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The Bad Boy: A Cultural Phenomenon

Writing Collective FFC 100.12

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The Bad Boy: A Cultural Phenomenon

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Abstract: The bad boy is a cultural phenomenon that exists as an archetype in all sorts of artistic mediums, though most prevalently in literature and film, and even in the real world. The bad boy is defined through his actions and his philosophy of resistance - of challenging the world (ours or his own) on the normalcy of its convictions. This article explores the ways in which the bad boy manifests and the vast categories he may occupy - from hero to criminal, introvert to public performer, or sexual deviant to authoritarian dictator. The bad boy is many things: a liberator, agitator, loner, performer, and above all a timeless icon.

Key words, terms, concepts, names: bad boy, social rebel, superheroes, villains, societal norms, rebellion, resistance, Captain Jack Sparrow, Kerouwac

Introduction

Think of a bad boy - of any figure that this term calls to mind - and now try to define this term. This is the icon we studied in our course and this essay presents our discoveries. To define the term "bad boy" requires it be examined from multiple perspectives, acknowledged in its multiple forms, and understood within its distinct cultural meanings. The existing scholarly literature only addresses individual characters such as Tom Sawyer, for example (Geller). We studied the bad boy as an archetypal figure and the numerous categories into which he fits in order to better understand his relevance and role in relation to the rest of society.

Oftentimes a bad boy is not constituted by something one *is*, but by something one *does.* To "bad boy" as a verb is "to go against" and to convince others to go against. The bad boy therefore needs to be understood as a social, psychological, and imaginative/creative cultural phenomenon. The act of being a "bad boy" is usually attractive in some way while it can also cause readers and viewers to question the norm. By introducing difference and queering the status quo the bad boy serves as a release for our idic pleasures and liberates us from conventional social and moral customs, allowing us to question ourselves and to question if we too are capable of becoming this attractive rebel. However, just as often the bad boy goes too far and violates too many ethical codes and so repels us from him. The bad boy then may have a conservative effect, driving us back to the security of traditions and social controls. Whether he is altering a stable situation or forcing society to question its standards, the bad boy is always working to convey the maladies of society and illuminating the options for resistance and rebellion.

Throughout history bad boys have been prevalent in literature, film, and other variants of media. The significance of our interest and rationale for researching this cultural phenomenon is to present an alternative perspective on the topic of social and cultural change and a questioning of the constructed norms that society has put in place. Classic bad boy figures can be found in almost every period of social uprising and are deemed liberators and instigators of cultural and social reform as inimical to the society they are attempting to change.

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Bad Boy: The Liberators

Although the general use of the term "bad boy" erroneously labels them all identically, bad boys fall into several disparate categories. However, these distinct types of bad boys do share a common feature: their role as liberators in society. Bad boys can catalyze liberation on many different levels, ranging from the sociopolitical to the intrapersonal. On one end of the spectrum lies perhaps the most obviously liberation-oriented type of bad boy: the rebel. Rebels incite large scale emancipation through their overt rejection of societal norms. Some bad boys liberate not just the inhabitants of their own worlds but also their viewers or readers themselves.

How a bad boy is defined as a liberator is entirely based on his world view. This determines the bad boy's course of action: he may lash out as an act of resistance or rebellion against society, or instead shut himself away and become a luminary for the readers or viewers and guide them towards revolutionary thought. The bad boy's critical view reveals how they react to their surroundings and to society itself: it determines whether they challenge society head on or from the shadows, whether they protest with elaborate speeches or Molotov cocktails, and whether they are remembered as renowned public heroes or controversial social outlaws. It varies with each individual bad boy: some may not even have the conviction to state outright their desires for emancipation. Instead, their goals may be disguised in a comedic form allowing for plausible deniability of statements they make or actions they commit that society finds completely intolerable.

The bad boy's outlook shapes how we, the readers, view his world and how it functions. These black sheep in society surprisingly have the most influence over our recreation of how the story is told. For example a reader's conviction that Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* is a completely lawless world is a revelation that stems from Anton Chigurh's attitude towards his own life. The critical view of the outlaw character then defines what type of action they might take against society. Their method for coping with the "flaws" they perceive in the world then resolves into either insurgent characteristics towards society or a withdrawn approach involving a more internal and personal liberation.

Critical bad boys' otherness can manifest itself in two different ways: the rebellious or the withdrawn. The rebellious bad boy focuses his badness into inciting rebellion and literally liberating oppressed people. This bad boy usually appears in worlds with overtly totalitarian manipulative governments and the bad boy makes tangible the complaints and desires of his fellow men. One example of this type of bad boy is V in the film *V for Vendetta*. V lives in a futuristic United Kingdom where a fascist government rules with an iron fist and performs lethal experiments on disabled people, homosexuals, and dissenters. He fights against the power in an extremely overt manner by blowing up Parliament and inspiring the majority of citizens to rebel against their own government. V is definitely a bad boy for he believes in carrying out the justified murders of high-ranking government officials, and he fits the rebellious bad boy genus because he uses his "bad boying" to physically liberate people from government oppression.

