WHERE IS YOUR DAUGHTER TONIGHT?
DON'T BE A DELINQUENT PARENT...
"BOLD!
DARING!
SHOCKING!
TRUE!"
A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959
Eric Schaefer
Everybody's talking about Monika

*"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!"*

COLUMBIA
MARIHUANA
DARING DOPE EXPOSE
3RD WEEK ADULTS ONLY
THE DOPE
ASSASSINATES YO
ADULTS ONLY
MARIHUANA
THE DOPE CIGARETTE THAT
ASSASSINATES YOUTH
"MARIHUANA"
WEED WITH ROOTS IN HELL
2nd BIG FEAT
3 BIG SMASH WEEK!
NOW PLAYING
YOUTH ASSASSINATED
MARIHUANA
ADULTS ONLY
"MARIHUANA"
THE DOPE CIGARETTE THAT
ASSASSINATES YOUTH
A PUFF OF SMOKE CHANGED HER LIFE TO HELL AND
MARIHUANA
WEED WITH ROOTS IN HELL
MARIHUANA
WILD ORGIES — WILD PARTIES — UNLEASHED PASSIONS

# "BOLD! DARING! SHOCKING! TRUE!"

*A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959*

**Eric Schaefer**

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*for Eithne*

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# Acknowledgments

Since I started this project on exploitation films over ten years ago, the question most often posed to me has been, "How did you ever get interested in this stuff?" A second question, always implicit but never verbalized out of friendship or social courtesy, seems to be, "Are you crazy?" I usually respond with what has become a rote answer about how I stumbled across references to some films while looking for a topic on which to write my master's thesis. Then I justify the study of these tawdry little movies by speaking of the way they reveal a great deal about the culture that produced them and so on and so forth. But recently, I have remembered two events from my childhood that may help answer that oft-posed question.

Both events occurred around 1970, when I was ten or eleven years old. In one instance, I remember baking cookies with my mother and listening to an afternoon call-in show on KMOX radio in St. Louis. At some point during the show, the subject of VD came up. I asked Mom what "the neareal disease" was. She gave me an honest but terse answer, indicating that it was not a good topic of conversation for cookie baking. I was left to wonder about the precise mechanics of how one got such a dreadful sounding illness. The other event took place in Mrs. Clark's science class at Goodall Elementary School. As children of the psychedelic era, we were fed a steady diet of antidrug movies. Mrs. Clark had ordered—yet again—*Drug Addiction,* an ancient black-and-white film that featured a fairly graphic scene in which a kid, high on marijuana, drinks from a broken soda bottle, slicing his lips and creating a gory mess. Of all the pedantic

drug movies we saw, it was the most visceral and the most fun. But on realizing that it was the same bloody dope movie that she had already screened several times, a horrified Mrs. Clark turned off the projector and vowed never to order it again. The unfinished reel sat on the machine as we proceeded to the day's lesson.

So perhaps my research on exploitation films fills some psychological need. After all, the most significant exploitation topics from the 1920s through the postwar period were venereal disease and drug use. Perhaps I was subconsciously drawn to these films in an effort to resolve or complete those unfinished moments from my quiet, middle-class childhood in the suburbs. Perhaps by closing that circle I might come to a greater understanding of myself and my historically situated position as a speaking subject. Or then again, maybe I am just crazy. . . . At any rate, the following people have either helped me in the analysis of my childhood years, or they are implicated in my insanity. I'm grateful for the references, suggestions, and support that they provided, whether they know it or not: Charles Ramirez Berg, Matthew Bernstein, William Boddy, David Bordwell, Mel Brandt, Darryl Brown and Jeanne Urciolo, Kathryn Burger, Diane Carson, Donald Crafton, Robert E. Davis, Thomas Davison, Mary Desjardins, Bob Eberwein, Craig Fischer, Tom Gunning, Susan Hacker-Stang, Brent Hanley, Mary Beth Haralovich, Doug Hart, Jenny Hoover and Mark Tobin, Mark Jancovich, Maude Jefferis, Henry Jenkins and Cynthia Jenkins, Joli Jensen, Doug Kellner, Chuck Kleinhans, Mark Langer, Bertil Lundgrin, Mike Mashon and Kristi Mashon, Linda Mizejewski, Sam Moffitt, Sandra Moore, Bob Morehead, Krista Olsen, Walter Pinkston, Dana Polan, Jim Ridenour, Dan Streible and Teri Tynes, Tim Swenson, Rachel Thibault, Kristin Thompson, Jim Wehmeyer and Barbara Wehmeyer, Tinky Weisblat, Terrance Jennings Wharton, Jim Wood, Leonid Yurgelas, and my colleagues and students at Emerson College.

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Mike Vraney and Lisa Petrucci of Something Weird Video have been unfailingly generous with their time and resources, going above and beyond the call. They have allowed me to root through the records and other material in the large SWV Collection, which has greatly enhanced the texture of this book. Many of the pictures used as illustrations come from that material and are being published for the first time. I am also grateful for the efforts that Mike has made to find and preserve this unique slice of American culture and for the support and friendship that he and Lisa have provided. I was lucky enough to meet Mike through David F. Friedman, the "mighty monarch of the exploitation film world." When I wrote my first, cautious letter to Dave a dozen years ago, I had no idea that such a long, warm, and productive relationship would develop. He and his wife, Carol, have been tremendously gracious, and the information and inspiration I have received from him cannot be measured. He has helped me "stay with it and for it."

Note that uncredited illustrations are from my own collection.

My parents, Frederick and Jeanette Schaefer, and my mother-in-law, Helene Johnson, have provided much support, moral and otherwise, over the years. But finally, one person is most responsible for seeing this project

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# Introduction

## *"As Long as It Was in Bad Taste!"*

So sinister, so suggestive, so subversive is this type of motion picture that organized producers of Hollywood have long since outlawed its manufacture entirely. Only the independent shoe-string producer goes in for the sex pictures in this day of the enlightened film-goer.
—Harry Martin, quoted in *Motion Picture Herald,* 1937

Poor Mr. Martin was very upset when he wrote those words in 1937.[1] He had taken his wife and daughter to see a comedy and found *Smashing the Vice Trust,* "a slice of cinematic slime," on the same bill. "Imagine our indignation," he asked readers of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal,* "at having foul glimpses into bawdy houses, pictures of unclad females executing the most vulgar dances, and other similar and better-unmentioned subject matter slapped into the teeth of our six-year-old youngster." Martin had just seen an exploitation film, one that he evidently watched with great care to work up sufficient indignation for his epistle to the newspaper.

Things had changed substantially almost forty years later. When the founder of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) discovered a print of the public domain picture first known as *The Burning Question* languishing in the Library of Congress in the early 1970s, he ordered copies for the group's fund-raising events. *The Burning Question* was released under one of its alternative titles, *Reefer Madness,*

and given a new lease on life.[2] During the 1970s it became a major hit on a revived midnight-movie circuit in big cities and college towns. *Reefer Madness* proved popular with "potheads" and their straight counterparts alike due to its outlandish depictions of the effects of marijuana on its users. The film's original antidope message was drowned out by the laughter of audiences who grooved on the overripe performances, the trite dialogue, and the strained sermons. Camp was cool, and *Reefer Madness* had become the essence of camp.

From roughly 1919 to 1959, exploitation films such as *Smashing the Vice Trust* and *Reefer Madness* existed in the shadow of Hollywood.[3] While Hollywood was constructing its image as the world's premiere manufacturer of wholesome entertainment, a group of independent "exploiteers," sometimes dubbed "The Forty Thieves," made and distributed films dealing with topics that censorship bodies and the organized industry's self-regulatory mechanisms prohibited. Exploitation movies purveyed the forbidden spectacle to moviegoers that the organized industry did not. Naked and unashamed nudists, high-flying hop heads, brazen strippers, vicious vice lords, and high school girls who found themselves "in trouble" populated exploitation movies. The organized industry found the lurid movies an embarrassment, and by the 1920s they had been segregated from the mainstream, becoming targeted for elimination by leaders of the film industry and moral watchdogs. But the ragged little films and the people who made them were tenacious. They survived and, in some cases, thrived.

It is probably already clear that I'm not writing about the films that have most often come to be identified with the term exploitation movie: those cheap genre pictures directed at the teen market by outfits like American International Pictures in the 1950s and 1960s. By the time Sam Arkoff and Jim Nicholson appeared on the scene with their "teenpics," exploitation films had been around for decades. In the past, critics and historians often lumped exploitation films with Hollywood's B movies and low-budget genre pictures made by Poverty Row outfits. Yet exploitation films were quite different from the movies cranked out by the major's B units or the companies that crowded Gower Gulch. The consequence of conflating exploitation films with other low-budget forms has been a failure to distinguish their singular attributes and unique history. When the films are considered at all today—still a fairly rare occasion—they are usually seen and enjoyed by fans of "bad movies." As such, they are prized for their cinematic ineptitude and become the object of an often sophisticated

reading strategy that stands in opposition to middlebrow and elite taste.[4] The movies' parochial take on sexuality and drug use, combined with their bombastic promises about shocking truths and fearless frankness, can seem like a tonic when compared with the jaded marketing and merchandising efforts that pass as films today. But as I will reveal, these early exploitation pictures were more than simply "bad" movies.

So what exactly are the exploitation films I am writing about, and how do they differ from the more contemporary understanding of that term? Exploitation producer and former roadshowman David F. Friedman provides the point of departure for the definition of exploitation film as it emerged in the early 1920s and existed throughout the 1950s:

> Exploitation pictures are as old as film itself, although they really began to flourish during the height of the original Motion Picture Code. The roadshowmen, the exploiteers, weren't subscribers to the Hays Office Code; they were itinerant carnival people. The essence of exploitation was any subject that was forbidden: miscegenation, abortion, unwed motherhood, venereal disease. . . . All those subjects were fair game for the exploiteer—as long as it was in bad taste! The technical definition of exploitation movies is cheaply made pictures distributed by roadshowmen or by local independents called states'-righters. A major studio was opening, in those days [the 1930s and 1940s], 400 prints. An exploitation picture never had more than 15 or 20, and they moved around from territory to territory. . . . They often leased the theater (now called four-walling), and once they paid the exhibitor and put their own cashier in the booth, they could do anything they wanted.[5]

Friedman's definition indicates that long before "exploitation film" had been broadened to include movies engineered to appeal to kids tooling down to the drive-in with their newly acquired disposable income in hand, the term had denoted an even more disreputable type of movie. Indeed, the broader use of the term illustrates the degree to which this historically specific designation has been diluted over time to embrace a greater range of practices.

Exploitation became a recognized and distinct category of motion picture during the 1920s. Films that dealt with the forbidden topics segregated from the mainstream industry were sometimes called "blues" or "Main Street movies," a reference to low-end "Main Street" theaters or grindhouses that regularly booked them.[6] Although the term exploitation picture was probably bandied about in conversation earlier, it was being used in print to refer to a specific category of motion picture at least as

early as 1933. A tradebook ad for the 1933–1934 season found low-budget producer Bud Pollard promising release of six "exploitation features" with titles like *Lunatic at Large* and *Dance Hall Dames.*[7] Of *She Devil Island,* which included scenes of torrid dancing and women warriors bathing in the surf, *Film Daily*'s 1936 review claimed "houses that go for exploitation specials will find something up their alley in this attraction."[8] A 1938 review of *Wajan* in *Motion Picture Daily* stated, "Theaters which play 'exploitation' films, as they are called, may find this Bali picture good box office. There are enough 'angles' here to offer ballyhoo-minded exhibitors plenty of material. . . . The film is distinguished by the semi-nudity of the Balinese 'beauties.' "[9] At the same time, *Boxoffice* was also classifying adult movies such as *It's All in Your Mind,* a film about a sex-starved milquetoast, and *The Unashamed,* a nudist film, as exploitation features.[10] And an ad for Modern Film Corporation in the 1938 *Film Daily Yearbook* highlighted the company's status as "exclusive foreign distributors of six exploitation features" including *Jaws of the Jungle* and *Guilty Parents.*[11] Among industry insiders it was understood that exploitation movies were not family fare, that most were exhibited as "adults-only" programs, and that they were often booked into theaters that specialized in "slightly lurid and indecorous roadshow attractions."[12]

The term exploitation film is derived from the practice of exploitation, advertising or promotional techniques that went over and above typical posters, trailers, and newspaper ads.[13] Exploitation producers conceded that because their films lacked identifiable stars or the recognition provided by conventional genres, they needed an extra edge to be "put over" with audiences. A kind of carnivalesque ballyhoo became integral to their success. During the postwar years, the designation of exploitation film was gradually expanded to include almost any low-budget movie with a topical bent.[14] During the 1960s and 1970s, the term was modified to indicate the subject that was being exploited, such as for "sexploitation" and "blaxploitation" movies. But it was only from the 1950s that the term became more fluid.[15] For the purposes of this book, I have returned to the use of exploitation film as it was understood in the 1930s and subsequently codified by Friedman above. For further clarification, I am modifying the term to "classical exploitation film." This not only indicates a return to the specificity of its original meaning when applied to a particular class of films but also emphasizes the form's parallel development with the classical Hollywood cinema.

Classical exploitation films generally conformed to the following fea-

tures. First, their primary subject was a "forbidden" topic. The major exploitation topics included sex and sex hygiene, prostitution and vice, drug use, nudity, and any other subject considered at the time to be in bad taste. The forbiddenness of a subject could best be gauged by the mainstream industry's prohibition of certain topics through self-regulatory mechanisms such as the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" and the Production Code, as well as censorship on state and local levels. These subjects were dealt with directly and were the primary point of interest in the motion picture. This would then exclude all movies, whether made by majors, minors, or independents, that had drug addicts as peripheral characters or that dealt with subjects like prostitution in an oblique fashion. Also excluded would be motion pictures about forbidden themes shown only in restricted situations, such as those used for the training of medical or military personnel, law enforcement officers, and so on. However, restricted films that were picked up by exploiteers for release to the general public in theaters would fall under the exploitation rubric.

Second, classical exploitation films were made cheaply, with extremely low production values, by small independent firms. Few if any well-known artists are associated with exploitation films either in front of or behind the camera. Exploitation films used shoddy standing sets, relied extensively on stock footage, were filled with continuity errors, employed only the simplest camerawork and the most basic editing, and, in the case of sound films, poor recording and matching. A tiny budget alone, however, was not enough for a film to qualify as a classical exploitation movie. Many well-known no-budget films like *Detour* (1945), *Robot Monster* (1953), *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959), not to mention scores of ultracheap westerns and "race" films, fell into other recognized genres or categories and lacked the controversial themes that would be necessary to rate as exploitation films. As a result of their restricted budgets, classical exploitation pictures eschewed the "style" of the classical Hollywood cinema (continuity editing, spatial and temporal coherence, etc.) and the rhetorical or categorical logic of most documentaries. This is because, to one degree or another, classical exploitation films centered on some form of forbidden spectacle that served as their organizing sensibility—at the expense of others.

Third, exploitation films were distributed independently. Distribution tended to be on a roadshow or a states' rights basis, and many distributors engaged in "four-walling." On very rare occasions, a film might be made by a major company and unloaded to states' rights distributors. Films of

foreign origin, both high- and low-budget, with the requisite titillating material were picked up for release on the American exploitation circuit.

Fourth, the films were generally exhibited in theaters not affiliated with the majors. A small circuit of grindhouses or Main Street theaters specializing in exploitation product did exist, usually bordering the skid row neighborhoods of major cities, and at times exploitation films crossed over to burlesque theaters. But they usually played in theaters that showed standard Hollywood fare that took a break from their typical programming. Because of the films' low budgets, lack of familiar stars, and immediately recognizable generic appeal, the exploiteers had to pitch their films by sensationalizing them. Going to an exploitation film was often a carnival-like event because of the extrafilmic practices that accompanied the show. Lecturers, slide presentations, the sale of pamphlets or books on the picture's topic, and the presence of uniformed "nurses" to attend to those who might faint due to the "shocking" sights became a major part of the exploitation film experience. At times, shows were segregated by gender and almost without exception were restricted to audiences made up of adults only.

Finally, in comparison to the mainstream motion picture industry, relatively few prints of an exploitation film were in release at any given time. However, unlike most other movies, exploitation films could be in release for ten to twenty years or more. Thus a movie's status as an exploitation film was determined by multiple factors. The great majority of exploitation films display all of the characteristics outlined above, though it should be noted that some movies that qualify as exploitation releases may have lacked one or two of these attributes. Under the broad heading of exploitation films fall a number of subcategories defined by the forbidden topic they exploited; sex hygiene, drug, nudist, vice, and burlesque films were among the most frequently produced.

Before discussing the time frame of this book, it may be necessary to explain what exploitation films were not: hard-core pornography.[16] Although exploitation movies and pornographic films would eventually converge in the late 1960s, they followed separate lines of development up to that point. Friedman has said that "after Mr. Edison made those tintypes gallop, it wasn't but two days later that some enterprising guy had his girlfriend take her clothes off [for the camera]."[17] This colorful description is probably quite accurate. Joseph W. Slade argues that by 1899 the first totally nude females appeared in motion pictures and that within three or four years acts of sexual intercourse had been captured on film.[18] The

**1** Siamese twins Daisy and Violet Hilton, who would later star in the exploitation film *Chained for Life* (1950), appear at a showing of *Marihuana* in the 1930s. (Something Weird Video Collection)

precise date of the first pornographic film remains undetermined, though two short movies have been identified as early as 1907 and 1908.[19] Europe was the center of early pornography production. The first extant American film, *A Free Ride* (also known as *A Grass Sandwich*) has been dated about 1915, although it is believed that sexually explicit movies were made in the United States prior to that date.

Exploitation films and the pornographic "stag" films were different in several important respects. Stag films were always short, usually only one or two reels in length. Exploitation movies were issued as short subjects

and in feature-length form. Stags depicted actual, nonsimulated sexual acts—something never found in exploitation films. Stags were produced for private viewings in "officially decried but socially tolerated circumstances (the brothel, the 'smoker')."[20] Exploitation movies were always shown in theaters or other public places. Stag films were strictly illegal, whereas exploitation films faced legal problems only in some areas at some times. Finally, stag movies, as the name indicates, were produced to cater to the desires and values of heterosexual men, whereas exploitation movies were capable of attracting both men and women and did not limit their appeal to a strictly heterosexual audience. So we are left with two distinct images: the illegal, sexually explicit, short stag film playing privately to male audiences in smoky fraternity houses or the basement of the American Legion hall, and the exploitation film, salacious and suggestive but not overtly pornographic, playing to a heterogeneous audience in a public site.

The exploitation film roughly paralleled the rise and fall of the classical Hollywood cinema. Prior to 1920, a number of mainstream companies, including Universal, American, and Triangle, made films that dealt directly with drug use, abortion, prostitution, and other topics considered to be unsavory. The exploitation film as an entity and an industry apart from the mainstream began to appear around 1920, as I detail in chapter 1. Restrictive efforts in the years immediately following World War I were directed primarily at sex hygiene films, driving the subject out of the mainstream and creating an industry apart that made films on topics that major companies would no longer approach. With the Thirteen Points or Standards (1921), the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" (1927), and the Motion Picture Production Code (1930), the organized industry detailed the "salacious" subjects that it would no longer allow in its movies. Exploitation films literally exploited this state of affairs by making pictures on almost all the topics forbidden by those mechanisms.

After World War II, changes in the film industry's structure, shifting social mores, and bellwether court decisions eased censorship restrictions. Revisions of the Production Code left sex perversion and VD the only verboten subjects by 1956. The release of Russ Meyer's *The Immoral Mr. Teas* in 1959 initiated a whole new class of exploitation films, the "nudie-cutie." With censorship challenges aimed at those films regularly dismissed by the courts and a growing crop of more daring Hollywood releases, 1959 appears to be an end point of classical exploitation given the criteria set forth above. Although movies that could qualify as classical

exploitation continued to be made and released after this point, they were rare, increasingly displaced by the more explicit "sexploitation" movie. Thus, I consider the four decades roughly bounded by 1919 and 1959 to be the era of classical exploitation film. It is also worth noting that the beginning of this period coincides with the emergence of the United States as a modern, urban, industrial society shucking off many agrarian attitudes and traditions, and ends with what is usually considered the opening of the "sexual revolution." The existence of the classical exploitation film not only coincides with the classical Hollywood cinema, but parallels and speaks of an era of significant social change in America.

Classical exploitation films were disreputable when they were originally released, and the mainstream industry went to great lengths to stamp them out. Histories of the motion picture medium passed them by. Their current position as part of the "bad film" cult accords them the status of curiosity at best, continued dismissal at worst. These factors contribute to the relative lack of prior research on exploitation films, academic or otherwise.[21] Given their disparaged nature and the general paucity of information on exploitation, how does one investigate a phenomenon that is little more than a shadow?

When I began to research this project, the lack of information on exploitation films was a particularly vexing problem. My academic training had stressed archival work. I had done research in the David O. Selznick archive, where there were five memos and three cables to document every belch that emanated from the legendary producer; one could expect the amount of documentation to triple if the production of a movie was actually involved. When it came to conducting research on exploitation films, there were no catalogues or comprehensive lists in existence. Even though many of the movies claimed copyright, the majority were never registered; they were only sporadically covered in the trades and were mentioned even less frequently in news magazines, dailies, or other periodicals that regularly reviewed motion pictures. My research process began by compiling a working list of titles that seemed to conform to the definition of exploitation films by digging through the *AFI Catalog, Film Daily Yearbooks,* and existing reviews, as well as scouring over forty years of *Variety.* Cross-referencing these sources with copyright records, censorship files, an unannotated list of holdings in the Sonney Collection at the UCLA Film and Television Archive, as well as extant posters, stills, and advertising materials eventually yielded hundreds of titles. Though this may sound like the worst kind of drudgery, it was actually the kind of

detective work that makes the process of historical research invigorating. I have generally erred on the side of inclusion in the filmography, hoping that additional information or evidence about the nature of some films will be found. Still, a number of movies that received only limited release undoubtedly escaped my detection. This relates to the second problem that became evident during my research: classical exploitation movies were often retitled a number of times over the years and in different territories; in some cases, a single picture may have been known by as many as five or six titles, creating a good deal of confusion in the identification process.

The films themselves were, initially, difficult to see. Only a handful were on what has become that most valuable, if problematic, tool for the film historian, the videocassette. The single largest concentration of exploitation films open to the researcher is the Sonney Collection at the UCLA Film and Television Archive. I was able to screen many films there, but some are unviewable due to nitrate deterioration or other problems. Since that time, many of the UCLA holdings have made their way into video release through Mike Vraney of Something Weird Video in Seattle working with David Friedman, former partner of Dan Sonney. Something Weird's series, dubbed "David Friedman's Roadshow Rarities," has brought previously unobtainable titles to the home screen as well as improved prints or more complete copies of movies that were already in circulation. Moreover, Something Weird's release of titles in the Sonney Collection has helped to dislodge films from private hands around the country. The company recently located and issued a print of *Street Corner* (1948), a film I had largely given up hope of ever seeing. Yet despite Something Weird's efforts, other exploitation titles are still lost, probably never to be seen by modern audiences.

