific and is easily identifiable as other while still remaining close enough to the dominant white, male, and Anglo culture of the United States to allow easy narrative resolutions and filmic assimilation of the identity, as Griffin notes. Yet, because Irishness is simultaneously similar to a dominant American identity and culture, but also distinctly other, the American film industry needs to highlight specific instances of its otherness onto which audiences can latch. This comes specifically, in these films, in femininity, in Irish accents, and in “Irish tempers.” Amanda Third, writing of the English colonization of Ireland, posits that “In the context of a form of colonization where chromatism as a category of difference was not easily deployed to construct the colonial other, red hair became one clear physical marker, among others, of Celtic or Irish difference.”<sup>145</sup> Similar to the way that Third argues that red hair was imagined as a marker of Irish otherness during the English process of colonization, femininity, accent, and an “Irish temper” function in a similar way in this group of films to imagine the unassimilated otherness of New Englanders. The use of Irishness as a symbol for otherness from an American identity has a history in the American film industry, and thus stands as a perfectly reasonable way for this group of films to demonstrate the otherness of their New England characters while allowing viewers to read their counterparts as fully assimilated Americans, precisely because of their lack of any highlighted ethnicity.

Although the film *The Miracle Worker* is ostensibly the true story of Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller, and is indeed based on their memoirs, the film foregrounds the otherness and the Irishness of Anne Sullivan through her ahistorical Irish accent. As Sullivan arrives at the Keller household (though the film does fail to mention where, exactly, within America that the Kellers actually live, as was the case with the place of birth of John Wayne in *Donovan's Reef*), her accent indelibly marks her as being foreign and out of place. Her accent highlights her specific otherness within the landscape of a heterogeneous United States as even the black servants of the Keller household, who viewers might expect to speak in some sort of stereotypical, offensive, *Gone With The Wind*-Mammy patois, are allowed nondescript accents that could pass anywhere in the United States. Again, it is worth mentioning that Sullivan was both

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>145</sup> Amanda Third, ““Does the Rug Match the Carpet?”: Race, Gender, and the Redheaded Woman,” in *The Irish In Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture*, ed. Diane Negra (Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press, 2006), 221.

born and raised in the United States, and, by all accounts, had no noticeable trace of an Irish accent in real life. Yet, *The Miracle Worker* sees fit to play up her ethnic identity through her distinctive and historically inaccurate accent. The film, however, does not stop with just Miss Sullivan, as, in flashbacks to her time growing up in a state asylum (an orphanage) in Massachusetts, the film exposes its audience to the other children of the asylum and the adults who run it, all of whom speak in the same broad Irish accent. It is in this manner that *The Miracle Worker* establishes those from Boston and New England as possessing an identity entirely divorced from that of all other Americans, and also posits that the area itself is a completely foreign land.

### ***3.3 Male, American Oppression of Filmic New England Femininity***

Other films also manage to foreground the Irishness of the New England characters through specific dialogue. In both *The Parent Trap* and in *Donovan's Reef*, this specifically takes the form of a male character remarking upon the "Irish temper" of a female character from New England or Boston. Expressly referring to the ethnic Irish identity of these characters in this way further establishes the distinct otherness of the New Englanders, as that identity now becomes not only racialized, but also feminized. In both of these films, this explicit mention of an unambiguous, ethnically defined personality trait occurs just as the male (American) protagonist forcefully takes the female (Bostonian) antagonist in his arms, and kisses her in a manner that, while it may not be unwelcome in the diegetic narrative universe of the film, is most certainly not gentle and was never requested by the female New Englanders. These two kissing scenes establish and reinforce traditional sexual and gender power dynamics. The subtext of this, of course, is that the female New Englander is subservient to the male American: she does not take him in her arms; she does not remark on his ethnically defined personality quirks; she does not force her will upon him. *The Light of the Western Stars* takes this type of subjugation to perhaps its most (il)logical extreme, as the male protagonist quite literally marries the female New Englander by force within the first fifteen minutes of the film, while she puts up little to no resistance. In this instance, it is clear that while the United States and New England may be inextricably bound together, this occurs only in service to and at the pleasure of the United States. As a result, then, the implication is that the woman is there in service of the needs of the man, as New England and Boston exist in order to service the needs of the United States at that time. It is instructive, then, to understand these scenes as a way of demonstrating the status of New England as an internal colony within the United States.

The American film industry has a history of utilizing this trope of subjugating its other, female characters in film to their American male counterparts. Importantly, though, the subjugation of these other, female characters has a history within the context of Irishness as otherness in American film as well. Diane Negra argues that, during the emergence of the American film industry in the 1920s, two different oppositional stereotypes of cinematic femininity emerged as responses to new forces of immigration and otherness in the United States: the vamp and the Irish Colleen. The American film industry deployed the vamp as, "...a thinly disguised incarnation of the threat of female immigrant sexuality"<sup>146</sup> and as "...the exotically threatening Other..."<sup>147</sup> specifically in an attempt to demonize and to make strange the female sexuality of Southern and Eastern European immigrants.<sup>148</sup> The Irish Colleen, opposite the vamp, is "...good-hearted, virginal, transparent..."<sup>149</sup> Yet, as Sean Griffin notes about the use of the Irish Colleens in the Fox wartime musicals, "...these Colleens often engaged in mischievous pranks, but such actions were usually excused as the childish exuberance of a basically sweet young thing. Further, that energy was positioned as something that could be cherished *yet harnessed* by an adult American male."<sup>150</sup> Indeed, this is precisely what audiences witness as John Wayne forces himself upon Amelia Dedham and her "Irish temper" in *Donovan's Reef*, as the American culture dominates, tames, and assimilates the otherness with which it is confronted. Further, considering that these films specifically other their female New England characters by highlighting their Irishness allows these films to be understood as undertaking a process that is analogous to colonialism: "...thinking about the colonized as members of distinct groups which are constructed as fundamentally other ('them') to the imagined community (the 'we') provides the legitimating discourse of the colonial right to rule."<sup>151</sup> And because, "...the Irish [Colleen] girl [serves] as a raw resource to be acted upon by patriarchal and capitalistic influences",<sup>152</sup> that is precisely what occurs in these films, as the dominant male, American identity quite literally forces itself upon the other, female, Irish New England identity in an effort to subsume this otherness so that there is no further undermining threat to an American identity.

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<sup>146</sup> Diane Negra, "Pola Negri and the Problem of Typology," in "Early Women Stars," eds. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra, special issue, *Camera Obscura* 48, vol. 16 (3) (2001): 166.

<sup>147</sup> Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (London, UK: Routledge, 2001), 26.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>150</sup> Griffin, "The Wearing of the Green," 70. Original emphasis.

<sup>151</sup> Third, "'Does the Rug Match the Carpet?'" 231.

<sup>152</sup> Negra, *Off-White Hollywood*, 26.

The implied sexual violence and sexual power dynamics of these scenes, deeply unsettling from a contemporary perspective, serve as a particularly apt metaphor for the way in which these films conceive of the New England identity in relation to the more broadly defined American identity. Where the male American characters possess agency and power, the female New England characters are defined by and according to the wishes and the desires of their male antagonist. Until the moment when these films explicitly tell their viewers that these women have an Irish temper, something that is never actually defined but is instead thrown out almost as a non sequitur and then allowed to stand entirely unchallenged, viewers never see any indication that either Margaret McKendrick of *The Parent Trap* or Amelia Dedham of *Donovan's Reef* has any kind of temper; the two women are, at most, rarely seen to be even mildly irritated. Whether or not these women do actually have any kind of temper, Irish or otherwise, does not matter as the male American identity arbitrarily decides to ascribe this as a definitive trait of the feminine New England identity as it suits his needs and his desires in that moment. That these women have entirely self-defined, self-aware, fully functioning identities and conceptions of their selves, as the viewer observes throughout the course of these films, is entirely immaterial as they simply evaporate once the male American imposes his will upon them and decides to define them as he sees fit. In the same way, and on a larger (though less fraught with sexual and gender tensions) scale, these films also act within that same power structure, defining the New England and the Boston identity as they need and desire, but always as an identity separate and apart from an American identity.

#### **4. VALLEY OF THE DOLLS**

The final film of this two-decade cycle of New Englander “fish-out-of-water” films, *Valley of the Dolls* (1967), effectively ends the interest of the American film industry in the area for more than twenty years, and reinforces the tropes and stereotypes of the Bostonian characters from the earlier films. Yet, this film accomplishes this by often presenting these tropes and stereotypes in a somewhat contrary manner to the previous films. The earlier films of this cycle hold the New England character, with her identity and her mannerisms, in stark contrast to those of the male American characters, and thereby highlight her otherness and place outside of an American national identity and history. Yet, *Valley of the Dolls* positions Anne Welles, its young female protagonist from a small Massachusetts suburb, as an outsider

not because of any innate nature of her New England identity, but rather because of her failure to fall prey to the perils of fame and her interactions with the culture and the people of the United States once she leaves her home. Her failure, or, rather, her success is quite cynically limited only to her ability to, in order: beat an addiction to sleeping pills; neither die nor lose the entirety of her sanity; and finally reject a man who had been her occasional lover (and, briefly, her husband, and, eventually, father to her child) over the course of twenty years. This establishes Welles as the outsider of this film, and thus as the person who does not possess that true American identity.

The film begins with Anne Welles, a recent college graduate in her early twenties, with typing skills, informing her parents that she intends to move to New York City in order to pursue some loosely defined “dream” or “life” before eventually beginning her (presumably) heteronormative lifestyle of husband, children, and suburban home. As such, Welles leaves her fictional hometown of Lawrenceville, Massachusetts, which serves as a stand-in for any of the large swath of suburban and rural towns spread throughout Massachusetts and New England. Lawrenceville, though, is most definitively not one of the numerous old mill towns that brought the area success and prosperity in the early history of the United States. This move to place the New England character in the safe haven of the snowy, idyllic New England suburbs, rather than from the city of Boston or its immediate surrounding sprawl of urban area<sup>153</sup> indicates a subtle shift in attitude towards the New Englander in this cycle of films, but also firmly cements the engrained assumptions and beliefs about these characters from the earlier films. Placing the Welles family in the suburbs, rather than in Boston, demonstrates their upper class wealth, yet the film provides no indication of how the family accrued that wealth. At a time in American history when many families were moving out of cities and into the suburbs, the viewer first encounters the Welles family in 1945, just slightly before the suburban boom, safely ensconced in Lawrenceville. Indeed, “Well-to-do Americans had been living in suburbs for generations, but it was only after World War II that relatively inexpensive suburban housing boomed.”<sup>154</sup> Thus, situating the Welles family as already in the suburbs, in medias res in the diegetic narrative of the film, and neither indicating how they got there nor how their wealth was acquired, has the same effect as attempting to tie a character

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<sup>153</sup> As is the case with the McKendricks from *The Parent Trap*; Amelia Dedham in *Donovan's Reef*; Stephen Fermoyle and his family in *The Cardinal*; or Anne Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker*, who was raised as a ward of the state and was working in the renowned Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, adjacent to Boston, when she was contracted to go work with Helen Keller.

<sup>154</sup> David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York, NY, USA: Hill and Wang, 1994), 9.

or her family to the Boston Brahmin class, or as being from a family who inherited or acquired their wealth before the creation of the United States. Further, because *Valley of the Dolls* positions the Welles family as also being firmly established in their suburban enclave before affordable suburban housing was available to the vast majority of Americans, viewers can understand that their prosperity comes from distinctly non-American means, and is therefore anathema to that independently and self-made wealth and prosperity of the favored Horatio Alger myth in the American consciousness.

*Valley of the Dolls* further subverts the previously established identity of the New Englander by eliding the ethnic origin of Welles, which, in turn, allows her surname to function as a further tenuous tether to the Brahmin class, and thus cements her identity as one entirely outside the scope of the American identity. Prior to *Valley of the Dolls*, these films show the Bostonian character to be of an unmistakable Irish ethnic origin. This Irish ethnic origin becomes such an overt defining characteristic of the New Englander who has ventured from home to travel among Americans that it now acts as a semaphore, where those characters from New England are racialized and are excluded from an American identity. Welles, however, escapes this fate through the ambiguous nature of her surname, which only hints at a vague Anglo origin, as opposed to such obviously, ethnically Irish names as Fermoy, Sullivan, and McKendrick. The film seems to hold the ambiguous Anglo origin of the Welles family, and of Anne herself, in direct contrast to the perceived stereotype of Irishness in America, as Anne befriends a young woman with the rather unambiguous name of Neely O'Hara. While other characters remark on the grace, class, and dignity of Welles, O'Hara, after becoming a Hollywood star, descends into a vicious addiction to alcohol and sleeping pills, which lands her first in an asylum, and then eventually leaves her a shrieking, howling drunk in an alley at the close of the film. Thus, Welles would seem to exist in the heterogeneous and ambiguous ethnic soup that is the American identity.

The spelling of her surname with an extra "e" at the end, however, seemingly lends her name and her identity an extra gravitas or dignity, something that is often missing from that hardworking, independently wealthy American identity where the more common Kellers and Evers can be found, despite their actual wealth and station within American society. More importantly, perhaps, is that the appearance of that extra "e" allows the name Welles to sit more comfortably alongside the true members of the Brahmin class without looking out of place, though no Welles family is, historically, a part of that class. Once more, then, a film where a Bostonian character goes abroad in



the United States lashes its New England character to a pre-American past, and therefore deprives her of that American identity.

Welles herself reinforces this other, not-American identity when she gleefully informs her erstwhile paramour and future husband (and ex-husband), while showing him around her hometown, that Paul Revere rode right by her house on his famed Midnight Ride, after he jokes that he can practically hear Revere in Lawrenceville. That it is historically implausible that Paul Revere passed anywhere near the Welles homestead is unimportant, as once more, the film insists on tying its New Englander to an historical past that predates the founding of the United States. It is important that the Welles family lives in the suburbs, rather than in one of the mill towns (such as the actual Lawrence, Massachusetts), so that the film can place Welles fully outside of the bounds of American history. Had the Welles family lived in one of these mill towns, or near to one, then Anne would have been able to point out the old mills that not only drove industry in the area, but also kickstarted the Industrial Revolution in the United States. If Welles could have pointed out this aspect of local history, she and her family would have been situated firmly within American history, and would thus be able to have a claim to an American, rather than a purely local, identity. Welles, however, then proceeds to torpedo any claim she may lay to being a fully integrated and functioning American by casually remarking that there was a scandalous rumor that her family was pro-British. In one instance, then, Welles stakes her claim to the Yankee heritage of which she is a rightful heir, and places herself outside of any iteration of American history or identity.

As with the other films that preceded it during the 1950s and the 1960s in which Bostonians and New Englanders travelled abroad to interact with non-geographically specific Americans, *Valley of the Dolls* imagines its New England character as existing apart from a larger, national American identity. The film imagines its New England protagonist, Anne Welles, as other by relying on several of the same tropes that were established in the previous films in this cycle. Specifically, by placing Welles and her family in the suburbs of Boston at a time when most Americans were not yet able to afford suburban homes, *Valley of the Dolls* indicates that the Welles family has access to a fortune that many, if not most, Americans do not. Unlike the previous films, however, *Valley of the Dolls* does not explicitly draw attention to this Welles family wealth, and instead allows viewers to make their own inferences. Though this film does not assign an Irish ethnic heritage to Welles, as is the case for the Bostonian and New England women of the previous films, *Valley of the Dolls* does position Welles as part

of a group that is not-American, as she states that her family, who have lived in suburban Lawrenceville, Massachusetts, since the colonial era supported the British, rather than the American colonists, during the American War for Independence. Thus, although *Valley of the Dolls* utilizes the familiar tropes of the Bostonian and New Englander abroad group of films, it deploys them in a slightly different manner than they are used in the preceding films. Nonetheless, *Valley of the Dolls* still imagines its female New England protagonist as other and separate from a larger, national American identity.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

During the 1950s and the 1960s, the American film industry produced and released a number of films that took for their primary focus the region of New England and its people. One of the main tropes of these films is a focus on a character from New England who leaves their traditional home, goes out into the America beyond the borders of their New England, and interacts with Americans. Yet, this particular trope produces a racialized, gendered, and othered image of the New Englander by forcing the imageability of the region onto the bodies of New England characters. This, in turn, only serves to heighten the otherness of these characters. As a result, American film audiences could hold this othered identity as one against which they could then directly negotiate a wider, national American identity. In turn, this segregates the New England region from the rest of the United States, and the traits ascribed and projected onto the Bostonian characters in these films come to stand in for the identity of the region and its people as a whole.