Open rebellion is not the only way in which a bad boy can liberate people. Many bad boys liberate not the people of their own world but also the readers or viewers themselves. Obviously fictional characters do not rise up to incite rebellion in the real world, so it follows that the withdrawn bad boy liberates his audiences within the psychic realm. A solid example of this isolated bad boy is Mr. Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz is not a liberator of people - in fact he practically enslaves the native people he lives among - but Kurtz's liberation is instead of the story's narrator, Marlowe, and of the audience through his philosophy. While V and Kurtz's respective bad boy qualities may manifest themselves in opposite ways, their methods of dealing with the worlds they occupy are both extremely critical.

Most rebellious and withdrawn bad boys present an incredibly serious critique of society, but oftentimes the most effective way to bring about change in the world is to affect audiences in a less heavy-handed manner; which brings us to discuss the comical bad boy. The comical bad boy succeeds through his presenting information in a way that the spectator will not find repulsive: by paralleling the flaws of society in a light-hearted fashion. A perfect manifestation of this can be seen through the characteristics of Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Sparrow is a pirate who steals, womanizes, and mocks the legal system which is never able to catch him. After escaping the confines of imprisonment he states that officials will remember the date "as the day that [they] almost caught Captain Jack Sparrow". Sparrow is portrayed as an addled character which adds comedy to the entire situation and makes the audience instantly fall in love with him.

Why would it be beneficial to express liberation through a dim-witted character? In Jack Sparrow's case the fact that he is dumb and the government is not able to catch him demonstrates the ineptitude of the legal government system which, like him, is equally nonsensical, dumb, and even corrupt. The comedic bad boy parallels and illuminates these flaws in the society, and the standards to which he is being judged. Furthermore, the spectator is more open to receive such criticisms, because it is funny, and at a base level it can go unnoticed. When a criticism is put in a comedic way the speaker is able to step back from the offense to the spectator and assert that he is "just kidding".
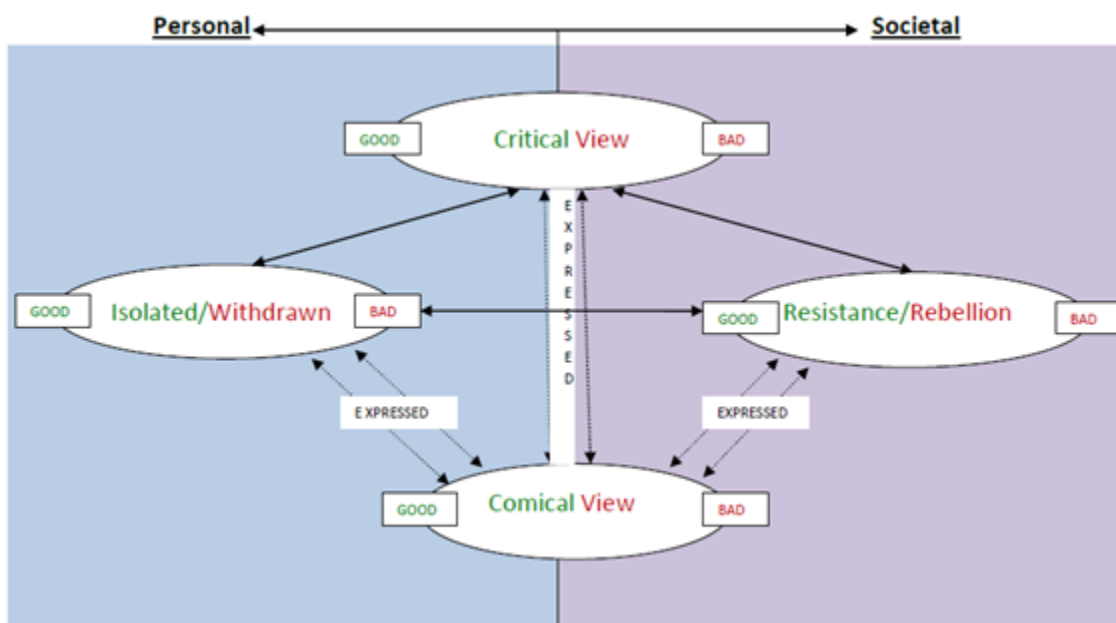
- Bad boys have the ability to liberate at the personal and societal levels
- A bad boy with a critical view of society can liberate on both personal and societal levels
- A bad boy's critical view can lead him to become isolated or withdrawn on a personal level or become a leader of resistance and rebellion on a societal level
- The comedic bad boy parallels the evils of society and can shed a critical light on what is happening, which in turn can express the need for resistance as well as encourage the individual to retreat from social functions and live in an isolated manner

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The Conflicted Bad Boy

The multidimensionality of society means we cannot limit the bad boy to a specific category because the bad boy comes in many forms. Still, we know one when we see one whether it be a fictional character or a real life individual. Among these we find figures diverse as Batman, James Bond, Tupac Shakur, Mike Tyson, and Anton Chigurh. The way each one acts defines him as a bad boy, from *On the Road*'s Dean Moriarty to Charles Manson. Despite their differences, all bad boys share a crucial connection: they are all internally conflicted. Batman watched his parents die in front of him, Spiderman felt the guilt for Uncle Ben's death, Jason Bourne lost his memory and with it his entire sense of identity. The internal struggle that the bad boy endures manifests itself through the bad boy's fashion, language, rugged individualism, and constructed persona.

