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**Social Determinism in Martin Scorsese's Movie *Goodfellas***

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Central  
Department of English, in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Masters of Arts in English**

**By**

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**Social Determinism in Martin Scorsese's Movie *Goodfellas***

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Central Department of English**

**Letter of Recommendation**

Miss Laxmi Khatri has completed her thesis entitled “Social Determinism in Goodfellas” under my supervision. She carried out her research from January 2012 to February 2013 A.D.I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for *viva*.

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled “Social Determinism in *Goodfellas*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Laxmi Khatri, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of the Research Committee

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## **Abstract**

The present research on Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* basically presents how the society and the social shape the behavior of the characters gets with the Marxist notion of the thought. It attempts to prove the subjugation of the individuals by the war which makes them the helpless victim of the war. George Lukacs' notion how the class-consciousness determines the social and individual atmosphere has been exploited to find how the war is responsible to cause the domination, subjugation and the mass murder. Mailer's central subject is the relationship between the individual's will and a world that attempt to overwhelm and extinguish it. Intimately connected with this spiritual warfare is the subject of power, particularly political power and the individual's need to resist the encroaching forces of totalitarianism. There is a longstanding controversy over the importance of social class in the production of criminal conduct. Some argue that there is a strong relationship between social class and crime while others say there is little or no relationship. This controversy is often an argument over the definition and measurement of crime, and the meaning of class. The concept of globalization of crime with the human diaspora arrangement which examines the role that crime plays as an agent of social change, social chaos and renovation. Linked to class consciousness and social development, we can understand the socio-political status of crime, crime in transitional cultures, such as the war on terror, the globalization of economies and culture, and the increasing social diversity and division in our societies.

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## I. *Goodfellas* and Contemporaneity

*GoodFellas* is director Martin Scorsese's stylistic masterpiece - a follow-up film to his own *Mean Streets* (1973), released in the year of Francis Ford Coppola's third installment of his gangster epic - *The Godfather, Part III* (1990). It is a nitty-gritty, unflinching treatment of a true mobster story about three violent "wiseguys" [Mafia slang for 'gangsters'], enhanced by the Italian-American director's own experience of his upbringing in Little Italy. It again reteams Scorsese with his favorite actor, Robert De Niro, who had appeared in *Mean Streets* (1973), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *New York, New York* (1977), *Raging Bull* (1980), and *The King of Comedy* (1983).

The film's factual, semi-documentary account was adapted from both Nicholas Pileggi's and Martin Scorsese's screenplay - based upon Pileggi's 1985 non-fictional book *Wiseguy: Life in a Mafia Family*. Film posters were subtitled: "Three Decades of Life in the Mafia." The real-life story concerned a low-level, marginalized gangster (or 'foot-soldier') of mixed ethnic roots (half-Irish, half-Sicilian) - Henry Hill, who ultimately broke the gangster's code of 'never ratting on your friends', and turned informant for the FBI and entered the Federal Witness Protection Program to save his life by disappearing from view.

The fast-moving, energizing, episodic story, with plentiful profanity (the F-word is repeatedly spoken by Joe Pesci's character), forceful editorial cuts and visuals, shifting points of view, and characters speaking directly to the camera, is told with voice-over narrative commentary by Henry Hill (Ray Liotta). It includes about thirty years in his life, from his teen years as a Brooklyn Irish neighborhood kid to maturity as an adult gangster, covering the years from the 1950s to the drug-saturated 1970s when he married to wife Karen (Lorraine Bracco). The additional

voice-over of his wife's point of view provides even further insight into the all-encompassing culture and lure of life within the 'family.' Freeze frames sprinkled through the film accentuate the indelible, impressionable moments in Henry's experiences.

The film is backed by a pop/rock oldies soundtrack spanning four decades, beginning with crooner Tony Bennett's "Rags to Riches," proceeding through rock 'n' roll, jukebox music and top 40 tunes, and ending in degeneration with punk rocker Sid Vicious' version of Frank Sinatra's "My Way." The score adds another layer of meaning, mood and information to the fact-based tale. The violent, carefully-built film was given six Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor (Joe Pesci), Best Supporting Actress (Lorraine Bracco), Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Editing (Thelma Schoonmaker) - and only Pesci won the Oscar. [Pesci's specialty was playing gangster-related roles, as in *Death Collector* (1976) (aka *Family Enforcer*), *A Bronx Tale* (1993), and in Scorsese's *Casino* (1995).

The major film credits zoom from the right of the screen, like speeding cars (heard on the soundtrack), and freeze for a moment. The film, "based on a true story," begins with a pivotal night-time scene that introduces the film's three major characters. It is a major turning point for each of them.

A thumping sound forces them to pull over into a grassy area and investigate - they open the trunk. Inside a bloodied mob member [identified later as Billy Batts (Frank Vincent)] wrapped in white tablecloths. Tommy can't believe the man is still alive and stabs him multiple times in the chest with an enormous butcher knife. Conway puts four bullets into the already-limp body. Henry witnesses the enormity of the violence and then slams the trunk shut.

A simple zoom shot and then a freeze-frame holds on Henry's face, as the main title credits play (with a blood-red title for the film). His autobiographical, defiant narration (in voice-over) confirms his choice of a lucrative, criminal lifestyle that brings him from 'rags to riches'.

The young Henry Hill (Christopher Serrone), a teenager in an impoverished Brooklyn neighborhood in the mid-1950s, is attracted to and impressed by the flashy, expensive clothes and cars of hoods that would congregate at the Pitkin Ave. Cab. Company across the street from his family's tenement apartment. The scenes of Henry's teenage years begin with a side close up of Henry's star-struck, reflective eye as he intensely watches his idols - the 'gangsters' who use the taxi stand as their front. Fascinated, he longs to "be a part of them" and the glamour.

Henry's family of seven living in a "tiny house" is composed of his wheelchair bound brother Michael (Kevin Corrigan), his Irish construction worker father (Beau Starr), his Sicilian mother (Elaine Kagan), two sisters, and another brother. The Ciceros came from the same part of Sicily as his mother. "Can't We Be Sweethearts", performed by the Cleftones. Rather than attending school, Henry is adopted by Paulie, and becomes a "full-time" errand boy/apprentice for the cabstand workers, e.g., parking Cadillac of *wiseguys*, running numbers - these appealing activities make him feel important.

Henry is commissioned to break the windows of cabs in a rival cab company and set them on fire. Under the tutelage of Paulie and his stoolies, Henry's self-esteem is boosted as he is emancipated from all connections to his family and becomes subverted to the criminal lifestyle of good times. He boasts of his new-found respect, "People looked at me differently and they knew I was with somebody, at thirteen, I was making more money than most of the grown-ups in the

neighborhood. I mean, I had more money than I could spend. I had it all"-Henry Hill. The camera again freeze-frames as an explosion rips through the gasoline tanks of the cars behind him - he appears engulfed in hellish flames. When he appears at home one day at the door, dressed as a hood with a beige, double-breasted suit, silk shirt and tie, and black lizard shoes, his mother is aghast: "My God! You look like a gangster".

Henry is introduced to Jimmy's apprentice youngster - full Sicilian Tommy DeVito (Joseph D'Onofrio) who is about his own age. Tommy calls him: "Hendry." While selling untaxed cigarette cartons out of the back of a car trunk, Henry is "pinched" by two city detectives and brought to trial ["Parlamid'AmoreMariu," performed by Giuseppe di Stefano]. When led out of the courtroom, Jimmy's hand is wrapped around his young protégé's shoulder and Henry is rewarded with a "graduation present" - a \$100 dollar bill tucked into his shirt pocket. He is respected for maintaining the mob's strict ethical code of silence ('the two greatest things in life').

"Everybody gets pinched. But you did it right. You told 'em nothing and they got nothing [. . .]. I'm proud of you. You took your first pinch like a man and you learned the two greatest things in life [. . .]. Never rat on your friends and always keep your mouth shut" (00:55:05). The film's entire plot is foreshadowed here - Henry, an outsider, will probably never be able to fully live up to the mobster's code of silence. Outside the courtroom door, Paulie and the cab crew proudly greet him with open arms as he is initiated into the ranks of the Goodfellas, "You broke your cherry" Again, the frame freezes on the wild congratulatory scene - this experience is another major imprint of mob life and its ethos upon Henry's adolescent mind.