Of course, problems do not end when an exploitation film is made available for viewing through an archive or on videotape. Mainstream motion pictures, especially after 1934, were almost always the same whether seen in Detroit or Des Moines, St. Louis or Sarasota. The Production Code and the studio system ensured uniformity to keep local censors' cuts to a minimum. On the other hand, an exploitation film that passed the censors in Ohio might be significantly different from prints of the film approved by the censor board in Kansas. Censored versions could, in turn, be very different from prints of the film that played in states or cities that did not have censorship. And differences were not just limited to cuts. In some areas, states' rights distributors would add footage, including "square-up

reels" of racy material. When an old film was reissued, newer footage might be incorporated to maintain its topicality or to increase the amount of exploitable spectacle between the first and last reels. Distinctions among "uncensored," "unedited," or "director's" cuts become tangled, if not entirely moot, because of the fluid, ever changing nature of exploitation releases. Of the more than five hundred motion pictures in the main section of the filmography (appendix 2), I have screened approximately 30 percent, constituting dozens of features and shorts. Inevitably, the selection of films was dictated by availability. I cannot profess that it is an unbiased or random sample, but I believe it is broadly representative of exploitation films in general and of the various subcategories in particular.

If the movies themselves have often been difficult to identify or see, uncovering information about the individuals and companies that produced them was hard and in some cases impossible to obtain. The people who made exploitation movies ran small operations at best, and in some instances outfits could best be classified as fly-by-night. They apparently did not keep extensive records. Due to the disreputable nature of their films, most of the exploiteers kept fairly low profiles; unlike their Hollywood counterparts, there was little to be gained by notoriety. The studio system generated a mountain of paper, much of which is now archived for scholarly use; the equivalent mole hill generated by the exploiteers does not exist. Some primary documents, mostly in private collections, have netted valuable information. Records collected by Mike Vraney and several boxes of material of Dallas-based distributor O. K. Bourgeois in a private collection contain exhibition files and budgets. The archives of the New York State Censors and the Production Code Administration provide valuable insight into the way the producers and distributors of exploitation negotiated censorship issues.

Lacking a sufficient quantity of paper records, I have had to rely on oral history to confirm hypotheses, elaborate on hunches, and fill in gaps. Regrettably, most of the major producers of exploitation film had died by the early 1980s. Much of what I had learned about the production of exploitation films has come from interviews or letters from those who were associated with producers and distributors in some way, including Dan Sonney, whose father was an exploitation pioneer and who was involved in the business himself from the 1930s. Hildegarde Esper, screenwriter and wife of exploiteer Dwain Esper, provided insight and anecdotes about the Esper operation and her role as a writer of exploitation movies. Lili St. Cyr, one of the major stars of burlesque films of the 1950s, an-

swered questions about that genre and her work in it. Director and editor Robert C. Derteano, Florence Kirby, the widow of exploiteer Klaytan W. Kirby, and the late Gidney Talley Jr., whose father owned *The Story of Bob and Sally* and who did some roadshowing himself, all provided valuable information. An ongoing dialogue in letters, phone calls, and meetings with David Friedman has provided me with answers to many questions and stimulated me to pose even more. Though memories have sometimes been cloudy and some details have been lost to time, in lieu of comprehensive records these accounts serve as what is often the only historical record.

How, then, does one construct a history of a subject when many of the traditional avenues open to the historian are closed or, at best, filled with holes and obstacles? George Lipsitz has noted that the dominant model of historical inquiry relies on a presumably "objectivist" relationship between the historian and a set of documents in which the scholar attempts to " 'find' concrete evidence to support arguments." He goes on to explain that this method "innately privileges the experiences of those able to leave some kind of printed documentary evidence over the experiences of those who are silenced, and it underestimates the degree to which facts are also interpretations in that they are aspects of reality singled out for notice because of some subjective judgment."[22] Instead of approaching exploitation films with an argument that demands support, I have come to them with a series of questions: Were exploitation films different from those motion pictures coming out of the Hollywood studio system, and if so, how? How were exploitation films produced, distributed, and exhibited, and were the practices of the exploiteers viable in the system dominated by Hollywood? What was the nature of the relationship between the mainstream industry and the "shadow cinema" of exploitation film? How did the exploitation filmmakers operate in such a (presumably) restrictive atmosphere? What was the relationship between the films and their audiences as well as different social institutions? And finally, what did exploitation films express to their original audiences? Although some of the questions are obviously based on presuppositions, they can only be answered by examining existing evidence.

This brings us to the ultimate question: Why is a history of classical exploitation films necessary? If the films were so bad, if they were and continue to exist on the fringes of culture, why consider them at all? In some measure, this project can be considered "revisionist" history—not because it revises the history of exploitation films, for such a history has not heretofore existed, but because it can be seen as one of a number of

recent or ongoing projects that attempt to redress past imbalances in our conception of film history. Just as Hollywood dominated production, it has also dominated the academic study of American film. Looking at questions of industrial practice has expanded the spotlight to include B films and other cinemas given little recognition by the mainstream industry and its critics. The independent African American cinema, amateur filmmaking, regional movements, and other forms that have been traditionally left out of the mix are being reintegrated into film history. Exploitation movies were a truly marginal, or liminal, form, existing in a place "in between." The films often played in grindhouses, theaters located in that physical space between the commercial areas and the skid row districts of many major cities. They played in neighborhood or small-town theaters in between runs of regular Hollywood pictures. Moreover, exploitation films fell into other liminal domains such as that between Hollywood and the hard-core stag reel, between documentary and narrative, between entertainment and education, and between art and obscenity. This study is aligned with those efforts that attempt to disassemble the canon in film studies, both to reinforce a broader definition of culture and to better understand its role in everyday life.

A second reason to study these films is that, as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White write in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression,* "what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central."[23] I find that that little aphorism has become something of a standard fixture in my work, yet it is such a simple and compelling proposition that for those who study history and culture it cannot be ignored. Looking at the marginalized exploitation industry serves to direct our attention to the centrality that issues of sex, drug use, nudity, prostitution, and other "transgressive" behaviors played in American society from World War I through the late 1950s. Through the study of exploitation films, we gain insight into the way American society grappled with these complex issues. The approach the movies took to their subjects accounts for some of this controversy, but it was the very topics at the heart of the films that tended to attract most of the rancor directed at them. If the vast majority of Hollywood pictures were about the American ideal of homogeneity and those things that bound us together geographically, socially, and politically, then exploitation films were about difference. In exploitation films, we find our society constructing many of its myths about "the Other." Of course, exploitation movies do not tell us as much about the Other as they do about the fears and anxieties of those who made and saw the movies:

working- and middle-class whites steeped in Judeo-Christian morality and the Puritan work ethic. As I will show, the tensions between an older, production-based economy and an emerging consumer culture largely determined these fears, many of which remain unresolved. For this reason, a number of the themes in the current debates about drugs, sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, and the way these issues are presented in the media parallel earlier arguments made in and directed at exploitation movies. Thus, this book is not just a history of an obscure and decidedly odd group of motion pictures, but a history of American attitudes about pleasure and desire.

Third, this book provides an understanding of how exploitation film functioned as an alternative to Hollywood while also shedding light on the mainstream motion picture business. When Hollywood abrogated any claim to the topics that would become exploitation's province, exploitation film became the object of Hollywood's "displaced abjection," "the process whereby 'low' social groups turn their figurative and actual power, not against those in actual authority, but against those who are even 'lower.' "[24] In other words, Hollywood as a cultural institution was subordinate to other, "higher," arts: painting and sculpture, theater, and opera. The organized film industry denigrated exploitation films, creating barriers to their distribution and exhibition, as a way of elevating the stature of its own product. But as I will show, the mainstream industry also depended on the contrast of exploitation to construct its own image as a responsible business and to present its films as wholesome, artistic, and, above all, entertaining. An understanding of the mainstream industry's rejection of exploitation subject matter and its relationship with the exploiteers provides us with a more complete picture of Hollywood, its mission as a maker of meaning for the culture, and its self-defined role as an intellectual and social force.

Of course, there is often an impulse to see the marginal or transgressive as somehow more authentic than the mainstream, containing the power to subvert dominant systems and values. There can be no doubt that exploitation films presented what was the most sustained domestic challenge to Hollywood's hegemony over aesthetics and content in the commercial cinema. By shaking the entrenched industry's definitions of acceptable form and subject matter, exploitation paved the way for the greater freedoms the screen began to enjoy in the years following World War II. Moreover, by simply invoking certain issues, exploitation films offered a degree of freedom for women and men who had little access to

information on sex and other topics at a time when such knowledge was restricted by law as well as social convention. At the same time, exploitation films' cautionary tales in which the pursuit of individual pleasure leads to disaster tended to discourage expressions of that desire in favor of sentiments of hard work and deferred gratification that characterized an earlier era. Warren Susman has described the fundamental conflict in twentieth-century America as being "between two cultures—an older culture, often loosely labeled Puritan-republican, producer capitalist culture, and a newly emerging culture of abundance . . . a significant and profound clash between different moral orders."[25] Drawing on Lawrence Birken's analysis of the emergence of "sexology," I show how exploitation movies embodied the tensions between the older economic system rooted in the ideology of productivity and the developing consumer-based economy. What this points to is the inadvisability of pigeonholing exploitation films, of either valorizing or demonizing them.[26] Like the culture that produced them, exploitation films were complex and filled with contradictions. This will become abundantly clear.

"*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*" is organized into two major sections. The first part operates as an industrial history. Chapter 1 uncovers the origins of exploitation films as they emerged from a series of restrictions placed on sex hygiene movies made around the time of World War I. Chapter 2 focuses on the mode of production of the films and their resulting style. Distribution, advertising, and exhibition constituted some of the major points of divergence between Hollywood films and classical exploitation movies, and they are the subject of chapter 3. In chapter 4, I look at the relationship the exploiteers had with censors on the state and local level, with representatives of the Hays Office, and with other powerful figures in the industry, such as Martin Quigley, publisher of *Motion Picture Herald.* The second part of the book examines the major categories of classical exploitation films. In each chapter, I situate the particular category, representative texts, and their reception within the broader discourses surrounding the topic, for instance, sex hygiene or drug use. This begins with the sex hygiene movie in chapter 5. Chapter 6 covers drug movies, and chapter 7 discusses vice, exotic, and atrocity films. In chapter 8, I explore the two exploitation genres that focused on nudity, nudist films and burlesque movies. The book concludes with a discussion of the factors that led to the decline and eventual disappearance of classical exploitation films.

I would like to be able to say that a book of this size and scope is the last word on exploitation films; I'm not that disingenuous nor that delusional. Each of these chapters could easily constitute a book in itself. Most of the films discussed deserve far greater analysis, and dozens of fascinating movies are not even mentioned in the text. But at least this book serves as a beginning. To paraphrase the opening of many an exploitation film, it is my sincere hope that by pulling back the veil of ignorance that has surrounded this topic for so long, we will all be able to lead happier, richer lives . . . or, to be a bit more reasonable, that we will broaden our understanding of American film history.

# 1. "An Attempt to 'Commercialize Vice'"

## *Origins of the Exploitation Film*

The entire motion picture industry has recently come in for severe criticism on account of such so-called health films as *Fit to Win* and *The End of the Road,* with which the recognized producers had nothing to do. One young girl, after attending a public presentation of one of these, said, "I never want to see another movie!"
—*Photoplay* magazine, 1919

Exploitation films are usually thought of as ethically dubious, industrially marginal, and aesthetically bankrupt. That they emerged from the mainstream industry, indeed, that their origins can be traced to respectable films made with the alleged "good intentions" of decreasing human suffering, is another paradox surrounding exploitation. But progressivism, the movement that gave birth to these films and was then instrumental in suppressing them, was itself filled with paradoxes. Progressivism was not a coherent ideology but a series of political, economic, and social reform movements that flourished in the early twentieth century. Some progressives were strictly concerned with the welfare of farmers and the agricultural sector. Some attempted to curtail the power of industry through "trust busting"; others looked to industry for management solutions with which to cure some social ills. Some progressives favored reinvigorating political energies of the people through populism; others sought to em-

power a new class of technocratic experts. Some attempted to improve the lot of newly arrived immigrants to America's cities; others hoped to keep them out. Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick note that "different reformers sometimes favored the same measure for distinctive, even opposite, reasons. Progressivism could be understood only in the light of these shifting coalitions."[1] What the progressives did share was a concern over the consequences of industrialism, an interventionist stance, and a Protestant moralism that could be justified through scientific disciplines such as statistics, sociology, and psychology.[2] The progressives "made the first efforts to grapple with the ills of a modern urban-industrial society."[3]

The cycle of white slave films that appeared in the early teens can be seen as precursors to the development of exploitation films. These films about the supposed traffic in white slavery—the buying and selling of girls and women for the purposes of prostitution—were the result of progressive anxiety over industrialization and the growth of the cities. They foreshadowed exploitation films in their promise of titillation, their professed educational mission, their topicality, and their construction of a social Other—the prostitute, in this instance.[4] To locate the origin of exploitation films, we must look to another series of motion pictures spawned by progressive reform: the sex hygiene film. In the course of just five years, the sex hygiene film moved from being relatively common and accepted to being the scourge of the young movie industry. Censorship efforts directed at hygiene films not only excised the subject from the mainstream but served to create a separate industry that began to make films on topics that Hollywood would no longer approach.[5] As a result of censorship, the exploitation film emerged as a distinct class of motion picture, existing alongside the classical Hollywood cinema from the late teens to the late fifties.

To understand the controversy that surrounded and resulted in the suppression of sex hygiene films, it is necessary to examine the social evaluation of venereal diseases and their treatments in the years prior to World War I. Medical progress throughout the nineteenth century had increased physicians' knowledge about the systemic threat of syphilis and the seriousness of gonorrhea. Yet the diseases were also attended by a social stigma that led many physicians to adopt the attitude that patients who suffered from the maladies were only receiving their due for moral transgressions.[6] In his social history of venereal disease, Allan M. Brandt states, "Because of misunderstandings of the pathology of the disease, as well as a desire to avoid the moral opprobrium attached to venereal infec-

tion, physicians often ascribed deaths due to syphilis to other causes."[7] Prince A. Morrow, the progressive physician who led the fight against venereal diseases at the turn of the century, claimed in 1901 that from 5 to 18 percent of all men carried syphilitic infections.[8]

Such efforts to call attention to and combat venereal diseases were certainly designed to decrease pain and death. However, the attention to sexually transmitted diseases accorded by Morrow and other progressive physicians stemmed not so much from the desire for accuracy in recording a cause of death as from fears that venereal diseases were among the major reasons for declining birthrates among the middle class, a phenomenon labeled "race suicide."[9] As Brandt notes, "Morrow's view demonstrated the wide-spread medical concern about the declining size of the white, middle-class family and provided a means for members of the profession to join the debate about the future of domesticity."[10] The gravity that progressive physicians attached to the potential decline of the white, middle-class family is also related to an attendant fear of the lower classes. Brandt elaborates:

> The substantial professional interest and popular anxiety that extra-genital infections generated . . . reflected concern about changes in American society during the late nineteenth century, particularly the heterogeneity and unhygienic nature of the burgeoning cities. Innocent infections promoted apprehension of the city, the working class, and the new immigrant populations, ultimately encouraging racism, and nativism. Progressive unease about hygiene, contagion, and cleanliness were evoked in the belief that in the brief contacts of everyday life—at the grocery, in the park, at the barber shop—these infections, originally obtained in "immoral" circumstances, could be passed to native, middle-class "moral" Americans. . . . Venereal diseases had become, preeminently, a disease of the "other," be it the other race, the other class, the other ethnic group.[11]

Brandt's contention that underlying concerns about sexual diseases were phobias of contamination by nondominant social groups is confirmed by period hygiene books and articles.

In a 1921 booklet, *The Control of Sex Infections,* J. Bayard Clark laid much of the blame for the spread of VD on modern industry and the working class. Clark wrote that professional prostitutes were not the largest source of the diseases because they knew how to stay free from infection. Instead, he pointed to working girls from shops and factories, servants, "and those who idle at home" as responsible for almost three-quarters of recorded

infections. "This is doubly unfortunate," Clark wrote, "as these girls not yet cut off from self-respecting sources of support still carry the hope of husbands and homes. Let us now move backward, as it were, and see if we can tell where the responsibility rests for this group of infected and oftentimes sexually ruined industrial workers who ignorantly spread the majority of sexual havoc to all classes of society."[12] Clark identified industrialism, which put young women to work while in "the flower of maternal possibility," as the source of the spread of venereal diseases.[13] And he located in the working class the conduit that carried "the social evil" from the lower classes to the middle and upper classes.

In a similar vein, a paper delivered at the National Conference of Social Work in 1919 by Edgar Sydenstricker of the U.S. Public Health Service quoted statistics showing 5.5 percent of white army cadets " 'representative of the better class of young men found in our colleges' " suffered from venereal disease, as compared to 16 percent or more of recruits "regarded as representative of 'mechanics, artisans, and untrained laborers.' "[14] Sydenstricker suggested that those in the lower economic strata were faced with conditions that led to "increasing sexual excitement and . . . lowering self-restraint." He continued: "There hardly will be any disagreement on the general observation that among the economically less favored group of our population these conditions are far more pronounced than among the well-to-do. These influences arise not only from the conditions which directly stimulate sexual activity but also from the conditions of living. The lack of healthful recreation and avocational opportunities, the monotony of daily life and work, the brevity of formal education—these factors which may be considered just as seriously as the more direct and positive forces that lower the standard of morality and tend towards vulgarity and grossness of thought." Whether because of social conditions or "direct and positive forces that lower the standard of morality," the upper and middle classes had located the source of venereal disease in the lower classes.

The fullest expression of this class doctrine can be found in the ideology underlying the pseudoscience known as eugenics. The eugenics movement was an attempt to combat "race suicide" by encouraging the "fit" white, Anglo-Saxon, middle and upper classes to have large families and "better babies" while attempting to reduce the growth of the "unfit" lower classes through means ranging from immigration restriction to sterilization. The threats posed to the status and power of the bourgeoisie by immigrants and the lower classes drew financial support for the eugenics movement

from many bankers and businessmen. Writing about the movement, Thomas M. Shapiro notes that "by focusing on both class and racial challenges, the propertied class simultaneously united on the basis of class consolidation and segmented the working class along race and ethnic lines." He suggests that eugenics gradually spread from the upper classes throughout society to become the pervasive ideology, nurturing attitudes of "racism, superiority, and outright hatred among the American people—all in the name of science."[15] Discourses on venereal disease and eugenics were so tightly intertwined as often to be inseparable.[16]

The problems of venereal disease were exacerbated by what came to be known as the "conspiracy of silence." Although physicians spoke of venereal diseases among themselves, little information was available to the society at large. In 1906 Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal,* published a series of articles on VD. His effort resulted in the loss of seventy-five thousand subscriptions.[17] As Morrow claimed in 1906, "Social sentiment holds that it is a greater violation of the properties of life publicly to mention venereal disease than privately to contract it."[18] The same sentiment was echoed fifteen years later by Clark as he spoke about "a subject which polite society has seemingly not cared to meet face on."[19] Ironically, the conspiracy of silence prevented the lower classes, who were identified as the cause of venereal diseases, from receiving medical and preventive information about them. As Brandt notes, Margaret Sanger's pamphlet, *What Every Girl Should Know,* was confiscated by the U.S. Post Office in 1912 because its references to syphilis and gonorrhea were considered obscene under the Comstock Law.[20] Although the "conspiracy of silence" was relieved somewhat in 1909 when Paul Erlich developed a viable treatment for syphilis, the heartening information about prophylactic measures was counterbalanced by moralists who claimed that dissemination of the knowledge would encourage sexual promiscuity.

Science offered new hope for sufferers of syphilis, but this was militated by old moral interdictions as issues of class and sexuality kept tensions high. It was in this highly charged atmosphere that the first play to attack directly the problem of venereal disease was produced in the United States. Some novels had obliquely referred to venereal disease, and Ibsen's *Ghosts,* with its references to Osvald's "hereditary illness," had been produced in America as early as 1882. But it was Eugene Brieux's *Damaged Goods* that pulled back the veil of secrecy that cloaked venereal disease and spoke the word syphilis on stage for the first time.[21] In 1913 Brieux's play was staged in New York City, produced under the auspices of the *Medical Review of*

*Reviews* to stave off possible public protest.[22] The drama told the story of a young man who contracts syphilis. He marries to collect a dowry despite the protests of his physician, eventually infecting his wife and baby. Lacking much dramatic action, the play was often described as a "preachment" or "medical sermon." Its staid tone and the sponsorship of the *Medical Review of Reviews* combined to keep opposition to a minimum.[23]

*Damaged Goods* was endorsed by many in New York society, who engaged boxes for the initial "special" performance.[24] In a feature story, the *New York Times* said that the play had been given "the approval of many of our leading men and women" and that a special performance had been arranged for President Woodrow Wilson and the Congress in Washington, D.C.[25] Most reviews of the production rhetorically asked if the stage were the proper place for the discussion of venereal disease yet concluded that Brieux's play served a useful purpose.[26] A review from *Hearst's Magazine* is representative: "I would wish to take a young boy or girl of mine to see this play. If they could get harm out of it, I confess I do not understand how. . . . This play puts the horrible truth in so living a way, with such clean, artistic force, that the mind is impressed as it could possibly be impressed in no other manner."[27] A *New York Times* editorial conceded the good that could come from dramatic treatment of "subjects generally considered too delicate for common conversation," but concluded, "It invariably causes harm, too, by its appeal to the merely curious and morbid minds."[28] Nevertheless, the conspiracy of silence had been broken and venereal diseases became legitimate subject matter for drama. "*Damaged Goods,*" writes Brandt, "became a symbol of a new sexual openness."[29]

It was only a short time before *Damaged Goods* and its star and driving force, Richard Bennett, made the transition from the stage to the screen. Scenarist Harry Pollard expanded Brieux's chamber play for the American Film Manufacturing Company, and the film was released by Mutual in late 1914. In a letter to the *New York Times* in 1952, Terry Ramsaye described the movie as a prestige production, claiming that it was "pretentiously made, for that day, at a cost, including promotional expenses, of less than $50,000, and its states' rights . . . sold for $600,000, thus indicating a boxoffice take of probably more than $2,000,000."[30] Ramsaye claimed that the production required special promotion and commanded higher ticket prices. Reviewers for the industry trade magazines seemed to be caught up in a progressive fervor when they discussed the film. *Variety*'s reviewer urged, "See *Damaged Goods,* and after seeing it, tell your son or daughter to see it, and let them tell other boys and girls, and you tell other fathers

and mothers, until all the world has seen *Damaged Goods* on the picture screen."[31] *The Moving Picture World* found the film "free from taint which inheres in most of the 'sex problem plays.' It does not parade evil in order that good may come of it."[32]

What was being praised? For one thing, the reviews took special note of the social status of the protagonist. George Dupont was described as "a young man of excellent home," a lawyer by profession, who is set to marry "a prominent society belle." George gets syphilis from a "street walker."[33] Annette Kuhn notes that "VD propaganda films . . . construct sexually active women as the principal cause of venereal infection"; it is also important to note the low social station of those women and how the disease is visited upon those of the upper classes.[34] The social dynamics established in *Damaged Goods,* and repeated in most other hygiene films of the period, illustrate Brandt's claim that venereal disease was seen as a malady of the Other inflicted on the bourgeoisie.

Sander L. Gilman has described the Other as that onto which we project our anxieties, externalizing our loss of control. The Other is not random, nor is it isolated from historical context. He suggests that when a group makes demands on a society, "the status anxiety produced by those demands characteristically translates into a sense of loss of control. Thus a group that has been marginally visible can suddenly become the definition of the Other."[35] Gilman goes on to describe how difference, in a variety of guises, threatens order and control: "This mental representation of difference is but the projection of the tension between control and its loss present within each individual in every group. The tension produces an anxiety that is given shape as the Other. The Other is protean because of its source, the conflicts within the individual as articulated in the vocabulary of the group. Qualities of the Other readily form patterns with little or no relationship to any external reality."[36] Industrial workers, immigrants, and blacks from the South were moving to America's great cities in tremendous numbers in the 1910s. At times, these groups made specific demands regarding working and living conditions; at other times, they appeared to require special treatment to be socialized or broken of "bad" habits or traditions. Such demands, or the perception of demands, led to a sense of loss of control over the reproduction of a class and a way of life, resulting in the middle and upper-middle classes projecting their fears on groups with lower status.