The bad boy is in a constant state of turmoil: he is at war with himself, a war that both isolates him and works to erode his sanity. He resists his norms and he fights against his own emotions and conscience. This struggle takes a hefty toll on the bad boy, pushes him past his limits, and wears him down physically and mentally. For example, Dean Moriarty's urge to break societal norms causes his inevitable mental deterioration. Because Dean is so focused on queering the status quo he eventually loses his grasp of all concepts except for that of time. This mental breakdown is common among bad boys because when one's id seizes control the balance is lost and chaos ensues. This shift from order to entropy invites society to question the moral constitution of the bad boy, which in turn further isolates the bad boy figure. This sort of resistance is prevalent in all aspects of the bad boy's life since even he resists himself. To "bad boy" is therefore to embody resistance.

The bad boy and his resistance to society are also embodied in the bad boy's sense of fashion. Rarely is the bad boy seen in Vans, high socks, cargo shorts, and a white t-shirt. Instead, he expresses unique individuality through his clothing. He is not willing to be another cog in the social machine, because the bad boy wants to stand out: he wants to be the one in the spotlight. A prime example of the bad boy using fashion as a tool of social defiance is Lady Gaga. Her fashion sense is definitely unique and whether you like her music or not, there is no denying she is abnormal. For instance, Lady Gaga wore a costume made entirely of meat to the Video Music Awards. She used this meat suit to protest "don't ask, don't tell," claiming that we are all more than mere pieces of meat and need to stand up for our rights. In an industry full of conformity and falsehoods, Lady Gaga is a beacon of individualism.

In Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* Alex and his droogs use their clothing to differentiate themselves from the society that they are resisting. In all-white clothing and a bowler hat, Alex goes a step further with a false eyelash under one eye. By wearing flashy, unique clothing, the bad boy not only illustrates his defiance of cultural norms, but also displays his own individual character to the world.

The bad boy also defies society with his language. The bad boy's vocabulary and diction are weapons against the society that he despises. Bad boys possess a certain wit: they usually are skilled orators and able to convince others of what they believe or verbally tear them apart. Bad boys such as James Bond, Indiana Jones, and Captain Jack Sparrow all exude a charming quality when they talk. Their words carry weight and are uniquely their own. In *The Breakfast Club*, John Bender uses his words as a weapon against the other students in detention. His smartass remarks and verbal abuse are hilarious to listen to, but also carry a disdain for society (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsZkkqLDFmg). Despite his humor and cruelty, Bender's words ring true and his critiques of the status quo are honest.

But not every bad boy possesses Bender's sharp wit: some are just extremely vulgar. Notorious rapper Tyler the Creator is known for his homophobic and misogynistic lyrics and he embodies profanity. His lyrics possess a shock value due to their offensive nature. With lyrics like "I'm a fucking paradox/no I'm not threesomes with a fucking triceratops" and "making crack rocks outa pussy nigga fishbones" (Okonma) there is no doubt that Tyler the

44   e-Research, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)

Creator goes against the social grain. Words are a powerful tool of the bad boy both allowing him to stand out as individual and lash out at the society that he despises.

The individualism of the bad boy is further shown by his accented personality quirks and eccentric behavior. Every Bond villain elucidates this notion: Jaws has metal teeth, Knick Knack is a midget, Oddjob murders with his hat. By embracing their oddities these characters are able to free themselves from the doldrums of society. To "bad boy" is to embrace what makes one unique - to embrace the individual - as Batman villain and bad boy Two Face (*Batman Forever*) illustrates perfectly. Two Face was not deterred when half of his body was horribly disfigured, instead he used it to his advantage. Acknowledging that there is a good and ugly side to everything - just as there is a good and an ugly side to him - Two Face becomes notorious for flipping a coin. By embracing his quirks Two Face found success, and in the process rebelled against the society that scorned him.

Just as Two Face constructed a villainous identity around his disfigurement, the bad boy artfully constructs a persona to influence how he is perceived. The bad boy society sees is exactly the person the bad boy wants society to see. Their very existence is dedicated to the pursuit of an ideal. The bad boy is a performer: he is playing a part. Such is true with real life bad boys like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin; both dictators developed a cult of personality. Through the use of propaganda, they appeared to transcend mere mortality.

In *V for Vendetta*, V adopts a larger-than-life identity. By donning a Guy Fawkes mask, V becomes more than a person - he becomes an idea. The same can be said of masked super heroes like Batman, Spiderman, *Watchmen's* Rorschach, and Iron Man. By putting on their masks these heroes make the transformation from men to the personification of justice.

Questioning of Societal Standards

The bad boy is generally an appealing figure that excites us in some way. Although there is no single concise definition of the bad boy he is usually attractive: either physically or through his actions or his lifestyle. However, the function of the bad boy is not just to be entertaining. Within society bad boys serve to question standards and bring to light issues that they feel need to be publicly addressed. Thus the bad boy figure plays an important role in society no matter what form he adopts (the "bad boy" indeed does not have to be human, let alone a boy). The term is used to classify anyone or anything that questions the standards society has accepted as normal. Bad boys do not always question the same standards nor do they expose the same critiques. This diverse range of bad boys is part of what makes them bad: we can't group them all together as they are all so dramatically different. But one of the traits they do have in common is their questioning the standards of society.