At this point, the plotline moves ahead about eight years to 1963 - Henry is twenty-one and has become completely incorporated and seduced into the irresistible life of the mob, although he is still an outsider. He and Tommy, now young adults, are leaning against a car outside the Airline Diner next to Idlewild Airport, robbing freight being moved in and out of the airport. With family connections who work in the industry, they are tipped off about the best jobs.

The glamorous, macho life of socializing with other indulgent, high-status 'family' members and 'wiseguys' that lived on the cutting edge and splurged is intoxicating. Now glamorously dressed and fit, Henry is quickly swept away by the celebrity of it all.

Meanwhile, the charismatic Tommy exhibits the first traces of his quick-trigger, psychotic, pathological temper as he entertains other mobsters with hilarious tales of violence laced with four letter words. Henry chuckles at his jokester pal: "You're a pisser. You're really funny. You're really funny." The comedic scene (improvised by the actors) immediately turns sour and the tension mounts as a seemingly-aggravated Tommy persists in asking - in a cold-blooded, fearsome, and ambiguous tone:

What do you mean, I'm funny? [. . .]. You mean the way I talk?

What? [. . .]. Funny how? I mean, what's funny about it? [. . .]. I'm

funny how, I mean, funny like I'm a clown? I amuse? I make you

laugh? I'm here to f--kin' amuse you? What do you mean funny?

Funny how? How am I funny? [. . .]. No, no, I don't know. You said.

How do I know? You said I'm funny. How the f--k am I funny? What

the f--k is so funny about me? Tell me. Tell me what's funny"

(00:01:12).

Finally, the situation is eased when Henry uses humor to defuse his potentially dangerous friend, but Tommy identifies his friend's mortal weakness: "I wonder about you sometimes, Hendry. You may fold under questioning." Then when he is embarrassed by cafe owner Sonny for owing "seven f--king Guys," Tommy breaks a glass bottle on Sonny's forehead.

In the next scene, a scared Sonny - with a bandage on his forehead from the injury, complains to Paulie about how Tommy's behavior (he's compared to "an arch criminal") is dangerous, disruptive and volatile to the self-regulating criminal world, but Paulie responds helplessly (foreshadowing an execution scene later in the film). Now the guy's got Paulie as a partner. He goes to Paulie. Trouble with a bill, he can go to Paulie. Trouble with the cops, deliveries, Tommy, he can call Paulie. But now the guy's got to come up with Paulie's money every week. "No matter what the business bad?" Henry and Tommy make incendiary preparations to burn down the restaurant by stuffing flammable wads of paper into ceiling fixtures - a Bamboo Lounge matchbook flares into flames and is used to light the rest of the interior of the restaurant. They non-chillingly wait in a car on the curbside as the restaurant slowly smolders behind them while discussing Tommy's heated sexual frustrations. He asks Henry for a favor to help him get a date with Diane (Katherine Wallach), a "Jew broad" from the Five Towns who is "prejudiced against Italians" and won't go out with him alone. ["It's not for me to Say," performed by Johnny Mathis.] Reluctantly, Henry submits to a double date with Diane's girlfriend, Karen (Lorraine Bracco) at the Villa Capri restaurant - he watches impatiently as Tommy stalls over dinner. Making their first acquaintance together, Karen narrates, in voice-over, her impressions of her rude, insensitive date.

*Goodfellas* is the strange title for a movie. There's a capital G and a capital F in there, inter capped as one word. One imagines that Martin Scorsese decided to make not just a film but a global conglomerate too, like FedEx or Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

The corporate comparison seems appropriate, because no movie looks at the mob as a business the way *Goodfellas* does. Sure, the first two *Godfather* films give us a sophisticated cross-section of the architecture of mob power, and the best parts of *New Jack City* track the drug trade up and down the class ladder. But *Goodfellas* is where we get learn exactly where the money goes, and precisely how it compromises, corrodes, and eventually collapses family and friendship. A multi-generational tale of bad money, it is the defining American movie of the 1990s. Ray Liotta is remarkably assured, funny, and frightening as Henry Hill, who becomes a part of the Outfit's inner circle in tacky New Jersey. (One of the most appealing parts of the film is how it tracks the sub-Woolworth's notions of home design through the decades, from the right-angled 50s to the black-tiled 80s.) The top dog is Paul Cicero (Paul Sorvino), and Hill's mentor is Jimmy Conway (Robert De Niro). But the tribe's defining character for Henry Hill and Tommy De Vito, played with irrepressible brilliance by Joe Pesci. Genuinely funny and kind-hearted but always *this close* to snapping completely, he underscores the tension Hill feels between loving a second family but knowing it's made up of cold-blooded killers.

The plot follows the cocktails and pistols rise and cokehead-turning-state's-evidence fall of Hill. That may not sound particularly surprising, but it's remarkable how intimately we understand the mobsters' relationships. It's almost heartbreaking to see Hill frozen out by Cicero and Conway towards the end, because it exposes how false those friendships were. And interestingly, we hear more from women than we

do in other mob flicks. As Henry's wife Karen, Lorraine Bracco is grating, but on purpose. All the mob wives we meet are grating, because their need for domesticity is smashed by the lives their husbands lead; when Bracco's good, especially towards the end, she shows the emotional toll of making yourself ignore the harm your loved one's doing.

The film opens with three men driving in their car late at night on a highway. In the car are Henry Hill (Ray Liotta), Jimmy Conway (Robert DeNiro) and Tommy DeVito (Joe Pesci). Jimmy and Tommy are asleep when Henry hears a loud thumping noise. Trying to figure out the source of the sound, Henry suddenly realizes they need to stop and check the trunk. When they open it, we see a beaten man wrapped in several bloody tablecloths. An enraged Tommy stabs the man several times with a kitchen knife and Jimmy shoots him four more times with a revolver. Henry slams the trunk lid shut and we hear a voiceover (Henry) as far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster.

In a flashback scene, Henry narrates that as a boy; he idolized the Lucchese crime family gangsters in his blue-collar, predominantly Italian neighborhood in East New York, Brooklyn, and in 1955 quit school and went to work for them. The local mob capo, Paul Cicero (Paul Sorvino) (based on the actual Lucchese mobster Paul Vario) and Cicero's close associate Jimmy Conway (De Niro) (based on Jimmy Burke) help cultivate Henry's criminal career.

Henry is teamed up with the young Tommy and the two sell cartons of cigarettes, given to them by Jimmy, to employees of a local factory, a crossing guard and some cops. While selling them, two detectives show up and confiscate the load, arresting Henry. Tommy slinks away to tell Tuddy, Paul's brother. Henry goes to

court and is given a slap on the wrist. Jimmy gives him a substantial reward for his silence and the rest of the gang greets Henry with joyful acceptance.

As adults, Henry and his associate Tommy DeVito (Joe Pesci in his Academy Award-winning performance) conspire with Conway to steal some of the billions of dollars of cargo passing through John F. Kennedy International Airport. They help out in a key heist, stealing over half a million dollars from the Air France cargo terminal. The robbery helps Henry gain more of Cicero's trust, to whom Henry gives a sizable cut of the haul. However, because Henry is half-Irish, he knows he can never become a "made man", a full member of the crime family. Nor can Jimmy Conway, who is also Irish.

Henry's friends become increasingly daring and dangerous. Conway loves hijacking trucks, and Tommy has an explosive temper and a psychotic need to prove himself through violence. At one point, he humiliates an innocent and unarmed young waiter "Spider" (played by an unknown Michael Imperioli), asking Spider to dance à la The Oklahoma Kid then shooting him in the foot. A few nights later, when Spider stands up to an extremely intoxicated Tommy, Tommy (egged on by Jimmy) suddenly draws his gun and shoots Spider in the chest, killing him instantly. Jimmy is angry with Tommy for shooting Spider but Tommy is completely indifferent, callously asking where he can find a shovel to bury the dead man.