Through their focus on the inherited, rather than earned, wealth of the Bostonian characters, and more specifically through their attempts to anachronistically shoehorn the characters into the Boston Brahmin class, these films deny the New Englanders access to a crucial part of the American identity. More, by placing their wealth as having been established before the founding of the United States of America and the War for Independence, these films place the characters outside the historical margins of the American nation, thereby further restricting their access to any form of an American identity and permanently confining them to interloping outsiders. Establishing these characters as being Irish within a broader (white) non-ethnically defined American landscape, this group of films allows viewers to construct two identities operating within the United States during this time period: American; and the obverse, not-American. The very act of ascribing an ethnic identity to these characters forces them

out of the American identity, which remains heterogeneous, an empty-vessel into which viewers can pour their own conceptions, so long as they remain undefined beyond the loosest of descriptors, “American.” One of the defining characteristics of these Bostonian or New Englander characters throughout this cycle of films is their gender. Specifically, these characters are female, whose otherness is more clearly noticeable through their interactions with the male characters. The sexual violence and traditional gender dynamics that emerge from the interactions of the female New Englander and the male Americans further marginalize the identity of Boston and New England as a part of an American whole, as the New Englander becomes subject to the desires and needs of the American, and her identity is defined and described only on the terms of the male American. By thus cordoning off Boston and New England geographically from the rest of the United States proper, and by creating and defining a unique identity that is wholly separate from the established and collectively negotiated American identity, these films establish Boston, New England, and its people as an entirely separate and distinct imagined community.

The presentation and utilization of this trope of sending Bostonians and New Englanders abroad, a “fish-out-of-water” scenario, a cinematic staple for two decades, serves to highlight certain perceived differences between Bostonians and Americans to viewers. As a result then, the consistent repetition of this scenario over the course of twenty years gives the impression of compressing a heterogeneous six state region of people into one homogenously defined identity, which can then be imagined in contrast to the larger American culture and identity. By focusing on largely outdated stereotypes of Boston and New England that are remnants from earlier eras of American, as these films tend to do, these films exclude Boston, New England, and its people from an integral piece of the American creation myth. Denying this crucial piece of “Americanness” to a large group of Americans, based solely on their geographic origin within the United States, creates an identity that is both different from and subservient to the larger, collectively negotiated, and nationally agreed upon American identity. This group of films simultaneously reinforces an American identity while placing New England and its people outside of it. The result of this is to imagine the Bostonian identity as one that functions and that exists as separately and apart from an American identity. By engaging in a form othering a large section of the American population, the American film industry was able to reinforce the traditional American identity.



**“IT’S ALL RIGHT. YOU’VE NEVER BEEN OUT OF BOSTON.”: *GOOD WILL HUNTING*, EXPERIENTIAL AUTHENTICITY, AND REDEFINING FILMIC BOSTON**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

At this point, the thesis pivots from an analysis of different groups of films, and how they help to imagine an other identity for Boston, New England, and its people, and here focuses exclusively on the 1997 film, *Good Will Hunting*. *Good Will Hunting* can be considered to be a watershed moment in the imagining of filmic Boston and New England as a community that is other and separate from a larger American identity by the American film industry because it represents such a clear break from the previously discussed tradition of imaging and imagining filmic New England in American audiovisual media. As a result of the enormous critical and commercial success of the film, unprecedented within the prior filmography of Boston and New England, *Good Will Hunting* is the culmination of the nearly eighty years of filmic imagining and othering of the area by the American film industry, and a turning point for the filmic identity that has influenced both the production practices of the American film industry and the ways in which the regional identity has been imagined. That is, *Good Will Hunting* marks a moment in the filmic history of Boston and New England when the imagined other identity of the community had become so engrained within the consciousness of the American film industry and American film audiences that regional locals chose to accept their filmic otherness, but also sought to redefine it so that it matched the reality of their experientially authentic daily lives.

Throughout the early part of the filmography of Boston and New England, the focus was almost exclusively on rural and pastoral New England. Yet, with the release of *Good Will Hunting* and following after it, the filmography shifts its focus to urban Boston, Massachusetts. As a result of this urban turn in the filmography, the imagined

filmic identity currently under examination also undergoes a transformation, which is the primary thrust of the analysis in both this chapter and the following chapter. Yet, urban Boston had appeared in the filmography before *Good Will Hunting*, and this chapter begins with a brief exploration of how the city was imagined before 1997.

Next, a film released nearly concurrently with *Good Will Hunting*, *Next Stop Wonderland* (1998) is briefly examined. At the time of their releases, both films were considered as two parts of a whole in a new direction of Boston films and Boston filmmaking. Yet, whereas *Good Will Hunting* has achieved an incredible staying power in popular imagination, due to its critical and commercial success, *Next Stop Wonderland* has largely faded away from public filmic consciousness, and did not achieve anything remotely resembling the critical or commercial success of *Good Will Hunting*. *Next Stop Wonderland*, however, remains an important piece of the filmography because of its exploration of the filmic New England identity and its role as a counter to the identity offered by *Good Will Hunting*. Specifically, *Next Stop Wonderland* continues the tradition of American audiovisual culture by presenting the iconographically fixed image of a wealthy, blonde, New England woman, again presenting to audiences a bodily imageability of a filmic region and its people, rather than providing an imageable space. Yet, *Next Stop Wonderland* does manage to somewhat break with the prior filmic tradition by having its blonde, female New Englander exist entirely within the urban core of the city of Boston. This section will analyze both this continuation of an imagined filmic identity and its intersection with the imageability of the space of Boston at the beginning of the urban turn in the filmography.

This chapter then next examines several key terms that this thesis has chosen to adopt in order to discuss *Good Will Hunting* in this chapter. Primarily, this section focuses on analyzing different modes of authenticity and their role in imagining and representing a filmic community. Because *Good Will Hunting*, and a number of films that are released and produced in its aftermath, are written by and starred in by people who are native to the region, whereas previously the filmic identity of Boston, New England, and its people had almost exclusively been imagined from the outside by the American film industry, the discussion of authenticity here refers to the terminology adopted from tourism studies, specifically “tourist” and “local,” in order to clearly delineate who is making these films. The term “local” is applied to film audiences or film producers who have a clearly defined relationship with the region, often through birth or through having spent their formative years there, and who can thus be

understood to be “ordinarily resident” in the area. Meanwhile, the term “tourist” is applied to film audiences and film producers who cannot be considered “ordinarily resident” to Boston or New England. Though the concept of authenticity may be a particularly slippery concept, this chapter does not make an argument for who has a right to claim authenticity, nor does it argue that one form of authenticity has any inherent value over the other. Rather, the concept of authenticity, as it is used here, is deployed to specifically explore how filmic Boston has been imagined and represented in these films. More, as much of the press about these films, demonstrates, both the term and the concept of authenticity are frequently used in connection to these films. Indeed, Damon and Affleck, the stars and writers of *Good Will Hunting*, specifically stated that they wanted to make a film that authentically portrayed the city, and as recently as August 4, 2017, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* was still being discussed as “...one of the greatest, most authentic Boston films ever made....”<sup>155</sup>

This section focuses specifically on two different modes of authenticity: “experiential authenticity” and “representational authenticity.” These terms, which seem to be absent from academic discourse in both film studies and in tourism studies, are defined here in order to analyze the different ways in which “local films” and “tourist films” help to imagine the identity and the space of the filmic community of Boston and New England. “Experiential authenticity” is defined as the understanding that locals have of a place that is neither time-limited nor mediated, and is grounded in their daily lives and experiences of that place. “Representational authenticity,” conversely, is the time-limited and mediated experience of a place that colors the perception of tourists. Importantly, the local film writers and stars of *Good Will Hunting* present a filmic version of Boston and its people that local film audiences understand to be experientially authentic.

The chapter next turns to its analysis of *Good Will Hunting*, and the ways in which the film presents its experientially authentic identity of Bostonians. One of the chief ways in which the film presents its experiential authenticity is through the costuming of the characters, the actions of the characters, and the ways in which these characters move through and inhabit the city of Boston. The positive reaction by locals and by the local press to these various facets of the characters demonstrates that many locals understood that what *Good Will Hunting* presents on screen was an accurate reflection of themselves. This, in turn, creates a sense of deep, horizontal comradeship

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<sup>155</sup> Sean Burns, “Honoring Robert Mitchum, Brattle Screens Ultimate Boston Movie: ‘Friends Of Eddie Coyle’,” <http://www.wbur.org/artery/2017/08/04/friends-eddie-coyle-brattle> , August 4 2017.

not only among members of local film audiences, but also between the members of local audiences and the characters in the film. *Good Will Hunting* also manages to redefine the filmic identity of the region and its people through its treatment of Irishness. Gesturing towards both the sociological reality of the composition of ethnic backgrounds in the area and towards the traditionally imagined filmic identity of Boston, many of the characters in *Good Will Hunting* possess Irish ethnic surnames. Yet, the filmic identity of Bostonians in *Good Will Hunting* differs from the Irishness of Bostonians as previously imagined by the American film industry because, in this film, the Irishness of its characters is neither a definitional trait nor something that demands narrative or dialogic attention. Perhaps most radically, *Good Will Hunting* asserts its experientially authentic identity, and thus actively imagines an other regional identity for itself, through the use of the local Boston accent by characters throughout the film, something that had heretofore been absent from the cinematic representation of the region.

The release of *Good Will Hunting* in 1997 represents an important turning point in the filmography and the imagined filmic identity of Boston, New England, and its people. Previously, the American film industry defined and imagined a filmic identity for the region. Yet, *Good Will Hunting* seizes upon this tradition of the filmic other identity and, rather than allowing the American film industry to continue dictating an imagined identity, defines their own filmic identity that is experientially authentic. The result of this experientially authentic filmic identity is the creation of a simultaneity between local film audiences and that filmic identity that binds both into a deep, horizontal comradeship that allows for audiences to imagine themselves as a self-defined other community that can possibly be understood as being analogous to the nation.

## **2. FILMIC BOSTON BEFORE *GOOD WILL HUNTING***

Though the city of Boston and the New England area, and its people, have been a recurring subject and feature in American films since the emergence of the film industry at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not until 1950 that the area was used as an actual filming location by the American film industry. Generally well received at the time, and nominated for an Academy Award, *Mystery Street* (1950) is now a largely forgotten and unimportant film. In fact, its status as the first film shot on location in and around Boston seems to not have had any fundamental impact upon the



film industry, as it did not set off a rush to film on location in the area, rather than on a studio set, nor did it appear to have any influence on the number of films focusing on the area, despite the relevance of Bostonians as film subjects continuing at a relatively steady pace.

Prior to 1997, the film most often associated with the region and its people was *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), a film about a low-level gangster in Boston. Filmed in and around the area, as with *Mystery Street*, the film has often been praised for its realistic depiction of Bostonians. The review of the film in the *Washington Post* notes that *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* is "...written in a salty, hardboiled idiom whose authenticity is slightly breathtaking",<sup>156</sup> while *The Boston Globe* review praises the film for its "...hard-bitten accuracy..." and for the "...realism of its deliberately limited scale."<sup>157</sup> A pre-release review published in the *Los Angeles Times* specifically mentions the attention paid to authenticity undertaken by the cast and crew of the film, as "...much of the reality they hope is being attained stems from the accurate dialog [sic]...."<sup>158</sup> In an attempt to add authenticity to his performance as the titular Eddie Coyle, the lead actor, Robert Mitchum, made several requests to meet with Whitey Bulger, a man who at that time was believed to be only a low-level Boston gangster, but who would ultimately be revealed to be a violent mob boss. Bulger is now serving two life sentences, plus five years, after having been convicted on thirty one criminal charges, including nineteen for murder, and, in addition to serving as the inspiration for the Frank Costello character in *The Departed* (2006), is also the subject of a forthcoming biopic (*Black Mass* [2015]). Although Mitchum did not ultimately meet Bulger, he did meet Howie Winter, who was the erstwhile boss of Bulger (who did ultimately usurp Winter) in the (not eponymous) Winter Hill Gang, and who was himself a ruthless gangster.<sup>159</sup>

Both *Mystery Street* and *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* represent the earliest attempts by the American film industry to authentically portray Boston and its people on film, and both were praised for their efforts to capture an authentic Boston on film through the use of filming locations or actor choices. Although one can hear broad performances of what one should, based on its narrative and setting, assume to be the

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<sup>156</sup> Gary Arnold, "'Eddie Coyle': A Replica Without Tension," *Washington Post*, July 13, 1973.

<sup>157</sup> Kevin Kelly, "Boston-Made 'Friends of Eddie Coyle' One of Years Best," *Boston Globe*, June 27, 1973, 24.

<sup>158</sup> William Wolf, "Movies: Guns All But Make the Man in 'Friends of Eddie Coyle,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 1972.

<sup>159</sup> Alex Ashlock, "Looking Back at an Unlikely Acquaintance with Whitey Bulger," *Here & Now with Robin Young and Jeremy Hobson*, last modified August 3, 2015, <http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2011/06/28/bulger-meeting-whitey>.

distinctive Boston accents in *Mystery Street*, the accent goes truly unrepresented in cinema until 1997, when the film *Good Will Hunting* is released. *Mystery Street* and *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* are two early attempts by the American film industry to utilize and to exploit Boston as both a viable film subject and as a viable shooting location steeped in authenticity. That either film failed to achieve that goal at the time is somewhat irrelevant, as both films demonstrated that the American film industry recognized that perhaps in order for a film about the city to be critically or commercially successful, Boston needed to be authentically and honestly represented on film. Both filmmakers and the film industry seem to have understood that any film utilizing Boston and its people as a subject and a setting demanded a realistic authenticity. Thus, it comes as no surprise that much of the local press for *Good Will Hunting* focuses on the authenticity of that film.

Written and starred in by two young men who were born and raised in the Boston area, *Good Will Hunting* represents the first critically and commercially successful attempt by Boston and New England locals to present their own version of their local identity on film. Until the release of this film in 1997, the primary interest of the American film industry in focusing on Boston, New England, and its people as a community was in presenting an identity that was imagined as other and as not-American. Primarily, the American film industry accomplished this by defining these New Englanders for viewers as being specifically from the region, and then positioning them opposite generically and non-geographically specific Americans. Placing these characters in a specific geographic location, rather than allowing them to exist as generically located Americans, has the effect of cordoning off New England from the rest of the United States in the minds of viewers. With the region thus defined and separated from the United States, these films allow audiences to understand that the presented characteristics and identities of the American characters can be universalized as a national identity, whereas those associated with the New England characters remain specific to that area and its people. Having thus excised the New England region from the United States, these films further imagined separate identities for New Englanders and for Americans, which results in the establishment of filmic New England as a community that is imagined as being distinct.

The American film industry accomplishes this imagining through showing its Bostonian and New England characters as being specifically other in contrast to their American antagonists. The presentation of Bostonian and New Englander protagonists as being almost exclusively female characters throughout these films prior to 1997

highlights their position of being in possession of an opposite identity to Americans, who were most often presented as male. This suggestion that femininity equates to otherness when held in contrast to an American identity principally manifests itself through the ability of male, American characters to actively define and to assign personal traits these female New Englanders, whether those traits are readily available to be read as text by film audiences. As a result, many of these films contain scenes where the male, American characters remark upon the “Irish temper” of female New Englanders, which thus situates these New Englanders as being both geographically rooted in an area that is not-America, but something more specific and local, and as being in possession of a national identity that is expressly not-American. More, these male characters often force themselves upon the female New Englanders in a sexually aggressive manner, suggesting an attitude of the American film industry that viewed New England and its people as subordinate to other Americans. Indeed, the American film industry asked its audiences to imagine a national identity based on what it is not: in opposition to the characteristics that these films attribute to their New England characters. The American film industry, then, presented New England and its people as a community that was separate and apart from the larger social fabric of American culture. This resulted, throughout many films and over the course of many years, in the establishment of an identity that was situated as an avatar for all New Englanders, and was contrary to an American identity. Thus, through these films, the American film industry established and insisted upon imaging New England as a community that was other and outside of the traditionally accepted bounds of the United States.

*Good Will Hunting* marks an important turning point in the imagining of filmic Boston and New England. Before its release, the American film industry imagined the identity of the region and its people for the region and its people. That is, Bostonians and New Englanders had very little, if any, control over the ways in which they were being presented in American films. As a result, then, the American film industry, over the course of more than eighty years, managed to create and to repeatedly present an identity that was other, separate, and distinct from a more collectively negotiated American national identity. The release of *Good Will Hunting*, however, represents a moment where local Bostonian seize upon the filmic otherness of the region that had been created, and use it as a springboard through which to present an experientially authentic identity that more accurately reflects the otherness of the region and its people. The film confronts the distinct and specific idiosyncratic characteristics of the identity of the region and its people, and strives to present those in a respectful and

authentic way. Yet, because *Good Will Hunting* does not situate its Bostonian characters in opposition to non-geographically located American characters, it argues for a distinct and other identity that is still nonetheless part of the larger framework of the national American identity. Before 1997 and the release of this film, the geographic specificity of filmic Bostonians and New Englanders in comparison to their (male) non-geographically located American opposites, highlighted their otherness. *Good Will Hunting*, however, does not place these two filmic identities in opposition to each other. Because the film authentically depicts specific peculiarities that are particular to the region, *Good Will Hunting* nonetheless has the same effect of imagining Boston, New England, and its people as the type of filmic community that can function as an analogue of the nation.