The Bad Boy Questions Gender Roles: In David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* the bad boy protagonist, René Gallimard, questions gender roles and expectations as well as social standards in the East and West, particularly in how we view our Western cultural customs as being superior to those of "the Orient". It is loosely based on the true story of French diplomat Bernard Bouriscot. The play centers on Gallimard, a married diplomat in China, and takes place during the time the French - and later the U.S. - fought in Vietnam. At a party he meets Song, a male Chinese opera singer who cross-dresses as a woman. They soon begin what becomes a twenty-year long affair, Gallimard believing the entire time that Song is a woman, and never realizing he is actually a spy. Until the very end the play mirrors the Italian opera *Madame Butterfly:* the story of a Japanese woman who falls for a white sailor and then kills herself when he leaves her. Gallimard believes he is with the perfect woman - a docile "lotus blossom". After the affair is revealed and he is ridiculed he can only say that he has been with the "Perfect Woman" (4). What made being with Song - his so-called Butterfly - so perfect? Well according to Song, "only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act" (63). Their relationship raises questions about cultural standards of

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femininity. Every Western woman offends the standards expected by Gallimard in some way; they are loud, question male authority, and use offensive language, like his mistress Rene's term "weenie" (54). The idea that cultural expectations of women somehow seem to embody the "Oriental" woman, and yet can be fulfilled by a man, brings into question the boundaries of gender if it is biological or pure performativity, and if heterosexual normativity is even relevant. The ending of the play, in which Gallimard kills himself, reverses the end of the opera *Madame Butterfly* and once again questions the nature of gender roles and their validity. Based on an opera in which an Oriental is submissive to a white man, and referring to the Chinese as "Orientals," which could indicate any person in Asia or the Middle East the play makes it apparent that the West is extremely ethnocentric and views all other cultures as their subordinates. This view hurts Gallimard and his career because it leads him to believe that Asians are meek and wish to be tamed by the superior French. He predicts that the Americans will easily win in Vietnam (historically, that is obviously inaccurate) and when the Vietnamese continue to fight effectively for their freedom it ruins his credibility and he is sent back to France. Paris soon breaks out into riots and protests in support of North Vietnamese and communist ideology, proving that many aspects of culture are global and that underestimating or undervaluing the East is untenable. Hwang brings doubt that there can only be one civilized or "correct" society, which if accepted by the West would mean admitting to the value of equality. Though based on a real person, the true function of Gallimard as a bad boy figure is to question these standards and make readers reexamine their own interaction with cultural standards and normativity.

The Bad Boy Questions Social Norms: The antagonist Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is an extremely unconventional character who rebels against the standards of the society he lives in. His singular name alone challenges the normal standards and he has no known history. The townspeople think of him as evil because of his gypsy-like skin color. While at the home in which he was meant to be treated as a family member he becomes a slave. He is a unique character whose rebellion and behavior cause us to question the boundaries that society imposes. Heathcliff's actions prove that he is different from those around him. Even after his childhood sweetheart Cathy gets married he pursues her relentlessly, going against the moral standards of the time, and follows his romantic passion. He marries Isabella Linton - Cathy's sister-in-law - to hurt Edgar, who is Cathy's husband. Heathcliff is cruel to those he should have loved and protected including his own sickly son. He calls him cruel names and treats him like a pawn. Heathcliff even goes so far as to manipulate Cathy's daughter into marrying his son, in order to take revenge on Edgar and obtain his estate. He rebels against society in almost every aspect of his life, and yet even though he is cruel and overbearing readers still sympathize with him. He causes us to question the standards society imposed on him to the effect that we actually support his rebellion.

The Bad Boy Questions Social Constructions: Alex, the fashionable and hip bad boy of *A Clockwork Orange,* is perhaps one of the most shocking modern literary figures. At fifteen years old he is the leader of his gang of droogs: several other teenagers who commit heinous crimes with him for sport in a futuristic dystopian society. After many violent acts including a brutal rape Alex finally commits a murder and his droogs, sick of his cruel tyranny, ensure that he is apprehended and sent to prison. While in prison he volunteers to participate in an experiment in which society would theoretically be able to reform him, but while it renders him harmless it also leaves him utterly defenseless. In this helpless state he is used by politicians who accuse the current government of violating human rights but they are taking advantage of him in quite a hypocritical fashion. Alex only loses the ability, not the desire, to commit violent acts and in desperation to escape the music that automatically sickens him he jumps out a window. He is later deprogrammed and can return to his former violent repulsive self. The repugnance of Alex at the young age of fifteen calls into question what could have possibly made him the way he is. Although he is poor he is not neglected by his parents or treated in a way that could logically explain his fetish for violence. Therefore we conclude that forces within society have influenced him to his monstrous behavior. Corruption within the judicial system allows many teenagers to act as he does without consequences yet it treats

them as inhuman when they are apprehended. While we cannot connect with him, let alone bring ourselves to like him, he questions how society allows for the creation of the monster that is Alex by extolling the fear that he could possibly exist, and galvanizing the conservative effect of trying to ensure that he never will.