Henry also meets and falls in love with Karen (Lorraine Bracco), a no-nonsense young Jewish woman; they go to the Copacabana club two to three times a week (the film depicts this in a famous continuous steadycam shot). Karen feels uneasy with her boyfriend's career, but is also "turned on" by it. Henry and Karen eventually marry (to marry her, Henry and Karen convince her parents that Henry is half-Jewish). In June 1970, Tommy (aided by Jimmy Conway) brutally murders Billy

Batts (Frank Vincent), a mad man in the competing Gambino crime family, over a simple insult Batts uses on Tommy. The murder is a major offense that could get them all killed by the Gambinos if discovered. Henry, Conway and DeVito bury Batts' corpse in an abandoned field (the car trunk scene that opens the film). When they discover six months later that the land has been sold, they are forced to exhume, move, and rebury the badly decomposed body.

Henry's marriage deteriorates when Karen finds he has a mistress, Janice Rossi (played by the late Gina Mastrogiacomo). Karen confronts a sleeping Henry with a gun as he wakes up. As soon as she lowers the gun, Henry subdues her and screams that he has enough on his mind having to worry about being "whacked on the street" without waking up with a gun in the face.

Henry ignores Cicero and involves Tommy and Jimmy as well as his wife, and new mistress (Debi Mazar) in an elaborate smuggling operation. About the same time, December 1978, Jimmy Conway and friends plan and successfully carry out a record \$6,000,000 heist from the Lufthansa cargo terminal at JFK International Airport. Soon after the heist, Jimmy grows increasingly paranoid when some of his associates foolishly flaunt their gains in plain sight, possibly drawing police attention, and begins having them killed off. Worse, after promising to welcome Tommy into the Lucchese family as a "made man," the elder members of the family coldly shoot him in the head at point-blank range as retaliation for Batts' death and his reckless behavior.

In an extended, virtuoso sequence titled "Sunday, May 11th, 1980," all of the different paths of Henry's complicated Mafia career collide. He must: coordinate a major cocaine shipment; cook a meal for his family; placate his mistress, who processes the cocaine he sells; cope with his clueless babysitter/drug courier, Lois;

avoid federal authorities who, unknown to him, have had him under surveillance for several months; and satisfy his sleazy customers, all the while a nervous wreck from lack of sleep and snorting too much of his own product.

Henry and Lois are arrested by police as he backs out of his driveway. Karen bails her husband out of jail, after destroying all of the cocaine that was hidden in the house and getting her mother to put their house up as collateral for bail money. Henry and his family are left penniless and Henry and Karen break down when Karen admits she destroyed the \$60,000 in coke Henry had been planning to ship when he was busted. After Henry's drug arrest, Cicero and the rest of the mob abandon him. Convinced that he and his family are marked for death, Henry decides to become an informant for the FBI. He and his family enter the federal Witness Protection Program, disappearing into anonymity to save their lives, but not before he testifies against Paulie and Jimmy in court. He is now an "average nobody" and tells us "I get to live the rest of my life like a schnook." The movie's quick final shot is of Tommy firing a pistol directly into the camera, a tribute to the final shot of *The Great Train Robbery*. The film closes with a few title cards (over Sid Vicious' version of "My Way") showing what became of Hill, Paul Cicero (Vario) and Jimmy Conway (Burke). Henry's marriage to Karen ended in separation with her getting custody of their children, and Cicero and Conway will practically spend the rest of their lives in prison. Cicero died in 1988. Conway's title card explains that he was eligible for parole in 2004, though he died in prison of lung cancer in 1996.

*Goodfellas* performed well at the box office, grossing \$46.8 million domestically, well above its \$25 million budget. It also received overwhelmingly positive reviews from critics. The film was nominated for six Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director, and won one for Pesci in the Best Actor in a

Supporting Role category. Scorsese's film won five awards from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, including Best Film, and Best Director. The film was named Best Film of the year by various film critics groups.

The research is based on the authentic cites. Guidance from the lecturers and professors is taken as the supportive tool. In addition to it the texts on the notion of class consciousness are taken as the tools in making the application of the text from the viewpoint of class consciousness. The tentative chapter division and allocation of the time of dissertation will be as follows. The chapter will give the bird eye view of the research. The second chapter will be the discussion of the methodology of class consciousness and the analysis of the text from the viewpoint of how our behavior is determined by the contemporary environment. The last chapter concludes the research.

## II. Social Consciousness Constructing the Mafia Culture

*Goodfellas* is a 1990 American crime film directed by Martin Scorsese. It is a film adaptation of the 1986 non-fiction book *Wiseguy* by Nicholas Pileggi, who co-wrote the screenplay with Scorsese. The film follows the rise and fall of Lucchese crime family associates Henry Hill and his friends over a period from 1955 to 1980. Scorsese originally intended to direct *Goodfellas* before *The Last Temptation of Christ*, but when funds materialized to make *Last Temptation*, he postponed what was then known as *Wise Guy*. The title of Pileggi's book had already been used for a TV series and for Brian De Palma's 1986 comedy *Wise Guys*, so Pileggi and Scorsese changed the name of their film to *Goodfellas*. To prepare for their roles in the film, Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci, and Ray Liotta often spoke with Pileggi, who shared research material left over from writing the book. According to Pesci, improvisational and ad-libbing came out of rehearsals where Scorsese gave the actors freedom to do whatever they wanted. The director made transcripts of these sessions, took the lines he liked best, and put them into a revised script the cast worked from during principal photography.

*Goodfellas* (1990) centers around Henry Hill, a minor gangster who teams up with his friends Jimmy Conway and Tommy De Vito, both of whom have visions of moving up within the Mafia. It was not until *GoodFellas*(1990) that Scorsese returned to portray the world of the Mafia, even if particularly *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) again sets up the clash between the protagonist and the dominant rules of the community. As Blake suggests: "Dying as an executed criminal, the Jesus figure fits into the pattern of Scorsese's trapped and self-destructive heroes" (2005: 209). In discussions about *GoodFellas*, it is frequently pointed out that the film is a conscious response to *The Godfather* saga in that it "can be regarded as Scorsese's reply to the

high style, grand opera treatment of Coppola in *The Godfather*” (Nyce 2004: 115).

Scorsese himself states in an interview that it was the ordinariness that he wished to capture as opposed to the grand life:

What fascinated me most were the details of everyday life. [...] What they [...] eat, how they dress, the nightclubs they go to, what their houses look alike, and how, around that, life organizes itself, day by day, minute by minute. Their wives, their kids” (Behar 2005: 185).

Elsewhere he states that “the food and the ritual of eating were very important. (qtd. in Keyser 1992: 201)

As in *Mean Streets*, the film zooms in on a tight and closed world, influenced by Scorsese’s own childhood area of Little Italy, which was characterized by Italian village life. Scorsese states: “Very rarely did a Sicilian live on Mulberry Street—that was for the Neapolitans. So what they did was import the village mentality and the village social structure to Elizabeth Street” (Behar 2005: 186). As Behar argues, this kind of structure created “its own highly complex geo-socio-politics” (2005: 186). Importantly, it could be termed a “feudal structure” (Behar 2005: 186), and if there were conflicts, “it was normally none other than the Don who settled any problems” (Behar 2005: 186). Although Scorsese points out that *GoodFellas* does not, in fact, deal with the Mafia, the group around Jimmy Conway (Robert De Niro) has a similar set-up and a similar “honor-among-thieves” code (Smith 2005: 195) as found in organized crime, most notably the Mafia. In other words, it heavily relies on the loyalty to one’s own close group, or tribe. Consequently, if one is loyal, rewards are handed out; if one is disloyal, one gets punished, often brutally so. Indeed, it would be fair to argue that the whole film revolves around conventions laid down by the leaders of the tribe, particularly in relation to masculine behavior. Several key scenes

emphasize a raw macho language which, as Keyser suggests, serves “to link the Italians as blood brothers in a criminal tribe and to capture the fiercely primitive masculine ambience” (1992: 202). Characterizing many exchanges is that there is “some testing, some trial by or deal” (Keyser 1992: 202).