In *Damaged Goods,* the catastrophe that visits George was brought about by a related error. The film version of Brieux's play features a bach-

elor party thrown for George by his friends. He gets drunk and spends the night with a prostitute, acquiring the disease from a momentary failing of standards. Alcohol was often cited as a contributing factor in the spread of venereal disease, and hygiene pictures assimilated this notion.[37] In *Damaged Goods,* as well as its successors, the consumption of alcohol frequently occurs, resulting in the bourgeois hero dropping his guard and engaging in social (and sexual) intercourse with the lower class. The audience was encouraged to view drinking as wrong not because of some innate moral doctrine or sin but because it broke down social discriminations, allowing a mingling of the classes. Lower classes then spread venereal diseases to the bourgeoisie, rendering wives sterile and babies diseased or dead, with the middle class facing "race suicide." The temperance and eugenics movements merged in *Damaged Goods* as George gives syphilis to his wife and their child is born with the disease. Morality became class doctrine rather than religious dogma in the early sex hygiene films.[38]

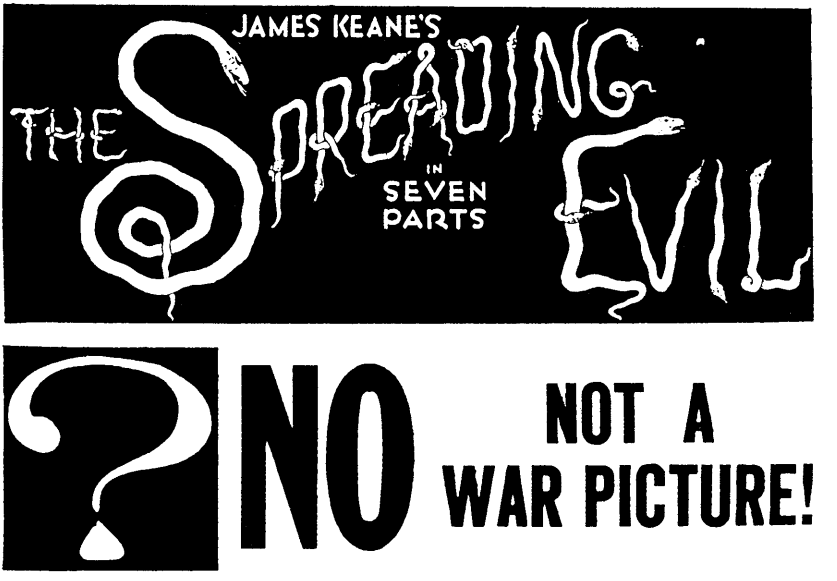
Just who made up the audience for the early sex hygiene films is difficult to determine. In any case, we can be assured that the films were successful. A 1915 article in *The Moving Picture World* spoke of *Damaged Goods*' run in Detroit: "The Grand Circus started to show *Damaged Goods* on Monday, Oct. 18, and has placed [*sic*] to capacity every performance. The Grand Circus only seats about 650 and the total daily attendance averaged 5,000 people. In the evenings the crowd has been so large that three policemen were sent over by the police department to keep the people in line and from blocking the sidewalks. Manager Blankmeyer will run *Damaged Goods* at least four weeks."[39] The same article also indicated the willingness of distributors to exploit the hot topic of sex hygiene in its reference to a 1913 film, *A Victim of Sin,* put in release to capitalize on the success of *Damaged Goods. A Victim of Sin* appears to have been almost identical to the Brieux work in structure and detail. It followed the story of a rising young medical student who falls in love with the daughter of a prominent banker, becomes infected with a venereal disease after spending an evening in Bohemia with friends, and returns to his hometown, where he is overcome by "a moment of forgetfulness," resulting in the pregnancy of his fiancée. A child is born, "suffering the sins of his Father, but soon after birth, is relieved by the merciful hand of Death."[40] Again, someone from society's upper crust, a physician, suffers because of a sexual liaison with a member of the lower class.

*Damaged Goods* proved so popular on its initial run that it was rereleased in 1917 following American military engagement along the Mexi-

can border. The newly acquired freedom to discuss the topic of venereal diseases had focused national attention on conditions in cantonments along the U.S. southern border, where troops had assembled to guard against raids by Pancho Villa in 1916. Saloons and red light districts contributed to a general air of moral laxity and fostered the concern among progressives and politicians alike that an army suffering from the ravages of venereal diseases was, in fact, no army at all. The Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) was created in 1917 to battle VD among American armed forces through a program of planned recreation or distraction, and coercion. The progressive philosophy that posited education as a cure for all ills was bureaucratized in the CTCA with its program of "educational prophylaxis."[41]

Concern about venereal disease was not limited to rowdy troops in far-flung outposts. Mark Thomas Connelly quotes a physician writing for the *Journal of Sociological Medicine* in 1917 claiming that the actual number of cases of VD in a large city was one hundred times greater than the official reports indicated. According to Connelly, the article "manifestly articulated the contemporary belief that venereal disease was rampant and *out of control,* a belief just as vital in focusing medical and public attention on the problem of prostitution and venereal disease as the concurrent explosion of new medical knowledge of the nature and consequences of venereal infection."[42] Connelly's characterization of contemporary beliefs holding that venereal diseases were "out of control" is important. Exploitation films generally followed when discourse on a given issue or problem reached a convulsive state. The white slave scare around 1913 served as the spark for a series of films and, as we shall see, the pattern was repeated with venereal disease pictures in the late teens, nudist films in the early 1930s, antidope movies during the marijuana scare in the mid-1930s, vice ring pictures following Lucky Luciano's racketeering conviction in 1936, the postwar hygiene films, more narcotic movies in the early 1950s, and so on. Exploitation films were fueled by moral panic.

In 1919 eight new sex hygiene films, along with another rerelease of *Damaged Goods,* hit American screens in rapid succession. At the vanguard of the postwar wave of sex hygiene features was *The Spreading Evil,* produced by James Keane and released in the last months of 1918. Though complicated by a story of wartime intrigue, the theme of venereal disease penetrating the upper strata of society from the lower classes was once again evident.[43] The film received the enthusiastic endorsement of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. *The Moving Picture World* praised the film for




2 Not a war picture in the conventional sense, James Keane's *The Spreading Evil* (1918) was about the war on syphilis.

its frankness, noting that "the production must be given credit for setting forth every phase of its story with acceptable delicacy."[44] *Variety* fairly trumpeted, "We are moving rapidly in the advancement of civilization! Only a very short time ago an educational film of the undoubted value of *The Spreading Evil* would not have been permitted by the authorities."[45]

At the beginning of 1919, *The Scarlet Trail* was added to the group of films that illustrated the effects of venereal disease on the middle class. In it, a corrupt financier threatens the bourgeoisie with his uncontrolled avarice. Not only does Ezra Grafton head a syndicate of quack doctors who sell VD nostrums, but his son Bob was born with congenital syphilis. Bob, planning to marry a debutante, learns of his fate and eventually kills himself, leaving his father "crushed by the knowledge that he is reaping of his own iniquities."[46] The film did not point directly to the lower classes as the breeding ground of syphilis, but did demonstrate the dangers inherent in the middle class letting its guard down: the threat comes from Bob, who could perpetuate his father's disease among the bourgeoisie by marrying Ethel Harding. The film was widely praised for its inoffensiveness: "A disagreeable theme has been handled carefully"; "One point in the picture's favor is the absence of suggestive scenes"; "[The director] may be

criticized, in fact, for being too delicate"; "The picture was made in a clean way."[47]

Up to and including the release of *The Scarlet Trail,* venereal disease pictures had been, above all, "clean." The protests that they generated seem to have been attributable to the subject itself, a holdover from the conspiracy of silence, rather than their treatment of VD. Indeed, the earliest venereal disease films were evidently subjected to little pressure from censors. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise, as the films had little reason to be censored: they espoused morality and continence as a middle-class defense against the threat posed by subordinate classes. Moreover, the films were made by major companies or the large pool of undifferentiated independents and as such were part of mainstream commercial releases. Thus, the early sex hygiene films can be viewed as part of a social discourse taking place on a biological battlefield where class conflict was played out on an intimate level. VD was represented as tantamount to a revolutionary weapon of the poor, a weapon that posed a far greater threat to the middle class than bullets because it robbed the bourgeoisie of the chance to reproduce both their population and their ideologies. The "educational" aim of the films was to offer morality and continence as a shield for bourgeois protection, not to offer broader solutions that would benefit the underclass as well. Trade journals, newspapers, and censors—the forums, watchdogs, and arbiters of American middle-class tastes and agendas—had little reason to argue with the films that cautioned against "the evils that threaten our future race unless we act now and act quickly."[48]

What, then, explains the dramatic reversal in the reception of sex hygiene films in 1919 after the release of *The Scarlet Trail?* The backlash against the venereal disease pictures is linked to three films produced by the CTCA as armed service training films: *Fit to Fight* (1918), *Fit to Win* (1919), and *The End of the Road* (1918). Ironically, it was these state-supported films that brought about the suppression of the sex hygiene film and the institution of exploitation movies. *Fit to Fight* traced the adventures—and brushes with VD—of five young men of divergent backgrounds in an army training camp. *Fit to Win* was essentially the same film but with an added epilogue that takes place after the war.[49] *The End of the Road* was created to impart lessons about social diseases to a female audience and told the story of two young women.[50] Made during the war, the three films were turned over at war's end by the CTCA to the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA), an organization created by the merger

of two existing groups (the American Vigilance Association and the American Federation for Sex Hygiene) in 1913 to combat prostitution and venereal disease through education.[51] ASHA placed the films under copyright and selected Isaac Silverman's Public Health Films to distribute them. Twenty-five percent of the profit from the pictures was to be returned to ASHA. Officials of the organization must have considered their decision to release the films to the general public to be a benevolent gesture toward a society in need of education about venereal disease. But authorities in the motion picture industry and municipal and state governments did not respond with anything akin to charity.

With the "war to make the world safe for democracy" just ended, *Fit to Win* was advertised as "The Opening Shot in the Big Battle To Make the World Clean and Safe For Posterity."[52] In April 1919, Public Health Films ran a trade ad, reproducing a letter from Assistant Surgeon General C. C. Pierce addressed to state and municipal boards of health. The letter stated in part, "In carrying forward this campaign throughout civilian life, the United States Public Health Service asks the cooperation of State and Municipal governments and requests the abrogation or suspension of such censorships as might impede this very essential missionary work. *Fit to Win* will be shown to both men and women, but always separate screenings except where audiences may be absolutely segregated according to sex. Children under the age of sixteen will be rigorously excluded."[53] The letter indicated a suspicion that some censorship might be attempted. Moreover, it set out exhibition strategies that were to become standard for exploitation films as they matured in the 1920s: screenings segregated by gender and minimum age requirements.[54]

The new films prompted far more caution on the part of reviewers. "Is *Fit to Win* fit to be shown is the first question that an exhibitor wants answered," stated *The Moving Picture World.* The journal concluded that under the proper circumstances, benefits could result, but that "It does not belong in a family theater to be shown to a mixed audience of men and women."[55] *Exhibitor's Trade Review* directed theater owners' attention to the prologue, which offered "actual views of diseased men and women with the ugly sores open to view."[56] One writer speculated that *Fit to Fight* "may have to be shown in the city dump."[57] Still, the films were apparently very popular with audiences. In May 1919, *Fit to Win* along with *The End of the Road* were "playing to capacity in the fifth week of a 12-week run" at the Grand opera house in Brooklyn.[58] *The End of the Road*'s opening in a Syracuse theater drew fifteen hundred "at top dollar price" and did almost

$9,000 in one week at a Philadelphia theater "with two shows a day and a 25 to one dollar scale."[59]

The *Mutual v. Ohio* decision, handed down by the Supreme Court in 1915, had left motion pictures without First Amendment armor. In spite of efforts to stave off any legal troubles with its ploy of segregated audiences and cautionary reviews, *Fit to Win* and its two companion films were the subject of tremendous censorship. In Dallas, censors deferred action while a team of physicians passed judgment: "Nauseating close-ups showing ravages of venereal disease on the human body will be lopped out of the film. So will the section that deals with the squalor of the vice district. This was too raw for the medicos, even though they did look at it from a scientific viewpoint."[60] In New York City, *Fit to Win* was the subject of litigation when the city license commissioner, John Gilchrist, threatened to revoke the license of any theater showing the film. In court, Gilchrist claimed, "I believe that any film or picture dealing with the social evil, particularly with diseases arising out of the social evil are improper to present before mixed audiences."[61] The commissioner had acted after a letter, critical of the film, appeared in the *Brooklyn Eagle*.[62] His authority to ban the film was eventually upheld by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.[63] *The End of the Road* was barred in Pennsylvania and was the subject of a vigorous campaign, instigated by the National Association of the Moving Picture Industry (NAMPI), to have it blocked in Chicago. The Providence, Rhode Island, Police Commission labeled the films "an attempt to 'commercialize vice.' "[64]

Why were the three government films subjected to such harsh censorship when the earlier films had not been? The most obvious reason for increased censorship seems to have been the graphic footage of the effects of venereal disease. Several efforts had already been directed at eliminating films that were sexually oriented or overly gruesome.[65] The nature and number of sex hygiene films in 1919 led to a critical mass. Stacie Colwell has questioned "the extent to which increasingly graphic depictions helped precipitate the 'backlash' " against sex hygiene films.[66] Relying on government records from September 1918, she indicates that all hospital footage was cut from *The End of the Road* and prophylaxis footage was removed from *Fit to Fight*. Yet the reviews and trade paper stories on *Fit to Fight* and *Fit to Win* from 1919 refer to "ugly sores open to view" and "nauseating close-ups showing ravages of venereal disease." National Board of Review documents (one from March 1919, one undated) in which reviewers were bothered by "the graphic nature" of *The End of the*

*Road* and "sicken[ed]" by shots of syphilitic lesions are further evidence that at least some of the material that was to have been eliminated was either not cut or, more likely, was reinserted by the distributor.[67]

Second, the crisis surrounding the sex hygiene films occurred as motion picture production in the United States was settling in southern California and the industry attempted to upgrade its public image. More important, however, is the fact that the industry was stabilizing around the primary commodity of the feature-length narrative film. A series of conventions had developed around the narrative film to the point where any deviation from those conventions was seen as improper or inadequate. The educational aspect of the hygiene films, usually referred to as "propaganda," set them apart from the conventions of narrative filmmaking.[68] Annette Kuhn has pointed out that in the hygiene films, characters operated as representatives of certain moral positions instead of as psychologically rounded individuals. I have identified five major character functions in the early hygiene films:

*The Innocent:* The Innocent is the young man or woman who, through ignorance about the ways of the world in general and sexual matters in particular, finds himself or herself in need of education. A male Innocent may contract VD from a prostitute or a "loose woman." A female Innocent either contracts a venereal disease or becomes pregnant, often forcing her to seek an abortion. In other instances, the need for education may arise from a legitimate pregnancy in which the prospective mother requires information about childbirth. Although the Innocents' actions may differ, their function—that of receiving proper education or demonstrating the need for education on sexual matters—always remains the same.

*The Corrupter:* The Corrupter is the man or woman who leads the Innocent down a path that is both injurious to the Innocent's health and contravenes society's formal sexual mores. The Corrupter may be a prostitute who gives a young man VD or a worldly man or insistent boy who seduces a girl, leaving her with a venereal disease or pregnant. As exploitation developed, theatrical agents or men posing as showbiz types often act in this capacity. The Corrupter may be conscious or unconscious of his or her actions. Minor versions of the Corrupter may also appear in a film in the form of friends or acquaintances who induce the Innocent to try alcohol or cigarettes or instigate a wild night on the town or a visit to a house of prostitution.

*The Parents:* Parents appear in two complementary, or contradictory, pairs in hygiene films. Good Parents are those who have given their children

proper sexual and moral instruction at an early age, arming the child with knowledge of how to avoid disease and unwanted pregnancy. Bad Parents are those who, through unreasonable modesty or self-centeredness, have failed to tell their children about sex, leaving them prey to the Corrupters of the world. Bad Parents are equated with the forces of ignorance in society.

*The Crusader:* The Crusader generally appears in the guise of a physician, a teacher, a public health officer, or a reporter. He—and the Crusader usually is a male character—either supports birth control, battles venereal disease and abortion, or engages in some combination of these. The Crusader is often in direct confrontation with the Bad Parents and local officials, who wish to maintain the status quo by standing in the way of sex education. The Crusader operates from a pragmatic point of view, often espousing a philosophy that may be at odds with the community but is proved to be in everyone's best interest in the final analysis. He is the man with a bitter pill that must be swallowed for the good of society. The Crusader often offers direct aid to the Innocent in his or her time of need and addresses both the characters in the film and the audience.

*The Charlatan:* The Charlatan is a physician, or someone posing as one, who takes advantage of the Innocent's condition and advances his or her suffering. The Charlatan may be a quack who offers nostrums for venereal diseases or illegal abortions. He—and the Charlatan is almost always male—is motivated solely by greed and has no regard for the health or welfare of those he attends. The Crusader works to expose the Charlatan.

Though they can be broken down into numerous subtypes, each of the major archetypes embodies a canon of beliefs that compel the character to act in a prescribed manner and propel the film along a fairly narrow trajectory. Education is at the axis of character function in the sex hygiene exploitation film and provides the locus for the discourse on social issues under examination. Each character functions to either receive, promote, stifle, or create the need for education about sex and reproductive health. The limited number of characters engaged in set functions contributes to relatively standardized story lines. Indeed, many of the plots of hygiene pictures appear to be scene-for-scene duplicates of earlier films. Once initial exposition has set the time and place of the film, a lack of education about one or more of the topics (birth control, abortion, etc.) is established. As Kuhn notes, rather than "identifying" with characters as in standard narrative film, audiences were "addressed as occupying a precisely identical position of ignorance and moral corruptibility as charac-

ters in the fiction." The lack of knowledge shared by the characters and the audience was filled at the same moment.[69] This, in addition to scenes of documentary material on the diseases and their treatments that were inserted into a narrative framework, placed the sex hygiene feature "in a rather uneasy relation with contemporary approaches to cinematic narrativity."[70] I will expand on the issue of formal properties of exploitation films and the controversy over mixing education with entertainment in succeeding chapters.

Beyond the unpleasant spectacle of disease and the awkward relationship to dominant cinematic practice, a study of the psychological effects of *Fit to Win* conducted at Johns Hopkins University by Karl S. Lashley and John B. Watson identified a series of criticisms of the film that point to other reasons for the widespread censorship. The first broad category of criticism identified was that based "upon purely sectarian concepts of morality."[71] A large segment of the leadership in the Catholic Church took a hard line on the government films and others released in 1919, organizing a pamphlet campaign against the films.[72] These same sectarian criticisms might have greeted the earlier films but never in a quantity that prompted heavy censorship. The second category of criticism claimed that "the method of sex education by motion pictures is ineffective or that it will lead to specific anti-social alterations in behavior."[73] Two of the criticisms enumerated in Lashley and Watson's second category seem to have a direct bearing on the change in attitude about the films. First, the government-produced movies emphasized the importance of chemical prophylaxis, something earlier films did not do.[74] As Brandt points out, "The more conservative social hygienists and purity activists centered their attack on the films' advocacy of chemical prophylaxis: 'If you can't be moral, be careful.' "[75] Information about prophylaxis was thought to counter messages about continence, thereby increasing immorality. Second, "The picture shows as a characteristic of the young men described in it a carelessness and lack of moral responsibility in sex matters which casts an unmerited reflection upon the decency of the average American home and of the Army."[76]

Furthermore, not only did the films pose prophylaxis as an alternative to continence, but *Fit to Fight, Fit to Win,* and *The End of the Road* did not locate the source of venereal diseases in the lower classes, as had the earlier films either directly or by implication. The five characters at the center of *Fit to Fight/Win* who are faced with the specter of VD are a mixed group. Billy Hale and Chick Carlton are college boys, Kid McCarthy is a boxer,

**3** Richard Bennet (left), the star of *Damaged Goods* (1914), appeared as an army physician in *The End of the Road* (1919). Claire Adams (center) learns "the facts of life" and becomes a successful nurse; her friend, played by Joyce Fair (right), who did not receive sex instruction, contracts syphilis. (Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive)

Hank Simpson a country bumpkin, and Jack Garvin is a cigar salesman. Thus, rather than invading a bourgeois home, venereal disease affects the egalitarian world of the military camp: members of all classes are equally at risk. *The End of the Road* tells the story of venereal disease having the same impact on the bourgeoisie as on the working class. No longer are the poor ruining middle-class lives through the transmission of venereal infections, leaving them to face the possibility of race suicide. In the government-made films, syphilis and gonorrhea are equal-opportunity diseases.

The issue of class-based differences in taste was another area of criticism these films faced. Although Lashley and Watson did not actually place class difference on their list of criticisms, they observed that "well-informed men and women" attacked the films as crude, inconsistent, tedious, and maudlin. On the other hand, "Sentiments which were ridiculed by the

medical and like groups were applauded vociferously by the carmen, soldiers, and others." The researchers concluded: "In the criticism of sex hygiene pictures it is not infrequently evident that the critic has failed to consider this class distinction and that no small part of his criticism is a rationalization of his own revulsion against the driveling inanity of the story."[77]

Unlike the earlier hygiene films, such as *Damaged Goods,* the government films presented alternative representations of class. By placing middle-class protagonists on the same level as poorer victims of the disease, class differences were not perpetuated but broken down. As military training films, the pictures were designed to be egalitarian, to promote cooperation and a sense of shared experience among men from different places and classes so energies and efforts could be directed toward winning the war by "keeping fit to fight." But following the war, with the status quo reestablished and reaffirmed and the class lines that had been erased by the leveling experience of military life redrawn, the films fell under attack. It should also be noted that in the wake of the war, "un-American" themes were frowned on to such an extent that NAMPI passed a resolution stating the industry's "determination to maintain 100% Americanism upon the screens of this country as scrupulously as during the late emergency."[78] The 100% Americanism of the war rapidly turned into the vicious nativism that gripped the United States in the 1920s, mistrustful of anything not white, Protestant, and conspicuously productive. Although no strict correlation was made between "un-American" propaganda and sex hygiene films while NAMPI was urging 100% Americanism, the trade association was also engaged in an effort to rid the nation's screens of hygiene films. Furthermore, the fact that *Exhibitor's Trade Review* placed boxed stories about "American ideas" and hygiene films on the same page as its report about the NAMPI convention indicates a tacit connection between the two issues. Thus, in addition to implying anticommunist, antiforeigner, and non-Protestant, the term un-American may also have been a coded term for "un-middle-class."