The Bad Boy Questions Limits: The bad boy exists as a kind of human question mark: he can challenge norms and uniformity in such a way that calls attention to and criticizes certain social constructs. Kerouac's *On The Road* is one of the most important novels in American culture largely because of how much the characters challenge the uniformity of the American identity. The novel takes place in conservative post-war America that revolves around Mom, God, and hard work. However, Kerouac's autobiographical journey exposes the true underbelly of this world in which bop and alcohol fly around the cities and people are sexually uninhibited. Dean Moriarty serves as the largest question mark of them all by undercutting all of the supposed tenets of his society. For one, Dean has no real family which is a fundamental part of the American identity. This serves as his initial severance from any root system in his culture. Furthermore, Dean is godless and searching for faith of a different kind. Because God is such a large part of the moral and cultural fiber of America Dean sets himself further apart; questioning God's identity, he is also questioning the identity of traditional America. But Dean is less a warning to society than he is a sign of change. Dean fits himself into a third category of American citizens; the first being a hard-working member of the American workforce, the second being the dropout punk who ends up with nothing and thinks he stood for something, and the third is Dean who works hard so he can afford big-ticket items like cars and has a family, but whose wonder and excitement are just as short-lived as the adventures that take him away from them. He commits only to adventure, in an eternal search for "it".

The Bad Boy Is the "Other": Anton Chigurh, in *No Country for Old Men*, embodies the "other" quality within the category. From a Freudian perspective bad boys are attractive figures because they appeal to the id's fascination with violence, resistance, and libidinal desires. It follows that bad boys represented in film and visual media tend to be sexually attractive to the masses. But Anton Chigurh is not a sexually attractive figure. The most physical description that is available comes from his name and his boots, neither of which is very descriptive. The closest Chigurh gets to women is when he is either about to kill them or when they have information about someone else he is about to kill. The novel as a whole does not lack romantic relationships, as we see with Llewellyn and his wife Carla Jean and Ed Tom and his wife Loretta, but Chigurh is a completely asexual figure.

Chigurh's actions could be the source of attraction, yet he is presented as a kind of emotionless force just murdering throughout Texas. We sympathize with characters who commit crimes when their motivations are rooted in good intentions, but Chigurh does not appear to have any normal human motivations. The closest thing to a driving force for Chigurh is the idea that fate and chance will determine who lives, as shown when he puts a man's life in the hands of a coin toss: "I can't call it for you. It wouldn't be fair. You stand to win everything," Chigurh said, "everything" (56). This man's life depends on whether he can correctly call heads or tails. Chigurh is noticeably irritated with him and has killed others for much less, yet he abides by the rules of chance and spares the man's life, even telling him to keep the lucky coin. Other criminal bad boys commit petty crimes that do not hurt anyone, or the victims have wronged someone else, and thus their pain can appear warranted. Chigurh on the other hand "others" himself by killing innocent victims. In his mind, the acts are justified, but the audience does not understand him. In fact, though mystery is deemed "sexy" in popular culture his mystery increases the terror. Yet because we are curious about him we are still attracted to him in a strange way (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhXJcfczNIc).

The Bad Boy May Be a Principled Loner: In Raymond Chandler's novel *The Big Sleep* Philip Marlowe challenges societal standards by following his own laws rather than those of society. He is not a regular police officer enforcing laws for the government: he is a private detective working only for the justice of his clients. In this way

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he evades the norm of lawfulness while still appearing to be morally just. He is cold, jaded, sneaky, and troublesome, but he seems to soften these negative terms with his honesty and humility to the point where we almost don't pick up on the fact that he is a very bad boy.

His code of honesty is genuine but it doesn't encompass the same moral standards of his society such as obeying the law, treating others respectfully and politely, and practicing non-violence. Marlowe is honest to the point of downright cruelty at times, such as with Carmen and Vivian Sternwood, his client's beautiful daughters. For instance, in one scene in which Marlowe wants information from Vivian he attempts to seduce her into telling him. She gives in to the seduction, but will not give Marlowe the information he requests, so he bluntly and honestly states, "Kissing is nice, but your father didn't hire me to sleep with you" (151). While most people choose to be friendly and considerate Marlowe does not accept this norm as it is not beneficial to him or his duty as a detective.

Perhaps the biggest questioning of standards is Marlowe's refusal to abide by the rules. Marlowe does not see the laws of state as the highest code by which one should abide; he has predetermined moral values that he believes surpass the law in certain circumstances. Marlowe takes orders only from those who have hired him to complete a duty, and even then he does things his own way. In his final visit with General Sternwood, Marlowe tells the General, "*You* don't know what I have to go through or over or under to do your job for you. I do it my way. I do my best to protect you and I may break a few rules, but I break them in your favor" (212). Marlowe has carefully chosen his profession in order to best get away with defying the rules and standards of society (bravo, Mr. Marlowe!).

Performing Bad Boys

Bad boys question uniformity in fields other than literature. In the realm of musical recording artists examples of bad boys abound. Where these artists show their individuality is particularly in their live performances, although some also question uniformity in their interviews and general behavior. This identity in music has existed in some form since slaves sang songs on plantations to pass the time under the unforgiving sun. They attempted to bring light into their dim circumstances on the plantations. In a way, their singing was a form of protest against their horrible conditions (see "Evolution"). As the music that the slaves sang evolved through the twentieth century it became more popular and its styles changed. It became the blues which promoted a similar style of protest against general conditions of the African American community. This became rhythm and blues, which subsequently gave way to rock 'n' roll. Rock spawned or helped spawn countless revolutions. By questioning the way things were in Western society, specifically in Britain and America, rock 'n' roll became a catalyst for much change. In the 1960s countless stars became such "question marks"; writing and performing music that called for a change in the way things were.