The choice to film *Good Will Hunting* on location in and around the city of Boston, radical in its own right as it marked a departure from the traditional filming practices of the American film industry in its imagining of the region, allows for the film to develop an authenticity of place and of identity that is instantly recognizable to all local viewers of the film. By filming on location, *Good Will Hunting* creates a filmic landscape through which its characters move and in which they exist that, importantly, is an exact facsimile of the one in which local film viewers also exist and live. This results in these local film audiences being able to both identify the otherness of this new filmic Bostonian identity as being true to their own experiences and to situate that identity within a familiar landscape, and thus settling it geographically. In this way, *Good Will Hunting* creates a situation for local film audiences that allows them to understand an other identity not as something that is being dictated to and about them, but rather as something that is being accurately and authentically reflected on screen as something that is a legitimate mode of being. This authenticity of place and identity allows locals to understand the deep, horizontal comradeship of the nation, and further enforces the notion of filmic Boston and New England as an imagined community.

*Good Will Hunting* further breaks from the previously established imaginings of filmic Boston and New England through its treatment of the Irishness of its characters. Previously, the characters from Boston and New England were assigned an Irish identity, which was highlighted for audiences through ethnically obvious names and other, ethnically ambiguous American characters explicitly commenting on this Irishness. Although Boston and New England has a documented history of an ethnically Irish population that is higher than the U.S. national average, the films

released prior to 1997 imagined the area and its people as a monolithic bloc of Irishness. This imagined ethnically and not-American homogenous population served to position Bostonians and New Englanders as specifically other from a national American identity because it assigned an identity that was expressly not an American one, whereas as American characters in these films remained ethnically ambiguous. *Good Will Hunting*, however, presented a version of Boston that was populated with many ethnically Irish citizens, but presented them in a way such that this identity was neither explicit, nor homogenous for all citizens of the area. Rather, the film allowed Boston to exist as a place where numerous ethnic identities all have a legitimate claim to the Bostonian identity. More, *Good Will Hunting* subverts many of the ways in which Irishness has come to function in audiovisual media over the last twenty years. This results in the film presenting and imagining a Boston that still exists as possessing an other identity, but one that also fits firmly within a larger American national identity. But because this representation of Irishness appears to be experientially authentic to local viewers, the film is able to further foster the feeling among locals that Bostonians and New Englanders are bound together in an imagined community.

Finally, filming *Good Will Hunting* in the authentic, local Boston accent indicates that the film understands that Boston possesses a unique identity within the American landscape, and that it had not been properly represented on cinema screens until that moment. Indeed, both Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, the writers and stars of the film, state that one of their primary reasons for making this film was so that they could accurately capture the language of the area in which they were born and raised, something that they felt had been missing in all prior filmic portrayals. The effect that this has on the imagining of Boston and New England as a filmic community is that it serves to further distance it from a larger American identity. This further demonstrates to local film audiences that their community is uniquely situated as existing outside the traditional framework of an American national identity, and allows them to imagine this filmic Boston as therefore being an inherently limited community.

The filmic identity of *Good Will Hunting*, which was self-determined and experientially authentic, proved to be both critically and commercially successful, and thus demonstrated a different and viable identity for the region than what had been defined in films before. Thus, *Good Will Hunting* represents a moment in the development of the imagined community of filmic Boston and New England where locals understood their own filmic otherness, and, instead of trying to reshape their

identity so that it fit into the traditional constellation of acceptable American identities, embraced and asserted this otherness.

### **3. NEXT STOP WONDERLAND**

A week before the 1998 Academy Awards, where *Good Will Hunting* would be recognized with two awards, Monica Roman wrote in the March 16, 1998 edition of *Variety*, an American film industry trade magazine, “Call it the *Good Will Hunting* effect. These days, it seems nearly everybody in the working-class section of Boston known as ‘Southie’ is polishing a script.”<sup>160</sup> Conflating a small and specifically defined section of Boston—which was prominently, though not solely, featured in *Good Will Hunting*—with the entirety of the city of Boston, as well as the larger region of New England with its own established tradition in American audiovisual culture, Roman proceeds to list a number of then-forthcoming films with connections to Boston. Although Roman notes that state-sponsored tax breaks specifically designed to encourage filming within Massachusetts created a “...production momentum in Massachusetts [that] doesn't appear to be slowing down any time soon”,<sup>161</sup> the “boom” in film and television production within the state does not directly account for the increase in audiovisual media that was taking the city as its specific subject. It is, therefore, instructive to consider that the “*Good Will Hunting* effect” did actually contribute to, as Roman thinks, everyone in Southie managing to turn their script into a production.

In January of 1998, *Next Stop Wonderland* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, and was initially considered in the press as a natural and logical next step in what some were considering an emerging Boston filmmaking scene. Further, at the time, it was often discussed as a sibling film to *Good Will Hunting*, though the plots, characters, settings, and commercial and critical successes of the two films are wildly divergent. Indeed, the fact that *Next Stop Wonderland* received a distribution deal is a direct result of the “*Good Will Hunting* effect” as, “Legendary distributor Miramax—the same company that produced Affleck and Damon's *Good Will Hunting*—stunned the independent film community gathered here at the Sundance Film Festival by buying world rights to *Next Stop, Wonderland* [sic], directed by Boston filmmaker [Brad] Anderson, for a reported \$6 million.”<sup>162</sup> That is, although *Next Stop Wonderland* was

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<sup>160</sup> Monica Roman, “Beantown Biz Boomtime,” *Variety*, March 16-March 22, 1998.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Peter Brunette, “Movie Deal Buoys Local Boy Wonder,” *Boston Globe*, January 21, 1998.

written, produced, and screened independently of *Good Will Hunting*, the success of the latter film was directly responsible for the same production company securing distribution rights to the former, and thus allowing it to permeate larger American film consciousness.

This “*Good Will Hunting* effect,” however, potentially only explains the (initial) press coverage received by *Next Stop Wonderland*, and its acquisition for distribution by Miramax. Indeed, the title of the film itself clearly indicates one of the major settings of the film, an area near the East Boston neighborhood of the city by the Wonderland Greyhound Park dog racing track (actually located in Revere, Massachusetts). Contrary to the assertion made by Roman, then, filmic Boston post-*Good Will Hunting* existed outside of Southie.

The plot of *Next Stop Wonderland* revolves around its two co-main characters—a blonde woman who comes from familial wealth, named Erin Castleton; and a plumber studying to become a marine biologist, named Alan Monteiro—and various vignettes from their lives of their separate searches for romance and an end to their singledom. The opening scenes of the film introduce viewers to Erin, who continues the established archetype of a New Englander character in American audiovisual culture, as she returns to a brownstone apartment (owned by her family, not by her). This introductory shot of Castleton returning to her home echoes tropes from earlier films such as *The Parent Trap* (1961) and *Donovan’s Reef* (1963), where blonde, female New Englanders are shown outside of their obviously wealthy homes, though viewers are given no further context where, within the city of Boston, these homes may be located. As a result, this trope—repeated here with Castleton standing in front of and entering one brownstone in a terrace among many other identical ones, along a nameless Boston street—has a double effect of destabilizing a sense of imageability among viewers, while simultaneously inscribing that imageability of place onto the body of a character. That is, eliding the exact locations within a city of the homes of these characters deprives viewers of the opportunity to create a mental image of that city, to navigate that mental image, and to experience and to understand the diversity and the lived-in-ness reality of that city. In effect, by essentially compressing the spatial imageability of filmic Boston (and New England, as it was often interchangeably called in earlier films) into a single, context-less building that gestures at wealth and an upper-class lifestyle, this trope asks viewers to not position filmic Boston as a space. That is, this trope allows audiences to

view filmic Boston as something other than a "...product of interrelations...";<sup>163</sup> as something other than a sphere of "...coexisting heterogeneity";<sup>164</sup> and as something other than "...always being under construction."<sup>165</sup> Or, as Doreen Massey states, "...we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far."<sup>166</sup> This trope, however, insists upon a filmic Boston that is static, homogenous, and non-imageable. Yet, the non-imageability of filmic Boston and its failure to be elevated to a space forces audiences to imagine an imageability of filmic Boston as something that is embodied by the iconographic wealthy, blonde, female New Englander, rather than as something that can be laid upon a place. *Next Stop Wonderland* thus, despite insistences that it was influenced by *Good Will Hunting* and represented a new direction in filmic Boston and New England, continues in the footsteps of the earlier filmography and continues the repetition of an imageable wealthy, blonde, female New Englander as a semaphore for the city.

This film further insists upon the imageability of Boston being entirely dependent upon the iconographic fixity of Castleton and her bodily image by, as was common in the New Englanders abroad cycle of films, depicting Castleton as being in transit through and from a series of non-places. The title of the film, in fact, is a reference to a stop on the MBTA public transport subway system in Boston, and Castleton is seen riding this system to Logan International Airport on the outskirts of Boston several times. Further, though the film does include a shot of the exterior of her brownstone house, Castleton is most often seen in anonymous interiors that cannot be specifically located within the city of Boston, such as workplaces, bars, and house interiors. Indeed, the film opts to show only the interiors of one of the more iconic Boston landmarks referenced by the film, the New England Aquarium, rather than to provide viewers with a recognizable establishing shot so that they can form a mental image of the city to navigate. As a result of Castleton seeming to exist in a series of non-places throughout Boston, the imageability of her iconographically fixed character is used, as was the case in previous films, to create an image of Boston for viewers. And because this image is tied to the body of a character, viewers are left to react to that character as being a stand-in for the region.

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<sup>163</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space*, 9.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



#### 4. REPRESENTATIONAL VERSUS EXPERIENTIAL AUTHENTICITY

While much has been written on the subject of authenticity across many different academic fields of study in both the humanities and the social sciences, the terms “experiential authenticity” and “representational authenticity” rarely appear in academic discourse. It is necessary, therefore, to be specific about what these two terms mean within the context of this thesis, and especially the relationship of these terms to the previously established definitions of tourist and local. “Representational authenticity” is defined here as the perception of tourists that their experience of a place, which is necessarily mediated and time-limited, corresponds exactly to the ways in which locals experience the same place in their daily lives. In the case of film and cinema, then, the mediated (re)presentation of Boston and New England allows viewers to apprehend and to imagine the area and its people in a way that that does not correspond to the daily experience of the people of the area, but nonetheless solidifies into an authentic image for these tourists. For locals, the “experiential authenticity” with which they live every day is their understanding and their conception of their place of ordinary residence and its people that is neither mediated nor constructed through representations, but is rather understood through quotidian experience that is not limited by time.

One of the few uses of the phrase “representational authenticity” is in *Unsettling the Literary West: Authenticity and Authorship*, a study of American literature of the West by Nathaniel Lewis. In his analysis, he writes that “To enforce their claims of representational authenticity, fiction writers who wrote about the West made elaborate assertions for the truth of their work, even while acknowledging a certain inventiveness.”<sup>167</sup> Lewis correctly identifies that the basis of representational authenticity lies in its claims to verisimilitude, even while it (representational authenticity) admits to being only a representation of the real thing. Similarly, Johanna Sprondel and Tilman Haug note that representational authenticity stresses the truth of its own performance in their study of seventeenth century diplomacy and the literature surrounding it. They write that “Representational authenticity referred primarily to the credibility of an ambassador’s ‘stage performance’ and thus to the success of assuming and performing the identity of the represented prince.”<sup>168</sup> The relationship between the

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<sup>167</sup> Nathaniel Lewis, *Unsettling the Literary West: Authenticity and Authorship* (Lincoln, NE, USA: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 34.

<sup>168</sup> Johanna Sprondel and Tilman Haug, “What’s In A *Promesse Authentique*? Doubting and Confirming Authenticity in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century French Diplomacy,” in *Indexing Authenticity: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*,

representation of something and the objective, truthful existence of that thing is crucial to understanding the term representational authenticity in both cases. Yet, what each of the above usages fails to note is the importance of the representation of the thing itself. The representation or the performance of something or someone, no matter how accurate it may be, is still only a representation. It is thus a mediated construction of that thing, rather than the authentic thing itself. As a result, then, representational authenticity lacks any true claim to authenticity, though it nonetheless functions as authentic in the minds of tourists who have no experiential authenticity.

Maria Månsson, while doing field research at Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, manages to illustrate the tension between representational and experiential authenticity. There, Månsson encounters one tourist whose decision to visit the church was, at least in part, influenced by their reading of the novel *The Da Vinci Code*, and the “authentic” image that the tourist had built of the place in their mind. Månsson explains that for this tourist, “The novel confirmed her imaginary space as the authentic space by both the mediated and the sensed senses. However, the descriptions in the novel and the story itself were not that easily traceable for her at the physical site.”<sup>169</sup> This tourist chose to visit a medieval church in Scotland in order to confirm and to experience an authentic image that she had created in her mind after reading a work of fiction, but found that the real, lived-in Rosslyn Chapel did not match up with the mediated representation she had come to imagine as being authentic. Though this tourist understood that she was at the authentic Rosslyn Chapel, she could not reconcile the experiential authenticity of the place with the representational authenticity that lived in her imagination.

Månsson further explores this tension, seen here on a specific and an individual level by one tourist, that is created by the inability of the tourist to reconcile these two types of authenticity through the difficulties the Rosslyn Chapel Trust, the organization that is in charge of preserving the church and that is ostensibly the official keeper of its history, has had with its newfound *Da Vinci Code* tourists. These tourists, as with the one above, visit the chapel expecting to be immersed in and to be regaled with the myths and pseudo-history they read about in the novel, while the Trust chafes against this type of tourist and the effect that they and the novel have had in eroding the “authentic” history of the place. The result of this tension is the creation of a feedback loop, where the representational authenticity of a thing or a place forces the

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ed. Véronique Lacoste, Jakob Leimgruber, and Thiemo Breyer (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2015), 350.

<sup>169</sup> Maria Månsson, “Negotiating Authenticity at Rosslyn Chapel,” in *Re-Investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions* (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2010), 177.

experientially authentic thing or place to bend in order to satisfy the demands of the tourist interaction. The experientially authentic Rosslyn Chapel differs from the representationally authentic Rosslyn Chapel, and each authentic version affects how the other version perceives (and receives) the other. As Månsson writes, "...media products influence the embodied experience of a physical space. However, this works both ways as physical sites may also influence the media experience."<sup>170</sup> The clash between representational authenticity and experiential authenticity results in the asymptotic distance between experiential and representational authenticity.

The way in which the television series *Cheers* influenced the experiential authenticity of the patrons of the Bull & Finch Pub in Boston is a perfect illustration of both this feedback loop and the tension between the two modes of authenticity. The establishing shot at the beginning of each *Cheers* episode of the exterior of the Cheers bar was of the nondescript and non-famous Bull & Finch Pub basement bar in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston. Yet, the commercial success of the television series, and its eleven season run on television, grew interest in the "authentic" Cheers bar, such that tourists hoped to visit the place "where everybody knows your name," only to be confronted with a place that had a different name and whose interior did not resemble what was on television. This bar was, experientially, the same bar from *Cheers*, even though its representation in the series was dissimilar to the authentic thing. In 2002, however, well after the television series had ended, the Bull & Finch Pub officially changed its name (and its sign) to Cheers in order to better service the tourist interest. More, they opened a second location in the Faneuil Hall marketplace whose interior was a replica of the one on the television show, and which sells various gifts and souvenirs emblazoned with the logo of the bar-cum-television show-cum-bar.

## **5. GOOD WILL HUNTING AND A NEW FILMIC BOSTONIAN IDENTITY**

In the (almost) one hundred years of American film history preceding the release of *Good Will Hunting*, the image of the Bostonian and New Englander was female and blonde, steeped in the pre-history of the United States, and tethered to myopic notions of a homogenous, wealthy Brahmin class of people with puritanical beliefs. And though it focused on a slightly more heterogeneous socioeconomic class of people, populated by both men and women, even the television program *Cheers*, the audiovisual touchstone for images of Boston and its people for the fifteen years between its debut in

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 175.

1982 and the release of *Good Will Hunting*, was filmed on a soundstage in Los Angeles, and featured no local actors. The images and identities of Boston and its people, then, were created entirely by “tourists” with no experiential authenticity of the area and its citizens, and who were thus able to forge and to present a communal identity that reflected their own beliefs rather than one that presented an authentic version of the actual, lived-in experience of the area by its own people. It is this mediated and imagined image that was used to represent an authentic Boston and its people for nearly one hundred years, but did not match up with the experiential authenticity of Bostonians and their knowledge of the area as it actually exists.

The origin story of *Good Will Hunting*, as told by the screenwriters and stars, Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, during the initial press tour is that their script could only ever have been filmed in Boston. In a profile in the *Boston Globe* months before the release of the film, Ben Affleck (who at that point was just starting to ascend as a star due in part to his roles in other films in 1997), noted that it took so long for the script to be purchased and then filmed because “Chief among our disagreements was that we said it has to be filmed in Boston.... They said Boston was too expensive, and we said we didn’t want to make this movie if we couldn’t do it in Boston.”<sup>171</sup> For Affleck, where the film was shot would be crucial to the success or failure of *Good Will Hunting* because it would add the necessary authenticity upon which filmic Boston seems to insist. Affleck noted that part of the appeal of setting a film in Boston is that “It’s very particular, and interesting, especially at a time when so much of the country is becoming generic. . . . Boston is still a place that has its own identity, its own flavor.”<sup>172</sup> As a result, then, what Damon and Affleck wanted to do was to “...present Boston the way we knew it growing up here. Because we feel like it has never really been done. Everything from the dialect to the specific kinds of culture, the way people live.”<sup>173</sup> From its inception, at least according to the biased screenwriter and local, native authenticity and insistence on the uniqueness, or difference, of the people and the area was not only an important feature of the film, but was crucial to it.