Finally, the CTCA films were criticized because they were part of a glut of sex hygiene films released in 1919. All of the films previously mentioned (with the possible exception of *A Victim of Sin*) were in release in 1919, along with three others, *Open Your Eyes, The Solitary Sin,* and *Wild Oats. Open Your Eyes,* one of the first films produced by the brothers Warner, followed the familiar formula: syphilis rising from the lower class to attack the bourgeoisie.[79] *The Solitary Sin,* the only film of the period to also deal

4 Samuel Cummins's VD film *Wild Oats* (1919), billed here as *Some Wild Oats* for a Detroit run, was criticized for its "coating of vulgar humor." It marked the beginning of Cummins's long career in exploitation.

with the subject of masturbation, is difficult to judge on the basis of the limited plot information available. However, *Wild Oats* offers another, more democratic view of victims and potential victims of syphilis with its rich city dweller/poor country cousin dichotomy.[80] Reviews of *Open Your Eyes* were positive, but those for *The Solitary Sin* and *Wild Oats* were less so.[81] *Moving Picture World* criticized *The Solitary Sin* because "It does not succeed in keeping a pleasant side uppermost, as many of its predecessors have done."[82] *Wild Oats* was damned for its "coating of vulgar humor."[83] Whatever the individual merits of these films, they were lumped with the CTCA films into what seemed to be an abundance of morbidly prurient motion pictures.

The general reaction to these other sex hygiene films paralleled the attitude toward the CTCA films: an unfavorable and, in some cases, hostile

response that went beyond negative reviews. Like the government films, they were widely censored. *Open Your Eyes* and *The Solitary Sin* were associated with *Fit to Win* and *The End of the Road* and barred in Providence, Rhode Island.[84] In Connecticut, a state law was enacted that forbade the public exhibition of "any stereopticon views or motion pictures in any way relating to the subject of venereal diseases without first securing a written permit from the state commissioner of health; and no person shall permit the exhibition of any such stereopticon views or motion pictures in any such building owned or controlled by him until such permit has been secured." Violation of the Connecticut law was punishable by a $500 fine, a six-month prison term, or both.[85] The Pennsylvania State Board of Censors banned any film that dealt with VD.[86] With the final decision in the New York City *Fit to Win* case in July 1919 came an editorial in *Exhibitor's Trade Review* that claimed to support sex hygiene campaigns, but added, "We part company with those who believe that the desired result will be gained by promiscuous exhibition of such pictures throughout the country."[87] The editors went on to predict "a new storm" of censorship legislation and a crippling of the motion picture's propaganda potential if the hygiene films continued.

Following its attempt in May to have *The End of the Road* barred, NAMPI gathered for its annual meeting in Rochester, New York, in August. At that meeting, a resolution was passed "unanimously declaring war to the bitter end on anyone making or showing salacious pictures and obligating themselves to submit every film to the National Board of Review."[88] *Exhibitor's Trade Review* labeled the resolution "The Death Knell of Legalized Censorship and the 'Educational' Sex Film."[89] In the 6 September 1919 edition of the same publication, a letter from Surgeon General Rupert Blue was published, which referred to an ad for *Some Wild Oats* (an alternative title for *Wild Oats*) that had appeared a month earlier. The ad had claimed that the film was "Approved by the Surgeon Generals of the Army and Navy, and the Public Health Department," a fact refuted by Blue. Beneath the letter, the magazine ran a notice that it would no longer accept advertising for or review sex hygiene films.[90] In the 20 September issue of *The Moving Picture World,* a notice from Surgeon General Blue was printed: "This is to inform you that the Public Health Service has withdrawn its indorsement [*sic*] of the films, *Fit to Win, End of the Road* and *Open Your Eyes,* and all other pictures dealing with venereal diseases that have been shown or are to be shown commercially."[91]

Although the medical community and public health bodies initially had

been quick to endorse hygiene films, by 1919 they had become wary of offering such support. Much like the motion picture industry, organized medicine was attempting to upgrade its public image. It was during this period that the medical market was becoming stabilized around office practice, specialization, and hospital affiliation. Professional organizations had all but eliminated "irregular" doctors from the scene and were in a position to dictate who would get care, when, where, and how care would be administered, and how it would be paid for. Association with anything that was frowned on by part of the public threatened to bring discredit on professional medicine.[92] The fact that there remained a division within the population about the morality of venereal diseases and their treatment meant endorsement of hygiene films by medical men and women could potentially alienate a segment of the public. Moreover, the profession was becoming increasingly protective of its domain, opposing virtually all government and private efforts that it considered "interference." This extended to the area of hygiene movies, which were rarely made by people with medical training. The medical profession as a whole eventually adopted a stance against the commercial exhibition of hygiene films, and by 1927 the *Journal of Social Hygiene* went so far as to label their producers "charlatans," perhaps the ultimate insult that could be bestowed by the medical community.[93]

So, by the end of 1919, the welcome that had greeted *Damaged Goods* in 1914 had turned into sour denunciations as public health officials, critics, censors, and the leaders of the motion picture industry attempted to dissociate themselves from the sex hygiene feature. In 1921 a conference of top motion picture directors adopted a self-regulatory code, this time called the Thirteen Points or Standards, that condemned production and exhibition of movies with content that was frequently cut by censor boards. These topics included "exploiting interest in sex in an improper or suggestive form or manner," white slavery, nakedness, illicit love and vice, "the use of narcotics and other unnatural practices dangerous to social morality," as well as vulgarity, ridicule of authority, and disrespect for religion.[94] Underlying the list and Hollywood's concern about censorship was an economic imperative.

By 1920, existing state and municipal censorship bodies could ravage prints of movies with demands for cuts, which seldom coincided from area to area, or they could reject films completely. The production of uniformly "clean" motion pictures could mean avoiding the expense of customizing prints for each censor board and playing a movie in every city

and state. Moreover, the industry's anxiety about its public image compelled its leaders to distance themselves from topics and, perhaps more to the point, moral attitudes, which were points of contestation. This "ceaseless quest for respectability" led to strict self-regulation as a means to avoid controversy and maximize profits.[95] Over time, Hollywood strengthened its self-regulatory mechanisms, first by adopting the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls," and then through the creation and eventual enforcement of the Production Code. More on the relationship between industry self-regulation and exploitation films follows in chapter 4.

Censorship, which was itself born out of progressive concerns, was marshaled against films that were made to bring about progressive reform. During the heated period around 1919, as the motion picture industry abandoned sex hygiene and other controversial topics, a schism occurred in the production community. Most producers chose to toe the industry line by rejecting "salacious pictures." This included major companies but also many of the small firms, such as Warner Bros., the makers of *Open Your Eyes.* Others, like Samuel Cummins, the producer of *Wild Oats,* pursued the profit potential in exploitation. By the early 1920s a growing number of minor producers, roadshowmen, and states' rights distributors were developing into a loose coalition that can be described as the exploitation film industry. An analysis of that industry and its films is the focus of the rest of this book.

Several factors led to the suppression of sex hygiene films in 1919 which in turn contributed to the emergence of exploitation films. The films deployed "unacceptable" sexual spectacle, an educational address, and mixed documentary and fictional material in such a way as to displace them from what was becoming the standard industry commodity. This reliance on spectacle remained a crucial component of the success of the exploitation film over the next four decades. Exploitation films remained closely tied to what Tom Gunning has identified as "the cinema of attractions": a cinema that "shows" rather than "tells."[96] Spectacle was an important ingredient in many Hollywood genres, such as musicals, but it usually functioned within the mise-en-scène (elaborate sets or special effects) and served to advance the narrative (song-and-dance numbers in which characters professed love, etc.). In contrast to the use of spectacle in the Hollywood cinema, exploitation film spectacle could spill over to impede or even obscure narrative. The fact that the sex hygiene films deviated from what was emerging as the film industry's normative practice made them vulnerable to attacks from religious quarters based on

sectarian concepts of morality, from health professionals and others who felt that sex education on film was either ineffective or would lead to counterproductive, antisocial behaviors, and from those whose more "refined" sensibilities were offended. These factors, in combination with the glut of venereal disease movies, attracted the disapproval of censors and those in the film industry who were organizing in an effort to increase power, prestige, and profits.

Presentations of the class dynamics in the spread of venereal diseases in the CTCA-produced films and those that immediately followed permitted a broader range of interpretations regarding the location and spread of venereal diseases. *Fit to Fight, Fit to Win,* and *The End of the Road* offered a more egalitarian view of the social hygiene problem by not identifying the lower classes as the initial source of the diseases. The morality and continence that had been preached by the earlier films as the only method to stave off race suicide disappeared in the films produced by the government, which promoted prophylaxis as a possible solution. The films that failed to support the bourgeois position were grouped together as opposed to the dominant view and fell out of favor with industry groups that responded to outside pressure. In later years, exploitation films often gave the impression of resistant or alternative positions to mainstream films. Their very existence appeared to fly in the face of Hollywood's image of propriety and responsibility. However, though later films invariably broke with the mainstream industry's self-imposed guidelines regarding content, the moral position they took, whether on drug use, prostitution, or illicit sex, was generally quite conservative.

As they developed, exploitation films continued to be the medium for telling stories about the Other to an idealized, homogeneous America that existed only in popular imagination. They were about those stigmatized as disease carriers, drug addicts, and prostitutes, those who were forced to undergo back alley abortions, and those who chose alternative lifestyles such as nudism or homosexuality. Even pregnant women, by virtue of their physical condition, were Other, and movies about childbirth became an exploitation staple. In hygiene films made before and during World War I, the Other was inscribed with class anxiety, with the poor presented as a direct threat to the monied classes; that crude dichotomy began to change after the war. During the 1920s, the United States and other Western economic systems underwent a deep and relatively rapid conversion from a classical political economy that saw production as the ultimate end of economic activity, to a neoclassical or marginalist economy that saw

consumption as the ultimate end. Attending this economic shift were a series of anxieties about sex located in the emergence of what Lawrence Birken has called sexology, the science of sex.

Stallybrass and White have examined the separation of popular pleasure from the emergent economic domain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The divorce of "economic man" from the physical created two separate spheres: the private, commercial, intellectual, and civic world of the marketplace and the surging, vulgar, physical realm of the carnival that celebrated the "lower body stratum." According to Birken, sexology emerged during another transition, from a productivist to a consumerist intellectual culture. Sexology exhibited ideological similarities to economic marginalism, "especially the stress on scarcity and idiosyncratic consumption. Moreover, like marginalism, sexology exhibits the contradictory structure of an ideology simultaneously embodying both productivist and consumerist values."[97] On the one hand, the productivist elements of sexology were "gendered, work-oriented, and optimistic"; on the other hand, the consumerist facets were "genderless, play-oriented, and pessimistic."[98] Birken goes on to suggest that "sexology was at first directed against, even as it helped define, the first consumers: the upper-middle classes. In particular, this is important to understand because sexology was not merely, as Foucault seems to argue, a system of control. It conferred a kind of freedom as well as a set of controls to limit that freedom."[99] In effect, the barriers that had been erected between high and low were, ever so slowly, becoming more permeable in the transition to an economic system grounded in consumerist values that placed a new premium on personal satisfaction.

Birken discusses the three phases or styles of sexology's evolution in the twentieth century: "The first style of theorizing, inheriting the ideology of the previous epoch most directly, distinguished normal coitus from its distortions, thus insisting upon the primacy of heterogenital desire. The second phase differentiated between heterosexuals in the right and heterosexuals in the wrong (inverted) bodies, consequently postulating the existence of heterosexual desire alone, although not necessarily directed toward reproduction. But in the third phase of the early development of sexology, some sex theorists began grudgingly to admit the possibility of a homosexual as well as heterosexual desire, thus assuming the existence of only desire in general."[100] So, as Birken explains, the sphere allotted to desire was enlarged, but at the same time new divisions and classifications of desire were constructed, which served to reinstate order and hierarchy.

"Sexology," he concludes, "thus appears to have functioned in part as a kind of cultural defense against its own tendency to enlarge the sphere allotted to desire."

Some of progressivism's efforts to control the disorder of the modern urban-industrial society can be seen as a means of reinstating order to developing divisions and classifications of desire. Exploitation films, in turn, grew out of that reform impulse in which investigation and exposure of social ills were necessary to bring about the educational process required to achieve reform. Thus, two of the hallmarks of progressivism—exposé and education—were at the heart of the exploitation film. Within exploitation, these two impulses were dependent on one another but often seemed to be contradictory because they became so distilled in practice. Exposé concentrated into titillation, and education was reduced to a brand of moralizing pedantry as exploitation films drew on classifications of desire that were based on the older, productivist economic system. Exploitation films are aligned with the more coercive strain of progressivism in which paternalistic and nativist impulses led to the creation of social Others marked by the "unproductivity" of their desire: the sexually precocious teen, the middle-class disease sufferer, the contraceptive user, the drug addict, and even the pregnant woman. As we shall see, exploitation films embodied the tensions between the older economic system rooted in the ideology of productivity and the developing consumer-based economy. Although this conflict may have appeared at times in Hollywood films, it was foregrounded in exploitation's tales of sexual desire and the pursuit of individual pleasure. As a group, exploitation films tended to discourage expressions of personal desire to favor sentiments of hard work that characterized an earlier era. The result was a nostalgia for an imagined past in which those unproductive Others were not part of the American scene—or, at least, where they were invisible and made no demands. As a result, exploitation films operate out of a nostalgic trope in which the problematic present is contrasted with an idealized past. It will become clear that in many ways the classical exploitation film was a form firmly rooted in modes of representation, financing, production, distribution, and ideology left behind by the mainstream movie industry after World War I. But before we can fully understand the substance of exploitation films, we must look at the way they were produced, distributed, and exhibited so that the average American could explore "unacceptable" topics from the safety of a seat within the socially acceptable space of the movie theater.

## 2. "A Hodge-Podge of Cuttings and Splicings"

### *The Mode of Production and the Style of Classical Exploitation Films*

It is no wonder that the screenwriting credits are missing from the opening titles. I don't think a writer was ever remotely involved with [*The Pace That Kills* (1935)]. Any attempt to follow the plot leads first to profound confusion, then to unfulfilled expectations, and finally to hopeless resignation. After the first screening the viewer is left with several legitimate questions. Among them are: Where did all these people come from? Who are they? What are they doing there? and, for God's sake, why?
—Thomas O'Guinn on "*Cocaine Fiends*"

The classical exploitation films made between 1920 and 1950 had a unique style that set them apart from movies produced by the major production companies such as MGM and Universal and even those of many of the minor companies such as Republic and Monogram. During these decades, exploitation films changed very little, always sporting a threadbare look that had much in common with seedy characters that populated the films and the skid row theaters that played them regularly. The low-end quality of these movies is one of the primary reasons that film scholars have ignored or downplayed them. At the same time, their cheesy style is what

remains so compelling for modern audiences who marvel at and embrace the films because they are, quite simply, so "bad." Jaws drop and eyes bulge as our expectations for what constitute the conventions of competence in cinema are continually undermined. Continuity is assaulted repeatedly and violently. Cameras grind away interminably on lethargic "specialty routines." Characters behave irrationally and lines of dialogue are delivered with all the finesse of a drunk on a three-day bender. We can chuckle at the incompetence of classical exploitation films, but it is important to understand these "problems" as the product of a specific mode of production. The mode of production and the films' reliance on spectacle as organizing principle forged their squalid style and resulted in an experience for the spectator that can best be described as delirium. As we will see, exploitation films could be "bad" because there was no compelling need for them to be "good."

## The Exploitation Film's Mode of Production

### *Mode of Production*

Scholarship over the past decade has begun to strip away some of the mystery and glamour from film production, especially as it existed during the studio era, to reveal the complex and detailed nature of the production process.[1] Both the process and the resulting product have been thoroughly analyzed in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. The classical Hollywood cinema was the result of a specific mode of production, a convergence of forces that, according to Staiger, forms "a dynamic relationship—each element affects and influences each of the others. Generally, three elements will be referred to in this relationship: 1) the labor force, 2) the means of production, and 3) the financing of production."[2] It is useful to understand exploitation's mode of production in relationship to the classical Hollywood cinema because exploitation movies were compared to Hollywood films by critics, industry leaders, and the public; because they were in competition with mainstream releases; and because their very existence came about as the result of restrictions imposed by Hollywood. By examining the three facets of exploitation's mode of production, we can better appreciate why the films look the way they do.

Watching a few classical exploitation films might lead one to conclude that their producers were fly-by-night operators who were more accomplished at evading creditors than shooting movies. Though this is true of some, there were many producers who remained on the scene for years and can justifiably be referred to as established. These producers include W. Merle Connell, Samuel Cummins, Dwain Esper, Harry Farros, J. D. Kendis, Willis Kent, the Sonney family, and George Weiss. Many of them operated under multiple company names over the years (see appendix 1). Being established, however, did not necessarily mean being big. The 1938 edition of *Film Daily Yearbook* contains listings of production personnel for four of the major exploitation companies operating during the period. These listings, though not conclusive, offer a basis for comparing the exploitation producers with B studios and the majors. Jay Dee Kay Productions, with offices on Hollywood Boulevard, listed only J. D. Kendis himself, in the capacity of president. Dwain Esper Productions lists five individuals, including Esper as production manager, his wife, Hildegarde, as his assistant, and three other people in technical and story positions. Esper owned his base of operations, a building at the corner of Willoughby and Seward in Hollywood, which contained a laboratory and two projection rooms. Willis Kent Productions, located at the International Studios on Sunset Drive, appeared to be a somewhat larger company. During the 1930s, Kent alternated between Poverty Row westerns (movies made on tight budgets and schedules) and exploitation before moving completely into exploitation in the 1940s. Six people were on the personnel roster in addition to President and General Manager Kent. Samuel Cummins's Jewel Productions, on South Vermont Avenue's film row, listed ten people, including his two sisters, Celia B. Cohen and Rose Chatkin. Max Cummins and Sidney Cummins, also employed by the company, were likely relatives as well. (Nepotism was not the exclusive province of the majors.) These numbers can be compared with personnel lists for B manufacturers Grand National (24), Monogram (22), and Republic (37). In turn, the figures can be contrasted with the majors, which listed only executives and department heads: MGM (47), Paramount (54), Twentieth Century–Fox (19), Warner Bros. (33), RKO (41), Universal (35), Columbia (35), and United Artists (22).[3] Hundreds of employees, including secretaries, readers, technicians, and others, would have been on staff at the majors. For instance, in 1938 a major studio employed an average of 1,887 crafts personnel (carpenters, electricians, painters, projectionists, etc.).[4] Because the exploitation companies were making only a few movies

**5** Before becoming a leading distributor of exploitation films, "Officer" Louis Sonney, shown here circa 1928, traveled with his crime-doesn't-pay roadshow built around the Clara Bow film *Capital Punishment* (1925). (Something Weird Video Collection)

a year at most, compared to an average of fifty-one at the majors in 1937, there was no need to maintain a large staff.[5]

Dan Sonney explained that the success of his father's company was largely attributable to keeping overhead low. The personnel roster was kept to a minimum: "That was our success . . . all we used to have was a secretary to write letters and stuff. In those days you could get a good secretary for $27 [a week]. Later on, after my dad died, then I hired a shipper. That was all we ever had. Nothing else. And if it got busy, we helped them ship. I was a guy that never wanted too many bookings, because I never wanted to get confused."[6] Unlike the major and minor studios, exploitation producers did not keep workers under contract. Technicians were hired on a per picture basis. According to Sonney, their productions were "all union. We went right down with a union cameraman, union everybody. We didn't get people that never knew what they were doing." However, other companies undoubtedly avoided union crews as a means of further shaving costs. Not all exploitation producers were so adept at keeping operating costs down. Sonney stated that many would overextend themselves: "A lot of these peo-

ple would make a picture and start doing good. They'd start hiring people and they'd always go broke. We always owned our own building. Never did pay rent. My dad believed in buying property." Keeping staff to a minimum seemed to be one of the keys to the Sonneys' longevity in the business.

The division of labor in exploitation film was not always as strict as it was in the classical Hollywood cinema's mode of production. Some exploitation films were made with union crews, thus fixing work functions. On nonunion productions, roles could be blurred, with individuals taking on multiple tasks such as directing and editing, directing and photography, writing and producing or directing, and so on. The fact that a number of exploitation films have very truncated credits, or do not list credits at all, is symptomatic of the fact that relatively few individuals were involved in behind-the-scenes capacities in comparison to mainstream productions. While the strict division of labor eventually eroded in Hollywood in some above-the-line positions, especially following World War II, exploitation production was always much looser. Willard Mack wrote, directed, and starred in *What Price Innocence* (1933) and Crane Wilbur cowrote, directed, and appeared in *Tomorrow's Children* (1934) long before "hyphenates" became a fixture of Hollywood production. There were some pictures for which all of the major production tasks were handled by a single individual, much as they were in the first years of filmmaking. For example, Klaytan Kirby wrote, produced, directed, and edited virtually all of his movies.

Lower budgets meant that those who labored in exploitation films usually had not had the opportunity to hone their skills to a degree comparable to those working in mainstream pictures. A handful of established, albeit minor, directors such as William Beaudine, Crane Wilbur, and Melville Shyer moved among exploitation, Poverty Row, and B production for the majors with some regularity. But others, such as Connell, Esper, and Kirby, to name only a few, remained in exploitation exclusively. Actors and actresses were also generally less skilled. Occasionally, a name performer—outside of burlesque—would find his or her way into an exploitation film. But these were usually older stars who had fallen on hard times (Horace Carpenter, Bela Lugosi), up-and-coming performers getting an early break (Betty Grable, Elisha Cook Jr.), or character actors doing some slumming (Byron Foulger, Leon Ames). Some players managed to build minor careers in exploitation film, such as Willy Castello, who appeared in several Willis Kent productions in the 1930s, and Timothy Farrell, who became an exploitation mainstay in the 1950s. Lona Andre, who had

small roles in major films in the early 1930s, headlined a few exploitation features later in the decade. Generally, those appearing in exploitation movies were unskilled actors and actresses, most of whom hoped to find their big break—or at least make some contacts or gain experience—by appearing in an exploitation film. Exploitation players tended to lack charisma, moved stiffly, and delivered their lines haltingly—not surprising, given the rapid shooting schedules of the movies. When asked if there was ever any problem finding players for their disreputable films, Hildegarde Esper responded, "No. My god, they'd do anything to act in a sex picture. Yeah, they really wanted to be seen and have people think of them as a big heman and everything. They liked to get in pictures of that kind. We never had any trouble getting women to act."[7] The same lack of skill extended to the other production functions in exploitation as well, from writing and lighting to cinematography and editing. The pool of labor available to exploitation producers was one of the key influences affecting the style of these films.

The majors owned the means of production, maintaining massive physical plants filled with stages, equipment, props, and all the technology necessary to make movies. Many of the B producers, such as Monogram and Republic, also owned a physical plant with sound stages, the rest of the facilities and equipment necessary to make pictures, and a nationwide system of distribution exchanges. Even ragged PRC purchased the old Grand National studios and lot in 1942 for $305,000.[8] Sonney and the other exploiteers may have owned buildings or offices, but they virtually always rented studio space, equipment, and the other means of production when a film was ready to go before the cameras. The fact that the bulk of the labor and the physical capital necessary for production were marshaled on a per picture basis meant that a gap existed between the labor force and the means of production. If the labor force was unaccustomed to working together, unfamiliar with the equipment or the space rented for production, problems were inevitable. Gaps between the labor force and the means of production, coupled with the speed necessary for shooting and the low budgets, meant that many of the resulting problems—boom microphones dipping into the frame, bad lighting, confused actors—ended up in the finished product.

The necessity of renting studio space, lighting, sets, props, and so on also contributed to the impoverished look of most exploitation films. Production design was limited to the simplest and cheapest sets possible. Sets tended to be spare, often using a minimal amount of furniture or

other decoration. A nightclub could be suggested with a few tables and chairs crowded into a corner. A gymnasium could be indicated with a couple of mats, a set of weights, and an exercise machine. Producers like Willis Kent used the same standing sets again and again, with minimal change. Little care was taken to establish verisimilitude. Doors that supposedly opened to the outdoors might open only to a black void. Living room or kitchen windows looked out onto dead gray space. The use of standing sets also contributed to continuity errors. In many instances, office sets sported windows with panoramic views overlooking a cityscape, but characters exiting the office emerged on suburban streets without a skyscraper in sight. Sparse sets and errors in spatial continuity contribute to the bizarre timeless and placeless feel that is conveyed by many exploitation movies.