The Bad Boy Resists: The best example of musical bad boy resistance to norms is Jim Morrison who is the lead singer of The Doors. Morrison questioned the conservative ways of the typical America culture, just like Dean in *On the Road*, but he took it to a new level. He was often found drunk or high in public areas and was arrested on some occasions for his behavior. His most famous arrest came from a stunt he pulled during one of his performances during which he exposed himself on stage to a large crowd of adoring fans. Similar to Dean, Morrison questioned the boundaries of sexual freedom. On top of sexual freedom Morrison was challenging the norms of law abidance. If he could have fun and not directly harm anyone while simultaneously breaking the law then he felt others should be able to also. Because of him artists like the Red Hot Chili Peppers can perform on stage with nothing but a single, well-placed tube sock to cover their genitals. Most notably, the bassist Flea from the same band has been known to come on stage with nothing on but his bass. However, he has never been arrested for such behaviors, because Jim Morrison set up the standard for breaking the norms of musical performance.

48   e-Research, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)

The Bad Boy Questions Belief Systems: Rock 'n' roll took many different forms as it progressed through the late twentieth century, and with each form came a new set of questions posed by the artists. Through the 1970s, the band Black Sabbath pioneered what is known as heavy metal: a harsh and dark sounding music, with horror-inspired lyrics. The lead singer of the band, Ozzy Osborne, was considered to be a Satanist and was seen on one occasion biting the head off of a bat during a gig (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3V5lHg3opM). Ozzy's supposed worshiping of Satan was completely against the ways of American and English culture largely because the two cultures were based on a Christian value system. After Ozzy came Marilyn Manson in the early 1990s: an outspoken Satanist and musical icon. Manson's stage name was highly controversial in that it juxtaposes two of America's icons: Marilyn Monroe (America's sexy sweetheart) and Charles Manson (America's most hated killer). This questioned the esteem we give to celebrities, because we give both the villains and the heroes the same attention. Not only did people attack Manson for his crude music and performances, during which he mimicked many sexual and violent acts, but he was also attacked for his personal life and especially his membership in the Church of Satan which directly challenges the tenets of Western culture.

The Bad Boy as Transgressor: Also during Marilyn Manson's rise to fame hip-hop music began to stake its claim in American culture. With this came the further questioning of sexuality and violence guidelines. One group has recently worked its way up the ranks through their obscene music and obnoxious persona that thoroughly questioned uniformity. The group Odd Future will forever be known as the wild Los Angeles teenagers who most heavily impacted hip hop music "not giving a fuck" (to use their diction). The group's leader, Tyler the Creator, stands strong amongst the rest of our musical bad boys with a signature attitude that seems to be everyone's guilty pleasure. His lyrics are dark and murderous but contrast his actual lifestyle. There are kids everywhere dreaming of living lifestyles parallel to any of the members of Odd Future. They get famous for creating the music they find interesting, doing things they think are funny, and the fan base follows closely behind; backing every last bit of madness.

Bad Boy Attraction/Conservative Reaction

The bad boy is conflicted and the reader, not surprisingly, may be as well; with attraction can easily come repulsion. Therefore the bad boy can just as easily lead to conservative reaction instead of liberation as a result.

On the Road would not exist at all without the inspiring and attractive qualities in Dean; Sal's initial description of Dean exemplifies his stimulating qualities, as he describes him as "tremendously excited with life" (4). It is Dean who prompts Sal to go on the road in the first place. "With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road" (1), says Sal after Dean left for the west. Sal would soon after follow him to Denver. Dean's carefree attitude and sense of adventure influences those around him to change their lives and desires. Dean provides Sal with a different option in life; he creates difference and queers the status quo. Instead of living a normal stationary life Dean opts for a nomadic existence. Dean truly sparks the change in Sal's life as he questions the social norms by which Sal abides. Ultimately Sal goes back to his previous way of life but will never forget what Dean taught him, closing with "I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty" (307).

In *Fight Club* Brad Pitt plays a schizophrenic hallucination by the name of Tyler Durden. He is the projection of an unnamed narrator who is an emasculated introvert. The narrator has a dead end job and spends his nights going to support groups in order to release whatever emotions he is feeling. After the narrator's apartment blows up, he moves in with Tyler, who is in many ways his antithesis. To put it in Tyler's words, "I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I am free in all the ways that you are not" (*Fight Club*). Once they start living together the narrator's life begins to change rapidly. Together they create Fight Club

which is a secret club where men fight each other in order to release their aggression, with many of its members using it as a type of therapy. The idea catches on and fight clubs pop up all over the country. This ring of underground fight clubs soon turn into something more as Tyler begins Project Mayhem. The end goal of project mayhem is to destroy the credit system and modern society as we know it, as Tyler sees it; "you're stalking elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center. You'll wear leather clothes that will last you the rest of your life. You'll climb the wrist-thick kudzu vines that wrap the Sears Tower. And when you look down, you'll see tiny figures pounding corn, laying strips of venison on the empty car pool lane of some abandoned superhighway". The film ends with a final confrontation between the narrator and Tyler Durden. The narrator decides that he has no need for Tyler and destroys him (remember that Tyler is a figment of his imagination). Tyler is a bad boy, the narrator is not. The narrator uses Tyler in order to do what he subconsciously wants to do. Using Tyler, the narrator completely alters his own life; something he was too afraid of at the beginning.