With its screenwriters insisting on the authenticity and verisimilitude of the filmic Boston in *Good Will Hunting*, the local press also seemed to pick up on this notion and became both demonstrative and protective of what the locals know to be authentic, and dismissive of how the rest of America thinks of and depicts Boston. The

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<sup>171</sup> Ben Affleck quoted in Matthew Gilbert, “Ben Affleck Grabs His Big Dream This Cambridge Kid Now Gets to Star in Hollywood and Fim [sic] at Home,” *Boston Globe*, April 6, 1997.

<sup>172</sup> Ben Affleck quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Ben Affleck quoted in *ibid.*

review of the film in the *Boston Globe* by Jay Carr on Christmas Day in 1997 focuses much less on the authenticity and more on the merits of the film as a film. This is, most likely, because the reviewer accepts the authenticity of filmic Boston in *Good Will Hunting* as a priori, and as something that is blindingly obvious. Carr writes positively of the film, and argues that it is successful because of its focus on believable working class characters, something that he believes that Hollywood so often fails to accurately capture. In fact, Carr asserts that *Good Will Hunting*, in spite of its “conventionality,” succeeds because of its believable blue-collar characters, who, of course, are authentically only from Boston. For Carr, *Good Will Hunting* “...has Boston written all over it” and “Any other locale would be unthinkable.”<sup>174</sup> Carr concludes his review with a paragraph assuring potential local moviegoers that the Boston of *Good Will Hunting* is not only authentic and recognizable, but also treated with dignity onscreen, preserving the Boston that those locals know and love.

### ***5.1 An Experientially Authentic Identity***

The proof that *Good Will Hunting* managed to present the experiential authenticity of Bostonians comes in their response to the film. While pre-release press focused on authenticity and accuracy, local film reviews and interviews with citizens often focused on their praise of the film in achieving these goals, and on their own abilities to recognize and identify what was on film as being not a reflection and a performance, but rather an authentic presentation of sights, sounds, places, and experiences as they know them to be through their daily existence and interaction with their experientially authentic Boston. An article in the *Boston Globe*, published after the release of the film, interviewed several men (but no women) from South Boston, the setting of the film, about their experiences of the film. One young man notes that “They not only had my character up there, but a lot of other people’s lives around here in South Boston”,<sup>175</sup> and that he was so overwhelmed with seeing his authentic experience on film that he was reduced to tears. He further comments that it was not just his own authentic Boston accent that he saw in the film, but rather a complete portrayal of his own life as a young man in South Boston: “From not being vulnerable, not being open with women, from the fears, the doubts and insecurities, to the people who let you know

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<sup>174</sup> Jay Carr, “‘Will’ Has Its Way Gus Van Sant Directs and South Boston Stars in a Film That Rides Young, Exuberant Energies,” *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1997.

<sup>175</sup> Phil Barrineau quoted in Brian MacQuarrie, “Southie Sees Itself,” *Boston Globe*, December 27, 1997.

who you are.”<sup>176</sup> The article also alludes to the indexical authenticity of *Good Will Hunting*, as it describes the way in which this interviewee went to see the film with his friends is almost an exact replica of a scene from the film: “Barrineau drove three of his friends to watch the film yesterday afternoon, four South Boston guys riding in a creaking blue Chevy with a dented door. In the film, Hunting and three friends cruise the neighborhood in another wreck of a car, dents and all. The resemblance was right out of the casting office.”<sup>177</sup>

It was not just young men from the neighborhood of South Boston, locally referred to as “Southie,” who understood the experiential authenticity of *Good Will Hunting*, as the local gossip column in the *Boston Globe* was also quite protective of this authenticity that they saw in the film. The authors of the gossip column chide the *New York Times* and film reviewer Bernard Weinraub for his comically incorrect put-on of someone who knows Boston, and has the authority to comment upon the authenticity of the film. The authors write:

Memo to Miramax Films: Get a glossary of Boston-location nicknames to hand out to the national press before the Robin Williams/Matt Damon movie “Good Will Hunting” opens next month. In yesterday’s *New York Times*, Bernard Weinraub buzzed about the buzz over the film, set in and around South Boston, which stars Damon as Will Hunting, a working-class Southie kid who happens to be a math genius. “The script was written with a specific sense of the Boston area, the blue-collar South Side as well as Cambridge,” Weinraub wrote. (Chicago, Boston, what’s the difference?) The piece also referred to Ben Affleck, who plays Damon’s buddy in the flick, as “Will’s best friend and fellow Southie.” Perhaps Weinraub meant “fellow townie.” Note to Miramax: It’s “fellow Southie boy.”<sup>178</sup>

The success of *Good Will Hunting* in presenting the experiential authenticity of Boston and its people in audiovisual media, and thus providing them with an alternative to the nearly century old filmic imagined community of Boston and New England, proves that this is both a commercially and critically viable audiovisual identity of the area. This, however, creates the aforementioned feedback loop, as once the experiential authenticity proves viable, “tourists” not only flock to the area in a hope to experience it themselves, but also attempt to profit from it through recreating and re-presenting the same identity on film repeatedly in the aftermath of the success of *Good Will Hunting*.

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<sup>176</sup> Phil Barrineau quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>177</sup> Brian MacQuarrie, “Southie Sees Itself,” *Boston Globe*, December 27, 1997.

<sup>178</sup> Susan Bickelhaupt and Maureen Dezell, “Names & Faces,” *Boston Globe*, November 21, 1997.

The experiential authenticity of the film with which locals can identify stems from banal, quotidian, and specific local idiosyncrasies in clothing choices and mannerisms. Following the opening scene at MIT, the film moves to an establishing shot of the L Street Tavern, a neighborhood bar that in the aftermath of the success of the film became famous for being “a neighborhood bar” and representative of the kind of identity that the film offers such that tourists could then visit and experience what it might be like to drink with the film characters. But having thus established the central characters at the L Street Tavern, *Good Will Hunting* next binds these heretofore locally accented ciphers inexorably to Boston through non-vocal gestures to the experiential authenticity known to locals as it cuts to the four men sweating off a hangover on a sunny morning at the local Little League baseball field, Foley Field, which would be instantly recognizable to locals as the same one on which every young child growing up in South Boston would have played. For tourists viewing the film, this baseball field for young children is indistinguishable from any number of millions of other American baseball fields, and falls into a morass of baseball fields that is at once similar to one they may have played on as a young child, but is at the same time different and not the same. The shot of this field is brief, and while tourist viewers may notice an “almost but not quite” quality to it, they would continue along, undisturbed, with the filmic narrative, whereas local viewers would be confronted with images and sounds that they themselves would have experienced in their daily lives. These viewers have sat in those stands and have played on that very baseball field. The indexical proof of their experiential authenticity in the fictional, filmic narrative affirms their understanding that these characters are not representational avatars of who others perceive them to be, but rather are authentic versions of their own lives presented to film viewers on celluloid.

After a brief establishing shot of Foley Field, the film then cuts to Will Hunting and his friends sitting in the stands (and drinking liquor out of bottles in brown paper bags), where viewers are shown Chuckie Sullivan wearing an outfit that exemplifies not just his own poor sartorial style, but also that of young men from the area in the 1990s: his omnipresent nylon track bottoms, and his Starter jacket. The Starter jacket, a nylon windbreaker-style jacket, was a popular item throughout much of the 1990s because buyers and wearers could choose one that allowed them to publicly and wordlessly display their sporting allegiance, as there were jackets individually bearing the colors, insignia, and logos for all major professional sports teams in the United States. Chuckie Sullivan, just as many other locals would have done, wears the colors of the local ice hockey team, the Boston Bruins. His choice of the Bruins is important to note because

the team would have been at the peak of its popularity as it was at the end of its record streak of appearing in the postseason playoffs for twenty-nine consecutive years, a record that still stands across all major professional sporting leagues in the United States. (Though the team would miss the playoffs the following year, it would not be until after *Good Will Hunting* had already been released and rewarded with success at the Academy Awards.) Morgan O'Mally also displays his sporting allegiance through the t-shirt he wears, which reads, in the colors of the local professional basketball team and also with its logo, "I Hate L.A.," a relic from a specific era of fandom and success of the Boston Celtics. Unremarkable on their own when devoid of context, the clothing choices of O'Mally and Sullivan in this instant, already piling on top of the jolt of seeing a possibly fondly remembered space from their youth, insists upon the authenticity of these characters. It is entirely possible that someone from Boston watching the film in a cinema would have played their youth baseball at Foley Field, driven to the cinema in a car not dissimilar to the one that Hunting and his friends drive (as Barrineau and his friends did), wearing an "I Hate L.A." t-shirt under their Bruins Starter jacket. Sullivan, O'Mally, and Hunting, then, are not fictional film characters or representations of people from a certain area who may be similar in some way. Rather, that viewers watch these characters act, speak, dress, and move through space in a way that is exactly that same as these viewers affirms the experiential authenticity of the film for Bostonians.

The effect of this experiential authenticity is that it binds local viewers in the deep, horizontal comradeship of which Benedict Anderson writes as being crucial to the formation and maintenance of an imagined community. The previously established filmic identity of Bostonians and New Englanders bound the area and its people into an imagined community only through the otherness and status as not-American, and only in the minds of those who were not from the area, and who thus had a vested interest in buttressing the correct national identity of the United States. Local viewers were only bound in deep, horizontal comradeship through their status as other, and not through anything that would have made them invested in a process of maintaining an imagined community through the remembrance of enslaved ancestors and the hope for liberated grandchildren, as Walter Benjamin puts it in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History."<sup>179</sup> Further, there was nothing in those films and the identity they offered that could approximate the daily plebiscite that is, as Renan stated, the nation's very

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<sup>179</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London, UK: Pimlico, 1999), 252.



existence. Yet, the sight of Sullivan and O'Mally wearing the colors and clothing of local professional sports teams, and moving through the space that locals inhabit on a daily basis, affirms the experiential authenticity not just of that identity, but of the viability of the imagined community. Having been previously imagined as other, and given no authentically viable identity to which to cling, *Good Will Hunting* provides the people of Boston and New England with an identity that their experiences informs them of being authentic and viable, but also shared with other members of their community.

## **5.2 Irishness and Filmic Bostonian Identity**

One of the more subtle, but perhaps most enduring, characteristics of Bostonian and New England characters on film has been an insistence on their Irishness. Through both ethnic naming conventions and through off-handed dialogue, films that contained characters from the region conditioned American viewers to understand these characters through a specific ethnic or racial lens so that their identities could be divorced from a larger American identity. Films such as *The Parent Trap* (1961) refer to the “Irish temper” of a woman from Boston, or anachronistically ascribe an Irish accent to native New Englander Anne Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker* (1962). In this way, the region is compressed into an ethnic homogeneity and dispossessed of any identity except “Irish.” Because a highlighted Irish identity marks characters as also being not-American (or at least not fully American), this insistence on Irishness is also an insistence on otherness. The characters portrayed by John Wayne on film were not ethnicized, but were instead allowed to function as Americans; Clint Eastwood’s Dirty Harry is a San Francisco police detective, but his ethnic background is unremarked upon and he exists as an ethnically irrelevant American; and Nick and Nora Charles of *The Thin Man* films are wealthy American socialites who happen to solve crimes, regardless of their unmentioned ethnicity.

Although Irishness and an Irish ethnic identity has been an important and defining characteristic of filmic New Englanders since, more or less, the start of the American film industry, it is only recently that “...Irishness has emerged as an idealized ethnicity with which large numbers of people around the world, and particularly in the United States, choose to identify.”<sup>180</sup> Even with a critical reappraisal of Irishness in the public and cultural spheres as an identity to be desired and to be performed, it has still endured as a marker of Otherness for Bostonians and New Englanders on film.

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<sup>180</sup> Diane Negra, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press, 2006), back cover.

For Diane Negra, one of the key functions of Irishness in media culture since the start of the new millennium is its role in mediating and reinforcing certain notions of traditional morality and values. She writes that these new media representations are "...increasingly using Irishness as an ethnic code for reinstating social values perceived to be lost in millennial American culture."<sup>181</sup> Though open to some interpretation, these social values can be broadly defined as familial loyalty (with a focus on a strong nuclear family unit) and hard work. Tethering a highlighted Irish identity to the presentation of a specific set of traditional (and, presumably, positive) values creates an easy shorthand for viewers such that any Irish character easily evokes "...a moral antidote to contemporary ills ranging from globalization to postmodern alienation, from crises over the meaning and practice of family values to environmental destruction."<sup>182</sup> The depiction of Irishness and Irish identity as being representative of such traditional, conservative, and inflexible morality also serves to infantilize the identity by rendering the constructed Irish in audiovisual media as a people who are in possession of some kind of primitive innocence that has not yet been stained by all the ills of the modern world.

Irishness and Irish identity in audiovisual culture since the turn of the millennium seems to be comprised of four basic components that make up its presentation and reception. First, Irishness is presented in such a way so that it is inextricably linked with notions of traditional family values and conservative morality. This manifests through the presentation of a strong and bonded nuclear family units with a sense of pride and loyalty. Generally these families are working class or blue-collar families, who then further exhibit values of hard work. These imagined values that are attached to this presented Irish identity suggest the second component of this new Irishness, a sense of pre-modern innocence. This allows viewers of this Irishness to place the identity as some kind of restorative cure-all to the traumas of the modern world, and to understand those who possess or assert the identity as being specifically ahistorical and as being able to exist in an imaginary, simpler yesteryear. This imagined and ascribed innocence then further manifests through the depiction of idyllic landscapes. These landscapes, purportedly of the countryside or coastline of Ireland, are shown without either people or modern intrusions, and are presented as serene and undisturbed antidotes to the traumas of the urban, modern world. More, these are meant

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<sup>181</sup> Diane Negra, "The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture," *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

to evoke the supposedly simpler and more peaceful lives of ancestors, before their emigration to the United States. Finally, Irishness is marked by its racial liquidity. While the above components allow Irishness to now stand as some sort of idealized ethnicity in the modern United States, Irish identity also carries with it an historical memory of oppression and persecution. This allows Irishness to straddle the line between whiteness and a minority identity, thereby creating an “...‘everything and nothing’ status of Irishness.”<sup>183</sup> Irishness, then, exists in a liminal space between the privilege of whiteness and an oppressed minority group, and can move fluidly between the two, with the possessor of the Irishness deploying whichever status may be more convenient in the moment.

What separates this new Irishness in audiovisual culture from the way it has been used throughout film history to mark and to identify Bostonians and New Englanders, however, is the active and conscious adoption of Irish identity. That is, characters in possession of the new Irishness are exactly that: in possession of that identity. These characters choose to adopt this identity, and can deploy it in an effort to evoke and present certain ideals in the minds of viewers. Yet, the Irish identity of filmic New Englanders prior to the release of *Good Will Hunting* is entirely passive, as their Irishness was something that was assigned to them. In both *The Parent Trap* and in *Donovan's Reef* (1963), the female New Englanders are told of their own “Irish temper” by their ethnically non-specific, and thus American, male counterparts. The historical Anne Sullivan is performed in *The Miracle Worker* with an anachronistic, and at times indecipherable, Irish accent, thereby depriving the historical Sullivan of a fully American identity or any agency in choosing to deploy an Irish identity.

*Good Will Hunting* continues this filmic tradition of passively establishing the Irishness of the characters through naming conventions, allowing their ethnically obvious names to provide viewers with the necessary information and context. The film also uses occasional ethnic jokes and slights as a way to subtly drive home the supposed Irishness of these characters. The difference between *Good Will Hunting* off-handedly discussing the Irishness of its Bostonians and previous films is that the characters doing so in *Good Will Hunting* are both Irish and Bostonians, whereas previously it was geographically ambiguous Americans bluntly stating the ethnic identity of Bostonians through mild ethnic insults. Further, although the Irishness of the characters in *Good Will Hunting* would outwardly seem to possess the same attributes as this new Irishness, their Irishness functions in a contrary manner, and is used for entirely different

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 1.

purposes. In this way, then, *Good Will Hunting* uses the established tropes of Irish Bostonians and the new Irish identity to shift the paradigm of the filmic Boston identity from one of passive otherness defined by non-Boston Americans to one defined by Bostonians as recognizably and experientially authentic to all those who would experience the deep, horizontal comradeship of the filmically imagined community of Boston and New England.