The most explicit illustration of the strict codes underlying this organization is the treatment of Tommy (Joe Pesci) following the murder of Billy Batts (Frank Vincent), an established member of the Gambino family. There are certain taboos in the Mafia, and one is that such a member as Batts cannot be killed without the go-ahead of the leadership. When the bosses invite Tommy, he and the audience are led to believe that he will be initiated as a member; instead, he is ritualistically executed, and it is made clear that he is killed because he has violated the code and jeopardized the order. As Keyser contends: “Tommy pays in blood for Batts’s death so the order of the crew can be preserved” (1992: 204). Another example of the rigid attitudes towards the breaking of the code is of course Henry’s betrayal of the group; here, he makes himself guilty of breaking what could be termed “a Mafia code of *Wharton’s The Age of Innocence* 49 silence” (Keyser 1992: 207). The consequence of this act is that he becomes exiled from the group, forced to enter the federal Witness Protection Program in order to survive. In short, significantly the film’s main concern seems to be the tribal system we call the mob: “The Mob is a family that embraces and contains all its members; like a feudal fiefdom, it endures by absolute allegiance. Its rewards are wealth and a sense of belonging; its penalties are exile and death” (Keyser 1992: 211). Importantly, *The Age of Innocence* succeeds *GoodFellas* and precedes *Casino* (1995), in which Scorsese revisits the world of the Mafia, so much so that Nyce even argues that “the first time in his career, Scorsese repeats himself, even down to specific shots and sequences” (2004: 139). Nyce particularly sees

strong similarities between the two main male characters in *Mean Streets* and in *GoodFellas* (Charlie and Johnny Boy, and Jimmie and Tommy respectively) and those in *Casino* (Sam “Ace” Rothstein [De Niro] and Nicky [Joe Pesci]), but also in narrative technique. Thematically, too, *Casino* to a large extent zooms in on the Mob, and the film is often seen as “the final installment of Scorsese’s gangster trilogy” (Casillo 2006: 341), the other two being *Mean Streets* and *GoodFellas*. Like these, Casillo goes on to argue, “*Casino* depicts a closed society that, with its own obsessive rituals, ceremonies, symbols, codes, taboos, and punishments, must defend itself against the hostile mainstream” (2006: 341). Similar to the former two films, Sam is loyal to the Mafia codes, while Nicky cannot conform to them and is killed because of it. As my discussion above demonstrates, there is little doubt that many of Scorsese’s films implicitly and explicitly echo one another, thereby creating interesting inter textual-cinematic links. In other words, they are part of what Stamp calls “dialogism” (2005: 27) and what Hutcheon refers to as “palimpsest intertextuality” (2006: 21). The more the viewer is familiar with Scorsese’s films, the more s/he is able to see the connections between them. These connections are predominantly found at the thematic level, where the intertextually concerns the individual trapped by the dominant society’s norms and strictures; Leitch points to “Scorsese’s thematic consistency” in that “[h]is heroes and heroines are free spirits struggling for survival in a world determined to crush them into conformity” (2007: 297). Moreover, although this aspect is not in focus in the present discussion, the inter-textual link arguably occurs at the level of actors chosen for the films, particularly Scorsese’s use of Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel and Joe Pesci, but also to some extent of Daniel Day-Lewis and, more recently, Leonardo DiCaprio. At a morespecific level, and particularly relevant to my discussion, the inter textually

manifests itself in the fact his films often deal with the Mafia and the tensions between its rigid codes and the individual's urge to go against them, as well as the consequences of such disobedience.

Here, it would be valuable to pause in order briefly to outline the dominant features and strategies of the Mafia, not only because they sum up several of the main issues in Scorsese's films focused on in my discussion above, but also because they are central to my examination of *The Age of Innocence* below. As Henner Hess writes in his comprehensive *Mafia & Mafiosi: Origin, Power and Myth*, to groupings in the Sicilian Mafia, the main model for Scorsese, "natural kinship" (Hess 1998: 85), that is, family, constitutes the most important bond, followed by "ritual kinship," "friendship," "instrumental friendship," and "clientele relationship" (Hess 1998: 115), all of which aim to secure close ties. Furthermore, for the close relationships to function satisfactorily, certain norms, or what could also be called "codified rules" (Hess 1998: 107) apply to the members. According to Hess, these would include, for instance, "[t]he duty of those associated to help one another to revenge in blood any affront suffered" (1998: 107), as well as "the duty to keep a secret" (1998: 107), elsewhere referred to as "the rule of silence" (1998: 110). These and other codes are, Hess goes on, "contained within a conventional system of norms valid for, and felt to be binding within, the entire subculture—the system known as *omertà*" (1998: 109). The term *omertà* includes the notion of respect and honor, which means that a man's property and family must be protected, and disputes and conflicts have to be solved "through his own efforts" (Hess 1998: 109). As Hess argues, it follows from this system that these groups primarily operate outside the rules of mainstream society. It also follows that the members are expected to be loyal to the codes implicitly or explicitly agreed upon. This loyalty is, as suggested, mainly maintained through

kinship and close relationships, such as marriage and godparent relationships, which operate as a regulating force and help to “screen off all uninvited intervention” (Hess 1998: 110), that is, threats to the group in question. However, if members of the group show signs of *Wharto’s* The Age of Innocence 51 disloyalty, or if the Mafia is threatened by external forces, or if it meets resistance from individuals who do not wish to agree to their terms, coercive strategies are frequently used. Hess holds that there are several steps in such coercion, for instance “more or less explicit verbal threats,” “symbolic warnings,” “actions resulting in considerable material damage,” or indeed cattle being killed (1998: 113-14). If the person fails to comply, more serious actions are resorted to, for example, beatings and various forms of mutilation. A killing, according to Hess, is used as a final solution, and it has “often been compared to the execution of a death sentence without previous trial” (1998: 114). Significantly, this acts “is needed to lend validity to the norms whose observance is not supervised by an enforcement staff” (Hess 1998: 114). Moreover, while the initial threats are covertly expressed, killings are more public in nature; in other words, “unless they were known in circles beyond those directly affected they would represent an ineffective weapon. It is not as man’s individual punishment or as an act of revenge but as a symbolical demonstration of what might happen that the terror act acquires its importance” (Hess 1998: 115). Killings, then, are mostly used to set an example.

If the Mafia relies on close bonds and a loyalty to certain norms and codes of conduct, as well as coercive strategies to get what they want, the status of the leader, most often the head of the family, is very much a part of its structure and power. Perhaps, his main aim is to increase material wealth for himself and those associated with him. Hess points out, though, that the leader’s “position and power enable the

*Mafioso* to act the part of patron, of protector, of the noble, chivalrous cavalier who unselfishly helps the weak” (1998: 133). As such, his position is arguably sanctioned by those surrounding him and “any citizen can turn to the *Mafioso* with a request for help” (1998: 133). Another important aspect of his function is that of mediator in conflicts, which shows the “prestige and respect” (1998: 134) he holds. Still, while seemingly acting benevolently, the *Mafioso* often uses his position to protect and further his own and the group’s interests. As will emerge in the discussion that follows, several dominant features of the Mafia outlined above as well as Scorsese’s treatment of them in many of his films, are of the utmost significance in my argument on Scorsese’s adaptation of Wharton’s novel, as I hold that the world of the Mafia and that of polite society in 1870’s New York, both as represented by the filmmaker, share a great many traits. The plot, setting, themes, motifs, characters, and props contribute to the movie’s success and make it an easily identifiable Gangster genre movie. However, a few conventions in this film indicate the changing nature of the genre.

This movie follows a young child, Henry Hill, as he lives his life in a mafia family. At a young age, Henry finds a job working for a local mafia family and, through the years, works for the family and becomes a trusted member. In the end, he becomes involved in the drug trade, angering his mafia boss, and, because he fears for his life, he becomes an informant or “rat” and divulges the family’s secrets to the FBI. Because he exposes the family’s criminal organization, he flees via the FBI’s witness protection program and cuts all of his ties with the mafia family. The plot differs significantly from previous gangster movies because *Goodfellas* focuses on a non-Italian’s rise through the mafia ranks. Moreover, Henry Hill becomes part of the mob family even though he is not a family relative. This film therefore illustrates the

changing focus on the importance of a traditional family. People that are not full-blooded Italian and are not blood related to the family are still able to become important family members.