Tyler Durden inspires the narrator similarly to how Dean inspires Sal. Without inspiration it is likely that Jack Kerouac, the real life Sal, would never have left the east coast in search of adventure. Without Tyler the narrator would have been unable to accomplish anything. Using Tyler he creates two organizations, he alters the lives of many, and in the end the narrator manages to destroy many credit companies which he finds evil. The inspiration provided by the bad boys is often necessary to incite change.

The greatest attraction towards the bad boy comes from his ability to act on his idic desires. His attraction derives from the viewer or reader because the reader wants to see his or her own self in another. Basically, the reader is attracted to the bad boy because bad boys are a fantasy without reality. A fictional bad boy can do anything without consequence which is what draws the reader towards him. A bad boy fulfills the fantasies of the average person by acting on the id, which according to Freud operates on the "pleasure principle," leading us to seek immediate and total gratification of our desires (Kagan and Havemann). Fictional bad boys can act in ways that can gratify the pleasure principle. James Bond does this by way of gunning down a Ukrainian terrorist or making love to a damsel in distress many times. The most obvious bad boy trait of James Bond is the fact that he's a no-nonsense kind of guy. Because he has travelled the world and experienced over a dozen near deaths and countless women, he is tough as nails and super suave. When somebody is in Bond's way he takes them down using various gadgets and skills. Almost everyone would love to have the ability to take someone down the way he does. Societal rules state that we can't, but James Bond can.

Unlike the attraction to James Bond most people would prefer not to act like Anton Chigurh (which doesn't make him any less attractive or any less of a bad boy than James Bond). "Chigurh shot him through the forehead and stood watching. Watching the capillaries break up in his eyes. The light receding. Watching his own image degrade in a squandering world" (McCarthy, 122): Chigurh is not likable, in fact most readers would want him dead but his attractiveness as a bad boy comes from how extreme and altered his idic desires are. People who have read the novel or seen the film become wildly interested in Chigurh because he acts through his idic desires in an incredibly disturbing way. Chigurh is a bad boy whose aggression has completely taken over; so much that his libido is centered on his enjoyment of killing things. An example is when he randomly shoots at a bird sitting on a bridge. There is no reason to try to kill it other than he just wants to. The reason that Chigurh's bad boy traits are so far off from James Bond's and other "attractive" bad boys is because his desires are completely altered from the average man. He is pure id transposed to pure violence.

This archetype of a bad boy may set up a conservative effect. In general, "conservative" in American culture has a Christian connotation though more broadly a conservative effect encourages members of society to maintain their roles and the status quo as determined by society. While initially audience members may find themselves drawn to bad boys' unconventional personae, by the end of a story such as Chigurh's audiences interpret the bad boy as

detrimental to daily society and their daily lives. On the surface films, media, and literature appear to display open-minded thinking, the definition of bad boy queering of traditional social roles. However, media depictions of the bad boy, even in the attempt to question common social mores, may further encourage conservative thinking. When the audience is exposed to differences in gender roles, for example, there is an underlying element of irony to the depiction of bad boys in transgendered and cross-dressing roles. Even when this this effect is unintended it encourages conservative thought on gender nonetheless.

Bad boys and bad girls are often portrayed in female/male dress for comedic effect (rarely are transgender movies or shows seriously portrayed). Popular examples include comical cross-dressing films *Some like It Hot* (1959) and *She's the Man* (2006). Each features a main character (or characters) who "acts" as the opposite gender for a period for some desired purpose. Highlighting Judith Butler's theory that gender is performative, such characters suggest that the perception of gender depends on a series of actions (Salih).

In pop culture men dressing as women is generally more prevalent and considered more comedic than females pretending to be men, most likely due to the fact that it requires more effort for a man to act "womanly" than vice versa. Many types of masculine clothing that men wear or use are available to women (pants, ties, shorts, shoes), but there are more female products that men do not use (blouses, heels, dresses, makeup). Additionally it requires more feminine products to make a man "womanly" (wigs, shaved legs, heels, dress, jewelry, makeup) than it requires for a woman to be "manly" (short hair, bound chest, boxers, and shaving kits). Men are more "exaggerated" in terms of dress when disguised as female, whereas women must limit their femininity (including hair, makeup, and genitals).

In both portrayals of cross-dressing when characters are out of their "façade" they revert quickly back to their "correct" gender stereotypes. In *She's the Man* the main character Viola (who has a distinctly female name and is portrayed by Amanda Bynes) occasionally switches from her disguise as her brother Sebastion back to her normal self. When she does so she dons tight-fitting dresses and heels, even though she is generally depicted as a soccer-playing tomboy. Furthermore, at the end of the movie after fulfilling her purpose of putting her "sexist" ex-boyfriend to shame on the soccer field, she actually embraces her overly feminine mother's request to become a proper debutante. The act of becoming a debutante (gender roles requiring a woman to "come out," marking their availability in society for marriage) and the stereotype that women must have a happy ending with a man by her side encourage sexist conservative attitudes to the irony of the film. Likewise, in *Some like It Hot* characters Joe and Jerry pretend to be women in a female band to escape mob figures who are searching for them (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWS2NVX6VP0&feature=related). Joe often dresses in his male form (but under the ruse of a millionaire Junior to seduce Sugar Kane, played by Marilyn Monroe). Joe acts as a gentleman and often "borrows" actual millionaire Osgood's yacht and ring to convince Sugar of his affection and money. While Joe has little money he furthers conservative thought that women must be taken care of in observation of conventional gender roles.