With their Irishness passively established within the first few moments of the film, the characters of *Good Will Hunting* subvert this new Irishness while simultaneously embodying all of its component parts. Perhaps one of the less explicit, underlying themes of the film is what constitutes a family. Will Hunting comes from a broken home, with neither of his biological parents involved in his life in any capacity, he is essentially orphaned and grew up as a ward of the state and a product of the foster care system. Without a traditional nuclear family in place, Hunting manages to forge something that resembles a family with his three good friends, who are also products of semi-broken homes and are without that traditional nuclear family structure. The family that Hunting creates for himself expands to include his adult mentor at MIT, Professor Gerald Lambeau, and his court appointed psychologist, Sean Maguire. The film further emphasizes the lack of traditional families in this instance of Irishness when Hunting insincerely jokes, unbeknownst to his date, about the size of his large Irish Catholic family and his having twelve older brothers, thus playing on popular cultural expectations of Irishness. Though this is no family in the traditional sense, they do exhibit traditional family values of loyalty and sacrifice. This is most prominently on display during the fight sequence with Carmine Scarpaglia, as his three friends quickly and easily join Hunting in his fight in order to protect their him and even the odds, and do so with only minor hesitation (which is remedied immediately).

The Irishness of the characters in *Good Will Hunting* is also on display in the very overt displays of their working class, blue-collar status. In addition to being raised in foster care or in broken homes, each of the four characters work menial, low-income jobs ranging from janitorial maintenance to construction. Will Hunting himself extols the virtues of this kind of existence at one point, as he attempts to explain how there is a certain kind of nobility and honor in working dead-end jobs. Yet, these Irish characters possess no innocence of any kind, political, moral, social, or otherwise. Both Hunting and Maguire openly discuss their histories of childhood physical abuse as byproducts of the working class environment in which they were raised. In addition to an extended violent and bloody fight scene, we also learn that Hunting has a long history of

criminality, as do his friends. More, in explaining why he does not want to take a job working with the National Security Agency, Hunting deftly (and rather prophetically) explains the potential outcomes of American foreign policy in the Middle East and its effect on that same working class:

Why shouldn't I work for the N.S.A.? That's a tough one, but I'll take a shot. Say I'm working at the N.S.A and somebody puts a code on my desk, something no one else can break. Maybe I take a shot at it, maybe I break it. And I'm real happy with myself, 'cause I did my job well. But maybe that code was the location of some rebel army in North Africa or the Middle East, and once they have that location they bomb the village where the rebels are hiding. Fifteen hundred people that I never met, never had no problem with, get killed. Now the politicians are sayin', "Oh, send in the Marines to secure the area," 'cause they don't give a shit. Won't be their kid over there gettin' shot, just like it wasn't them when their number got called, 'cause they were all pullin' a tour in the National Guard. It'll be some kid from Southie over there takin' shrapnel in the ass. He comes back to find that the plant he used to work at got exported to the country he just got back from, and the guy who put the shrapnel in his ass got his old job 'cause he'll work for fifteen cents a day and no bathroom breaks. Meanwhile he realizes the only reason he was over there in the first place was so that we could install a government that would sell us oil at a good price. And of course the oil companies used the little skirmish over there to scare up domestic oil prices, a cute little ancillary benefit for them, but it ain't helping my buddy at two-fifty a gallon. They're takin' their sweet time bringin' the oil back of course, maybe they even took the liberty of hiring an alcoholic skipper who likes to drink martinis and fuckin' play slalom with the icebergs. It ain't too long 'til he hits one, spills the oil, and kills all the sea life in the North Atlantic. So now my buddy's out of work, he can't afford to drive, so he's walkin' to the fuckin' job interviews, which sucks 'cause the shrapnel in his ass is givin' him chronic hemorrhoids. And meanwhile he's starvin' 'cause every time he tries to get a bite to eat the only blue plate special they're servin' is North Atlantic scrod with Quaker State. So what did I think? I'm holdin' out for somethin' better. I figure fuck it while I'm at it why not just shoot my buddy, take his job, give it to his sworn enemy, hike up gas prices, bomb a village, club a baby seal, hit the hash pipe and join the National Guard? I could be elected president.

The specificity and acute analysis of political cause and economic effect for his "buddy" puts the lie to any sense of pre-modern innocence that might be written onto the Irishness of Hunting (and, by extension, the Irishness of his friends). Hunting, in spite of his Irishness and the burden that that identity is supposed to bear, clearly sees the world without the rose-colored glasses that is supposedly a hallmark of this Irish

working class identity. Nonetheless, Hunting still wonders “What’s wrong with laying brick?” and contends that “...there’s honor in that.” In this way, he asserts an aspect of this new Irishness through his defense of the honorability of working menial labor for minimal pay, but subverts the identity through his insightful and cynical understanding of the political and economic way of the world. Finally, though the characters may work physically demanding jobs, they are rarely ever seen to be working hard. Hunting himself often neglects to work when he is asked to put his considerable mathematics skills to use, mocking others because it comes too easily to him and requires very little effort.

*Good Will Hunting* also marks a turn from the more pastoral images of New England landscapes on film to a focus on urban space. The entire film is set within a small section of the city of Boston, and is marked by dingy, triple-decker houses, construction sites, the fluorescent lighting of interior offices, and only an occasional skyscraper. This is a far cry from a presentation of the docile and serene images of the Irish landscape and coast, yet it is no less important a part of this presentation Irishness. Landscape and place is still an informative aspect of the Irishness of *Good Will Hunting*, it just happens to be a more experientially authentic version of landscape in which the actual ethnic Irish in Boston would exist. This landscape is nonetheless evocative of this Irishness, yet it contains no wistfulness or yearning for an ahistorical and peaceful past. The only pastoral landscapes in the film are presented after its climax and under the closing credits as Hunting packs his car and leaves Boston, driving west along the Massachusetts Turnpike to California in order to hopefully start a new life with his girlfriend. The images of trees and semi-wilderness here do not evoke an ancient homeland of ancestors, but rather signal an exit from the home and represent a new direction in life away from that home.

Although the characters of *Good Will Hunting* embody the components of Irishness, the film gives no indication of the racial fluidity of that identity. The film contains no minorities of color, and the only non-Irish white ethnic minority in the film is violently assaulted by the Irish characters. These characters exhibit no special enhanced status within a hierarchy of whiteness as, again, they have past histories of physical abuse, little to no formal education, and no nuclear families, each of which can be argued to be a direct effect of their Irishness. Yet, the characters display no signs of being oppressed minorities either. Rather, these characters passively exist as Irish.

The iconography of this identity, however, is actively asserted through markers other than Irishness. While their Irish identity may initially mark them as other, their

assertion of a Bostonian identity through speech and language, and through urban space, truly sets them apart. Where prior films assigned the identity of Bostonian and New Englander to characters and used it to assert a negative, not-American identity, thereby enforcing a proper American identity, *Good Will Hunting* marks a turning point where the identity is claimed, displayed, and allowed to stand on its own as separate, but no less valid.

### ***5.3 Authenticity of Language and Performative Authenticity***

During the initial local press coverage in the run up to the wide release of *Good Will Hunting*, one of the screenwriters and stars of the film, Matt Damon, remarked on both the accent and authenticity of filmic Boston by noting that “It’s an interesting accent that nobody can get—Robert Mitchum came close in ‘The Friends of Eddie Coyle.’ People have tried and couldn’t do it, so we kind of had a home-field advantage....”<sup>184</sup> For Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, part of their purpose in writing and striving to produce *Good Will Hunting* was to have the Boston accent authentically portrayed on film, and in their pre-release press interviews, this point was often made: “From the beginning, Damon and Affleck knew the story had to be set in Boston—if only to bring an authentic Boston accent to the big screen.”<sup>185</sup> The result of their attempt was undeniably successful both quantitatively, with the film earning more than one hundred-thirty-eight million dollars at the domestic box office, and qualitatively, as the film earned two Academy Awards.

Matt Damon further made note of this insistence on authenticity and the desire to make a film about Boston that accurately reflected the reality of the area, which both he and Affleck intrinsically knew as men who had been born and raised in the area. Alluding to previous attempts to communicate authentic Boston on film, Damon said of the Boston accent that “It’s really hard to do, so we very much took pride in doing it, and said, ‘If we ever do a movie, let’s do it with those accents because no one ever does it right.’”<sup>186</sup> Interestingly, the author of this profile on Damon makes mention of the fact that Damon told her that “...the accent does not come to him naturally, although there are occasional traces.”<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Matt Damon quoted in Renee Graham, “Local Boy Makes ‘Good Will’ Star—and Co-Writer—of This Ode to Southie, Matt Damon is Hot, but Not Into the Heat,” *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1997.

<sup>185</sup> Renee Graham, “Local Boy Makes ‘Good Will’ Star—and Co-Writer—of This Ode to Southie, Matt Damon is Hot, but Not Into the Heat,” *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1997.

<sup>186</sup> Matt Damon quoted in Graham, “Local Boy Makes ‘Good Will’ Star,” *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1997.

<sup>187</sup> Graham, “Local Boy Makes ‘Good Will’ Star,” *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1997.

As both Damon and Affleck note, they believed their local and geographically rooted identities as Bostonians had been under- and poorly represented on film primarily because of the lack of an authentic local accent. That is, these men, who were born and raised in the Boston area, had consumed mediated audiovisual images of a Bostonian identity for many years, but inherently understood that these presented identities seemed false and inauthentic to them precisely because they had never heard voices that sounded like theirs on cinema screens. To Damon and Affleck, the Boston accent was an authentic marker of the geographically specific otherness of the Boston identity. Yet, in these interviews, neither man elaborates on the nuances or sounds of the Boston accent, and instead let its uniqueness stand as something that is understood by both tourists and locals. Because they do not elaborate on what makes their presentation of the accent authentic, this results in tourist film audiences continuing to hear only the most glaringly obvious aspect of the accent and believing that people from Boston speak only by dropping the “r’s” from words.

Although *Good Will Hunting* begins with Professor Gerald Lambeau, who would become a mentor to Hunting later in the film, droning to a class of students about math problems in a non-specific accent, the film introduces the speech of its local protagonists immediately after this scene, and thus highlights the distance between the ways that Americans speak and the Boston accent. In this first scene, Chuckie Sullivan quickly highlights the “r”-lessness of the Boston accent, when the name of his friend morphs from “Morgan” to something that sounds more like “Mawghin.” Viewers also hear another well-known feature of the Boston accent, the flat “a” (the low central vowel /a/),<sup>188</sup> in this scene, as a minor character transforms the curse word “fuck” into the short, clipped “fahck.”

While these two moments demonstrate the most well-known and most easily parodied elements of the Boston accent, the insistence of *Good Will Hunting* upon the authenticity of the accent continues throughout. Later in the film, Sullivan arrives at a bar and openly marvels that, “...this is a Harvuhd bah, huh?,” and once again enunciates the infamous “r”-lessness of his speech. Yet, he quickly finds his lost “r’s” when turns to the bar and orders “...a pitcher of your finest lahr-gur in the house.” Rather than reflexively dropping the “r” from the word “pitcher,” as one would assume based on his previous “r”-lessness, the authenticity of his accent demands that Sullivan pronounce the “r” as it carries over to the vowel that begins the next word. Because the writers and the stars of the film are Boston locals, *Good Will Hunting* can insist on the authenticity

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<sup>188</sup> Naomi Nagy, “‘Live Free or Die’ as a Linguistic Principle,” *American Speech* 76, no. 1 (2001): 33.



of its accent, and thus claim to present an experientially authentic, though still other, identity for local film audiences. Thus, prior films that may have attempted the accent could have presented the “r”-lessness, the lack of the other nuances of the accent would have only demonstrated that tourists understood, and dictated, the otherness of Bostonians. Yet, the authentic language of *Good Will Hunting* allows local viewers to define their own otherness, which in turn allows them to imagine a community of others who sound similar to them, but nonetheless remain different from and outside of an American identity.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

For the previous eighty years of American film history, Boston, New England, and its people had been a filmic subject whose popularity had waxed and waned, but had remained an enduring fixation for the American film industry. From the early moments of the American film industry, filmic Bostonians were often imagined and presented as possessing an identity that functioned in opposition to their American counterparts. Thus, these geographically specific characters were imagined as being other and separate from an American identity. It is through this identity, which was primarily imagined as a blonde woman with an ethnically Irish name, that the American film industry bound filmic Boston and New England into a deep, horizontal comradeship in the minds of American film audiences, and thus positioned the otherness of the region as being indicative of a separate community that could be understood to function analogously to the nation.

With their filmic otherness having been thus established through an identity that had been defined for them by outsiders and then unilaterally applied, the 1997 release of *Good Will Hunting* represents a turning in the filmic identity and imagining of the region and its people. Importantly, it is with this film that regional natives seize the means of film production and filmic representation and begin to define and to present their own vision of their other identity. Although this new and alternative filmic Bostonian identity in *Good Will Hunting* contains some remnants of the previously imagined identity, specifically a preponderance of ethnically Irish characters, the film, because it was written by and starred locals, radically shifts this other identity from one that had been defined by outsiders and forced upon the region to one that was defined by locals and that was informed by the experiential authenticity of their quotidian reality. The difference between these two types of identity imagining is the subtle

distinction between the American film industry imagining Boston and New England as an other community, and Boston and New England understanding itself as an imagined community that can function analogously to the nation as a result of its filmic otherness. That is, previously, the American film industry created and presented an identity of Boston and New England that was other and not-American, which allowed American film audiences to consider the region as being separated from a broader American community. *Good Will Hunting*, however, presents an experientially authentic identity that allows local Bostonians and New Englanders to imagine themselves as being bound in a deep, horizontal comradeship with each other, and thus exist as members of a type of imagined community that can be an analogue of the nation.

Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, the writers and the stars of *Good Will Hunting*, allude to the idea that what had been previously presented on film as Boston was not an authentic (or, for that matter, even an asymptotically authentic) Boston, and one of their stated desires for making *Good Will Hunting* was to present and to create a filmic Boston that is recognizable as experientially authentic to the people of the area. The film presents this experientially authentic Boston by utilizing the local accent spoken correctly by local actors, rather than tourists performing it. Although the accent had previously been attempted on rare instances in film and on television, it appeared only as mimicry and as a performance. As Damon had indicated, those previous attempts at the Boston accent did not sound correct to those with an experientially authentic sense of the accent, and they thus fell into the “almost but not quite” of representational authenticity. Yet, if those prior attempts to present the Boston accent in audiovisual media were merely representational and mimicking, they did gesture towards an experientially authentic accent that could be presented as a viable indicator of identity for Bostonians, rather than as something used to mark them as other. Filming *Good Will Hunting* in the local Boston accent, then, was a deliberate attempt to wrest the othered identity of the region away from the American film industry in order to reclaim and to redefine that identity as something more than not-American and that is rooted in a sense of experiential authenticity. The performed experiential authenticity of the film indicates, “...a striving towards indexical authenticity—a view of the place as the real thing....”<sup>189</sup> And indeed, this performed experiential authenticity, “...not only signifies that we do and perform places by our actions and behaviours, but that places are

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<sup>189</sup> Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade, “Performative Authenticity in Tourism and Spatial Experience: Rethinking the Relations Between Travel, Place and Emotion,” in *Re-Investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions* (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2010), 2.

something we authenticate through our emotional/affective/sensuous relatedness to them.”<sup>190</sup> *Good Will Hunting*, then, is an important and watershed moment in the evolution of the imagining of the identity of Boston and its people in audiovisual media because, specifically through its authentic use of the local accent, it bridges the gap between performative and indexical authenticity, but also because it replaces an imaginary representational authenticity with the experiential authenticity of Bostonians.

The decision to film and to produce *Good Will Hunting* in the local Boston accent demonstrates that after nearly eighty years of being imagined as other by the American film industry, local New Englanders and Bostonians were not only ready to embrace their own filmic otherness, but also to proudly proclaim that otherness in such a way that left no doubt as to where it stood in relation to the American mainstream. Yet, the radicalness of the decision to so prominently feature such a distinct and other way of speaking, coupled with the high visibility of the film, due to its commercial and critical success, forces American film audiences and the American film industry to confront a very obvious, and easily parodied, way to display an already previously imagined otherness. The result of this is an increase in the number of “tourist films” following the release of *Good Will Hunting*, which then also chose to film in the Boston accent. The difference between *Good Will Hunting* and these films, however, is that the former utilizes the local knowledge of its writers and its actors to affect an experientially authentic accent, while the latter rely on their own viewing and interpretation of a way of speaking, resulting in a colonial mimicry and an “almost but not quite” version of the Bostonian identity in these films.

Mirroring the films and the television programs that preceded its release, the characters in *Good Will Hunting* and in the films that follow it, whether they are produced by and star “locals” or “tourists,” are almost exclusively of an Irish ethnic origin. This indicates the asymptotic distance between the experiential authenticity of *Good Will Hunting*, and the representational authenticity of the films that follow in its footsteps, as they mimic and seek to recreate that authentic identity and sound, but succeed in only representing an “almost but not quite” image. Although Irishness is a constant feature of the filmic identity of Boston and New England, it functions differently in *Good Will Hunting* and the local films that follow it than it does in the tourist films that both precede and that follow *Good Will Hunting*. As has been argued previously in this thesis, the American film industry used narrative and dialogue to specifically highlight the Irishness of its Boston and New England characters so that

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

American film audiences could understand these characters as not-American by virtue of their very specific and noticeable connection to a foreign and other nation. The American film industry further used this Irishness as a cudgel to other their Bostonians and New Englanders by allowing the American counterparts in these films to exist as ethnically non-specific, and thus as American. In *Good Will Hunting*, however, many of the characters are ethnically Irish, yet, this familial origin is never highlighted as either a definitional or a governing trait of Bostonians. Rather, the Bostonians of *Good Will Hunting* may be Irish, but that is not the attribute that defines them as Bostonians, which allows a broader and more inclusive identity for Bostonians that can be claimed by locals who identify with the experiential authenticity of the film.