The movie follows the rise and fall of Henry Hill within the Italian-American mob, and along the way he becomes friends with Jimmy Conway and Tommy de Vito. Henry and Jimmy are part Irish, and Tommy is Italian. Both Tommy and Henry started to work with the mafia family as teenagers and meet because of their work within the family. In addition, Paulie is the boss of the Italian-America mob who supervises Henry. The longer Henry works for Paulie, the more trust he gains and the faster Henry moves up the family ladder. Since Paulie is the head of the family and the person making all the decisions, Henry develops a close relationship with Paulie. Henry's wife, Karen, also plays an important role in the film as she struggles to find her place in the mob family. The setting of the movie is largely in New York City starting from the 1950s and continuing through the early part of the 1980s. Common sets include dark restaurants and bars, which are often used as meeting places for the mafia to conduct business. Besides conducting business in the bars, the gangsters also frequently meet together in dark rooms to gamble. These dark settings symbolize the gangsters' involvement in illegal activities. When Henry first meets Jimmy, they are in a dark, underground room surrounded by illegal gambling. As Jimmy passes through the room, he hands out large amounts of money gained through illegal means to bartenders, the doorman, and waitresses. Moreover, a restaurant owner offers a share in the restaurant to Paulie. The dark restaurant becomes a front for Paulie's illegal fencing business, and as the merchandise is transferred through the restaurant, the scenes are minimally lit. Thus, the scene associates the illegal activity that is so important to the gangster with darkness and, therefore, symbolizes the corrupt nature

of the gangster. One of the main themes in the movie is the notion of family. Family, however, does not refer to blood relationships as it did in *The Godfather* movies. The early gangster films focus on a literal family where the members are all directly related to each other. For Henry Hill, family refers to the group of gangsters who look out for each other. Thus, in order to be a gangster, Henry does not have to be a blood relative of the boss; rather, he becomes a symbolic brother of the other gangsters.

Karen explains as she meets with her friends: “We were all so very close. I mean, there were never any Outsiders around, never. Moreover, being together all the time made everything seem all the more normal.” Karen explains further as she is getting ready to go shopping with her friends: We always did everything together, and we always were in the same crowd. Anniversaries, christenings- we only went to each other’s houses. The women played cards, and when the kids were born, Mickey and Jimmy were always the first at the hospital. And when we went to the islands or Vegas for vacation, we always went together, no outsiders, ever. Karen’s comments exemplify Henry’s place within the family even though he was not a blood member of the family. The individuals all become close to each other and take on the roles that mimic traditional family members.

Corruption is a key motif in this movie. While his initial contact with the mafia was parking cars for the gangsters, Henry clearly becomes involved in the illegal aspects of the business by running errands and picking up packages for the gangsters. As Henry begins to learn the business operations, he becomes involved with selling stolen goods. Gangsters bribe delivery truck drivers and then steal cigarettes and other goods from the trucks. When the police investigate, the gangsters give them stolen goods or pay them off. Moreover, when Henry grows older, the

police frequently search his house for incriminating evidence so Henry will pay them to keep quiet about the illegal goods they find.

One of the clearest motifs in the movie is violence. For example, the movie's first scene involves Henry, Jimmy, and Tommy driving a car at night. When they hear a noise from the back of the car, the men pull the car over and open the trunk. As they open the trunk, they realize that a man they thought they had killed is still alive, so Tommy stabs the bloody man several times with a knife. After stabbing the man repeatedly, Jimmy fires his gun into the body several times. Excessive violence is shown as normal as gangsters conduct business each day in violent ways.

Respect is also an important motif in this film. Henry tells a story about a day when "some of the neighborhood kids carried my mom's groceries all the way home for her. You know why? It was out of respect." Because Henry works hard within the local family, everyone in the neighborhood pays Henry and his family the proper respect.

When Henry and Jimmy are at a bar, Tommy walks in with a girlfriend. At this time, a former friend of Tommy's named Bats disrespects Tommy by teasing Tommy in front of his girlfriend and friends about his shoe shining job as a teenager. As a result of the lack of respect, Tommy becomes enraged and brutally murders Bats at the bar. In addition, Paulie warns Henry not to become involved with drugs, and Henry lies to Paulie, saying he would never sell drugs. When Henry is arrested because of his involvement with drugs, Paulie turns his back on Henry because Henry disrespected his orders. Closely tied with the notion of respect is revenge. As a young boy involved with the mob, Henry drops out of school. As his absences add up, his father receives letters in the mail that indicate Henry's failure to attend. Consequently, the mob members abduct the letter carrier responsible for delivering

the letters to Henry's father and threaten to kill him if he brings another letter. Moreover, the gangsters force the letter carrier's head into an oven to demonstrate their willingness to follow through on their threat. Moreover, Karen tells Henry that her neighbor attempted to molest her. Infuriated, Henry drives to the neighbor's house and assaults him with his gun to seek revenge for hurting Karen. When Tommy kills a gangster from another mafia family without first asking permission from the mafia family boss, he is punished for his actions. On the day he is supposed to become a "made man" himself, he is instead murdered because he disrespected his own family's rules and the gangster code of respect. Therefore, the other mob family along with Tommy's family kills Tommy.

Several props are essential for the gangster film. Early in the movie the gangsters' dress is shown to be very important as Hill comes home wearing an expensive suit. Henry's mother says, "You look like a gangster," demonstrating the association between nice suits and the gangster life. When Henry grows older and becomes an established gangster, his closet becomes full of expensive suits. As the camera pans his clothes, the audience sees dozens of classy suits as well as Karen's fancy dresses. The camera quickly pans over his closet then slow pans across, showing each of the roughly 50 in a variety of colors in the closet. The scene then moves to Karen's closet, which is full of roughly 50 suits and expensive dresses. The entire scene lasts for seventeen seconds, mostly focusing on the wardrobe. In addition to wearing nice suits, the gangsters all drive expensive cars. A teenage Henry marvels at the cars he parks as a valet for the top mob members. Each of the cars he parks is expensive and new. Moreover, as he exacts revenge for the family, Henry breaks the rear windshield of six brand new cars before pouring gasoline in them and lighting them on fire. The scene lasts forty-one seconds in the dark parking lot full of nice

cars. Although it is unclear why Henry is doing this, he clearly performs the action for the mob family as he waves to another gangster to make sure he is doing the job correctly. Also, when Henry, Tommy, and Jimmy pull off a major heist, the members of the crew immediately spend the money, and one of the associates buys his wife a brand new expensive car because buying a car demonstrates his success. He is later murdered in this car to indicate the mob's displeasure with his extravagance when they were attempting to keep quiet about the heist. Additionally, guns are important for the gangsters in case they need to protect themselves or conduct business. Henry uses a gun to beat up Karen's neighbor and then has Karen hide the gun at her mother's house. When Henry asks Karen to hide the gun, Karen comments, "I know there are women like my best friends who would have gotten out of there the minute their boyfriend gave them a gun to hide. But I didn't. I gotta admit the truth, it turned me on." Thus, the power and prestige associated with guns excites Karen, and she marries Henry.

Many of the conventions in *Goodfellas* are consistent with the conventions established by *The Godfather*. The relationship between family and business are still key in the movie, and the gangsters continue to be involved with illegal and corrupt business practices. Violence, mostly through the use of guns, continues to dominate the lives of the gangsters, and the gangster's drive for success and wealth continues to be a focus. While most of the conventions of *Goodfellas* follow the traditional genre conventions, the plot differs significantly. The notion of family is different than in *The Godfather* movies as both Henry and Jimmy are not Italians, but they are still welcomed into the mob family business. These movies therefore expand the conventions of the genre to include other ethnicities. However, Henry and Jimmy are limited in how far they can advance within the family because they are not Italian.

Although more types of people may be allowed to be part of the mob, they are still limited to how far they can rise within the organization. Moreover, the role of the traditional family is a new invention to the genre. *The Godfather* movies strictly focus on the blood family ties, but *Goodfellas* focuses on a more figurative family. The gangster's ability to be successful in the mafia family is therefore less dependent on having true family ties than in previous gangster movies. *Goodfellas* demonstrates a slight move away from the traditional Italian-only mafia from which other ethnicities are excluded since two important characters are only half Italian but still able to work their way up the mafia hierarchy and gain both wealth and power. However, the gangster genre has not expanded enough to allow a non-Italian gangster to reach the top of the mob.