The labor force and means of production set exploitation apart from the mainstream industry. But financing, the third element of the exploitation mode of production, was probably the point of greatest divergence between the major Hollywood studios and the exploitation outfits. Staiger notes that by 1935 the major firms were characterized by advanced capitalism, which implies "the concentration and centralization of capital. It is characterized by a massive vertical and horizontal integration for economy of scale, a shift from identifiable owners to joint-stock firms, and a multinational range in marketing control."[9] Unlike the titans of Hollywood production, the owners of exploitation companies were identifiable (at least in most cases) as individuals or partnerships. The companies were never fully integrated on a large scale although a few operators, such as the Sonneys and Cummins, produced and distributed their pictures and owned a handful of theaters. Their control never extended beyond the borders of the United States. As Staiger suggests, when the advanced-capitalism movement took hold in the late 1920s and the independents began to be cut off from first-run exhibition, financing from outside sources became increasingly difficult. As a result, the exploitation companies relied on preadvanced capital methods of financing. When an outfit was unable to reinvest profits from earlier pictures into new production, it generally got direct financing in the form of loans from private individuals or other companies. J. D. Kendis apparently received capital from a relative who worked for MGM. Some producers, such as Dwain Esper, regularly relied on the Sonney family for funds, in whole or in part. These sources had limited capital, which naturally resulted in pictures with limited budgets.[10] Dan Sonney describes the major exploitation pro-

**6** The cast and crew of *Racket Girls* (1951). Veteran cinematographer William C. Thompson stands by the camera. Peaches Page, the film's star, stands third from the left. Those seated include director Robert C. Derteano (far left), producer George Weiss (center), and Muriel Gardner (far right), who played Ruby McKenzie in *Racket Girls* and *The Devil's Sleep* (1949).

ducers: "They weren't what you'd call wealthy. They had a nice home, a nice family—nice middle-class."[11] Contrast this with the salaries of the top brass at MGM in 1941: Nicholas Schenck, David Bernstein, and J. Robert Rubin took home weekly salaries of between $2,000 and $2,500, plus between 1.25 and 2.5 percent of net corporate profits.[12]

If the operations of exploitation companies were cut-rate, the budgets of the movies they made were at the bottom of the motion picture barrel. Compared with both A and B films in any given period, their product had the lowest budgets, the shortest shooting schedules, and the fewest stars of any films appearing on American screens. Though As and Bs differed in budget and level of stars, both categories had to appeal to a broad audience, especially when As and Bs were combined on double bills. Exploitation films, on the other hand, differed not only in terms of stars and budgets but also in content and specialized audience appeal. A brief com-

parison of As, Bs, and exploitation films can help illustrate these fundamental differences.

A-class films generally featured the most popular and highly paid stars and were often based on expensive story properties such as Broadway plays or best-selling novels. During the 1930s, the budget on an A film could range from several hundred thousand dollars to well over a million. For instance, MGM spent $304,292 on its 1934 Clark Gable–William Powell crime film *Manhattan Melodrama* and over $1 million on the lavish *David Copperfield* a year later.[13] At Universal in 1939, *Son of Frankenstein* cost $417,000, and just under $1 million was spent on the Deanna Durbin musical *First Love.*[14] Shooting schedules for A films in this period ranged from the relatively rapid twenty-one days for *Manhattan Melodrama* to a full three months for the problem-plagued *First Love.*[15] By contrast, production on standard B films was fast and cheap. Although the majority of B movies featured recognizable stars such as Gene Autry, Boris Karloff, and the East Side Kids, films were emphatically of the second rank. Budgets were lower, shooting schedules were abbreviated, and running times were shorter, allowing Bs to fill out the bottom half of double bills without extending the time of a program too much. Thomas Schatz describes movies made by Bryan Foy's B unit at Warner Bros. during the 1930s being budgeted from $50,000 to $125,000 with shooting schedules of fifteen to twenty-five days.[16] Universal's program features ran from under $100,000 to $125,000; their low-end Johnny Mack Brown westerns had eight-day schedules and budgets of $35,000 to $42,000.[17]

The studios that specialized in B product undercut both the budgets and the shooting schedules of the majors. Douglas Gomery calculates the average budget for a Monogram film in the 1930s at $20,000 and a shooting schedule of eight days.[18] Some of Monogram's specials during the 1930s reached $100,000, but they were rare exceptions to the rule. The average Gene Autry western for the 1936–1937 season, a popular mainstay at Republic Studios, cost between $50,000 and $75,000.[19] By the early 1940s, Republic had stratified production into three categories: the low-end "Jubilees" with $30,000 budgets, shot in seven days; midlevel "Anniversaries," shot in fourteen or fifteen days and budgeted at around $120,000; and the somewhat more aptly named "Deluxe" pictures, budgeted at around $300,000 and shot in twenty-two days.[20] B films made by the majors, as well as those made by Republic, Monogram, and even the lowly PRC, may have been cheap to make and quick to shoot, but they had

more in common with the A films of the majors than with exploitation product. The only films that can be equated with classical exploitation movies in terms of budgets, shooting schedules, and style were those "quickies" made by Poverty Row and "race films" made for African American audiences.[21]

Mainstream A and B productions seem almost extravagant when compared to the budgets of exploitation films. *Mom and Dad,* the mid-1940s exploitation blockbuster and one of the most polished classical exploitation movies ever made, cost about $65,000 and was shot in one week. *The Birth of a Baby* (1938) was made for a reported $43,000, and *Child Bride* (1941) for $24,000.[22] These three films were all at the upper end of exploitation movies, featuring production values on a par with typical product coming from such studios as Monogram or PRC and even employing recognizable, if very minor, actors and competent production personnel. But these films were atypical. The two features made by Klaytan W. Kirby, *A Virgin in Hollywood* (1952) and *Love Me Madly* (1954), cost $17,000 and $18,500, respectively.[23] Movies produced by George Weiss, such as *Test Tube Babies* (1948), *The Devil's Sleep* (1949), and *Dance Hall Racket* (1953), are estimated to have cost between $10,000 and $20,000.[24] Dan Sonney recalled that Dwain Esper's *Maniac* "cost about $7,500" in 1934, and *Narcotic* (1933) was brought in for a reported $8,900.[25]

Some of these figures are based on individuals' memories, which may not always be accurate. Others are based on publicity from the manufacturers, which was often inflated to give press and patrons the impression that "all the money was on the screen"—although it's hard to imagine anyone swooning over a $60,000 budget. One budget that has come to light is that for J. D. Kendis's *Secrets of a Model* (1940), produced under his Continental banner. At just over $10,000, the budget is probably fairly typical for an exploitation film from the time.[26]

Above-the-line costs accounted for only about a quarter of the budget on *Secrets of a Model.* The bulk of the capital went to rentals of locations, equipment, properties, film stock, and processing. Film stock and the lab bill accounted for the two largest line items in the budget, a fact stressed by Dan Sonney, who states, "We never threw money away, everything went for the lab bill—the lab bill and the raw film."[27] The cast list for *Secrets of a Model* consists of only seventeen people, who would have split the meager onscreen talent budget of $1,245. Behind-the-camera personnel, including producer Kendis, director Sam Newfield, cameraman Jack Greenhalgh,

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TITLE: SECRETS OF A MODEL | | DATE: | Dec. 31st 1939 |
| | | STARTING | Nov. 6 |
| DIRECTOR: Sam Newfield | | COMPLETION DATE | Nov. 11 |
| | | ESTIMATION | |
| | | | TOTALS |
| 1. | Story | | $ 250.00 |
| 2. | Continuity & Treatment | | 57.00 |
| 3. | Director | | 500.00 |
| 4. | Script Clerk | | 76.01 |
| 5. | Assts. to Director | | 30.00 |
| 6. | Production Manager | | 160.00 |
| 7. | Camera Equipment & Rentals | | 188.00 |
| 8. | Camera Man | | 200.00 |
| 9. | Cameramen Assts. | | 126.64 |
| 10. | Still " | | 90.00 |
| 11. | Stills & Negative Negs. 25.49 - Stills 31.20 | | 56.69 |
| 12. | Cast | | 535.00 |
| 13. | Bits and Extras | | 724.25 |
| 14. | Studio & Sets | | 710.00 |
| 15. | Extra Set Rentals | | -- |
| 16. | Processing Studio | | 156.13 |
| 17. | Set Construction (Materials & Rentals) | | -- |
| 18. | Wardrobe Woman (1 day) | | 5.00 |
| 19. | SOUND: (Equipment & Rental) | | 200.00 |
| 20. | (Labor) Prod. 368.97 + Dubbing 30.41 | | 399.38 |
| 21. | (Royalties) | | -- |
| 22. | ELECTRIC: (Equipmt. & Rentals) 29.87 plus 6.00, 9.00, 17.10 | | 61.97 |
| 23. | (Labor) 3 Regs. 3 Extras | | 416.59 |
| 24. | PROPERTIES: (Rentals) | | 434.02 |
| 25. | (Purchases) | | 49.37 |
| 26. | (Labor) | | 90.00 |
| 27. | WARDROBE: (Purchases) | | 53.09 |
| 28. | (Rentals) | | 50.64 |
| 29. | GRIP: (2) | | 204.00 |
| 30. | SET DRESSER (1) | | 75.00 |
| 31. | " " ASSTS. 2 59 + 9 = 68 plus watchman 20 | | 88.00 |
| 32. | TRANSPORTATION: (Gas & Truck Rentals) 70.35 | | |
| 33. | " (Labor or Drivers) 59.75 | total | 130.10 |
| 34. | LOCATION: (Lunches, Fees, Etc.) | | 55.96 |
| 35. | FILM: (Raw Stock) | | 1129.50 |
| 36. | (Stock Film) 100 plus 9 postage | | 109.00 |
| 37. | LABORATORY: | | 1656.03 |
| 38. | FILM EDITING: (Pos. Cutter) | | 300.00 |
| 39. | (Neg. " ) | | 133.00 |
| 40. | (Asst. Cutters) | | -- |
| 41. | (Moviola Rentals & Access.) | | 30.00 |
| 42. | TITLES: | | 277.50 |
| 43. | SPECIAL EFFECTS: (Newspaper Inserts, etc.) | | 45.14 |
| 44. | MUSIC: (Background) | | 200.00 |
| 45. | (Original Songs & Lyrics) | | -- |
| 46. | (Musician labor) | | -- |
| 47. | INSURANCE: (Negative) | | 125.00 |
| 48. | (Liability) | | -- |
| 49. | MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE: Cinema Casting commission | | 25.34 |
| 50. | OFFICE EXPENSE: Phone 25.15 plus sundries 23.18 | | 48.35 |
| 51. | PUBLICITY: (Accessories) Colorcraft Post. Co. | | 250.00 |
| 52. | SUPERVISION: | | -- |
| | TOTAL: | | 10,251.70 |
| | | | 250.00 |
| | GRAND TOTAL: | | $10,501.70 |

7 The budget for *Secrets of a Model* (1940). (Something Weird Video Collection)

**8** Jack Thorndyke (Harold Daniels) prepares to take advantage of innocent carhop Rita Wilson (Sharon Lee), whom he has plied with drink in *Secrets of a Model,* Continental's $10,000 exploitation epic from 1940. (Something Weird Video Collection)

technicians, grips, cutters, and others, was made up of only twenty-one people, some of whom were only minimally involved in the production. Because budgets cut as close to the bone as possible, the exploiteers avoided technological gimcracks like color and widescreen. Only a handful of classical exploitation films, usually burlesque movies, were shot in color, and the only technical innovation to be employed at all was 3-D, which popped up in a few instances in 1953.[28]

The shooting schedules of exploitation films matched their parsimonious budgets. A minimum of seven days was generally required for shooting B films at the low end of the spectrum, whether made by a major or a Poverty Row outfit. In contrast, seven days was considered a long shoot for an exploitation movie. *Mom and Dad* was shot in only six days.[29] Actor Timothy Farrell claimed that the Weiss Screen Classics productions were shot in a week or less.[30] In the case of *Secrets of a Model,* shooting began on Monday, 6 November 1939, and was essentially finished the

following Friday. Between forty-four and sixty-six scenes (or shots) were completed each day. Saturday was used for process shots. One of the reasons the film could be completed so quickly was because of the limited number of sets or locations used: a mere six exteriors and only fifteen interiors, some of which were used extensively. Other films were made faster. Dan Sonney recalls, "We always shot a picture in three or four days. . . . We were just the opposite of the big operations. They'll shoot something twenty times. Where we—if the first time didn't go—we'll take it a second. But never over three times. Never."[31] As Sonney indicates, most exploitation films were probably made in five days or fewer with a shooting ratio of 2-to-1 being close to standard. This is evinced by anecdotal accounts as well as through viewing the films. Many movies contain blown lines or botched bits of business, indicating that producers simply did not have time or money available for retakes. The wooden performance style in exploitation movies can be largely attributed to the scant rehearsal and shooting time.

Budget and time restrictions dictated a very limited number of setups per scene. For instance, the first scene of *Elysia* (1933), lasting about one-and-a-half minutes, includes only two setups and an insert. An eight-minute scene in Dr. King's office consists of only nine setups, excluding the stock shots of the "movie" he shows. Entire segments of burlesque films were often shot with a single setup. Two- and three-shots dominated in exploitation films and were favored over shot–reverse shot combinations or other patterns that required complex editing. Camera movement was almost exclusively attributable to reframing to follow characters. Tight budgets and schedules tended to limit the action of the film to only a few, very simple sets and several exteriors.

When sound arrived in the late 1920s, exploitation producers found the cheapest ways to deal with the new technology. Films that employed synch-sound techniques were often poorly recorded, sounding hollow or muffled. Postdubbing was often utilized as a cost-cutting measure, but it could have disconcerting results when lip movements failed to conform to the words heard on the soundtrack. In some instances, wild sound did not match images; in others, producers simply did not insert the effects. For instance, in *Souls in Pawn* (1940), a character works at a typewriter but the anticipated sounds—striking keys, a clattering carriage, the bell—are not produced; there is only dead silence. Some films, such as *One Way Ticket to Hell* (1954), were narrated, with no synchronized dialogue. Others, such as *Bad Girls Do Cry* (1954), attempted to disguise their lack of synchronized

sound with inept overdubbing or by showing close-up shots of characters "listening" while an offscreen character "speaks." Original music was unheard of in exploitation movies. Stock music was the rule, and many of the ditties were used over and over again across a range of films, contributing to the sameness of many of these pictures.

Burlesque films were perhaps the least expensive films to make where no previously existing footage was involved. Because the majority of burlesque films were essentially nothing more than recorded or "canned" performances, they could also be shot with remarkable speed. In the most basic form of the burlesque movie, performers danced, stripped, or did their comedy sketches in front of a single, static camera in one long take, ranging from three to ten minutes. Other films used two cameras, one in medium-long shot with the performer(s) visible from head to toe, and one in a medium shot, showing the player in plan-American. The routine would then be assembled in the editing room, alternating between these two camera positions. Shot length in most of the films with two-camera setups was ten to twelve seconds. At other times, burlesque films could use a single camera with multiple setups, usually for comic skits or more elaborate dance numbers. No matter how the camera was employed or how many were used, the primary goal was a clear, uninterrupted display of the performers, especially the strippers.

Dan Sonney estimates that the burlesque features he financed in the 1950s generally cost about $15,000.[32] Florence Kirby recounts that the short films that she and her husband made in the 1940s and 1950s never cost more than $2,000.[33] The burlesque film is one of the only areas in the field of exploitation where star power counted. With an established hierarchy of striptease personalities in place, producers were forced to pay more for top dancers, potentially driving up production costs on a feature or short. Dan Sonney recalls, "I made *Love Moods* with Willis Kent. I gave Lili St. Cyr $5,000 for one day—I put up the money."[34] St. Cyr was perhaps the most famous stripper in the nation when the film was made in 1952, and her participation in the twenty-minute short did not come cheaply. Most burlesque features had only one or two headline acts plus a number of minor dancers who served to keep costs down. But the expenses of star power were easily offset by the simplicity of production and the rapid shooting schedules.

Burlesque films could be shot in less than a day. *Love Moods,* which often received top billing on exploitation programs, was filmed between shows at the Follies Theater in Los Angeles. According to St. Cyr, shows at the

Follies would start "at twelve noon and go until midnight—2 A.M. on Fridays and Saturdays. So we had to squeeze this in between the shows somehow."[35] A one-hour to ninety-minute burlesque feature could easily be shot in less than two days. With such low budgets and short schedules, the production values of burlesque movies were almost nonexistent. Their sets were the most limited of exploitation films. Standing scenery could be used if a film was shot on location at a burlesque theater, or a bare-bones set could be constructed for studio shoots. *Variety*'s review of *Teaserama* (1955) assessed the production values of that film: "Virtually all routines . . . are done on some inlaid linoleum against a background of some yard goods hung on a wall. With the exception of an occasional sofa, there are no sets or props as such."[36] In many instances, striptease dances were shot silent to save on the cost of synchronous-sound shooting. Music and canned applause were added to the soundtrack later.

## *Production Strategies*

The mode of production of exploitation films, from the labor force to the means of production to the financing, separated them from the dominant model of American film production during their day. This section describes four production strategies that, taken as a group, were unique to exploitation films: recycling techniques, padding, the square-up, and hot and cold versions. Though recycling, padding, and square-ups were used in some mainstream movies on occasion, hot and cold prints of films were found only in exploitation movies. These strategies, often dictated by skimpy budgets or the need to differentiate exploitation from mainstream movies, marked exploitation film as a distinct form during the studio era and could contribute to their shabby style.

### Recycling Techniques

I use the term recycling to describe a series of production ploys used by exploitation filmmakers to save time and money. Though several of these measures also served Hollywood, the bag of money-saving tricks used by the exploiteers was far deeper than their pockets. The use of stock footage or library shots is certainly not limited to exploitation films, although it is generally associated with B and low-budget filmmaking. In *Kings of the Bs,* Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn claim, "Few B studios had any

qualms about reusing footage from earlier productions, especially for such expensive-to-stage scenes as chases, fights, battles, and natural disasters. Many Bs are liberally sprinkled with stock footage."[37] The same held true for exploitation producers. Exploitation films were littered with stock material, ranging from establishing shots, night shots of cities, chases, and more. Unlike conventional Bs, exploitation stock footage could provide the primary instances of spectacle in a film. For instance, exotic exploitation movies contained yards of footage of wild animals as well as shots of tribal women in native dress—or undress. Hygiene films used clinical footage of births, cesarean operations, and disease sufferers to provide spectacle. Cummins, among others, would regularly cannibalize his older movies. *Birth,* a film of Swiss origin, provided clinical footage for a number of Cummins's later productions. Kent built a montage segment for *Mad Youth* (1939) with party scenes from his four-year-old *The Pace That Kills.* Stock footage could come from other features; for example, *Maniac* (1934) uses inserts apparently from Benjamin Christensen's *Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1922) to indicate madness. Or the footage could be purchased from a library. Edward D. Wood's repeated shots of a lightning flash, traffic on a highway, and World War II combat in *Glen or Glenda* (1953) are typical. Stock footage was often old, poorly lit, and badly shot, and in many instances its integration into a movie is abrupt and startling, drawing attention to itself.

Other producers were not content to reuse old footage; they actually reused characters from earlier films. Kendis resurrected his vice king, Jim Murray (Wheeler Oakman), from *Slaves in Bondage* (1937) some six years later in *Teenage* (1943). In the latter film, Murray, again played by Oakman, is released from prison to find his son following in his footsteps in a life of crime. The reuse of a character name, along with the actor who portrayed that character, opened a variety of recycling possibilities to the producer. Weiss trotted out his low-rent vice king, Umberto Scalli (Timothy Farrell), along with Scalli's sidekick, Ruby McKenzie (Muriel Gardner), in *The Devil's Sleep* (1949) and *Racket Girls* (1950). And even though Scalli is killed at the end of *Racket Girls,* he was miraculously revived for *Dance Hall Racket* (1953). The reuse of the same actors in the same roles meant that the performers were already familiar with their characters, which would theoretically reduce, if not eliminate, the little time that might be devoted to rehearsal. It also meant that old footage could be incorporated into the new films. In *Racket Girls,* Ruby recounts how Scalli had suggested that her friend become a prostitute. The scene, shown in

**9** Timothy Farrell, seen here in *Dance Hall Racket* (1955), made several appearances as Umberto Scalli in George Weiss's exploitation films. (Something Weird Video Collection)

flashback, was shot for *The Devil's Sleep* and was either cut from the final print or does not appear in the print currently available. In the scene, Scalli convinces a girl with a pill habit to become a prostitute so she can pay him for her drugs. The scene is used in *Racket Girls* to illustrate Scalli's low morals to the new wrestler whom he wants to date.

Just as characters were reused, so were plots. Majors, particularly Warner Bros., often remade films. But given the far more limited output of the exploiteers, we can see how remakes served as a crucial production strategy. Kent remade two of his silent films, *The Road to Ruin* (1928) and *The Pace That Kills* (1928), as talkies in 1933 and 1935, respectively. The 1933 version of *The Road to Ruin* is almost a frame-for-frame remake of its silent precursor. The story of *Street Corner* (1948) closely parallels that of *Mom and Dad* (1944), which in turn is an uncredited remake of *High School Girl* (1934). Remaking a film was still an expensive proposition for

exploiteers; it was far easier to refresh an old property by simply slapping a new title on the first reel.

McCarthy and Flynn describe Republic serials being routinely re-released under different titles and that "this trick was used more than once with features, too."[38] If retitling was an occasional phenomenon with Bs and relatively rare with A films, it was almost de rigueur with exploitation movies. Exploitation producers and distributors changed titles and repackaged pictures almost as often as they changed their socks—which gives rise to considerable confusion when trying to identify the films today. For instance, Cummins's early hygiene effort *Wild Oats* also went by *Some Wild Oats* and *Know Thy Husband. Children of Loneliness,* a 1935 film about homosexuality, was also known as *Bewildered Youth, Strange Lovers,* and *The Third Sex.* The 1937 version of *Damaged Goods* was issued under the titles *Forbidden Desire, Marriage Forbidden,* and *Sins of Love.* Some titles were applied many times to totally different films because they possessed a certain generic cachet based on sensationalism and lurid appeal. *Sins of Love* was used as a title or retitle for at least five features, *Human Wreckage* and *No Greater Sin* were used at least twice, and so on.

There were three main rationales for changing titles. First, there are those cases in which a film would be retitled by a states' rights distributor to give a movie greater box office appeal. T. R. Steede of Steede Amusement Enterprises in High Point, North Carolina, explained the reason behind changing the title of *B-Girl Rhapsody,* a burlesque film, in 1953: "We never use this title in this territory. We do distribute this picture over here in eight states but we distribute it under the title of *Girls of Pleasure.* The reason for this was the fact that *B-Girl Rhapsody* meant nothing in this territory and did not draw while on the other hand *Girls of Pleasure* does a good business."[39] Second, on some occasions, a film would be retitled to meet the demands of a particular municipality. City officials in San Diego required S. S. Millard's *Is Your Daughter Safe?* to be retitled before it played in that city, where it was called *The Octopus.*[40] The reasoning behind the requirement seems to have been that *The Octopus* was a less sensational title and, more important, would not instill public doubt about the competence of local law enforcement.