Yet, because of the noticeably ethnic names of the characters in the film, because of the sociological reality of the Boston and New England region, and because of an established tradition of filmic Irishness for Bostonians and New Englanders, the post-*Good Will Hunting* films adopt Irishness as an overriding and primary attribute for their characters. This further solidifies the Irishness of the area in the imagination of American film audiences, and conditions them to expect films set in or focused upon the area as being populated solely by Irish Bostonians. As a result, in order to keep any sort of filmic representation authentic and viable, local films and local film producers must then bend their own experiential authenticity to match the representational authenticity and mimicry of the tourist films, and to cater to the expectation of tourist film audiences, such that the experientially authentic Boston is now compressed into a singular accented and Irish male. Indeed:

...tourists will create their own imaginary spaces from, for example books, newspapers, web pages and films. Thus, media, imaginary and physical spaces are interwoven in an ongoing negotiation process, which will continue as new media products are added to people's previously held experiences as well as new physical visits to tourist sites. When media, space and tourism mix in this manner, perceptions of authenticity among visitors will be affected.<sup>191</sup>

Whatever objective and experiential authenticity momentarily existed on film with *Good Will Hunting* almost immediately evaporated as it collided with representational authenticity and created the feedback loop of each influencing the other.

One way of considering this feedback loop of experiential and representational authenticity is in relation to Homi Bhabha's theory of colonialism and mimicry, though

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<sup>191</sup> Månsson, "Negotiating Authenticity at Rosslyn Chapel," 180.

specifically in its inverse, where the colonizer, acting out its perceptions of the colonized, mimics the colonized. In places that are dependent upon tourist money for their economic health, it becomes imperative to bend the experiential authenticity to match or to conform to the representational authenticity that is expected. As such, those who are invested in the experiential authenticity of a place must then mimic the received notions of what tourists believe to be authentic, essentially to mimic the ways that the colonizer is mimicking them, in an attempt to preserve their own ever-changing experiential authenticity. Thus, when the colonized makes the decision to present their own experiential, indexical authenticity, rather than to feed into the received representational authenticity, it marks a defining moment in the construction of their identity and the point at which ownership is taken of that identity.



**“YOU’RE A LONG WAY FROM HOME, AREN’T YOU, MR. CARPENTER? ... OH, I CAN TELL A NEW ENGLAND ACCENT A MILE AWAY.”**

### **1. AN ALIEN OR A NEW ENGLANDER?**

The 1951 science-fiction film, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, opens with a number of quick, intercut scenes of various military personnel around the globe tracking the process of an unidentified flying object that has entered the atmosphere of the earth. Expectedly, the arrival of a possible alien life form is the cause of much panic and confusion, and when the flying saucer ultimately lands on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, the military immediately surrounds it. And despite their fear of whatever may lurk inside the UFO, many civilians also excitedly gather on the National Mall, and wait for something to emerge. Ultimately, an alien life form does emerge from the flying saucer, and immediately announces that “We have come to visit you in peace and with good will.” Shortly after this declaration of peace, however, the situation turns violent as a misunderstanding causes the military to fire upon the alien. Although this initial encounter begins with a violent misunderstanding, order is restored, and the alien is able to state why he has travelled to earth. Klaatu, as viewers come to learn the alien is named, eventually informs the president of the United States that he has come to earth to deliver a message, simultaneously, to all world leaders.

As a result of a series of narrative twists and turns, Klaatu escapes from being kept under the guard of the United States government, and attempts to hide out by taking a room at a boarding house run by a Mrs. Crockett. His initial appearance at the boarding house, and request to rent a room, causes a young boy, who is already staying there with his mother, to suspect that Klaatu is an FBI agent who is looking for the “spaceman.” The young boy then offers to help look for the spaceman because, as he tells Klaatu, “I know just what he looks like. He’s got a big square head with three

great big eyes.” The little boy is quickly shooed away as Mrs. Crockett escorts Klaatu, who has told the other lodgers that his name is Carpenter, upstairs to show him his room, whereupon she asks of him, “You’re not from around here, are you, Mr. Carpenter?” Klaatu is immediately taken aback and worried that his identity may be revealed, and wants to know how Mrs. Crockett could know that he was, quite literally, an alien to the area. Mrs. Crockett casually responds, “Oh, I can tell a New England accent a mile away.”

Part of the irony of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* for viewers is that Klaatu, despite the fact that he is an alien who has very clearly arrived on earth from another planet in a flying saucer, looks and sounds like any other American in the film. Yet, in a casual, throwaway comment, shortly after the “spaceman” is described in monstrous and grotesque terms, the film identifies Klaatu as a New Englander. That is, in 1951, the American film industry quite literally assigns an alien identity to New England and its people. Thus, although this mistaken New Englander looks, speaks, and acts similar to other Americans, the rest of the nation still views him as alien and as other.

This small, illustrative moment from a film that otherwise has no interest in New England or its people nonetheless demonstrates the way in which the American film industry has understood and has presented filmic Boston and New England over the course of American film history. Bostonians and New Englanders had been imagined on film as comprising a separate community within the United States, and whose other identity acted as a negative by which Americans could negotiate and navigate a larger, national identity. This combination of imagining an other identity that is also specifically confined within clear geographic boundaries allows for audiences to then understand filmic Bostonians and New Englanders as inhabiting an imagined community that is separate from the larger United States. Utilizing a variety of methods, the American film industry, throughout its history, has presented to American film audiences repeated images of Bostonians and New Englanders in which these characters were expressly defined as being from a certain section of the United States, which was then held in contrast to other characters, who were allowed to exist as less concretely defined Americans. This othered filmic identity further pushes these Bostonians and New Englanders outside of and away from a claim to an American identity, and instead solidifies their unique standing as New Englanders, but not-Americans. As a result, over more than a century, filmic Bostonians and New Englanders have been represented as unique, separate, and other in comparison to a



larger, national American identity, which results in the representation and the imagining of filmic Boston and New England as an other community.

## **2. “THREE GREAT BIG EYES”: MOTIFS OF NEW ENGLAND OTHERNESS**

Since the start of the twentieth century, audiovisual media has been one of the primary modes of cultural production and consumption, and has thus been an important tool in the project of imagining and defining the otherness of New England. This has resulted in a large filmography dedicated to exploring the identity of the area through a variety of lenses, but also one that has primarily been about constructing, defining, and imposing that othered identity upon New England and its people, rather than allowing the inheritors of that identity to articulate how and why that identity is other. As has been demonstrated, this imagining of the filmic otherness of the region and its people has occurred in several distinct, though connected, ways during different moments in American film history. Although each separate moment presented Bostonians and New Englanders in a slightly different way, a distinct and an easily identifiable filmic New England identity has emerged. It is the creation and the (re)presentation of this other identity that has allowed the American film industry to imagine Boston, New England, and its people as a community that seems to exist apart from and separately to the rest of the United States.

### ***2.1 Accent***

With the commercial and the critical success of *Good Will Hunting* (1997), it is unsurprising that the American film industry would hope to capitalize on this success by replicating some of the things that made it so distinct. The most enduring legacy, and the most easily noticeable and replicable feature, of *Good Will Hunting* is its use of an authentic Boston accent. As Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, the local stars and co-writers of the film, have both stated, one of their primary reasons for making *Good Will Hunting* was so that they could put an authentic Boston accent on screen for what they considered to be the first time. In the twenty years since the release of the film, however, the increase in the number of films that focus on the region and its people has also resulted in an increase in the use of the Boston accent on film, as *Good Will Hunting* demonstrated that there was an appetite from American film audiences to hear this particular, and peculiar, mode of speech. Yet, if much of the appeal and the success of the accent in *Good Will Hunting* stemmed from the authenticity of the accent, as it

was used by local actors, then the post-*Good Will Hunting* films seem to exploit a perceived market by employing this accent, but not local actors who can speak it authentically. These films demonstrate a seeming lack of authenticity because their Boston accents only touch upon the most easily noticeable aspects of the speech, specifically the “long *as* and dropped *rs*” that are so often noted as hallmarks. As a result, then, the presentation and the repetition of this accent on film in the post-*Good Will Hunting* era demonstrates that the American film industry understands the identity of Boston and New England in only the broadest terms, and as something different from an American identity that can be easily mimicked by others on film.

Indeed, as seen in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, as early as 1951, the American film industry understood the local accent to be a hallmark of an alien identity. And although it may be representationally authentic for the characters in the films of the post-*Good Will Hunting* era to speak in exaggerated accents, it does not encompass the totality of the experiential authenticity that was on display in *Good Will Hunting* and with which locals live on a daily basis. Thus, American audiovisual culture has deployed the specific otherness of the accent of New England and Boston in ways that are both representationally and experientially authentic, thereby imagining the filmic region as a real-but-imagined thirdspace. The effect of (re)presenting a heightened and imagined version of a real regional accent serves to further define the otherness of filmic Boston, as well as to further separate it from a larger, national American identity.

## **2.2 Irishness**

As has been true throughout almost the entirety of the corpus of Boston and New England films produced by the American film industry, Bostonians and New Englanders are indelibly marked by their Irishness. The American film industry has focused on and highlighted the Irishness of their Boston and New England characters through obvious ethnic naming conventions and through narrative and dialogue. Before *Good Will Hunting* presented a viable alternative identity for Bostonians and New Englanders, those characters would often be found interacting with non-geographically specific Americans, who in turn would mention the Irishness of New Englanders as if it were a remarkable or defining feature of those people. During the “abroad films” cycle, this most clearly manifested itself through ethnically Irish surnames and in dialogic references to an “Irish temper.” Although the Boston of *Good Will Hunting* is populated by a number of ethnically Irish characters, the film only allows their surnames to mark their Irishness as the film does not otherwise highlight their Irishness

for audiences. The representation and the imagining of filmic New England and Boston as an ur-Irish enclave within the United States serves to further highlight the otherness of the region, and to position it as something not-American. The result of this not-American positioning of the region allows for American film audiences to recognize this specifically defined identity as other, and as something against which they can negotiate what is an American national identity. Yet, though these films never explicitly force filmic New England outside of the United States nation-state, situating the filmic region as a foil for an American identity serves to imagine filmic Boston and New England as a type of other and separate community that can and should be analyzed on its own terms.

### **2.3 *Blondeness***

One of the most surprising, curious, and enduring motifs of Bostonian otherness over the entire filmography has been the blondeness of the Bostonian and New England characters. Through the iconography of the witch, the American film industry, throughout its history, has imagined New England as other. Primarily, this New England witch has been deployed in film as blonde. Because of the technical and the economic constraints of film technology in early cinema, film production during this time period necessitated the use of fewer numbers of blonde-haired actors and actresses in films. As a result, their blondeness appears more conspicuous when it does appear on screen, thus rendering blondes as visibly and obviously different from the rest of film casts. Thus, blondeness has come to be presented by the American film industry, and to be understood by American film audiences, as an indicator of otherness. In this way, the American film industry has yoked the idea of a witch from New England to an image of blondeness, thereby training film audiences from the earliest moments to understand the inherent linkage of the witch character type to a specific indicator of otherness.

Further, because this witch image was one of the earliest filmic depictions of the regional identity of Boston and New England, it achieved a certain iconographic fixity that then carried forward in American film history and informed future depictions of the region. It is with and because of this iconographic image of the New England witch that the American film industry understands Boston, New England, and its people as other and as separate from the larger, national American community, and thus imagines the region as the type of community that is analogous to the nation. This blondeness further appears in the “abroad films” cycle. Here, though, these films highlight the otherness of

their characters in several more obvious ways, primarily through the dialogic mention of their Irishness, and the blondeness of these characters is more muted than the “blinding blondeness” of their witch predecessors. Thus, over the course of American film history, it is clear that blondeness has achieved a certain iconographic fixity in the imagining and (re)presentation of the Bostonian and New England otherness.

This blondeness, especially in the earlier films of the filmography, plays an important role in imagining the filmic community of Boston and New England because it provides film audiences with a vivid and memorable mental understanding of the region and its people, and thus makes filmic New England imageable. Presenting an imageability of filmic Boston and New England is important because it allows for film audiences to comprehend the filmic region as a separately existing, distinct, and unique region. This separateness is then further enforced because this imageability is inscribed upon the bodies of characters who expressly represented as being other. As a result then, American film audiences are able to imagine and to hold a specific image of filmic New England, and also to understand that image as representative of an identity that is other, which then allows them to negotiate understandings of an American national identity against it.

### **3. “A PLACE THAT HAS ITS OWN IDENTITY”**

Since almost the beginning of American cinema, the American film industry has created an identity for the New England region and its people that has essentially existed outside of the traditional framework of an American identity, and therefore existed parallel to and independently of conceptions of American-ness. This parallel and independent identity has been reinforced by the specific, delineated, and inflexible geographic and historical boundaries of the region. It is in this way, then, that American film audiences have been asked to imagine Boston, New England, and its people as being members of a community that is limited and that, although part of a larger nation-state, functions as an independent and other community within American cinema. Thus, within the American film industry and within American audiovisual culture, filmic Boston, New England, and its people are imagined as an other and separate community that can be understood as analogous to a nation.

Over the course of more than one hundred years, a number of specific characteristics have come to be associated with filmic Bostonians and New Englanders, and their continual repetition helped to create a filmic identity that achieved an

iconographic fixity in the minds of American film audiences. This has resulted in the American film industry imagining and presenting Boston, New England, and its people as other and as members of the type of community that functions analogously to the nation. By the time that *Good Will Hunting*, a film written and starred in by native Bostonians, premieres in 1997, American film audiences had been exposed to a repetition of New England otherness in audiovisual media for more than eighty years. *Good Will Hunting*, however, did not refute the otherness of the filmic Bostonian identity, but instead attempted to portray this uniqueness in an experientially authentic way so that other native Bostonians could view their othered identity in cinema in a way that accurately captured the way in which they conceived of themselves. This attempt to portray the unique otherness in an experientially authentic way most clearly manifests itself in the use of the local Boston accent in *Good Will Hunting*, which had essentially been absent from American films throughout history. As a result, Bostonians and New Englanders were able to present a version of their own identities that was a deliberate assertion of that other, not-American identity. Yet, the success of *Good Will Hunting* also created a space where local films, presenting an experientially authentic identity that would be instantly recognizable to Bostonians and New Englanders, could not only continue to be made, but could also thrive in the market place. Thus, while the American film industry continues to seemingly present Boston and New England with an exaggerated and other identity, and to imagine the region as the type of community that is analogous to the nation, the continued success of these local films, in an authentic local accent, seem to function as a response to the American film industry. In a way, these films seemingly embrace the otherness of their own filmic identity, and re-present it back at the American film industry, and, not being ashamed of their own otherness, ask the American film industry, just as Will Hunting once did, “How do you like them apples?”