Moreover, the blood relationship in *Goodfellas* is not as important as in the other gangster films. American film makers, like their literary counterparts of the late 19th Century had been fascinated by the cruel reality of life in the modern city. The criminal element of the urban landscape particularly fascinated many writers. The film, which is one of Scorsese's favorites, established many of the features of the genre. It was based on fact, a newspaper article Griffith had read about gangster killings and vice scandals in 1912, and used social realism to depict an "other world" of crime. The story follows a young musician and his wife where they enter New York's other side and have to try to make it in the gritty urban setting, one of the constant features of the gangster genre. The poor musician is robbed by the Snapper Kid and the couple seems doomed. The wife is taken to a "gangsters ball" where she witnesses how crime provides a way out of the impoverishment of city living. At the ball, the Snapper Kid shows that, despite being a criminal, he is strangely honorable

and protects her from another gangster. The wealthy underworld of the gangster and its situational morality is the violence between gangs and the normalization of the way of life. *Streets* (1973), *Raging Bull* (1980), *GoodFellas* (1990), and *Casino* (1995), in the first two Scorsese examines street life as he recalls it from growing up in the Little Italy. In the next three he traces the domestic diaspora and assimilation of Italians into the American mainstream, first to outer boroughs of New York City and finally, in *Casino*, to Kansas City and Las Vegas. Casillo patiently prepares his readers for his detailed treatments of the films. Beginning with a history of Scorsese's immigrant roots, he retraces the chronicle back to Sicily. Not only in the body text, but through 160 pages of notes, he explores social structures of village life in southern Italy. His special interest in the Mafia and the Catholic Church suggest the dyad of the title, *Gangster Priest*. Relying on sociological studies of Italian life on both sides of the Atlantic, he describes the adaptations the immigrants made, or failed to make, in their new homeland. Equally suspicious of the institutions of state and church, they formed informal networks of relationships to preserve order as they knew it in their homeland. Nor did they did not trust outsiders, even those from different areas in Italy. Faced with the alternative of immediate income through menial labor or education in American schools, which they believed could undermine their culture and values, many of these refugees from desperate poverty saw little choice. As a result, assimilation proceeded more slowly than with the other major immigrant groups of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the Irish and Jews. With this background in place, Casillo turns to the films. At this point film critics must exercise a certain degree of modesty, as Casillo does for the most part. With good reason, caution should not be confused with a lack of authority. For the

past half-century film critics have been wrestling with their proper role as cultural historians, and the issue is not yet settled. As early as the 1950's, French theorists and reviewers writing for *Cahiers de cinema* formulated the canons of auteurism, a method of criticism that centered almost exclusively on the director, including the social forces that shaped his/her perceptual universe. It was an extremely productive approach, and for many years it dominated the film journals. Indeed auteur theory gave rise to film criticism as an important form of scholarship. In the 1980s the limitations of auteurism became apparent, and the reaction set in. A film has not one, but many creators. Scriptwriters, actors, composers, editors, cinematographers and even producers, all make their contribution to the finished product. Thus focusing almost exclusively on the contribution of the director includes in its method two dangers that must be acknowledged.

For the most part, *GoodFellas* went with a naturalistic palette, though one that tended toward the red side of the register. The colors remained tight and solid throughout the flick. Even the occasional examples of red lighting - often problematic on video - looked firm and did not show any bleeding noise. Blacks were dense and firm, while low-light shots appeared nicely visible and never became too dark. I found little about which to complain in this solid transfer. Class consciousness, as described by Georg Lukács's famous *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), is opposed to any psychological conception of consciousness, which forms the basis of individual or mass psychology.

The eyes of Lukacsian class consciousness in *Goodfellas* are used neglecting other aspects to make the thesis proving the hypothesis. According to Lukács, each social class has a determined class consciousness which it can achieve. In effect, as

opposed to the liberal conception of consciousness as the basis of individual freedom and of the social contract, Marxist class consciousness is not an origin, but an achievement. Hence, it is never assured: the proletariat's class consciousness is the result of a permanent struggle to understand the "concretetotality" of the historical process.

According to Lukács, the proletariat was the first class in history that may achieve true class consciousness, because of its specific position highlighted in the *Communist Manifesto* as the "living negation" of capitalism. All other classes, including the bourgeoisie, are limited to a "false consciousness" which impedes them from understanding the totality of history: instead of understanding each specific moment as a portion of a supposedly deterministic historical process, they universalize it and believe it is everlasting. Hence, capitalism is not thought of as a specific phase of history, but is naturalized and thought of as an eternal solidified part of history. Says Lukács, this "false consciousness", which forms ideology itself, is not a simple error as in classical philosophy, but an illusion which can't be dispelled.

In *GoodFellas*, organized crime seems to grow out of and perpetuate class division; it is the shortcut whereby the ambitious of working class achieves only a tenuous facsimile of capitalist success. Scorsese's obvious message is that the American dream feeds upon those it enthralls that even the criminal "success" story, however perilous, replicates the image of mainstream cultural beliefs. As we can glance in this picture:

Fig. No.1



00:12:54 – Jimmy “The Gent”, bribing the police with a few boxes of Marlboro Cigarettes (Illegally obtained through Hijacking).

Another key shot that is a clear representation of mis-en-scene is the above shot. This is where De Niro’s character is shown to be bribing the police officials in order to protect his future plans, from the antagonists. It also represents the equilibrium of the two characters, as De Niro is kneeling down, almost to show that they have the same amount of power. However, because De Niro is standing up slightly higher, whilst having his hands on the car window, as well as the audience knowing a bit about him, then he is represented as being the more powerful figure, by not only the audience’s knowledge but his body language, as by having his hands on the door, his body language could connote that he is prepared for anything, if something was to go wrong.

Fig. No. 2



00:01:34 – Jimmy the Gent (center, De Niro), clearly shown without a tie. This could connote him losing control with his involvement in the Mafia family.

De Niro is a very intriguing character within certain scenes, a fine example of the image that can be found above. The above image, is found at the very beginning of the film, and reflects something of urgency and intensity. As we can see, De Niro usually portrays a character is calm and collected, however De Niro's character shows him without a tie, which could represent the need to play without rules, whilst also showing that he could be losing control. We can also tell they are about to kill somebody, as De Niro's character has a spade in his hand, whilst Liotta looks to be pulling out a gun, hence we can also see the red brake light coming from the car, which could also connote anger, passion for the job, and blood, as there is a murder that is about to go down. We can also vaguely see the environment, as behind the two characters a little bit of light, is shed onto the forestry behind the characters, which could tell the audience that they are in the middle of nowhere. However, Todorov's

theory can be easily placed into this film. Throughout the film the sense of equilibrium has been shown.

Fig. No. 3



00:01:06 – With Rule of Third’s gridlines placed upon the image in red lines.

This shot clearly the importance of Hill. During this shot, it focuses mainly on Hill as the primary character (due to it being his life story), as his eyes are clearly on the eye line for the rule of thirds as seen above. This can also shows Hill as the most important character within the story, and could quite possibly connote that he is the Mafia leader, even if the narration clearly states he’s not.

Another element is during the film, are the long shots used in order to represent the typical American mafia fronts, followed by the introduction of highly-ranked mafia members driving in posh cars, which shows them being powerful and well-respected.

Fig. No. 4



00:03:41 – Represents closeness of the Mafia Family

There are particular scenes, (such as in the restaurant where the line “do you think I’m funny, like a clown?”) that show the character’s quite physically close, hence this can represent not only a type of family bond, but how they are loyal to each other.

Fig. No. 5



The above scene that can justify the beginning part of the film, where all of the Mafioso are standing inside of the shop. The scene clearly shows them play fighting with one another, whilst showing a sense of togetherness and closeness. This shot/scene can be seen in the above image. This movie experiences providing us with very distinct viewpoints on very different areas of American gangsterism.