The third and most significant reason for retitling an exploitation film was to extend its life at the box office. Of the practice, David F. Friedman has said, "That was part of roadshowing, that you changed the title. You couldn't afford to make a new picture every three months, but you could

afford a new main title. Nobody knew the difference. I never had anybody ask for their money back."[41] The late 1930s release *Polygamy* was changed to *Illegal Wives* and was also billed as *Child Marriage.* The 1933 version of *The Road to Ruin* became *Call Me Co-ed* in 1936; when it was distributed in 1950 by Exclusive Pictures Corporation, the title was changed back to *The Road to Ruin*—which must have seemed fresh again some seventeen years after its initial release. Changing and rechanging titles could keep a film alive on the roadshow circuit for decades.

The mechanics of extending a film's life by changing a title were relatively simple and far cheaper than producing a new motion picture. In 1956, Astor Film Exchange sold the rights to the film *Hometown Girl* (ca. 1949) to Don Kay, an exploiteer operating out of New Orleans. Kay's three-year agreement allowed him to retitle and repackage "the poignant story of a girl in trouble," calling the "new" film *Secret Scandal.* The largest single expense in the process was the production of new ad art at $316.32. Other costs included engraving and printing of posters and press sheets, printing stills, and other ad materials at $364.01. The preparation of the new title and changes in the film negative amounted to $206.91. Kay estimated his other expenses in setting up distribution for the film at about $500, bringing the total cost of converting *Hometown Girl* into *Secret Scandal* to $1,387.24. For an investment of under $1,400, Kay had a film that could be peddled as a new production.[42] In 1946, *Variety* speculated that the entire cost of retitling and reissuing old exotic pictures was "frequently covered by coinage of the film at the initial two or three houses exhibiting it. As a sensational example, the Ambassador theater, N.Y., running *Native Bride* and *Savage Love,* grossed $18,000 the first week of a six-week hold-over."[43]

Relatively innocuous motion pictures were sometimes given a full exploitation treatment long after their original release. Esper succeeded in acquiring two major studio releases in the postwar years and issuing them as adults-only features. In his hands, MGM's *Freaks* (1932) became *Forbidden Love,* and the 1939 Paramount drama about tenement life, *One Third of a Nation,* was transformed into *House of Shame.* One of the tag lines for the latter film read, "I'm tired of sleeping in a one room flat and my brother watching me undress!" In a similar fashion, Astor acquired a cache of pre-Code independent films in the 1950s. Most of the films had story lines, costumes, or some other element that made them a bit more daring than later pictures made under the Code, which allowed Astor to gussy them up with exploitation campaigns. *The Wife of General Ling,* a

1937 Gaumont-British Production, was sold with the lines "Where white girls are sacrificed to Buddha!" and "Terrified girls ravished." *Midnight Lady,* a 1932 Chesterfield release with a "*Madame X* slant,"[44] became *Secret of the Female Sex; City Park* (Chesterfield, 1934), a light romance with several "street walker inferences,"[45] was renamed *Outcast Girls.* The two features were coupled with two others to form a "spicy 4 unit explosion." A 1932 Allied production, *Parisian Romance* with Lew Cody, promised to reveal "what goes on in bachelor quarters" when it was picked up by Astor. It was paired with *The Figure Gorgeous* and shown on an adults-only basis.[46] The local exhibitor could also team the older motion pictures with exploitation shorts or burlesque reels distributed by Astor.

Recycling techniques thus could extend the life of an old movie; taken to an extreme, they could be used to fashion totally new films. Exploitation compilation films were made up of footage, purchased or purloined, that was reedited and combined with material from other sources or new film shot for the production.[47] Fresh intertitles or narration was often added, a new main title shot, and the film circulated as an entirely new production. In his 1964 book-length study of compilation films, Jay Leyda mostly discussed movies that would be considered documentaries—many with a historical slant, some made for propaganda or persuasion, others as novelties. As Leyda notes, the work of Esther Schub, Capra's *Why We Fight* films, and series that scavenged newsreel and studio vaults, such as *Adventures of the Newsreel Cameraman* and *Screen Souvenirs,* did not hide the fact that they made use of old material; in many instances, they announced it. Exploitation compilations were different in that they seldom, if ever, advertised that they were made up of old footage, and they fell into the narrative as well as the documentary category—often completely erasing the perceived divisions. As a group, they were the shoddiest exploitation films made. Compilation films made by documentarians tended to smooth over the links between footage. Leyda remarks that Pare Lorentz's *Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937) "both used newsreel so skillfully cut with newly photographed shots (and given imaginative soundtracks) that they appeared to make undifferentiated units in the spectator's mind."[48] The appropriated footage in exploitation compilations was often old, scratched, and, to make matters worse, poorly integrated with other material. Exploitation films received bad notices when reviewed in the trades, but the movies made up of recycled material account for the most scathing criticism leveled at the form.

As a production strategy, compilation was a quick and cheap means to

an end—a way to turn lead into gold by reconstructing spent footage into a "new" and marketable commodity. Fly-by-night outfits could throw together compilation films quickly, make a few bucks, and disappear. *Red Headed Baby* was a "men-only" show that appeared in Los Angeles in 1933. The movie featured footage of nudist camps, strip poker games, artist's models, and childbirth. It vanished when the manager of the theater playing it was convicted of violating the lewd show ordinance, sentenced to six months in jail, and fined $1,000.[49] As one might gather from descriptions of that epic, compilation films did not simply recycle a few shots from older movies but instead used entire scenes or large portions of scenes from other sources. A film like *Confessions of a Vice Baron,* discussed in detail below, which made heavy use of full scenes from a number of movies, would be considered a compilation film. Most of the finished picture's running time is derived from older films. *Lash of the Penitentes* (1936), *No Greater Sin* (1939), and others used large and small segments throughout not shot specifically for the production and thus can be considered compilations.

Among the earliest exploitation blockbusters were compilation films such as *The Naked Truth* (1924). This Cummins production was constructed of footage from *The Solitary Sin* (1918) and several clinical reels showing the effects of VD. Almost all of Millard's features were apparently compilations. *Variety* claimed that *Is Your Daughter Safe?* (1927) was made up of "cut-outs from other films," some up to fifteen years old.[50] One of the first films Louis Sonney produced, *Hell-A-Vision* (1936), combined new footage with scenes from the 1911 version of *Dante's Inferno* and clips he had previously used as part of his crime-does-not-pay roadshow. Esper's 1939 *No Greater Sin* (not to be confused with the 1941 film of the same title) opens with a title card: "These remarkable pictures—part of which are random shots taken throughout the country—are being shown in the hope that they may enlighten other individuals to the horrible curse that threatens humanity." What follows is a production constructed largely of title crawls about sex hygiene, scratchy silent-vintage scenes of lab work, animated views describing menstruation and other bodily functions, scenes from *Man's Way with Women* (1937), and newsreel footage of gangster Al Capone, who died of syphilis. Cummins's *Miracle of Life* (1949) was described by *Variety* as "an assembling job with virtually all of the material coming from pre-war European pictures."[51] *Miracle of Birth,* which ran with *Miracle of Life,* appeared to be a patchwork of three different stories

**10** The compilation nature of Louis Sonney's *Hell-A-Vision* (1936) was also evident in publicity materials, as this collage still suggests.

into which was cut "a hospital scene of an actual Cesarean birth, undoubtedly the best thing in either of the films."[52]

Sex hygiene films were not the only ones made by compiling and recutting old footage. Many of the exotic exploitation films were comprised of films from expeditions purchased from anthropologists or explorers, sometimes coupled with stock footage and scenes shot specifically for a particular release. *Ingagi* (1930) was the archetypal exploitation exotic feature assembled from "silent-vintage expeditionary film" and intercut with "fictional episodes filmed in California."[53] *Ingagi,* which I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 7, spawned a number of imitations. For example, the producers of *Angkor* (aka *Forbidden Adventure,* etc.) bought for $500 several thousand feet of Congo tribal life shot by a Harvard expedition team. The footage consisted mainly of long shots. A story about "love-crazed gorillas" was constructed, and the rest of the production went into full swing:

> Marshall Gordon, [a] non-union $85-a-week director, made a deal with the madam of a whorehouse on Selma Avenue [in Los Angeles], where 12 soon-to-be-wed native beauties were recruited. Each was to be paid $10 [in advance] for the one-day shooting schedule. A rented costume worked out well for the ferocious gorilla, but the film ran over budget when unexpected fog rolled into the "jungles" of Topanga Canyon during the first hour of shooting. The scantily clad girls insisted on an additional day's fee to complete the film. The planned $8,500 budget zoomed to nearly $11,000, including a voice-over narration and native sounds consisting of tom-toms and occasional roars from the jungle. But the film was finished. Over a period of 10 years, *Forbidden Adventure* played in more than 300 theaters and grossed upwards of $200,000.[54]

Footage from *Angkor* itself, as well as *Ingagi,* found its way into Cummins's *The Love Life of a Gorilla.* This "hodge-podge of cuttings and splicings"[55] was first released in 1937 and played the country for at least five years running under titles as diverse as *Life of a Gorilla, Kidnapping Gorillas, Jungle Gorillas, Gorilla Kidnappers,* and *The Private Life of Ingagi,* and ranging in length from six thousand to eight thousand feet.

Another successful compilation film was *Lash of the Penitentes.* The film contained documentary footage showing the ceremonies of Los Hermanos Penitentes (the Penitent Brothers), a secretive sect in New Mexico known for elaborate ceremonies of self-flagellation and mock crucifixion. This footage was shot by Roland C. Price, "the vagabond cameraman." Price and director Harry Revier combined the documentary material with the semifictionalized tale of a writer, Carl Taylor, who was murdered while investigating the cult. The narrative footage included scenes of Raquel (Marie DeForest) posing in the nude for her artist boyfriend and being lashed by the Penitentes. Other scenes about religions in India and Africa were thrown in, including "a nude negro girl being bathed by women of the tribe and anointed with oils."[56] Revier peddled the film under the title *The Penitentes Murder Case* for a year before selling the feature to Mike J. Levinson, who kept it in circulation for decades. The entire package of some seventy minutes was put together for around $15,000.[57]

The thinnest thematic thread could become the subject of a compilation film. The notion that "thousands of people today . . . wear no clothes" became the core of the short subject *They Wear No Clothes* (1956). The film was assembled from shots of strippers and models as well as footage of nudists from a nearly twenty-year-old short, *Exposé of the Nudist Racket.*

Many burlesque "features" were strung together from shorts or pieces of other burly features. Because burlesque features generally consisted of discrete segments, each act could be shot without relation to the other segments, as well as easily reordered. Lili St. Cyr recalled that Irving Klaw's productions were shot in a way to facilitate this recutting and repackaging:

> Irving Klaw had this loft and he was acquainted with an awful lot of strippers. And he'd take them one at a time and shoot their various acts. I did not meet any of the other girls in some of these productions. His mode of operation was that he would take these separate segments—one with me, and one with Betty Page, and all these other girls—then he would splice these together until he had enough time—fifty minutes or whatever—and make what he would call a full picture. But actually it was nothing but a bunch of segments of ten or twelve different girls doing their various acts. He'd piece them together in several different movies. The one I did he put into several other movies that I heard about later.[58]

Another good example of this procedure can be found in *Vegas Nights,* a feature made by J. D. Kendis around 1953. Several shorts made by Klaytan W. Kirby were integrated with new material evidently shot for the feature.

Some compilation films are almost incoherent, appearing to have been thrown together by a roomful of chimps left alone with a splicing block and a gallon of cement. Others are much more elaborate. *Confessions of a Vice Baron* is perhaps the penultimate example of the compilation strategy, an instance of recycling taken to the limit. The movie was produced by Willis Kent in 1942. Kent made some of the more polished and most widely seen exploitation pictures between 1935 and 1940: *The Pace That Kills* (1935), *Smashing the Vice Trust* (1937), *Race Suicide* (1938), *The Wages of Sin* (1938), *Mad Youth* (1939), and *Souls in Pawn* (1940). *Confessions of a Vice Baron* featured Willy Castello, star of *Smashing the Vice Trust, Race Suicide, The Wages of Sin,* and *Mad Youth,* as Lucky Lombardo—the same character he had played in *Vice Trust.* As *Confessions* opens, we find a somewhat paunchier Castello, three years after his last Kent picture. He now sports a mustache and his hair is receding. About to be executed in prison, Lucky explains to the warden that he wants to make a statement to the newspapers that will serve as a warning to others who might be tempted into a life of crime. He tells his tale, which is illustrated in flashbacks using scenes from earlier Kent films.

In the framing device of the prison confession, Lucky explains, "During

**11** Perennial Willis Kent star Willy Castello (center) starred as Lucky Lombardo in *Smashing the Vice Trust* (1937). Both the character and footage from the film were later incorporated into *Confessions of a Vice Baron.* In this scene, Lucky's lawyer warns him that the D.A. is cracking down on vice.

my career I used many names and changed frequently my personal appearance," presumably explaining why he only occasionally has a mustache in the flashbacks and why his name is sometimes Lucky, but also Tony, Dr. Von Hertsen, and Count De Koven. Scenes from *Smashing the Vice Trust,* in which Castello played Lucky, dramatize his rise and fall. But scenes from other films are included to illustrate Lucky's slow rise to power through a series of nefarious jobs under assumed names. Also included in *Confessions* are scenes from *Mad Youth,* with Castello as Count De Koven, a gigolo; *Race Suicide,* with Castello as Dr. Von Hertsen, an abortionist; *Wages of Sin,* which starred Castello as Tony, a procurer for a prostitution ring; *Souls in Pawn,* in which Castello did not appear, but in the framing story Lucky describes a black market baby ring with which he was involved; *The Pace That Kills,* again without Castello, but scenes showing a girl being abducted at a club to be forced into white slavery are

shown as part of Lucky's operation. The murder trial sequence from *Smashing the Vice Trust* concludes the flashbacks, and the narrative of *Confessions* ends with Lucky making a heartfelt plea directly to the camera: "There is no such thing as easy money. . . . Don't look upon the gangster as a glamorous figure. . . . Let my fate be a warning to you that crime doesn't pay." Newspaper headlines hail Lucky's fate in the electric chair. The film's loose cause-and-effect logic is the product of an externally imposed framework that is employed to mask, in cursory fashion, the disjunctions that result from the film's varied source material. Questions of motivation (Why did Lucky hold so many sleazy jobs? Why does his appearance change?) are either brushed aside with a line of dialogue or simply ignored. Elements that may have been important to the plot of source films remain in the segments used in *Confessions,* but go unresolved. Lucky's "story" becomes a mere hook on which to hang scenes of forbidden spectacle: tarts in the halls of a brothel, a cootch dance at a sideshow, a nude woman waiting for a medical examination.

With *Confessions of a Vice Baron,* Kent was able to create a completely new fifty-nine-minute feature by using fifty-one minutes of old footage and shooting slightly over eight minutes of new material. The old footage contained all of the spectacle that attracted audiences. Shooting eight minutes of new material entailed a very minor cash outlay, as it was shot on one simple set, the warden's office, with only three actors: Castello, whose acting career had gone nowhere, plus actors to play the warden and the stenographer who records Lucky's story. A total of six minutes of the new footage is of Castello alone. Five minutes and thirty seconds is a medium shot of him telling his tale, which is intercut with the old material. A final thirty-four seconds is a close-up of Lucky's direct address to the camera as he pleads with the audience to stay on the straight and narrow. The remaining new footage of Lucky, the warden, and the stenographer required only a few setups. *Confessions of a Vice Baron* is one instance where the new material was even worse than the old footage pulled from Kent's library. The framing scenes were poorly lit and woodenly acted. The performer who played the warden had difficulty with his limited dialogue. Castello evidently read most of his lines from cards or script pages placed in his lap. The entire segment was likely staged and shot in a few hours. The film was packaged as an entirely new picture, the one-sheet promising to show "Hired guns, sex slaves, easy money! The inside story of organized crime!" A large "adults only" balloon promised spicy scenes, all of which came from the older films. Following its initial

run, *Confessions* was picked up by Mack Enterprises around 1948, retitled and rereleased as *Skid Row,* with a new campaign. As *Skid Row,* the organized crime angle of *Confessions* was toned down and the sex angle was played up as the poster ballyhooed: "Sex maniacs turned loose to prey on innocent women and children. . . . Innocent virgins now victims of passion," and so on. Ticket buyers would have had no reason to believe that they were seeing a six- or seven-year-old film that itself was made up of footage that was by then between eight and thirteen years old.

The production strategy Kent used to construct *Confessions of a Vice Baron* was not entirely new to narrative motion pictures. Producer Nathan Hirsh had used large segments of an earlier film for his 1933 exploitation item *Reckless Decision* (aka *Protect Your Daughters*). And though the strategy was employed periodically on Poverty Row, such as in Frase and Merrick Pictures' *White Gorilla* (1949), there was never any direct corollary of the exploitation compilation film to be found in mainstream Hollywood cinema. This is somewhat surprising, for the strategy would seem to have been a natural for series pictures at both the low-end majors and the B studios. It has, however, been used extensively in television to save money: characters recall past trials, tribulations, and triumphs, which are shown as flashback scenes from earlier episodes.[59]

## Padding

As I argue below, spectacle was the most important component of exploitation films, and issues of continuity, narrative, and logic were a secondary concern. The narrative elements of many exploitation movies were truncated at best, almost nonexistent when carried to the extreme. To create feature-length movies, many producers were forced to add additional material—padding—to expand a film to fifty or more minutes. Don Miller describes the phenomenon succinctly: "Somewhere at about the midway point in the story, the protagonists would visit a spicy nitery; thereupon, all forward motion would screech to a halt while a series of flash acts were paraded before the disinterested camera lens, cutting away at frequent intervals to show the story characters sitting at a table rapturously enjoying themselves. Some of these acts were not to be believed. . . . They included acrobats, trick cyclists, Latin dance teams, and jugglers of variable skills."[60] Virtually all of Kent's films contained such scenes, most lasting five minutes or more. *Variety* described the padding in *Mad Youth* as "a flock of smalltime acts," and described the "full floorshow of the

**12** Two songs, "Listen to the Mockingbird" and "Sea Shells," padded out the scant 65-minute running time of *The Wages of Sin* (1938) by four minutes.

Mex-type nitery" as being "thrown into the film."[61] Babb's *Mom and Dad* spotlighted a group of adolescent acrobats, a singer, and jitterbug dancers. *Test Tube Babies* includes a striptease number at a party; *Racket Girls* features interminable wrestling matches and scenes of women working out in Scalli's Gym; a prostitute dances for wealthy clients in *The Flesh Merchant* (1955); and so on. All these scenes were simply shot, usually with only one or two camera setups. Reactions of the protagonists were sometimes intercut. Dan Sonney suggests that these scenes were included to give a feature greater production value.[62] Although this may have been true in some instances, the primary motivation was almost certainly to add several minutes to the running time to get a film up to feature length.

## The Square-Up

With the exception of burlesque movies, most exploitation films began with a square-up, a prefatory statement about the social or moral ill the film claimed to combat. Kathleen Karr has traced the square-up to a 1912

Eureka Production, *The Evil Art (or) Gambling Exposed.* The technique was certainly well established by the time exploitation films broke from the mainstream, around 1919. Karr explains:

> The general approach to the square-up was to state at a film's beginning that such and such an evil existed (unfortunately), and that its existence necessitated exposure so that the aforementioned evil could be eradicated once and for all from the face of the earth. Following the square-up was always a highly lurid story (by period standards) which included lots of the pleasures of a particular vice. The conclusion found the villain and/or hero/heroine either getting their just rewards or reforming, thereby proving that vice does not pay, even if it can be fun along the way. The square-up soon became a stock element of practically every example of the silent exploitation film.[63]

Indeed, the square-up remained a stock element of every sound exploitation film through the end of the 1950s. Below are three representative square-ups:

> In offering this film to the American public, the producers feel that they are doing a great social service. This picture brings the light of truth to bear on one of the greatest evils of our time: and does so honestly, fearlessly, and without false sense of shame. It is only through such revelations that we may hope to clean up the dark spots of our civilization. To that purpose we dedicate this picture. We tell this story in simple everyday language. On that basis we offer it—remembering always the great moral purpose that lies behind it. (*Street of Forgotten Women,* 1927)

> Here is a page from the book of life. The characters are real people who live deep in the heart of Thunderhead Mountain. In dramatizing life among these "back yonder" folk—we aim neither to ridicule nor defend their way of living. And if our story will have helped to abolish Child Marriage—it will have served its purpose. (*Child Bride,* 1941)

> We wish to publicly acknowledge the splendid cooperation of several of the Nation's narcotic experts and Government departments, who aided in various ways, the success of this production. This is the story of "tea"—or "tomatoes"—the kind millions thru ignorance, have been induced to smoke. We are proud to bring to the screen this timely new film about Marihuana. It enables all to see, hear and learn the truths. If its presentation saves but one young girl or boy from becoming a "dope fiend"—then its story has been well told. (*She Shoulda Said "No"!,* 1948)

Despite the disparity in subject matter—prostitution, child marriage, and dope—all three square-ups serve the same basic function. As Karr suggests, they apologize for the necessity of bringing an unsavory subject to light but claim the producer's earnest hope that such exposure will put an end to an evil or bring about greater understanding. The wording in square-ups, which usually scrolled lethargically up the screen, was invariably similar, often concluding with an earnest line about how the film will be considered a success if it has saved just one person from such-and-such an evil. The square-up points to the tension between education and titillation within exploitation, which I will explain at some length below. The only exploitation subtype that did not regularly feature a square-up was the burlesque film, although some did include prologues explaining that they were an effort to preserve a disappearing form of entertainment from "grandpa's day." The fact that exploitation producers thought it necessary to include a modest stab at respectability through the use of a square-up speaks to the fundamentally disreputable nature of the form. Exploitation films existed in a space between "regular" motion picture entertainment, which needed no excuses, and the completely inexcusable and illegal stag film. Occupying this liminal space—controversial without being strictly illegal, but far from conventional—exploitation required explanation and justification.

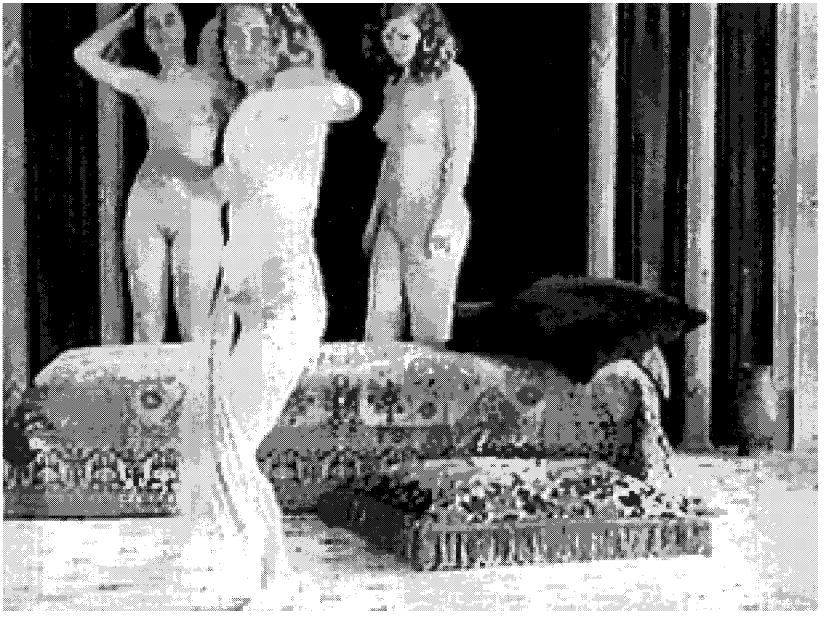
Beyond operating as an apology or an excuse, the square-up served several other functions. It warned audiences that they were going to see something different and to be prepared for a shock. It also fostered anticipation for that shock or thrill. In this respect, the square-up stood in for generic referents that exploitation lacked but that standard genres such as the horror film or western would have had that guided audience expectations. In most instances, the square-up made claims to authenticity, promising audiences that what they would see was not a mere fiction or simply entertainment, but a film that carried the burdens and responsibilities of "real life." This burden of the real required the square-ups to operate as a call to action. Individuals were encouraged to take the knowledge that they gleaned from the movie and make changes in their own lives or to push the government and other institutions to bring about a necessary reform.