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## FILMOGRAPHY

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### 1. FILMS

1. *The Yellow Traffic* (dir. Olaf Skavlin, 1914)
2. *The Virginian* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, 1914)
3. *Coral* (dir. Henry McRae, 1915)
4. *The Daughter of the Sea* (dir. Charles Seay, 1915)
5. *The Grandee's Ring* (dir. Unknown, 1915)
6. *The Daughter of the People* (dir. J. Searle Dawley, 1915)
7. *The Thoroughbred* (dir. Reginald Barker, 1916)
8. *Witchcraft* (dir. Frank Reicher, 1916)
9. *American Aristocracy* (dir. Lloyd Ingraham, 1916)
10. *Mary Moreland* (dir. Frank Powell, 1917)
11. *The Scarlet Letter* (dir. Carl Harbaugh, 1917)
12. *The Last of the Ingrams* (dir. Walter Edwards, 1917)
13. *Like Wildfire* (dir. Stuart Patton, 1917)
14. *Little Women* (dir. Alexander Butler, 1917)
15. *The Silent Lady* (dir. Elsie Jane Wilson, 1917)
16. *The Planter* (dir. Thomas N. Heffron, John Ince, 1917)
17. *A Petticoat Pilot* (dir. Rollin S. Sturgeon, 1918)
18. *The Liar* (dir. Edmund Lawrence, 1918)
19. *The Hired Man* (dir. Victor L. Schertzinger, 1918)
20. *The Studio Girl* (dir. Charles Giblyn, 1918)
21. *Kidder and Ko* (dir. Richard Foster Baker, 1918)
22. *The Whims of Society* (dir. Travers Vale, 1918)
23. *The Vigilantes* (dir. Henry Kabierske, 1918)
24. *High Tide* (dir. Gilbert P. Hamilton, 1918)
25. *Daughter Angele* (dir. William Dowlan, 1918)
26. *Little Women* (dir. Harley Knoles, 1918)
27. *The Sea Waif* (dir. Frank Reicher, 1918)
28. *Why I Would Not Marry* (dir. Richard Stanton, 1918)
29. *Broadway Bill* (dir. Fred J. Balshofer, 1918)
30. *The Deciding Kiss* (dir. Tod Browning, 1918)
31. *It's a Bear* (dir. Lawrence Windom, 1919)
32. *Phil-for-Short* (dir. Oscar Apfel, 1919)
33. *A White Man's Chance* (dir. Ernest C. Warde, 1919)
34. *The Captain's Captain* (dir. Tom Terriss, 1919)
35. *What Love Forgives* (dir. Perry N. Vekroff, 1919)
36. *His Parisian Wife* (dir. Emile Chautard, 1919)
37. *Out Yonder* (dir. Ralph Ince, 1919)
38. *The Price of Innocence* (dir. Frank Gordon Kirby, 1919)

39. *Behind the Door* (dir. Irvin V. Willat, 1919)
40. *A Woman There Was* (dir. J. Gordon Edwards, 1919)
41. *Daddy-Long-Legs* (dir. Marshall Neilan, 1919)
42. *The Price of Innocence* (dir. Frank Gordon Kirby, 1919)
43. *Below the Surface* (dir. Irvin Willat, 1920)
44. *Pollyanna* (dir. Paul Powell, 1920)
45. *Love, Honor and Obey* (dir. Leander de Cordova, 1920)
46. *Pink Tights* (dir. Reeves Eason, 1920)
47. *Broadway and Home* (dir. Alan Crosland, 1920)
48. *Common Sense* (dir. Louis William Chaudet, 1920)
49. *The Whistle* (dir. Lambert Hillyer, 1921)
50. *Opened Shutters* (dir. William Worthington, 1921)
51. *The Rowdy* (dir. David Kirkland, 1921)
52. *The Rider of King Log* (dir. Harry O. Hoyt, 1921)
53. *The Scarlet Letter* (dir. Challis Sanderson, 1922)
54. *At the Sign of the Jack O'Lantern* (dir. Lloyd Ingraham, 1922)
55. *The Seventh Day* (dir. Henry King, 1922)
56. *No Trespassing* (dir. Edwin L. Hollywood, 1922)
57. *Puritan Passions* (dir. Frank Tuttle, 1923)
58. *Dollar Devils* (dir. Victor Schertzinger, 1923)
59. *The Virginian* (dir. Tom Forman, 1923)
60. *Trouping with Ellen* (dir. T. Hayes Hunter, 1924)
61. *Welcome Stranger* (dir. James Young, 1924)
62. *Hearts of Oak* (dir. John Ford, 1924)
63. *Captain January* (dir. Edward F. Cline, 1924)
64. *My Son* (dir. Edwin Carewe, 1925)
65. *Lena Rivers* (dir. Whitman Bennett, 1925)
66. *Siege* (dir. Svend Gade, 1925)
67. *Shore Leave* (dir. John S. Robertson, 1925)
68. *The Night Ship* (dir. Henry McCarthy, 1925)
69. *Rugged Water* (dir. Irvin Willat, 1925)
70. *The Scarlet Letter* (dir. Victor Sjöström, 1926)
71. *The House Without A Key* (dir. Spencer Gordon Bennet, 1926)
72. *Perils of the Coast Guard* (dir. Oscar Apfel, 1926)
73. *Forever After* (dir. F. Harmon Weight, 1926)
74. *The Yankee Clipper* (dir. Rupert Julian, 1927)
75. *Wreck of the Hesperus* (dir. Elmer Clifton, 1927)
76. *Captain Salvation* (dir. John S. Robertson, 1927)
77. *French Dressing* (dir. Allan Dwan, 1928)
78. *No Defense* (dir. Lloyd Bacon, 1929)
79. *The Woman from Hell* (dir. A. F. Erickson, 1929)
80. *The Virginian* (dir. Victor Fleming, 1929)
81. *Whispering Winds* (dir. James Flood, 1929)
82. *Up The River* (dir. John Ford, 1930)
83. *Compromised* a.k.a. *We Three* (dir. John G. Adolphi, 1931)
84. *A Private Scandal* (dir. Charles Hutchison, 1931)
85. *Laugh and Get Rich* (dir. Gregory La Cava, 1931)
86. *Way Back Home* (dir. William Seiter, 1931)
87. *Lena Rivers* (dir. Phil Rosen, 1932)
88. *Strange Interlude* (dir. Robert Z. Leonard, 1932)
89. *Polly of the Circus* (dir. Alfred Santell, 1932)
90. *Tess of the Storm Country* (dir. Alfred Santell, 1932)



91. *Stage Mother* (dir. Charles Brabin, 1933)
92. *Chance at Heaven* (dir. William A. Seiter, 1933)
93. *Doctor Bull* (dir. John Ford, 1933)
94. *Little Women* (dir. George Cukor, 1933)
95. *Face in the Sky* (dir. Harry Lachman, 1933)
96. *One Man's Journey* (dir. John Robertson, 1933)
97. *Ever in My Heart* (dir. Archie Mayo, 1933)
98. *The Working Man* (dir. John G. Adolphi, 1933)
99. *The Scarlet Letter* (dir. Robert G. Vignola, 1934)
100. *As the Earth Turns* (dir. Alfred Green, 1934)
101. *Ah, Wilderness!* (dir. Clarence Brown, 1935)
102. *Captain Hurricane* (dir. John S. Robertson, 1935)
103. *Two in the Dark* a.k.a. *Two O'Clock Courage* (dir. Benjamin Stoloff, 1936)
104. *Small Town Girl* (dir. William A. Wellman and Robert Z. Leonard, 1936)
105. *The Captain's Kid* (dir. Nick Grinde, 1936)
106. *Chatterbox* (dir. George Nicholls Jr., 1936)
107. *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (dir. Frank Capra, 1936)
108. *Captain January* (dir. David Butler, 1936)
109. *Captains Courageous* (dir. Victor Fleming, 1937)
110. *Border Cafe* (dir. Lew Landers, 1937)
111. *The Toast of New York* (dir. Rowland V. Lee, 1937)
112. *Stella Dallas* (dir. King Vidor, 1937)
113. *Vogues of 1938* (dir. Irving Cummings, 1937)
114. *Maid of Salem* (dir. Frank Lloyd, 1937)
115. *Adventure's End* (dir. Arthur Lubin, 1937)
116. *Make a Wish* (dir. Kurt Neumann, 1937)
117. *Mother Carey's Chickens* (dir. Rowland V. Lee, 1938)
118. *Tarnished Angel* (dir. Leslie Goodwins, 1938)
119. *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell* (dir. Irving Cummings, 1939)
120. *Thunder Afloat* (dir. George B. Seitz, 1939)
121. *Our Town* (dir. Sam Wood, 1940)
122. *The House of the Seven Gables* (dir. Joe May, 1940)
123. *Northwest Passage* (dir. King Vidor, 1940)
124. *The Light of Western Stars* (dir. Lesley Selander, 1940)
125. *Private Affairs* (dir. Albert S. Rogell, 1940)
126. *Buy Me That Town* (dir. Eugene Forde, 1941)
127. *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (dir. William Dieterle, 1941)
128. *The Devil Commands* (dir. Edward Dmytryk, 1941)
129. *H. M. Pulham, Esq.* (dir. King Vidor, 1941)
130. *Lydia* (dir. Julien Duvivier, 1941)
131. *Harvard, Here I Come!* (dir. Lew Landers, 1941)
132. *The Lady Is Willing* (dir. Mitchell Leisen, 1942)
133. *The Talk Of The Town* (dir. George Stevens, 1942)
134. *I Married a Witch* (dir. René Clair, 1942)
135. *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (dir. Michael Curtiz, 1942)
136. *Stand by for Action* (dir. Robert Z. Leonard, 1942)
137. *This is the Life* (dir. Felix E. Feist, 1944)
138. *Together Again* (dir. Charles Vidor, 1944)
139. *The Great John L.* a.k.a. *A Man Called Sullivan* (dir. Frank Tuttle, 1945)
140. *The Woman Who Came Back* (dir. Walter Colmes, 1945)

141. *Spellbound* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1945)
142. *Leave Her to Heaven* (dir. John M. Stahl, 1945)
143. *Getting Gertie's Garter* (dir. Allan Dwan, 1945)
144. *The Stranger* (dir. Orson Welles, 1946)
145. *The Virginian* (dir. Stuart Gilmore, 1946)
146. *The Strange Woman* (dir. Edgar G. Ulmer, 1946)
147. *Two Sisters from Boston* (dir. Henry Koster, 1946)
148. *Boomerang!* (dir. Elia Kazan, 1947)
149. *Gentleman's Agreement* (dir. Elia Kazan, 1947)
150. *The Late George Apley* (dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1947)
151. *Millie's Daughter* (dir. Sidney Salkow, 1947)
152. *Mourning Becomes Electra* (dir. Dudley Nichols, 1947)
153. *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim* (dir. George Seaton, 1947)
154. *Time Out of Mind* (dir. Robert Siodmak, 1947)
155. *The Inside Story* (dir. Allan Dwan, 1948)
156. *If You Knew Susie* (dir. Gordon Douglas, 1948)
157. *Deep Waters* (dir. Henry King, 1948)
158. *Come to the Stable* (dir. Henry Koster, 1949)
159. *Lost Boundaries* (dir. Alfred L. Werker, 1949)
160. *Little Women* (dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 1949)
161. *Mystery Street* (dir. John Sturges, 1950)
162. *The Lady From Boston* a.k.a. *Pardon My French* (dir. Bernard Vorhaus, 1951)
163. *Painting the Clouds with Sunshine* (dir. David Butler, 1951)
164. *Plymouth Adventure* (dir. Clarence Brown, 1952)
165. *Lydia Bailey* (dir. Jean Negulesco, 1952)
166. *Million Dollar Mermaid* (dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 1952)
167. *The Actress* (dir. George Cukor, 1953)
168. *The Band Wagon* (dir. Vincente Minnelli, 1953)
169. *White Christmas* (dir. Michael Curtiz, 1954)
170. *The Country Girl* (dir. George Seaton, 1954)
171. *The Raid* (dir. Hugo Fregonese, 1954)
172. *Six Bridges to Cross* (dir. Joseph Pevney, 1955)
173. *All That Heaven Allows* (dir. Douglas Sirk, 1955)
174. *The Trouble with Harry* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1955)
175. *Daddy Long Legs* (dir. Jean Negulesco, 1955)
176. *Good Morning, Miss Dove* (dir. Henry Koster, 1955)
177. *High Society* (dir. Charles Walters, 1956)
178. *Mohawk* (dir. Kurt Neumann, 1956)
179. *Carousel* (dir. Henry King, 1956)
180. *Tea and Sympathy* (dir. Vincente Minnelli, 1956)
181. *Moby Dick* (dir. John Huston, 1956)
182. *Fear Strikes Out* (dir. Robert Mulligan, 1957)
183. *Designing Woman* (dir. Vincente Minnelli, 1957)
184. *Johnny Tremain* (dir. Robert Stevenson, 1957)
185. *Peyton Place* (dir. Mark Robson, 1957)
186. *The Last Hurrah* (dir. John Ford, 1958)
187. *Desire Under the Elms* (dir. Delbert Mann, 1958)
188. *Auntie Mame* (dir. Morton DaCosta, 1958)
189. *Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!* (dir. Leo McCarey, 1958)
190. *A Summer Place* (dir. Delmer Daves, 1959)
191. *It Happened to Jane* (dir. Richard Quine, 1959)

192. *The Devil's Disciple* (dir. Guy Hamilton, 1959)
193. *Holiday for Lovers* (dir. Henry Levin, 1959)
194. *Take a Giant Step* (dir. Philip Leacock, 1959)
195. *The City of the Dead* a.k.a. *Horror Hotel* (dir. John Llewellyn Moxley, 1960)
196. *House of Usher* a.k.a. *The Fall of the House of Usher* a.k.a. *The Mysterious House of Usher* (dir. Roger Corman, 1960)
197. *Blueprint For Robbery* (dir. Jerry Hopper, 1961)
198. *Return to Peyton Place* (dir. José Ferrer, 1961)
199. *The Parent Trap* (dir. David Swift, 1961)
200. *The Miracle Worker* (dir. Arthur Penn, 1962)
201. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (dir. Sidney Lumet, 1962)
202. *How the West was Won* (dir. John Ford, 1962)
203. *Lolita* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1962)
204. *Donovan's Reef* (dir. John Ford, 1963)
205. *Summer Magic* (dir. James Neilson, 1963)
206. *The Haunting* (dir. Robert Wise, 1963)
207. *The Cardinal* (dir. Otto Preminger, 1963)
208. *The Haunted Palace* (dir. Roger Corman, 1963)
209. *The Outlaws IS Coming* (dir. Norman Maurer, 1965)
210. *Hawaii* (dir. George Roy Hill, 1966)
211. *Dead Heat On A Merry-Go-Round* (dir. Bernard Girard, 1966)
212. *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* (dir. Norman Jewison, 1966)
213. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1966)
214. *Valley of the Dolls* (dir. Mark Robson, 1967)
215. *The Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin* (dir. James Neilson, 1967)
216. *The Shuttered Room* (dir. David Greene, 1967)
217. *The Naked Witch* a.k.a. *The Naked Temptress* (dir. Andy Milligan, 1964/1967)
218. *The Thomas Crown Affair* (dir. Norman Jewison, 1968)
219. *The Boston Strangler* (dir. Richard Fleischer, 1968)
220. *Charly* (dir. Ralph Nelson, 1968)
221. *Pretty Poison* (dir. Noel Black, 1968)
222. *Rachel, Rachel* (dir. Paul Newman, 1968)
223. *Alice's Restaurant* (dir. Arthur Penn, 1969)
224. *Love Story* (dir. Arthur Hiller, 1970)
225. *House of Dark Shadows* (dir. Dan Curtis, 1970)
226. *Carnal Knowledge* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1971)
227. *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* (dir. John D. Hancock, 1971)
228. *The Other* (dir. Robert Mulligan, 1972)
229. *A Separate Peace* (dir. Larry Peerce, 1972)
230. *1776* (dir. Peter H. Hunt, 1972)
231. *Justin Morgan Had a Horse* (dir. Hollingsworth Morse, 1972)
232. *The Carey Treatment* (dir. Blake Edwards, 1972)
233. *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (dir. Peter Yates, 1973)
234. *Silent Night, Bloody Night* (dir. Theodore Gershuny, 1974)
235. *Jaws* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1975)
236. *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane* (dir. Nicolas Gessner, 1976)
237. *Pete's Dragon* (dir. Don Chaffey, 1977)
238. *Between the Lines* (dir. Joan Micklin Silver, 1977)
239. *Coma* (dir. Michael Crichton, 1978)

240. *The Brink's Job* (dir. William Friedkin, 1978)
241. *Jaws 2* (dir. Jeannot Szwarc, 1978)
242. *Billy in the Lowlands* (dir. Jan Egleson, 1979)
243. *The Europeans* (dir. James Ivory, 1979)
244. *Starting Over* (dir. Alan J. Pakula, 1979)
245. *A Small Circle of Friends* (dir. Rob Cohen, 1980)
246. *The Children* (dir. Rob Kalmanowicz, 1980)
247. *Altered States* (dir. Ken Russell, 1980)
248. *Night School* (dir. Ken Hughes, 1981)
249. *The Incubus* (dir. John Hough, 1981)
250. *Dead and Buried* (dir. Gary Sherman, 1981)
251. *The Dark End of the Street* (dir. Jan Egleson, 1981)
252. *On Golden Pond* (dir. Mark Rydell, 1981)
253. *The Verdict* (dir. Sidney Lumet, 1982)
254. *Superstition* a.k.a. *The Witch* (dir. James W. Roberson, 1982)
255. *The Eyes of the Amaryllis* (dir. Frederick King Keller, 1982)
256. *The World According to Garp* (dir. George Roy Hill, 1982)
257. *Tenebre* (dir. Dario Argento, 1982)
258. *The Flight of Dragons* (dir. Jules Bass and Arthur Rankin, Jr., 1982)
259. *The Dead Zone* (dir. David Cronenberg, 1983)
260. *The Devonville Terror* (dir. Ulli Lommel, 1983)
261. *Reuben, Reuben* (dir. Robert Ellis Miller, 1983)
262. *Cujo* (dir. Lewis Teague, 1983)
263. *The Bostonians* (dir. James Ivory, 1984)
264. *The Hotel New Hampshire* (dir. Tony Richardson, 1984)
265. *Clue* (dir. Jonathan Lynn, 1985)
266. *Re-Animator* (dir. Stuart Gordon, 1985)
267. *One Crazy Summer* (dir. Savage Steve Holland, 1986)
268. *Children of a Lesser God* (dir. Randa Haines, 1986)
269. *Where Are the Children?* (dir. Bruce Malmuth, 1986)
270. *Aenigma* (dir. Lucio Fulci, 1987)
271. *The Witches of Eastwick* (dir. George Miller, 1987)
272. *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (dir. Norman Mailer, 1987)
273. *Criminal Law* (dir. Martin Campbell, 1988)
274. *The Good Mother* (dir. Leonard Nimoy, 1988)
275. *Beetlejuice* (dir. Tim Burton, 1988)
276. *Mystic Pizza* (dir. Donald Petrie, 1988)
277. *Sweet Hearts Dance* (dir. Robert Greenwald, 1988)
278. *The Nest* (dir. Terence H. Winkless, 1988)
279. *Funny Farm* (dir. George Roy Hill, 1988)
280. *The Accused* (dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1988)
281. *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (dir. Wes Craven, 1988)
282. *Ghosthouse* (dir. Umberto Lenzi, 1988)
283. *Warlock* (dir. Steve Miner, 1989)
284. *Second Sight* (dir. Joel Zwick, 1989)
285. *Dead Poets Society* (dir. Peter Weir, 1989)
286. *Glory* (dir. Edward Zwick, 1989)
287. *Pet Sematary* (dir. Mary Lambert, 1989)
288. *Blind Fear* (dir. Tom Berry, 1989)
289. *Bride of Re-Animator* (dir. Brian Yuzna, 1989)
290. *Physical Evidence* (dir. Michael Crichton, 1989)
291. *Signs of Life* (dir. John David Coles, 1989)