The introduction of the local mobsters hanging out in a night club is memorable and worth the whole film. Cherish this scene as Scorsese's camera moves in and about the characters, pausing only momentarily to hear their greetings. To Henry, this was the life; civilians were suckers.

Fig. No. 6



00:35:07 – Shows the importance of two characters (centre) as they are sitting at a table in front of everyone else, front row.

However, the iconic tracking shot that follows both Karen and Hill through the back entrance of the club (by avoiding the line and gaining a quick entry) shows their relationship becoming more involved and progressive, as they are given special treatment by the manager. It is also important to note, how the camera follows Hill's

hands as he places tips into people's pockets, as it not only represents his increase in wealth, but it can also represent how he has the power to do these type of things, and people seem to respect him for doing that. It is also important to note, that when they do eventually sit down, Hill's representation as being a powerful figure is further enhanced as the manager of the club, gives them the table closest to the stage, whilst allowing them to be served by two waiters simultaneously (as can be seen above).

Fig. No. 7



00:09:43 – Shows the Protagonist's growth and maturity, progressing through the hierarchy of the Mafia Family.

Another aspect that is clearly shown throughout the early parts of the film is the use of speed between shots. This is used to represent the time it has taken this very young character to become a man, and shows not only his quickness in maturity but the quickness he gains in venturing through the ranks of the Mafia's elite.

Also during the early stages of the film, we also hear the narration of Hill talking about Pauli. As Hill is narrating, the camera zooms in instantly on Pauli, which shows him with a near-enough perfect rule of thirds, with no other item or

person invading his breathing space. This can represent power, fear and also liberty, as no other character's dared to threaten his breathing space.

During the early parts of the film, the editing places an ellipsis when he is at the age of 21, which meant cutting out eight years of Hill's life and maturity. By allowing a massive gap in the storyline, it enables the audience to imagine what would have happened, whilst cutting out the need for scenes in the film that are not very relevant or important, which is key to keeping the narrative and the production interesting for the audience.

Another early scene of the film is the over the shoulder, shot-reverse-shot that is shown between Hill and his father, as Hill's father finds out that his son is working for the Mafia. It shows the type of relationship they have, and how Hill's father frowns upon the fact that one day his son will be a key figure in the underworld.

Throughout the early stages of the film, there are three freeze frames all on Hill. This in order to distinguish how Hill has matured, and the progression throughout his life, whilst also showing the types of activities he does for the Mafia family. However, after the early stages, there is another still shot of Hill, as he becomes acquainted with the higher levels of the hierarchy of the mafia family, hence forth, representing another progressive step in this young man's life.

However there is one particular editing element that I find intriguing about this film and it's about the editing in terms of the narrative. In the first scene, De Vito and Hill are shown as fully mature men, murdering a Capo, after this scene the narrative then goes into a non-linear order, as it clearly shows that the previous scene was the present, whilst the non-linear scenes of him being a child show it as a flashback.

Throughout the film, we also take notice about how Hill narrates his life story. This is key as it not only shows the film in a presentable fashion, but it allows the

audience to maintain a constant interest in the film, whilst enabling them to associate themselves with the character, perhaps allowing themselves to be further enthralled into the narrative.

Another key element of sound is the music that is non-diegetic and is placed in post-production editing. The music is well picked, in order to suit the era that the narrative is based in (1950-1960). However, one key music track, is the song 'Rags to Riches' by Tony Bennett which represents his life as a nobody/a schmuck, yet this quickly turns around throughout the narrative, as Hill becomes successful and well-respected! Hence, this is dramatic irony, as it assists in enabling the audience to see what the future has in store for Hill.

With *Goodfellas*, Scorsese extends and refines his examination of those shadowy figures at the edge of collective media consciousness that seem both to shun exposure and to covet a dubious celebrity. A product of the urban working-class environment, they are "movie stars with muscle," familiar with the back alleys and circuitous underground routes which seem to lead to the front rows of the urban high life. Marx described it in his theory of commodity fetishism, which Lukács completed with his concept of reification: alienation is what follows the worker's estrangement to the world following the new life acquired by the product of his work. The dominant bourgeois ideology thus leads the individual to see the achievement of his labour take a life of its own. Furthermore, specialization is also seen as a characteristic of the ideology of modern rationalism, which creates specific and independent domains. Only a global perspective can point out how all these different domains interact, argues Lukács. He also points out how Kant brought to its limit the classical opposition between the abstract form and the concrete, historical content, which is abstractly conceived as irrational and contingent. Thus, with Kant's rational system,

history becomes totally contingent and is thus ignored. Only with Hegel's dialectic can mediation be found between the abstract form and the abstract notion of a concrete content.

Even if the bourgeois loses his individual point of view in an attempt to grasp the reality of the totality of society and of the historical process, he is condemned to a form of false consciousness. As an individual, he will always see the collective result of individual actions as a form of "objective law" to which he must submit himself (liberalism has gone so far as seeing an invisible hand in this collective results, making capitalism the best of all possible worlds). By contrast, the proletariat would be, according to Lukács, the first class in history with the possibility to achieve a true form of class consciousness, granting it knowledge of the totality of the historical process. The proletariat takes the place of Hegel's *Weltgeist* ("World Spirit"), which achieves history through *Volkgeist* ("the spirit of the people"): the idealist conception of an abstract Spirit making history, which ends in the realm of Reason, is replaced by a materialist conception based not on mythical Spirits, but on a concrete "identical subject-object of history": the proletariat. The proletariat is both the "object" of history, created by the capitalist social formation; but it is also the "subject" of history, as it is its labor that shapes the world, and thus, knowledge of itself is also, necessarily, knowledge of the reality and of the totality of the historical process. The proletariat's class consciousness is not immediate; class consciousness mustn't be mistaken either with the consciousness of one's future and collective interests, opposed to personal immediate interests.

The possibility of class consciousness is given by the objective process of history, which transforms the proletariat into a commodity, hence objectifying it. Class consciousness is thus not a simple subjective act: "as consciousness here is not

the consciousness of an object opposed to itself, but the object's consciousness, the act of being conscious of oneself disrupts the objectivity form of its object" (in "Reification and the Proletariat's Consciousness", III "The proletariat's point of view"). In other words, instead of the bourgeois subject and its corresponding ideological concept of individual free will, the proletariat has been transformed into an object (a commodity) which, when it takes consciousness of itself, transforms the very structure of objectivity that is of reality

This specific role of the proletariat is a consequence of its specific position; thus, for the first time, consciousness of itself is also consciousness of the totality. Through dialectical materialism, the proletariat understands that what the individual bourgeois conceived as "laws" akin to the laws of nature, which may be only manipulated, as in Descartes's dream, but not changed, is in fact the result of a social and historical process, which can be controlled. Furthermore, only dialectical materialism links together all specialized domains, which modern rationalism can only think as separate instead of as forming a totality. Only the proletariat can understand that the so-called "eternal laws of economics" are in fact nothing more than the historical form taken by the social and economic process in a capitalist society. Since these "laws" are the result of the collective actions of individuals, and are thus created by society, Marx and Lukács reasoned that this necessarily meant that they could be *changed*. Any attempt in transforming the so-called "laws" governing capitalism into universal principles, valid in all times and places, are criticized by Lukács as a form of false consciousness. As the "expression of the revolutionary process itself", dialectical materialism, which is the only theory with an understanding of the totality of the historical process, is the theory which may help the proletariat in its "struggle for class consciousness". Although Lukács does not

contest the Marxist primacy of the economic infrastructure on the ideological superstructure, he considers that there is a place for autonomous struggle for class consciousness. In order to achieve a unity of theory and praxis, theory must not only tend toward reality in an attempt to change it; reality must also tend towards theory. Otherwise, the historical process leads a life of its own, while theorists make their own little theories, desperately waiting for some kind of possible influence over the historical process. Henceforth, reality itself must tend toward the theory, making it the "expression of the revolutionary process itself". In turn, a theory which has as its goal helping the proletariat achieve class consciousness must first be an "objective theory of class consciousness". However, theory in itself is insufficient, and ultimately relies on the struggle of humankind and of the proletariat for consciousness: the "objective theory of class consciousness is only the theory of its objective possibility".

