

repression and the other



“We accept her, one of us! We accept her, one of us! Gooble gobble, gooble gobble!”

*~ The Freaks, *Freaks* (1932)*

repression and the other

- **Basic** repression is the “necessary and inescapable” repression of the animalistic drives and primal impulses that allow for our development as human beings (Wood, 197).
- It is fundamentally “bound up with the ability to accept the postponement of gratification, with the development of our thought and memory processes, of our capacity for self-control, of our recognition of and consideration for other people” (ibid, 197).



Zombies in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Dawn of the Dead* (2004)

repression and the other

- **Surplus** repression “is specific to a particular culture and is the process whereby people are conditioned from early infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture” (Wood, 197).



Promiscuous sex in *It Follows* (2015)



Punishing the beautiful in *Maniac* (1980)

- **Sexual energy** is repressed in American culture, in order to produce an ideal subject “whose sexuality is sufficiently fulfilled by the monogamous heterosexual union necessary for the production of future ideal inhabitants” (ibid, 198).

repression and the other

- **Surplus** repression “is specific to a particular culture and is the process whereby people are conditioned from early infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture” (Wood, 197).



David Allen Griffin in *The Watcher* (2000)



Catherine in *Basic Instinct* (1980)

- **Bisexuality** is repressed in American culture because it devalues the “romantic myth of ‘the one right person’,” for everybody, it threatens the “norm” of sexual union for reproductive purposes, and it deconstructs social roles of masculinity and femininity (ibid, 198).

repression and the other

- **Surplus** repression “is specific to a particular culture and is the process whereby people are conditioned from early infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture” (Wood, 197).



Sil as the monstrous feminine in *Species* (1995)



Baby Firefly in *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003)

- **Female sexuality/creativity** is repressed in American culture in order to produce “subordinate and dependent” women who adhere to patriarchal notions of femininity (ibid, 198).

repression and the other

- **Surplus** repression “is specific to a particular culture and is the process whereby people are conditioned from early infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture” (Wood, 197).



The sadistic cult of killer kids in *Children of the Corn* (1984)

- The **sexuality of children** is repressed in American culture to instill a “veto on the expression of sexuality before marriage,” and to shelter them from the dangers of deviating from sexual norms (ibid, 198).

repression and the other

- In American culture then, if they are operating appropriately, basic repression “makes us distinctively human,” while surplus repression “makes us into monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists” (Wood, 197).
- Wood emphasizes that the word *normal* is to be used “in a strictly non-evaluative sense, to mean simply, conformity to the dominant social norms” of a particular culture (ibid, 203).



Normality threatened by the monster in *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006)

repression and the other

- In patriarchal society, white, heterosexual males are considered the norm. Minorities, non-white/non-straight identities, and other marginalized groups/cultures are identified as **Others**.



Imhotep's demise in *The Mummy* (1932)



Fido as surrogate father in *Fido* (2006)

- Otherness functions as something that is “repressed in the self and projected outwards in order to be hated and disowned” (Wood, 199).
- The dominant ideology cannot wholly accept the Other, and it must be dealt with by either “rejecting and if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it” (ibid, 199).

repression and the other

- Wood contends that the popular horror film functions as a “dramatization of the dual concept the repressed/the other, in the figure of the monster” (Wood, 200-01).



Marital troubles figured as the mysterious suicide epidemic in *The Happening* (2008)

- The central project of the horror film, then, is “the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization *represses* or *oppresses*,” with the rejection/annihilation of the monstrous entity signaling “the restoration of repression” (ibid, 201).

repression and the other

Frankenstein



Directed by
James Whale

Written by
**Francis Faragoh
& Garrett Fort**

Universal Pictures
(1931) 71 mins.

Robin Wood. "An Introduction to the American Horror Film: I. Repression, the Other, the Monster,"
American Nightmare. Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979.