Hollywood films occasionally opened with written or spoken prologues in which the narrative presented material in a direct and self-conscious way. Information could be provided about character, as in *Hangover Square* (1944), setting, as in *Casablanca* (1942), or it could help establish mood, as is the case with the John Donne sonnet that opens *The Seventh*

*Victim* (1943). Square-ups, however, were seldom seen in mainstream motion pictures because there was rarely a need to justify movies designed as entertainment to be consumed by the entire family. When they did appear, they signaled a film that was, in some way, out of the ordinary, and in these cases they served the same function that they did in the exploitation cinema. For instance, to deflect criticism that it was antireligion, *Elmer Gantry* (1960) included a square-up announcing that it sought only to expose the shady side of revivalism. The square-up used for *Scarface* (1932) and those later attached to *Little Caesar* (1931) and *Public Enemy* (1931) goaded the public to accept some of the responsibility for gangsterism and call on officials to eliminate the menace. In other instances, a square-up assured audiences that what they were about to see was based on real incidents and made with the cooperation of official bodies. This is most evident in combat films made during World War II, such as *Air Force* (1943), and then in the cycle of semidocumentary policiers and crime exposés of the late 1940s and early 1950s, such as *The Street with No Name* (1948), *Walk East on Beacon* (1952), and *The Phenix City Story* (1955). They also indicated that the basis in real events would have a stylistic impact as well, resulting in films that lacked the gloss associated with Hollywood picture making, substituting instead a grittier style found in newsreels and documentaries. The use of square-ups in mainstream movies was an exception, whereas in exploitation cinema it was the rule.

A second definition of the term square-up was applied only to exploitation films. Friedman has explained this alternative use of the term: "A [roadshower] gets into a town and the cops are there, so he just snips out the hot footage, goes up on stage, and says, 'Unfortunately, the police department has not allowed us to show you the entire production.' The audience goes, 'Booooo!' But when the movie was over and the cops left, the guy was up in the booth handing the projectionist a one-reeler: 'Throw this on.' And suddenly—zoom, zam—frontal nudity, tits and ass, everything. It only ran eight or nine minutes, but the audience walked out saying, 'Boy, you should have seen what we just saw.' That was called the square-up reel. The term comes from the carney or con artists' phrase 'squaring a beef.' "[64]

Square-up reels could be short nudist or burlesque films such as *Nudists Unadorned* (ca. 1940), *Model School* (1940), and *Naughty but Nice!* (1952), which as a rule did not include full-frontal nudity and could have played as part of a regular exploitation program. Other reels may have been made to be used specifically as square-ups. These featured attractive models loung-



**13** *The Girls of Loma-Loma* was a square-up reel that featured full-frontal nudity, as seen in this frame enlargement. (Something Weird Video Collection)

ing about in various stages of undress, at times including shots of full-frontal nudity; examples include *The Girls of Loma-Loma* (aka *Forbidden Daughters*) and *Hollywood Script Girl,* both from the 1930s. Such reels should not be confused with hardcore stag films, as they lacked explicit sexual activity. Needless to say, a square-up reel was not a regular part of an exploitation show and would not be advertised, but it could be used if an audience became unruly and complained that they had not received the spectacle promised by posters and trailers.

## Hot and Cold Versions

One final characteristic is exclusive to exploitation films: multiple prints of the same title known as "hot" and "cold" versions. These alternative versions differed in the amount of nudity or censorable material that they contained. Hot prints were shown in states or communities without censorship and could feature graphic shots such as birth scenes and the effects of venereal diseases, suggestive dances, as well as partial to complete

nudity. In contrast to hot prints, cold prints were self-censored versions for exhibition in difficult territories. When necessary, a roadshowman could top off a cold print with a square-up reel to satisfy an audience. One of the most notorious examples of hot/cold versions was to be found in *Because of Eve* (1948). Cold prints used drawings to illustrate the male and female anatomy; the hot ones displayed fully nude photos of male and female models. The mainstream film industry did everything possible to ensure uniformity of prints, but the exploiteers were willing to tailor prints to whatever degree was necessary to get playing time. Customizing hot and cold versions was not overly taxing because exploiteers generally had only fifteen or twenty prints of a title in circulation at any one time.

Burlesque films were routinely released in hot and cold versions. When *Variety* reviewed *Hollywood Burlesque* in 1949, the critic snapped that "the staff of peelers . . . fail to shed as much as a hairpin. There's only one number in which the gals dispense with some raiment, but when it looks like it might become interesting, they go off-stage and return in gowns."[65] The writer saw the film in New York, where the state censor board was offered a watered-down version for approval. By the time a 1951 article appeared in *Time* magazine commenting on the "peddling of a brand-new movie line," the reporter was able to reveal that there were "two versions of *International Burlesque*—the 'cold' one for strict towns, and the 'hot' or 'farm' one for the wide-open spots."[66] In burlesque films, the dancers would usually come on stage and perform a number for several minutes in an exotic but none-too-revealing costume. The number would end with the dancer smiling and walking offstage as applause resonates on the soundtrack signaling conclusion. In the cold version, the film would fade or cut to a title announcing the next act, but in the hot version, the dancer would reemerge from behind the curtains and continue for another two or three minutes, performing a striptease to a G-string and pasties or sheer brassiere. In a hot version, the encores would be left in for "wide-open spots," whereas the cold prints would have the encores cut out for areas with censorship.

The ability to customize hot and cold prints is symptomatic of the classical exploitation film's small-scale mode of production. Exploitation films were marked by extremely low budgets coupled with hit-or-miss financing, rapid shooting schedules, and limited retakes, when practiced at all. Budgetary constraints meant hiring inexperienced actors or those who had fallen out of favor with the majors. In either case, the lack of rehearsal time and abbreviated shooting schedules resulted in awkward

performances. Exploitation films used a variety of recycling techniques to trim costs, including the heavy use of stock footage, reusing the same characters and story lines in multiple films, and in some instances lifting large chunks of old films and refashioning them into "new" movies. Exploitation films were often padded with amateurish production numbers, and in many cases were retitled multiple times to extend their life on the road. The features and some shorts usually employed a prefatory moral statement, the square-up, and were at times shot in hot versions (with forbidden spectacle), and cold versions (lacking that spectacle). All of these factors contributed to the unique "style" of the exploitation film in its classical era.

## The Style of Exploitation Films

Taken at face value, the risible budgets and shooting schedules of classical exploitation films would seem to have given moviegoers little reason to want to see them. Why see an ineptly made film when one could enjoy a competently made film in almost any theater? Exploitation producers had to attract an audience by differentiating their films from others in a way that would make such low-budget fare enticing. This was accomplished in large measure by the topics of the films and through exploitation and exhibition practices, discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. But the subjects and the exploitation were not enough in themselves to ensure the long-term viability of the films in the market. The films had to deliver something different. This came from the style of the classical exploitation film. In the following pages, I suggest that the style of exploitation films, coupled with certain extrafilmic factors, set them apart from the more easily recognized forms such as narrative, documentary, and avant-garde movies. Classical exploitation movies also differed from those films with which they had the greatest affinity: movies made by Poverty Row outfits in the early sound period and "race films," made by both African American and white producers, for black audiences.

Poverty Row movies and race films are linked to exploitation films by their shoestring budgets and rapid shooting schedules. Outfits such as Mascot, Majestic, Reliable, and Progressive catered to rural theaters and filled out the bottom half of double bills in larger cities with films that generally featured truncated narratives, sparse sets, and lousy acting on a par with exploitation. In addition to playing special situations, Poverty

Row producers were able to differentiate themselves from the majors by making films in genres the majors avoided. When westerns fell out of favor with the majors in the early 1930s, many Poverty Row outfits specialized in "oaters."[67] Race films were differentiated from the mainstream because they provided black characters in roles that were nonstereotyped—at least in comparison to Hollywood product. The films made by Oscar Micheaux and William Alexander, as well as those manufactured by white-owned production companies such as Toddy and Sack Amusements, were also made on exceptionally low budgets with short shooting schedules and contained stilted performances and a wealth of "errors" when compared to the classical Hollywood cinema.

Poverty Row westerns and mysteries and race films could contain a level of "carelessness" because they still satisfied audience desires. Rural audiences that craved westerns or lived in towns where the theater owner could not afford the rental for better movies might ignore the static staging and clumsy acting in the movies turned out by Poverty Row concerns. Black audiences seeking images of a successful black middle class might overlook continuity errors and poor photography in the films of Micheaux and his contemporaries. Because they spoke to the desires of a segment of the moviegoing public, these forms were viable—at least for a time. The aesthetics of Poverty Row filmmaking, the independent African American cinema, and classical exploitation have many similarities and more extensive work needs to be done on their areas of convergence. But the point of departure between classical exploitation and these other manifestations of low-end commercial cinema in the studio era can be located in the area of forbidden spectacle.

The term spectacle has been bandied about in the field of film studies to a great extent, although, like many other terms, its definition has tended to be rather slippery. In employing the term here, I refer to something that is presented to fascinate the eye of the spectator. Spectacle can be beautiful or hideous, the familiar presented in a unique way or the uncommon. Spectacle invariably exerts an immediate, affective response in the spectator: loathing or lust, anxiety or amazement. In exploitation films it most often takes the form of suggestive material, but it can also be "educational" information. Of course, spectacle is often a part of narrative filmmaking (large-scale musical numbers, panoramic vistas, displays of special effects), although it is not a necessary part of the narrative process. For instance, spectacle adds to the appeal of DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956), but elaborate scenes such as the parting of the Red Sea could

be handled in less "spectacular" ways without damaging the narrative coherence of the film: characters could relate to the event through dialogue or the narrator could reference it in voice-over. Spectacle can also play a role in nonfiction film; the flood sequence in Lorentz's *The River* (1937) stands as an example. Here again, however, it could be substituted with a simple statement about the devastation wrought by floods or a shot of a flood's aftermath. Such a substitution might rob the film of some of its power, but it would not substantially alter its rhetoric. Exploitation films, on the other hand, required spectacle: it was the red meat that attracted an audience.

As noted earlier, the centrality of spectacle to exploitation practice is rooted in what Tom Gunning has described as "the cinema of attractions." Using Sergei Eisenstein's term "attraction," a unit of impression that "aggressively subjected the spectator to 'sensual or psychological impact,'" Gunning describes the unifying thread between the Lumière Brothers and Georges Méliès (or nonfiction and fiction) "traditions" in early cinema as "a way of presenting a series of views to their audience, fascinating because of their illusory power and their exoticism":

> The aesthetic of attraction addresses the audience directly, sometimes . . . exaggerating this confrontation in an experience of assault. Rather than being an involvement with narrative action or empathy with character psychology, the cinema of attractions solicits a highly conscious awareness of the film image engaging the viewer's curiosity. The spectator does not get lost in a fictional world and its drama, but remains aware of the act of looking, the excitement of curiosity and its fulfillment. Through a variety of formal means, the images of the cinema of attractions rush forward to meet their viewers. These devices range from the implied collision of the early railroad films to the performance style of the same period where actors nodded and gestured at the camera . . . or where a showman lecturer presented the views to the audience. The cinema addresses and holds the spectator, emphasizing the act of display.[68]

Gunning locates the tradition of this aesthetic in the fairground and the carnival and argues that the cinema of attraction does not disappear as narrative comes to dominate around 1906–1907. Instead, it "goes underground, both in certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative films, more evident in some genres (e.g., the musical) than in others."[69] I contend that the exhibitionist tendencies of the cinema of attraction are at the heart of exploitation, which is without question

**14** A patient disrobes in Willis Kent's *Race Suicide* (1938). Moments such as this differentiated exploitation films from Hollywood product and made them economically viable.

"a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator"—through spectacle. Indeed, it is this ability to attract the attention of the spectator through "exhibitionistic confrontation rather than diegetic absorption"[70] that permitted exploitation producers to differentiate their films from those of the mainstream.

We can look to the screenplay of Esper's *Modern Motherhood* (1934) for an example of the crucial role that spectacle played in exploitation. Almost half a page is spent describing a shot where the heroine's lingerie is ripped off when it gets snagged on a Murphy bed: "At a certain point the counterweights raise the bed some more so that Molly is dangling although her weight keeps [the] bed from closing way up. Molly starts wiggling and slowly but surely begins to slip out of her clothes or they begin to tear. Ted dashes into the scene. His weight brings [the] bed back to floor and rolls Molly over onto it and he loses [his] balance and sprawls on her. As he clambers off there are quite some eyefuls. Should yield hot lobby stills via

perfectly innocent comedy action."[71] The fact that Esper thought it necessary to describe the scene leading up to the "eyefuls" in such detail and to note the potential for "hot lobby stills" indicates the vital role spectacle played in exploitation from preproduction to marketing. More than anything, it marked the exploiteers' films as different from standard motion picture product.

Although it is not the province of this book to dive down an epistemological rabbit hole in search of definitions of narrative or documentary, it is important to understand how the display of spectacle broke with the logics that unify those forms. Most now acknowledge that documentary or nonfiction films are often narrativised and that many narrative or fiction films contain documentary elements or make claims to the "real"—another hotly contested term. But in exploitation film, the divisions between fiction and nonfiction, made either intuitively or through industrial practices, were consistently erased. This convergence is initially evident in the advertising for films. Movies that were ostensibly narratives were promoted with words and phrases that implied they were presenting something real (Astounding *Fact* Drama!; The Naked *Truth!*) and movies that were billed as documentaries or travelogues were pitched in a way that emphasized their narrative properties (The *Story* of Girls in Trouble!; Amazing *Legends* of Strange Jungle Love!). *Goona-Goona* (1932), an early exotic exploitation picture, was praised for giving its documentary footage a narrative: "Al Friedlander, editor for First Division, made a good cutting job of the material with which he had to work. There is a decided story thread throughout which wins for *Goona* the distinction of being among the first feature-length travelogs with a melodramatic flavor."[72] But more important than aligning exploitation films with standard forms was the repeated assurance that their audience would "See! See! See!" Fiction and nonfiction merged in the classical exploitation film, and spectacle served as their organizing and unifying principle.

Exploitation films from the classical period mobilized spectacle in a range of ways. Range is an important consideration here because exploitation films should be seen as existing on a continuum. At one end are those movies, notably burlesque and nudist movies, that operate almost entirely as spectacle. The viewer is confronted with a barrage of images and he or she is fully aware that those images are being presented to appeal to curiosity and the desire to see. At the other extreme are those films that function largely as conventional narratives or as documentaries. Within this range, spectacle is deployed in several different ways. Spectacular

strategies can be labeled as (1) discrete segments, (2) integrated, (3) a combination of the two in the form of inserts, or (4) random. Discrete segments were self-contained and could be either strung together, as is the case with most burlesque films, or cordoned off from the main body of the film. By the late 1940s, it had become quite conventional for the narrative in sex hygiene films to come to a stop so characters in the film could watch documentaries dealing with reproduction, childbirth, or disease. Integrated spectacle was incorporated into the larger whole of the movie in a more seamless way, justified at least in some measure by the narrative or the subject of a documentary. Inserted spectacle was a discrete segment that was dropped into a narrative or documentary, was logical within the confines of the particular film, but could also be easily removed if necessary. Finally, random spectacle was thrown into a film with no apparent rhyme or reason. In short, spectacle could dominate a film, be briefly inserted into a more or less conventional narrative or documentary, or not appear at all. Méliès stated that his stories were merely a pretext for a series of visual effects or tricks.[73] This is much the same in exploitation; the story or the topic being documented became a vehicle for the spectacle provided by nudity, drug use, or suggestive dances that both attracted and satisfied the audience.

With the possible exception of the insert, the centrality of spectacle in exploitation films tended to disrupt or override the traditional cause-and-effect chain in narrative, while it also permitted filmmakers to be slack with classical devices like continuity editing. As a result, the forbidden sights stood out in relief from the shambling wreck of the diegesis. Whereas the classical Hollywood film invited the viewer to move into a voyeuristic relation with the represented events through its creation of a seamless world signaled by the shift of the narration from a self-conscious to an unself-conscious mode, the exploitation film was essentially an exhibitionistic form that encouraged a different type of engagement on the part of the viewer. Classical exploitation consistently reminded the viewer that he or she was watching a film, either through the display of spectacle or because of the crumbling continuity.

Let's begin by looking at several of those films in which spectacle dominates. Burlesque films and nudist movies were the most blatant in the way spectacle was mobilized in exploitation. Burlesque films arrived on the scene rather late, in the mid-1940s, but quickly moved to the forefront of the field. They ranged from filmed versions of complete live burlesque programs to collections of striptease dancers spliced together. An example

of the former, *Midnight Frolics* (1949), was "photographed on the stage of the Belasco Theater of Los Angeles with the cooperation of the Belasco management," according to the credits. The film consisted of twelve acts (four strip or exotic numbers, three dance production numbers, three comedy routines, one specialty number featuring a tumbler, and one vocal). Each bit was self-contained and they could be shuffled around, removed from one feature and added to another. The segmented construction and spectacle of burlesque films meant that strip numbers, and occasionally comic routines, were simply snipped from features and issued as short subjects. The "Cinderella's Love Lesson" number with Lili St. Cyr was excised from Venus Productions' *Striporama* (1953) and distributed in this fashion. Others were made as stand-alone shorts; in these instances, the spectacle was distilled to its purest form with one, or sometimes as many as three, dancers going through their paces performing their strip routines.

Shooting a burlesque film may have been far removed in years from the Edison experiments at the Black Maria, but not in technique. In the burlesque movie's most basic form, performers danced, stripped, or did their comedy sketches in front of a single, static camera in one long take, ranging from three to ten minutes. For instance, the final number in *Kiss Me Baby* (1957) features top-billed Taffy O'Niel. Curtains part and O'Niel emerges from the wings in a gown, looking directly into and rolling her hips toward the camera. As she dances, she moves toward the camera/spectator, smiling and beckoning with her arms. In response, the camera moves in slightly, eventually backing away again, but always holding O'Niel in a medium to medium-long shot. This pattern continues throughout the number. The first part of the dance ends and she exits to the wings, returning in a much briefer outfit consisting of a bikini bottom with veils attached to it and a brassiere. She dances, exits, and reemerges again, this time in just the bikini bottom, sheer bra, and pasties. Although made up of several shots, the scene gives the impression of being one seamless long take. When the number ends, the curtain swings shut.

Extended views of the strippers constituted the attraction of the burlesque film, and as such they were almost exclusively a form of spectacle. Female bodies were offered to the spectator in smorgasbord fashion as the dancers displayed themselves with vigor. Gunning notes one aspect of early cinema that is emblematic of the different relationship the cinema of attraction constructs with its spectator: "the recurring look at the camera by actors. This action, which is later perceived as spoiling the realistic

**15** Taffy O'Niel in a frame enlargement from the final number of *Kiss Me Baby* (1957), showing the standard framing and staging in postwar burlesque films. (Something Weird Video Collection)

illusion of the cinema, is here undertaken with brio, establishing contact with the audience."[74] He refers to comedians who smirk at the camera and illusionists who bow and gesture to the spectator. The direct solicitation of the camera, whether by dancers or comedians, calls attention to the act of display in the burlesque film. This is also accomplished through the proscenium-style shooting, the frontality of the subject, the curtains that signal the open and close of the performance, and the introduction of a performer by a title or an announcer.

A few burlesque films, such as *Paris After Midnight* (1950) and *The Professor Misbehaves* (1953), attempted to integrate the spectacle of striptease with a hobbled narrative. Perhaps the most elaborate, *The Striptease Murder Case* (1950) is set in a New York nightclub, a set so seedy it makes the club in Edgar G. Ulmer's heralded low-budget classic *Detour* (1945) look like the Coconut Grove. Wedged among the discrete acts, which serve as the primary interest, is a truncated love triangle between Joan and Johnny, singers at the club, and a sleazy operator named Vince Armstrong. When Vince is found murdered in the kitchen, the singers are implicated.

The bulk of the narrative information is provided by an unseen, omniscient narrator who speaks in hard-boiled argot. During the final number, the investigating detective is called to the telephone, and shots of him talking on the phone are intercut with a stripper dropping articles of clothing. By the time her act ends, the detective has rejoined Johnny and Joan in the club office. He tells them they are free to go—someone has turned himself in at the station for the murder. Moments prior to fade-out the narrator says: "Oh say, I almost forgot to tell you who knocked Vince off. Remember a little guy who had some trouble with Vince earlier? This guy, he's a cokie, see? Been gettin' the stuff from Vince. This time he was broke and Vince turned him down. He killed him. Funny thing . . . gave himself up just so he could get a shot from the prison doctor." The "little guy" had been briefly shown being pushed around by Vince earlier in the film. When the narrator asks if the viewer remembers him, a freeze-frame of the fellow is shown to help jog the memory. The hasty revelation of the killer by the narrator coupled with the reminder shot of the murderer reveal how unimportant the narrative elements in *The Striptease Murder Case* were. Not only are the story elements handled as an afterthought, they are shot as one too. The narrative scenes are photographed with only one or two setups and are always done as two- or three-shots to avoid intercutting, thereby saving money.

Nudist films were the other exploitation genre that were heavily weighted with spectacle. *Elysia* was produced by Brian Foy's independent company in 1933 and was one of several features from the early 1930s that professed to show the joys of nudism. It was shot largely on location at Elysian Fields, a California nudist camp near Lake Elsinore. It is an example of a film that incorporated both discrete and integrated approaches to its spectacle. *Elysia* operates in a loosely narrative framework as it follows a reporter, Mack, who is assigned by his editor to write an account of the nudist camp craze. At first we may assume Mack is the goal-oriented protagonist of the classical Hollywood paradigm, but it soon becomes clear that he does not advance the narrative; instead, he is pulled along by other characters who show him things and by doing so exhibit spectacle to *Elysia*'s audience. Mack interviews Dr. King, who, in a discrete segment of spectacle, shows the reporter a film on nudism. King then ships the reporter off to Elysian Fields with his secretary, Miss Kent, acting as guide. As they travel to the nudist camp, Miss Kent lectures Mack about the points of interest along the way, including Lake Elsinore and Aimee Semple McPherson's summer home. That night at the camp, colony president

Hobart Glassey gives a lecture on the healthful effects of nudism to Mack and a group gathered around the campfire. Dr. King arrives the next day and gives Mack a tour of the camp while espousing the benefits of nudism.