There is a libidinal aspect to cross-dressing films most of which feature a cross-dressing character as appealing to a "normally" heterosexual character. A straight female character, Olivia, falls for Viola/Sebastian as Viola/Sebastian falls for Duke. This gives rise to change in the norms of attraction as Olivia likes Viola and Sebastian likes Duke. The climax of the movie is reached when Olivia kisses and declares her love for Sebastian to the "real" Sebastian - the point being that the film conforms to conservative notions by preventing any "actual" homosexual actions from occurring - thus setting the conservative standard that "homosexual thoughts and feelings are okay," but homosexual actions are not. Olivia is visibly relieved when Viola explains that Olivia kissed her brother not Viola/Sebastian. Though Olivia marks Viola's/Sebastian's caring and sweet qualities (generally seen as female characteristics) as her reasoning behind her passion, when Viola/Sebastian turns out to be male she immediately

accepts a date from the true Sebastian. This appears to be a strategic move of Olivia's character to get back into conservative thought by "jumping back on the straight train" so to speak in order to prove her sexual identity. Now Viola is now free to stare dreamily (often shown in the movie as being comedic due to homosexual connotation) at Duke because she is now female and "normal" by conservative standards.

Although *Some Like it Hot* does contribute to conservative values, Jack Lemmon's character Jerry is clearly more of a bad boy than he is a beacon of the conservative view. Queering his gender role with the memorable line "Oh boy, I'm a boy!" Jerry becomes caught up in his role as the female Daphne and accepts an engagement proposal from millionaire Osgood (temporarily forgetting his actual identity /gender). This is uncommon within most comic cross-dressing media as most characters are depicted as separating themselves from their disguise (often forgetting their "pretend" gender, which leads to comic activities). When Daphne/Jerry admits that he is a man to his "fiance" Osgood, Jerry is only met with the vague response, "Well, nobody's perfect," leaving the audience, and Jerry, to wonder if Osgood is gay or loves Daphne's character no matter the gender. The conservative notion of gender is queered but becomes comedic in the eyes of the viewers. Rather than discouraging social constructs this scene actually embraces them, as the Osgood character is seen as "bizarre" and Jerry is seen as being the "sane" confused heterosexual.

Dean Moriarty in *On the Road* can create a conservative reaction in a way that changes the reader's mind about the appeal of the road. A major aspect of Dean's life that attracts many readers to his lifestyle is that he is essentially free. That does not mean that people in America are not free but it is rather saying that Dean brings out a whole new meaning to freedom. Dean is carefree and has no responsibilities to worry about. There is no work to tie him down and he is without a stable job. Dean does not have people depending on him nor does he depend on people for his survival. He is free in his travels to aspire to the true "pursuit of happiness": chasing after his dreams. Throughout his travels he is free to try new things, gather new experiences, and make many heartwarming memories. He has a laid-back attitude allowing him to have a worry-free untroubled view on life. That being said, Dean also has little to no moral concern. He parties night after night, sleeps with countless women, and lives the nightlife to the fullest. When things become too stressful or too tough for him he is able to go on the road time after time again.

Though Dean's lifestyle is attractive he also constantly finds himself in trouble whether it is with the law or one of his many girls. Breaking women's hearts is one of his specialties. He marries three different women and flip-flops among them. He doesn't have a stable family to go back to nor does he have true friends despite Sal. The women that he created families with learned not to depend on Dean: they know he's unreliable. With his way of living it is very hard or Dean to provide for any of his wives or children. He doesn't accomplish anything worth being proud of. Another worrisome characteristic to Dean's lifestyle is the fact he's continuously chasing after something new. He uses people and manipulates them to assist his travels in search of "it".

At the end of the story the conservative reaction has taken place in many reader's minds. Seeing Dean leave his families to fend for themselves the reader feels pain for them, and becomes aware that family is important to them, and that they want to provide for their family. People like the feeling of accomplishment, and they see that if they act like Dean they will not accomplish much. The reader feels a need to belong to society. Dean is a social outsider and the attractiveness of Dean's lifestyle diminishes. Dean's character ultimately suggests that perhaps one should remain in one's "proper" role in society. This conservative view encourages the status quo.

Bad Boys Are Forever

In literature, film, and history, a broad spectrum of categories and classifications encompasses the bad boy. From Martin Luther King, Jr. to Gandhi to Hitler, he has invigorated us and at times he has deterred us. Political bad boys

52   e-Research, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)

have influenced the course of history as well as turned the public's attention towards social norms in need of reform. Bad boys challenge us to admit that changes are necessary but they can also indicate that current social norms should remain unchanged. Whether they are loved or hated by the public or even cause a social divide, these figures succeed in drawing attention to social issues and providing commentary on them.

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