The movie "Goodfellas" is a dramatization of life in the New York Mafia. It is based on the accounts of real life ex-gangster turned state evidence. He tells his story from when he was hired by a wiseguy as a teenager in the fifties to the time he is put in the witness protection program in the seventies. The movie portrays the spirit of the Mafia subculture and demonstrates their distinctive values, customs, norms, and deviant lifestyle. The Mafia is a subculture of localized groups of criminals that developed for the purpose of protecting those who cannot go to the police for protection. Its roots can be traced back to Sicily, where the Mafia was based on the premise that any member suffering an alleged injustice was obliged to take personal vengeance while avoiding all contact with legal authorities. Even in the modern day American Mafia, each family ruled its own territory and when others from outside the territory interfered they were dealt with through violent methods.

The wiseguys (or local gangsters) paid for their protection by paying the head of their local family.

The major concern of this research is to find the sense of class consciousness hidden inside the film. It also touches the debate of how the socio-political atmosphere governs the human behavior. In this way, the film becomes the mirror of the human life guided by the class consciousness, and to find that is the objective of the present research. The limitation of the research is that it will not touch the debate of other aspects apart from the class consciousness. The characters are celebrating the loss of ambition, faith and morality as they indulge in the game of ambition, love and corruption also confirms the feature of postmodern sensibilities. But, the delimitation of the research is that it only sticks to the notion of the class consciousness as well as social consciousness.

### **III. Social Determinism in *Goodfellas***

Social determinism is the theory that social interactions and constructs alone determine individual behavior (as opposed to biological or objective factors).

Consider certain human behaviors, such as having a particular sexual orientation, committing murder, or writing poetry. A social determinist would look only at social phenomena, such as customs and expectations, education, and interpersonal interactions, to decide whether or not a given person would exhibit any of these behaviors. They would discount biological and other non-social factors, such as genetic makeup, the physical environment, etc. Ideas about nature and biology would be considered to be socially constructed.

Scorsese's camera is as subjective here as it ever has been, and it notices what young Henry notices expensive suits with luxurious shoes and cuff links; fine and exquisite gold rings that must have cost thousands; cars that jump out and sing of affluence and prestige; and the men themselves that carry an aura of overwhelming power and, most importantly, fearful respect.

In his voice over narration the older Hill, who recounts this situation, explains, "To me, being a gangster was better than being President of the United States." He would later go on to reveal, "For us to live any other way was nuts. To us, those goody-good people who worked shitty jobs for bum paychecks and took the subway to work every day, and worried about their bills, were dead. I mean they were suckers." Judging by the naivety of young Hill at the beginning of the film, well no one could blame it. If Scorsese's *Goodfellas* is not the best film about gangsters and organized crime that has ever graced the screen than I sure don't know what is.

There is no doubt that the film is Scorsese's most enthusiastic and personal. I think that the majority of mob pictures take on one of the following two criteria – they

either glorify the characters and the violent worlds they exist in or they depict both the personas and the mayhem with such gut-wrenching and perverse detail that no one, in their right mind, would want to become a member of that questionable fraternity. Hill himself, in his early teens, commanded a presence and authority that most adults could not attain. *Goodfellas* is not a leisurely film to sit through. Yes, it is long by the conventional length of modern films, but it never feels long. What it does with its extended running time is it frees itself up to seriously explore, look at, and analyze the details, characters and themes. The film does not have a particular unifying story, but it does have ideas, tone, and mood. There is not a plot that monotonously progresses from A to B to C and finally to a cozy denouement. Rather, the film is one of frame of mind – it more or less brilliantly encapsulates what it might actually feel like to live in the mafia. Sure there were lots of good times for the men in *Goodfellas*, but they are mixed in equally with the bad. More than anything, *Goodfellas* creates a lasting and absorbing impression of the power and influence of these men.

*Goodfellas* also works marvelously as one of the cinema's great biopics. The film is based on an actual person – the real Henry Hill, still alive today whose own life was the inspiration for Pileggi's book. He was, as depicted in the film, put into the witness relocation program and sent to Redman where he ran an Italian restaurant. However, he was such a wanted man by all of the wrong people that when the film came out in 1990 he was forced to relocate again. Even more rousing is his participation on the audio commentary track for the film's 15th Anniversary release on DVD this past year, where he reveals that, for some elements of the film, Scorsese remained about 90-99 per cent accurate in the details. While watching the film it feels like this assertion is quite honest. The film opens by introducing us to a 13-year-old Henry Hill (played by Christopher Serrone). The story is narrated throughout by the

older Hill (voiced and later played by Ray Liotta, in a completely career making performance). We are shown New York of the 50's and, to the young Hill, becoming a member of the mob looks a hell of a lot more enticing than going to school, getting good grades, and then getting some sort of menial job that pays next to nothing. As he states very early on in the film, "As far back as I could remember I always wanted to be a gangster," and no wonder. He is utterly surrounded by the influence of the mob and to the untainted and unmolested child's eye, it's as close to being a super hero as possible, with many more perks. The story, in a rather surprising and democratic move, also allows her to provide a voice over narration to the story, which adds to the film's effective punch, counterpunch of the themes. As the story continues Henry and his gang begins to get involved in areas that the mob does not approve of in any way drug dealing. To make matters worse, Henry's life starts to spiral out of control as he soon starts to "get high on his own supply" and takes on several mistresses, not to mention that he becomes an accomplice to Tommy's murder of an untouchable, "made" man. It soon becomes apparent that the once gratifying and romanticized life that Henry aspired to live as a child is now tumbling down around him, so much to the point that he soon can't trust those that are closest to him. In the end, Henry soon realizes that he might have to break two cardinal rules of the mafia (never rat on friends and never say anything to anyone) in order to save his life.

The film is intimate and epic at the same time. The story has scope and grandeur, but still does a brilliant job of chronicling the particulars of the rise and fall of Hill over a twenty-year-plus period. Scorsese's eye with the camera reflects these various time periods effortlessly. In the opening moments of Hill's childhood he paints the screen with lush colors, sweeping and majestic camera shots, and loving close-ups to create the sense of inescapable attraction to the mafia lifestyle. This

sequence shows Scorsese's command over shots, editing, pacing, and music placement (no one does it better to finer effect than here). What he does is create a fabric that helps typify the mood of the final act of the film. There are several issues Henry deals with here – the sense of anguish about being caught; the sense of anguish of betraying his friends and fellow mob bosses that gave him his livelihood; the sense of anguish of becoming addicted to the lifestyle that the mob clearly shunned; the sense of anguish of getting the drug deal done without being pinched; the sense of anguish of ensuring that his brother stirs the sauce just right so that it does not burn and ruin the dinner and so on and so on. Henry's life is taking a nosedive, and we feel his sense of fear.

As portrayed in the movie, members of the Mafia see themselves as normal people. They justified their deviant and criminal behavior as nothing more than carrying out every day business transactions. That is how they got the name of this movie, the men all believed they were just a bunch of *Goodfellas*.

The socially determined actions of an individual can be influenced by forces that control the flow of ideas. By creating an ideology within the society of the individual, the individual's actions and reactions to stimuli are predetermined to adhere to the social rules imposed on him/her. Ideologies can be created using social institutions such as schooling, which "have become the terrain upon which contending forces express their social and political interest" (Mayberry, 3), or the mass media, which has "significant power in shaping the social agenda and framing of public opinion to support that agenda" (Colaguori, 35).

By creating a social construction of reality, these forces directly create a hegemonic control over the future of individuals who feel like the social construct is

natural and therefore unchangeable. Their actions become based in the context of their society. Their society has successfully determined their actions.

In *Goodfellas*, the socialization process started very early. Usually a member took a liking to a neighborhood kid and offered him a job. As the kid built trust the boss would slowly work the kid into more criminal type jobs, like running numbers money or selling stolen goods. If the recruit could conform to the ways of the organization, he was rewarded with the respect and pay of an adult. This provides deeper trust and allegiance to the subculture. However, the Mafia had a castes system, so no matter how much trust and respect you got, you could not become a mad man in the family unless you were 100% Sicilian. Being a mad man was a blood ritual that brought you totally into the Mafia family and allowed for the possible advancement to the position of being a boss.

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