292. *Mermaids* (dir. Richard Benjamin, 1990)
293. *Once Around* (dir. Lasse Hallström, 1991)
294. *Run* (dir. Geoff Burrowes, 1991)
295. *Other People's Money* (dir. Norman Jewison, 1991)
296. *Far and Away* (dir. Ron Howard, 1992)
297. *Ethan Frome* (dir. John Madden, 1993)
298. *Hocus Pocus* (dir. Kenny Ortega, 1993)
299. *Malice* (dir. Harold Becker, 1993)
300. *Needful Things* (dir. Fraser Clarke Heston, 1993)
301. *The Good Son* (dir. Joseph Ruben, 1993)
302. *Where the Rivers Flow North* (dir. Jay Craven, 1993)
303. *The Firm* (dir. Sydney Pollack, 1993)
304. *The Dark Half* (dir. George A. Romero, 1993)
305. *Blown Away* (dir. Stephen Hopkins, 1994)
306. *Dumb & Dumber* (dir. Peter and Bobby Farrelly, 1994)
307. *Federal Hill* (dir. Michael Corrente, 1994)
308. *Little Women* (dir. Gillian Armstrong, 1994)
309. *The Ref* (dir. Ted Demme, 1994)
310. *The River Wild* (dir. Curtis Hanson, 1994)
311. *The Shawshank Redemption* (dir. Frank Darabont, 1994)
312. *In the Mouth of Madness* (dir. John Carpenter, 1994)
313. *Wolf* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1994)
314. *Casper* (dir. Brad Silberling, 1995)
315. *Dolores Claiborne* (dir. Taylor Hackford, 1995)
316. *The Scarlet Letter* (dir. Roland Joffé, 1995)
317. *Jumanji* (dir. Joe Johnston, 1995)
318. *To Die For* (dir. Gus Van Sant, 1995)
319. *Celtic Pride* (dir. Tom DeCerchio, 1996)
320. *Never Met Picasso* (dir. Stephen Kijak, 1996)
321. *The Crucible* (dir. Nicholas Hynter, 1996)
322. *The Spitfire Grill* (dir. Lee David Zlotoff, 1996)
323. *Two if by Sea* (dir. Bill Bennett, 1996)
324. *Joe & Joe* (dir. David Wall, 1996)
325. *That Darn Cat* (dir. Bob Spiers, 1997)
326. *Squeeze* (dir. Robert Patton-Spruill, 1997)
327. *The MatchMaker* (dir. Mark Joffe, 1997)
328. *Good Will Hunting* (dir. Gus Van Sant, 1997)
329. *The Ice Storm* (dir. Ang Lee, 1997)
330. *The Myth of Fingerprints* (dir. Bart Freundlich, 1997)
331. *Lolita* (dir. Adrian Lyne, 1997)
332. *Affliction* (dir. Paul Schrader, 1997)
333. *Next Stop Wonderland* (dir. Brad Anderson, 1998)
334. *Monument Ave. a.k.a. Snitch* (dir. Ted Demme, 1998)
335. *Southie* (dir. John Shea, 1998)
336. *A Civil Action* (dir. Steven Zaillian, 1998)
337. *Practical Magic* (dir. Griffin Dunne, 1998)
338. *Safe Men* (dir. Jon Hamburg, 1998)
339. *There's Something About Mary* (dir. Bobby and Peter Farrelly, 1998)
340. *Animals with the Tollkeeper* (dir. Michael di Giacomo, 1998)
341. *Coventry* (dir. J. T. Foster, 1998)
342. *Lake Placid* (dir. Steve Miner, 1999)
343. *Colorz of Rage* (dir. Dale Resteghini, 1999)

344. *A Stranger in the Kingdom* (dir. Jay Craven, 1999)
345. *Outside Providence* (dir. Michael Corrente, 1999)
346. *The Boondock Saints* (dir. Tory Duffy, 1999)
347. *The Cider House Rules* (dir. Lasse Hallström, 1999)
348. *The Iron Giant* (dir. Brad Bird, 1999)
349. *The Haunting of Hell House* (dir. Mitch Marcus, 1999)
350. *The Perfect Storm* (dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 2000)
351. *What Lies Beneath* (dir. Robert Zemeckis, 2000)
352. *Green* (dir. Marc Powers, 2000)
353. *The Exchange* (dir. Ed Nicoletti, 2000)
354. *Me, Myself & Irene* (dir. Bobby and Peter Farrelly, 2000)
355. *State and Main* (dir. David Mamet, 2000)
356. *The Weight of Water* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 2000/2002)
357. *Winter Lily* (dir. Roshell Bissett, 2000)
358. *The Blue Diner* (dir. Jan Egleson, 2001)
359. *Blow* (dir. Ted Demme, 2001)
360. *Harvard Man* (dir. James Toback, 2001)
361. *Title to Murder* (dir. Stephen Furst, 2001)
362. *Legally Blonde* (dir. Robert Luketic, 2001)
363. *Dischord* (dir. Mark Wilkinson, 2001)
364. *A Beautiful Mind* (dir. Ron Howard, 2001)
365. *Easy Listening* (dir. Pamela Corkey, 2001)
366. *In the Bedroom* (dir. Todd Field, 2001)
367. *Riding in Cars with Boys* (dir. Penny Marshall, 2001)
368. *Summer Catch* (dir. Michael Tollin, 2001)
369. *Super Troopers* (dir. Jay Chandrasekhar, 2001)
370. *Wet Hot American Summer* (dir. David Wain, 2001)
371. *The Quiet American* (dir. Phillip Noyce, 2002)
372. *Mr. Deeds* (dir. Steven Brill, 2002)
373. *Moonlight Mile* (dir. Brad Silberling, 2002)
374. *Eight Crazy Nights* (dir. Seth Kearsley, 2002)
375. *Kiss the Bride* (dir. Vanessa Parise, 2002)
376. *Behind the Red Door* (dir. Matie Karrell, 2003)
377. *Dreamcatcher* (dir. Lawrence Kasdan, 2003)
378. *Mystic River* (dir. Clint Eastwood, 2003)
379. *Alex & Emma* (dir. Rob Reiner, 2003)
380. *Dumb & Dumberer: When Harry Met Lloyd* (dir. Troy Miller, 2003)
381. *Mona Lisa Smile* (dir. Mike Newell, 2003)
382. *The Human Stain* (dir. Robert Benton, 2003)
383. *What Alice Found* (dir. A. Dean Bell, 2003)
384. *Little Erin Merryweather* (dir. David Morwick, 2003)
385. *Beyond Re-Animator* (dir. Brian Yuzna, 2003)
386. *Stuck on You* (dir. Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly, 2003)
387. *Gothika* (dir. Mathieu Kassovitz, 2003)
388. *The Recruit* (dir. Roger Donaldson, 2003)
389. *Spartan* (dir. David Mamet, 2004)
390. *Irish Eyes a.k.a. Vendetta: No Conscience, No Mercy* (dir. Daniel McCarthy, 2004)
391. *Welcome To Mooseport* (dir. Donald Petrie, 2004)
392. *Miracle* (dir. Gavin O'Connor, 2004)
393. *The Off Season* (dir. James Felix McKenney, 2004)
394. *Fever Pitch* (dir. Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly, 2005)

395. *Vers le sud* (dir. Laurent Cantet, 2005)
396. *The Family Stone* (dir. Thomas Bezucha, 2005)
397. *Ice Princess* (dir. Tim Fywell, 2005)
398. *Tara Road* (dir. Gillies MacKinnon, 2005)
399. *Greener Mountains* (dir. Lee Shallat Chemel, 2005)
400. *The Greatest Game Ever Played* (dir. Bill Paxton, 2005)
401. *The Sacrifice* (dir. Jamie Fessenden, 2005)
402. *The Jacket* (dir. John Maybury, 2005)
403. *Shopgirl* (dir. Anand Tucker, 2005)
404. *Thank You For Smoking* (dir. Jason Reitman, 2005)
405. *The Departed* (dir. Martin Scorsese, 2006)
406. *Islander* (dir. Ian McCrudden, 2006)
407. *Little Children* (dir. Todd Field, 2006)
408. *The Legend of Lucy Keyes* (dir. John Stimpson, 2006)
409. *Vacationland* (dir. Todd Verow, 2006)
410. *A Lobster Tale* (dir. Adam Massey, 2006)
411. *The Covenant* (dir. Renny Harlin, 2006)
412. *Running with Scissors* (dir. Ryan Murphy, 2006)
413. *Live Free or Die* (dir. Gregg Kavet, Andy Robin, 2006)
414. *Disappearances* (dir. Jay Craven, 2006)
415. *Deck the Halls* (dir. John Whitesell, 2006)
416. *Black Irish* (dir. Brad Gann, 2007)
417. *Gone Baby Gone* (dir. Ben Affleck, 2007)
418. *Everybody Wants To Be Italian* (dir. Jason Todd Ipson, 2007)
419. *The Game Plan* (dir. Andy Fickman, 2007)
420. *The Mist* (dir. Frank Darabont, 2007)
421. *Whisper* (dir. Stewart Hendler, 2007)
422. *21* (dir. Robert Luketic, 2008)
423. *The Forbidden Kingdom* (dir. Rob Minkoff, 2008)
424. *Misconceptions* (dir. Ron Satloff, 2008)
425. *What Doesn't Kill You* (dir. Brian Goodman, 2008)
426. *My Best Friend's Girl* (dir. Howard Deutch, 2008)
427. *The Other Side of the Tracks* a.k.a. *The Haunting of Amelia* (dir. A. D. Calvo, 2008)
428. *Spinning Into Butter* (dir. Mark Brokaw, 2008)
429. *Knowing* (dir. Alex Proyas, 2009)
430. *The Boondock Saints II: All Saints Day* (dir. Troy Duffy, 2009)
431. *Tell-Tale* (dir. Michael Cuesta, 2009)
432. *The Uninvited* (dir. Charles Guard, Thomas Guard, 2009)
433. *Tanner Hall* (dir. Francesca Gregorini, Tatiana von Furstenberg, 2009)
434. *What Goes Up* (dir. Jonathan Glatzer, 2009)
435. *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* (dir. Lasse Hallström, 2009)
436. *Wild About Harry* (dir. Gwen Wynne, 2009)
437. *Offspring* (dir. Andrew van den Houten, 2009)
438. *Leap Year* (dir. Anand Tucker, 2010)
439. *The Company Men* (dir. John Wells, 2010)
440. *Edge of Darkness* (dir. Martin Campbell, 2010)
441. *Shutter Island* (dir. Martin Scorsese, 2010)
442. *Locked In* (dir. Suri Krishnamma, 2010)
443. *Knight and Day* (dir. James Mangold, 2010)
444. *The Town* (dir. Ben Affleck, 2010)
445. *Grown Ups* (dir. Dennis Dugan, 2010)

446. *The Ghost Writer* (dir. Roman Polanski, 2010)
447. *The Fighter* (dir. David O. Russell, 2010)
448. *Yellowbrickroad* (dir. Jesse Holland, Andy Mitton, 2010)
449. *Conviction* (dir. Tony Goldwyn, 2010)
450. *My Soul to Take* (dir. Wes Craven, 2010)
451. *Sucker Punch* (dir. Zack Snyder, 2011)
452. *Inkubus* (dir. Glenn Ciano, 2011)
453. *Hall Pass* (dir. Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly, 2011)
454. *Cloudburst* (dir. Thom Fitzgerald, 2011)
455. *See Girl Run* (dir. Nate Meyer, 2012)
456. *Moonrise Kingdom* (dir. Wes Anderson, 2012)
457. *The Battery* (dir. Jeremy Gardner, 2012)
458. *That's My Boy* (dir. Sean Anders, 2012)
459. *Fairhaven* (dir. Tom O'Brien, 2012)
460. *Ted* (dir. Seth MacFarlane, 2012)
461. *The Lords of Salem* (dir. Rob Zombie, 2012)
462. *The Cohasset Snuff Film* (dir. Edward Payson, 2012)
463. *Dark Shadows* (dir. Tim Burton, 2012)
464. *Black Rock* (dir. Katie Aselton, 2012)
465. *Infected* (dir. Glenn Ciano, 2013)
466. *The Conjuring* (dir. James Wan, 2013)
467. *The Heat* (dir. Paul Feig, 2013)
468. *R.I.P.D.* (dir. Robert Schwentke, 2013)
469. *Beneath the Harvest Sky* (dir. Aron Gaudet, Gita Pullapilly, 2013)
470. *Northern Borders* (dir. Jay Craven, 2013)
471. *Bluebird* (dir. Lance Edmands, 2013)
472. *The Equalizer* (dir. Antoine Fuqua, 2014)
473. *Dumb and Dumber To* (dir. Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly, 2014)
474. *Black Mass* (dir. Scott Cooper, 2015)
475. *Ted 2* (dir. Seth MacFarlane, 2015)
476. *Bleed for This* (dir. Ben Younger, 2016)
477. *Renaissance* (dir. Matthew Campagna, post-production)
478. *Becky's Driving School* (dir. Dirk Craft, announced)
479. *The Grounding of Group 6* (dir. Tom Sheppard, announced)



## 2. TELEVISION SERIES

1. *Peyton Place* (1964-1969, 514 episodes)
2. *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971, 1225 episodes)
3. *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1968-1970, 50 episodes)
4. *Banacek* (1972-1974, 17 episodes)
5. *James at 15* a.k.a. *James at 16* (1977-1978, 21 episodes)
6. *Soap* (1977-1981, 85 episodes)
7. *The Paper Chase* (1978-1979, 1983-1986, 59 episodes)
8. *Cheers* (1982-1993, 275 episodes)
9. *St. Elsewhere* (1982-1988, 137 episodes)
10. *Newhart* (1982-1990, 184)
11. *Goodnight, Beantown* (1983-1984, 18 episodes)
12. *Spenser: For Hire* (1985-1988, 66 episodes and 4 TV movies)
13. *The Cavanaughs* (1986-1989, 26 episodes)
14. *Lenny* (1990-1991, 16 episodes)
15. *Dark Shadows* (1991, 12 episodes)
16. *Boston Common* (1996-1997, 32 episodes)
17. *Sabrina, The Teenage Witch* (1996-2003, 163 episodes and 3 TV films)
18. *The Practice* (1997-2004, 178 episodes)
19. *Ally McBeal* (1997-2001, 112 episodes)
20. *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003, 128 episodes)
21. *Two Guys and a Girl* (1998-2001, 81 episodes)
22. *Costello* (1998, 4 episodes)
23. *Family Guy* (1999—, 249 episodes)
24. *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007, 153 episodes)
25. *Boston Public* (2000-2004, 81 episodes)
26. *Crossing Jordan* (2001-2007, 117 episodes)
27. *Dead Zone* (2002-2007, 80 episodes)
28. *It's All Relative* (2003-2004, 22 episodes)
29. *The Brotherhood of Poland, New Hampshire* (2003, 8 episodes)
30. *Boston Legal* (2004-2008, 101 episodes)
31. *Kingdom Hospital* (2004, 13 episodes)
32. *Brotherhood* (2006-2008, 29 episodes)
33. *October Road* (2007-2008, 19 episodes)
34. *Fringe* (2008-2013, 100 episodes)
35. *Leverage* (2008-2012, 77 episodes)
36. *Eastwick* (2009-2010, 13 episodes)
37. *Rizzoli & Isles* (2010-2016, 105 episodes)
38. *Haven* (2010-2015, 65 episodes)
39. *American Horror Story: Murder House* (2011, 12 episodes)
40. *Being Human* (2011-2014, 52 episodes)
41. *Falling Skies* (2011-2013, 30 episodes)
42. *Once Upon a Time* (2011—, 156 episodes)
43. *Holliston* (2012—, 31 episodes)
44. *American Horror Story: Asylum* (2012-2013, 13 episodes)
45. *Ray Donovan* (2013—, 62 episodes)
46. *American Horror Story: Coven* (2013-2014, 13 episodes)
47. *Salem* (2014-2017, 36 episodes)
48. *Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp* (2015, 8 episodes)