***Far From Heaven***

The golden era of White America: the 1950’s. An era founded on simplicity, family, and home-cooked American tradition. Through the tattered eyes, and inebriated analysis of generation-X, this relic of a generation seems so foreign, and incomprehensible that it must be a by-product of Hollywood production. These simplistic ideals, and lackluster portrayals of prominent, wealthy, Americans simply does not reflect our rude, crude, thrill-seeking, bill-freaking, XXX-rated culture which we inhabit every day.

This “golden era” of the unified states seems to have operated on a foundation of societal values that would be viewed as square, or taboo, in today’s fast-food culture. The most prominent values, or at least those expressed in the film “Far From Heaven”, seem to be the role of women as submissive, homemakers who wouldn’t dare raise a finger, or even an opinion to their husband, the unquestioned familial dictator. The film seems to indicate that all women knew “their place”, and that “their place” was indeed the household. The woman was not to make waves about any issue involving patriarchal presence or involvement in the home; she was only to look after the children, and the home, hour after tireless hour without complaint, or comment. The issue of segregation also seemed to be portrayed as a prevalent value expressed throughout daily socialization. The issue of segregation is quite relevant as a value because although blacks were allowed minimal social involvement, and direct contact and relations to white folks by means of employment, the blacks remained a “taboo” group in which it was ok to have work for you, but not to socialize with on personal occasions, as they were not “ideal Americans”. This “taboo grouping” is very similar to homosexual issue that this movie takes on directly. As this foundation of values begin to evolve in to a separation of acceptable norms, and taboo behavior, these segregated groups of little knowledge or concern became the most easily identifiable elements of social differance, thus making them the easiest to label and ostracize. As the main catalyst of discrimination is lack of knowledge, the mystique, and fear generated by the close-minded, subjective thought of the 1950’s primed our civilization perfectly for the public identification and humiliation of these two groups.

These two “taboo groups” also seem to insight the most notable positive and negative sanctions in the movie. What is most intriguing about these sanctions is that they seem to come from friends of the characters in the film, and they seem to be a form of paradoxical praise, as the friends will offer positive sanctions to a character when that character treats a member of a “taboo group” in a socially-normal, discriminative, or condescending manner. This meaning for example, the wife’s friends are all very impressed by her so-called compassion toward negro’s, as long as the negro she is showing compassion to is still in a position of servitude, however when she converses with the negro gentleman in public, in a position of social equality, her friends offer her negative sanctions in the form of disgust and slander.

The drastic difference in language seems to be the most revealing factor of social reform over the last fifty years. The lack of profanity, crude humor, and unadulterated oration that we take for granted, as a means of egoistic expression, and radical individualism shows the extreme level of social conformity that was prevalent during this “golden age”. The innocence of society prior to dramatic result of social upheaval, and expression; as a result of war, politics, and wide-spread drug abuse, is clearly expressed in the film by the use of language that would be considered “square” by our twenty-first century standards, which directly reflects the drastic change in thought and expression on a societal level.

Seeing as how in relation to our culture, the customs of the 1950’s seem as though they are the “ideal culture”; nuclear families, complete with working husbands/fathers, and devoted loving mothers, mingling with their neighbors over mid-day daiquiris, amidst the shade of the old oak tree in the yard. That sounds like Martha Stewart’s fantasy of a capitalist utopia, however at one time it was a reality. The differences between the real and ideal cultures in the film seem quite subtle, apart from the never-ending marital conflict behind the doors of the seemingly perfect, American couple, not many cultural elements seem to differ. However in relation to the actual capitalist utopia in which we dwell consisting of: stress-infested, drug-addicted, poverty-stricken single mothers, incarcerated, incapacitated, incompetent, ingrate sperm-donors, and gang, foster, and television raised bastards the “real culture” of the 1950’s has become not only the “ideal culture”, but the non-existent, fairy-tale culture, that exists only in our imagination, and even though we can see it only with our minds eye, we yearn to be part, or at least catch a tiny glimpse of this allusive reality, that is now nothing more than a minor footnote in our academic excavation of American history.