*Elysia* can be divided into three major sequences—King's lecture and screening for Mack, Glassey's campfire talk, and the tour of the colony—that constitute the bulk of its running time. In each of the scenes Mack is passive. As with the earliest hygiene films, Mack serves as an audience surrogate. He and the spectator require education which is accomplished through the process of display. The editor tries to rouse Mack's interest in the assignment by showing him a photo of a nudist camp. Dr. King presents a film composed of stock footage shots almost exclusively of dark-skinned primitive people in brief costumes or nude. These scenes lead to the final payoff, the integrated spectacle of the camp tour, in which Mack and the viewer see white, evidently middle-class nudists engaged in outdoor activities. What we at first believe to be the narrative stakes—Mack's ability to get the story—are unimportant. We never find out if the story is filed, if his boss likes it, or what kind of reaction it receives. Unlike the typical classical Hollywood protagonist, Mack is never privileged by the camera. Glance-object cuts are shared by characters and are generally directed by Dr. King or Miss Kent, who literally guide Mack's gaze, pointing to things for him, and the audience, to look at. The film ends once the dual goals of exploitation have been achieved: the educational requisite has been fulfilled by the three major informational units and the titillation requirement has been met by King's film and the tour of the camp. The viewer has been given a degree of insight into the nudist lifestyle and has seen the forbidden sights promised.

Because the emphasis of *Elysia* is on spectacle rather than a complex narrative, space is not subordinate to narrative causality as in the classical Hollywood cinema. Numerous unconventional moments are present. In an early sequence, Mack enters the scene from a position next to the left of the camera, making the viewer aware of the offscreen space because of the odd entry point. During the campfire speech, Glassey addresses the camera directly while shots of Mack and others listening to him are intercut. Much of the tour scene and several other segments of the film were evidently shot silent, with wild sound added later. The effect, particularly when the nudists gather for lunch, is jarring, and the attendant discontinuity alerts the spectator to the viewing process. These ruptures with the classical system are easily accommodated by the spectator, for he or she does not have to work hard to "manage" the experience. The patient

**16** In *Elysia* (1933), Mack does not behave in the same way a goal-oriented protagonist does in a typical classical Hollywood film. In this frame enlargement, Miss Kent guides Mack's gaze. (Something Weird Video Collection)

viewer knows that the promised spectacle will be delivered in some quantity at some point during the film.

*Nudist Land* (1937) combined documentary footage of Africa, Bali, Samoa, and other places with a dramatized "true-life story" of an American couple who wind up becoming converts to the nudist lifestyle. Both the documentary and the narrative segments of the film work to present naked bodies to the curious spectator. Other nudist films, such as *Ten Days in a Nudist Camp* (ca. 1935), operated in a more documentary mode, coupling scenes of nudists at play with narration that expounded on the nudist philosophy. Visually, the emphasis is always on nude people walking, exercising, or simply lounging about. The display of the nudity is continually reinforced through the narration, which points to "sun-dappled skin" or the "vigorous glow" of the nudists' bodies. Other nudist films, particularly some shorts such as *Nudist Recruits* (ca. 1950) and *Back to Nature* (1954), were made up of shots of nudist camp life (constructed of recycled footage, in the case of the former) with no narration, just a

musical accompaniment. Such films condensed the visual spectacle into one lengthy segment. Just as the "unashamed" nudists shucked off their clothes, these films shed any pretense of narrative or documentary information or argumentation and solicit the spectator's attention solely through the display of naked bodies. This general rule applies to square-up reels and clinical reels as well.

If burlesque and nudist films tended to rely on a system of excess for the deployment of spectacle, other exploitation films mobilized it in more rationed doses. In some films, the spectacle is carefully segmented from the rest of the movie. Such is the case in *Mom and Dad, Because of Eve,* and other postwar hygiene films in which characters and the audience are shown films of childbirth, venereal diseases, and so on. The story of *Mom and Dad* is so formulaic, both as an exploitation staple and as a popular narrative (in stories, moral homilies, folk wisdom) as to be almost inconsequential. As such, its primary purpose is to serve as the vehicle onto which the spectacle of the clinical reels can be grafted. The same is the case with *Because of Eve.* In that film, Bob and Sally discuss their impending parenthood. They are visited by Dr. West and together recall their premarital physicals a year earlier. We flashback to that exam, where Dr. West tells Sally, "That first baby didn't hurt you a bit," and tells Bob, "there's no trace of your old VD." Bob and Sally look at each other, aghast, and begin to snipe, slinging questions and accusations at each other. The crisis gives Dr. West the opportunity to trot out two films, *The Story of VD* for Bob and *The Story of Reproduction* for the pair. Returning to the present, West tells the couple to come to his office in a week for the results of the pregnancy test. At the meeting, he informs Bob and Sally that they are to become parents and pulls out his handy projector to show them *The Story of Birth.* The film ends with Bob and Sally promising Dr. West that they will give their child proper sex instruction.

The spectacle in *Because of Eve* comes in each of the discrete clinical films. Some of it is designed to titillate; as indicated above, the hot version of the film featured nude models in the clinical reels. The models stand, feet slightly apart and arms out with palms up as if in supplication. It is a position of openness that invites inspection by the camera and the spectator. In response to this invitation, the camera trucks in to the genitals for closer examination. This visual strategy of display is at work in the other spectacular moments in the films. During the childbirth footage, the unwavering camera focuses on the pudenda of a woman, legs splayed in stirrups, giving birth to a baby boy. Childbirth footage seemed to have the

**17** Spectacle in the form of education. This frame enlargement of the childbirth footage from *Mom and Dad* (1944) is fairly typical of the staging of birth reels found in sex hygiene exploitation films. (Video Dimensions)

ability to titillate by exposing the female genitalia, as well as to awe and to horrify. Some of the spectacle within the film—close-ups of disease-ravaged genitalia, a cesarean operation—both fascinated and repelled audiences. These horrific or shocking scenes and shots were also photographed to actively display sights to the spectator. Gloved fingers turn a penis to give full view of a chancre. Pointers indicate rashes on bodies. A tongue depressor is used to spread the labia of an infected woman, her genital area framed by white sheets. The cesarean operation is shot to offer a clear and unobstructed view of the procedure. Narration continuously emphasizes what is being shown with phrases such as "This is . . ." and "Here we see . . ."

Scientific photos and diagrams, both still and animated, are also constituted as spectacle within the clinical reels by displaying processes that are invisible to the naked eye.[75] Animated diagrams illustrate the way venereal diseases enter through the sex organs and cause internal damage. Other diagrams show the process of conception. As an animated egg moves along the ovaduct, the narrator intones: "Here come the sperm

cells, swimming up from the vagina . . . like little fish racing upstream to spawn. Only one will enter and fertilize this egg. This is conception!" By illustrating things that the unaided eye cannot see, the film exerts a fascination over the spectator. The mundane narrative framework of *Because of Eve* becomes secondary to the parade of spectacle in the clinical reels, one that becomes quite literal in *The Story of VD* as the effects of tertiary syphilis are discussed. The narrator talks about blindness, paresis, and locomotor ataxia. His words are coupled with a long take in which a blind man moves with a cane through the frame from right to left. He is followed by a paralyzed woman being pushed in a wheelchair and a man walking with two canes. As a businessman enters the frame, the narrator booms, "If the spirochete attacks your heart you may develop a swollen heart, leaky valves, hardening of the arteries—any one of which may kill you with a sudden heart attack!" The man drops his briefcase, clutches his chest, and collapses to the ground, dead.

In other films, there was an effort to integrate the spectacle into the narrative, although it still stood out from the rest of the film. For instance, one scene in *Secrets of a Model* (1940) finds carhops Rita, Sally, and JoJo in the locker room of the drive-in where they work. As they argue about men, JoJo knocks over the screen behind which Sally is dressing. There is a momentary thrill as the screen falls aside, promising to reveal Sally in a state of undress. That anticipation dissolves as Sally is shown in a dress, pulling on her shoes. The women continue to bicker and JoJo and Rita fight over flowers delivered by Jack Thorndyke. A truce is finally achieved, and as Sally sits on the couch paging through a magazine, Rita and JoJo peel off their uniforms to their underwear and begin to primp. The scene lingers for a full minute as the women stand in their scanties, struggling to put on their shoes. At another point, several women "audition" for artist Stuart Bannerman by posing for him in their underwear. And still later in the film, after Thorndyke gets Rita drunk and prepares to take advantage of her, the camera pans down and then back up Rita's body as she lies on a bed in her underwear. Such moments of display bring the narrative to a halt and are geared solely to fascinate the spectator with what, by Hollywood standards, was a forbidden thrill. Many other exploitation films deployed their spectacle in a similar way, such as with strip poker games or wild jitterbug routines in several films, Jennie's nude swim in *Child Bride* (1941), the locker-room, workout, and female wrestling footage in *Racket Girls* (1950), and the scenes of Sally undressing and preening in front of

mirrors in *Bad Girls Do Cry* (1954). In each of these instances, the spectacle provides a burst of excitement and sparks further anticipation.

The spectacle in most exploitation exotics was integrated into the film, showing naked or seminaked natives of African tribes or South Sea islands going about their daily lives. As *Variety*'s review of *Wajan* (1937) noted, "Production has the usual semi-nudity of the dusky queens. . . . Spectacle of a young girl stripped to the waist, teaching youngsters to perform queer dance steps is different if nothing else."[76] *Karamoja* (1954), acquired by Kroger Babb for release through Hallmark, featured scenes of life among a Ugandan tribe. The film was sold with a standard hyperbolic Babb campaign that promised that the Karamoja "wear only the wind." A number of "shocking" scenes were presented, including the bleeding of cattle and drinking of the warm blood and self-mutilation as a form of ornamentation. Reviews invariably emphasized that some scenes were not for the squeamish.[77]

Spectacle could also be deployed as inserts. This strategy combined characteristics of the discrete segment, as the scenes of spectacle could be dropped in or removed if necessary. It also maintained elements of the integrated method because the segments are tied in some fashion to the narrative or to the situation being documented. For instance, *Mau Mau* (1955) was a fairly staid account on uprisings in Great Britain's African colonies. For one critic, scenes of native villages in flames were "eye-catching enough, but the scenes of violence, in which men and women [were] butchered, and the scenes of victims after the massacre, [were] on the gruesome side."[78] A more astute reviewer speculated, "I have a strong suspicion that, aside from being ludicrous and excessively gory, this scene was reenacted by native 'actors'; it is hard to believe that the Mau Mau tipped off a photographer they were coming."[79] Indeed, the faked segments of nudity and gore that illustrated events discussed in the narration were inserted into *Mau Mau* to make the film exploitable. The inserts delivered on the promises made by the ads: "You are there! A 20th Century jungle massacre. Africa explodes with naked terror!"

Spectacle inserts were usually included in films that contained little or no spectacle in their original form. In *Birthright,* a phlegmatic 1951 VD film shot in Georgia, the chicken-farming protagonist, John, has a fling with Nell, a waitress who works at a local greasy spoon. After an evening of drinking in the café, Nell tells John he is in no condition to drive home. She invites him to her place for coffee so he can sober up. They exit frame

left. Cut to a silent insert of two different actors in a room. The woman sits on the man's lap and they are both drinking. She rises and moves over to a bed, drops her skirt and then sits on the bed and takes off her blouse and bra, revealing a bare breast. The guy begins to take off his shoes and socks. A door, hinged at the left, swings shut, blocking the view. Fade to a door that opens on hinges on the right. We hear Nell say goodnight as John exits. John walks out the front door. At a later point in the film, a birth reel is inserted. *A Figleaf for Eve* (1945), a fairly conventional low-end comedy about a nightclub dancer who is a missing heiress, was spiced up when the dancer and her hellcat aunt visit a club. Inserted into the scene is a segment of a striptease dancer. In both of these instances, as well as in *Mau Mau,* the inserts could have been eliminated without damaging the film, but they serve to provide the spectacle that audiences were led to believe would be present due to the subject matter or advertising of the films.

In other exploitation films, the spectacle is delivered in a largely random fashion. Dwain Esper's *Maniac* (1934) is a formidable instance of this strategy—or lack of strategy—and it warrants a more in-depth analysis because it provides an excellent example of the effect that exploitation spectacle can have on the viewer. The film combines horrific elements, borrowing liberally from mad scientist films, with bits of Poe's "The Black Cat" and other stories, as well as nudity and gore added to the concoction. It is presented as a treatise and warning about mental illness, opening with a foreword cautioning that "unhealthy thought creates warped attitudes which in turn create criminals and manias [*sic*]." In *Maniac,* Dr. Mierschultz, a mad scientist, and his assistant, Don Maxwell, a vaudevillian, work on an experiment to restore life to the dead. With Don disguised as the coroner, the pair go to a morgue, where they revive a beautiful young suicide and take her away.[80] Later, at the Bureau of Missing Persons, a cop, the real coroner, and a morgue attendant speculate that the disappearance of the body was the work of Mierschultz. At Mierschultz's lab the doctor tells Don he needs a body with a "shattered heart" so he can replace it with a heart he has revived. When Don returns from the undertaker's parlor empty-handed, the crazed scientist demands that Don kill himself so that he can restore his life. Instead of following doctor's orders, Don shoots Mierschultz and assumes his identity. Don, now disguised as the scientist, treats Mr. Buckley, who believes he is the orangutan killer from "Murders in the Rue Morgue." Buckley goes crazy and steals off with a catatonic girl who happens to be walking through the lab (evidently the one revived earlier, although this is not entirely clear) and rapes her by the roadside.

**18** Don Maxwell (Bill Woods), disguised as Dr. Mierschultz, conducts an "examination" in one of *Maniac*'s (1934) moments of spectacle. (Something Weird Video Collection)

Don finds that a cat has eaten the heart Mierschultz revived. He captures the cat, pops out one of its eyes and eats it, commenting, "Why, not unlike an oyster or a grape."

Don bricks Mierschultz's corpse behind a wall in the basement and while he is not looking, the one-eyed cat jumps into the makeshift tomb. Meanwhile, a cop walking his beat questions a woman about Mierschultz and then queries a man who raises domestic cats for their fur. An intertitle tells us, "Maxwell had forgotten all about his wife, and she him until . . ." Maxwell's wife and two other women in a room read in the newspaper that Don is a lost heir. His estranged wife goes to find him. Don, still disguised as Mierschultz, tells her to return at eight that night. In the meantime, he examines a bare-breasted woman behind a dressing screen and a girl in a negligee who reclines on a table. Don then decides his wife wants

to murder him, so he enlists Mrs. Buckley's help. He confides to each woman that the other is crazy, then locks them in the cellar where they battle it out with syringes. The rat-and-cat rancher summons the police, who arrive, find the women, hear the entombed cat, and discover Mierschultz's body. The film ends with Don behind bars, wailing at the camera, "I only wanted to entertain. . . . Mierschultz, my greatest impersonation!"

The "story" of *Maniac* may sound odd, but a synopsis of the film cannot begin to convey the disjointed, confusing experience of an actual viewing. Don is the ostensible protagonist of *Maniac*—he is the maniac of the title—but because he is not rational, is not sensible, is not goal-oriented by any standard definition, the narrative quite literally makes no sense. The film shows no concern for the "general 'placing' of the spectator in an ideal position of 'intelligibility.' "[81] Indeed, in watching *Maniac,* the viewer is continually confused. Intelligibility in terms of space and temporal chronology are constantly violated. For instance, after the first scene, there are five quick shots of a cat catching a mouse. It is obvious that two different cats are used to convey this single action, which has no relation to the previous scene and precedes the establishing shot that appears to open the second scene in the morgue. Once the second scene is underway, an insert shot of the cat and mouse reappears, although there is nothing to indicate that the action of the animals takes place in the morgue. As Mierschultz and Don work on the suicide in the morgue, shots of two men in conversation are intercut. It develops that they are attendants at the morgue and are watching as the scientist and his assistant try to revive the suicide. The viewer is initially confused, not knowing who or where the men are. Dialogue cues indicate their proximity to Mierschultz and Don, but no establishing shots confirm this hypothesis. The viewer is left disoriented or confused if he or she expects the film to operate within the classical Hollywood paradigm.

The same disjunction occurs not only within scenes but between scenes. The girl that Buckley carries off appears out of nowhere. No cues are given to indicate her presence and status as a possible victim before she is whisked away. The police officer questions the woman about Mierschultz and "his assistant, Don Maxwell." Yet prior to this there is no indication that the police have connected the two men. The officer then questions the neighbor who raises cats. The breeder launches into a long discourse about how "rats eat raw meat—you know, cat carcasses. . . . So the rats eat the cats, the cats eat the rats, and I get the skins!" The cat scene appears simply to be padding, having no bearing on any other events in the film.

The viewer is likely to paraphrase the officer who asks Don at the end, "What kind of place is this?" by wondering "What kind of movie is this?" Such sequences and editing make hypothesis formation on the part of the spectator a fruitless exercise after a time, because no logical hypotheses can be formulated.

But this is exploitation, and so story, in the classical sense, is unimportant in *Maniac.* It does, however, provide an abundance of spectacle. In addition to the foreword, at random points throughout the film intertitles appear that define aberrant mental states (dementia praecox, paresis, paranoia, manic-depressive psychosis, and manias). These moments fulfill exploitation's educational imperative. Spectacle is also furnished in the scenes in which Don eats the cat's eye, the two women fight with syringes, Don's wife is introduced (she and the other women lounge about in their underwear), and in the "examination" and rape scenes. These last two scenes, both of which feature female nudity, do not have any logical connection with the "story" and appear to have been inserted merely for the sake of titillation. The examination scene is particularly autonomous because there is nothing that indicates the time. The women who appear in the scene do not appear prior to it or after it. The scene could have been inserted at any time after Don began sporting his Mierschultz disguise, but the scene's position is not crucial. These scenes, along with the educational material, are the heart of the film's spectacle, hence the surrounding material serves as little more than an episodic quasi-narrative and appears not bound by the rules of classical Hollywood cinema.

The experience of watching *Maniac,* and many other exploitation films, is summed up in the quote by Thomas O'Guinn that opens this chapter. O'Guinn's confusion over Kent's 1935 version of *The Pace That Kills* is understandable. Though the level of spectacle in that film is limited to brief, usually implied, scenes of drug use and degradation, the multiple, confusing story lines into which it splinters continually anticipate its appearance. The promise of those moments on the part of the film, and the anticipation of those moments on the part of the spectator, permitted the producers to jettison many of the conventions of narrative filmmaking that were established conventions by that time. The random moments of spectacle in *Maniac* and the anticipation of spectacle in *The Pace That Kills* condition the surrounding scenes, making them seem more unusual, more highly charged, more spectacular. We can think of this as exploitation film's corollary to the "Kuleshov effect," with moments of spectacle—or even its mere promise—imbuing the shots and scenes around them

with a kind of delirium that is conveyed to the spectator. I am not using delirium in an arcane psychoanalytic sense but in a very direct and literal sense, as a state of temporary mental confusion, anxiety, disorientation, or one of frenzied excitement or emotion, brought on by shock or other causes. The spectacle in exploitation films, whether excessive or limited, and whether parceled out in discrete segments, integrated, inserted, or occurring in the more chaotic fashion, works to produce confused or excited reactions in the spectator, even in those films with minimal spectacle or the mere promise of it. Delirium is perhaps the best way to characterize the experience of viewing exploitation, an experience that is the direct result of the centrality of spectacle to the form. And although I will argue that exploitation films operated out of particular ideological positions, these positions were filled with fissures due to the fractured, delirious nature of the films. Thus audiences had, and continue to have, a good deal of interpretive leeway as they approach these movies.

I have concentrated on examples of nudity and sexual display because these served as the dominant forms of spectacle in exploitation films. Other types of spectacle were included, such as microscopic views of biological processes and the depiction of drug use. For instance, both Esper's *Narcotic* from 1933 and *The Narcotics Story* from 1958 spend time detailing the preparation and use of various drugs. The latter film, produced as a police training documentary, delves into tremendous visual and verbal detail on the drying and grooming of marijuana and the proper way to smoke it; the step-by-step preparation of a fix of heroin is also shown. Although such detail might have been necessary for the training of fully informed narcotics officers, in an exploitation film these scenes serve as lurid spectacle, as how-to lessons for the audience.

And what of the exploitation films that seem to contain no spectacle, the films like *Polygamy* and *Samurai* or all of those old Chesterfield and Monogram releases played in adults-only programs? As I detail in the next chapter, the advertising, exploitation, and exhibition that was attached to the films were part and parcel of that spectacle. In some instances, a mundane Poverty Row potboiler could become, at least for a while, an exploitation movie, because the spectacle was attached to the film with shorts, a square-up reel, or a second feature that delivered the goods. It's conceivable that even the ad campaign itself could imbue a film with sufficient external spectacle. The mere promise of the forbidden through education or titillation could condition audience members to read a film as providing that spectacle that would carry over into the total filmgoing

experience, not just in the viewing of a particular motion picture. Thus the delirious nature of exploitation experience during the classical period extended from the films to their carnivalesque presentation, which served to spark anticipation in audiences as they entered the theater.

As I have shown, exploitation films relied on forbidden spectacle to differentiate themselves from classical Hollywood narrative films and conventional documentaries. As such, they were related to the cinematic tradition Tom Gunning has called "the cinema of attractions." The impulse to display spectacle was relied on almost exclusively in some exploitation films or served up in others in such a way as to disrupt the conventions expected in classical Hollywood cinema. The question Which came first, exploitation mode of production or exploitation style? implies the proverbial conundrum. The mode of production and style were, to a very large degree, mutually determining. For independent producers of exploitation films, reliance on titillating images meant that they could eschew slick production and embrace spectacle. At the same time, the low-budget nature of their operations necessitated that they make films grounded in spectacle to attract an audience.

The issue of the quality of exploitation films was a constant concern to those who represented the interests of the mainstream motion picture industry. Reviewers, particularly those working for *Variety* and the Quigley publications, were always quick to attack the exploitation films for their slipshod nature. When compared with the product of the majors and viewed through conventional critical standards, such evaluations were inevitable. It is clear, however, that those same issues were not paramount in the minds of the producers who made the films, the states' righters who distributed them, the theater owners who booked them, or the audiences who paid to see them. The exchange that took place, both from an economic standpoint and from an aesthetic perspective, was evidently considered equitable and satisfying for some forty years. It was only when the classical exploitation film could no longer return an adequate profit for the businesspeople or satisfy the desires of the audience for forbidden sights that they lost their viability in the marketplace.

# 3. "You Gotta Tell 'Em to Sell 'Em"

## *Distribution, Advertising, and Exhibition of Exploitation Films*

Title and theme make caviar for the cheap-street showmen and owl grind houses which bait their lobbies and six-sheet frames with lurid posters, cheesecake cutouts and sexy catchlines. It calls for lotsa red paint and carny showmanship and that's what it's getting at its advertised "world preem" showing.
—Review of *Escort Girl, Daily Variety* (1941)

### Distribution

I have already described exploitation movies as being something of an anachronism in terms of production and style. The distribution of exploitation movies was also rooted in early motion picture practice and combined elements of other, older entertainments like the carnival and circus. Exploitation films were distributed in two main ways. The first was through what was known as the states' rights system, the second was "roadshowing." The states' rights system of distribution was the primary means for getting exploitation films from producer to screen. In this arrangement, the producer sold the exclusive distribution rights for a territory to

an exchange or individual for a set period of time. The system emerged in the motion picture field when Raff & Gammon sold the rights to the Kinetoscope, and later the Vitascope, on a states' rights basis in the 1890s.[1] Early film exchanges, such as the Miles brothers' San Francisco operation started in 1902, were independent states' rights outfits, having a contract with producers to rent films to exhibitors in a predetermined territory.

What was to become the dominant system of film distribution started in 1909. The establishment of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) was an attempt by Edison and the other major film producers to drive their competitors out of business. Despite the Patents Company's various legal, economic, and strong-arm tactics to eliminate competition, new independent producers began making and importing motion pictures. Plenty of exhibitors were willing to risk the wrath of the MPPC to show these independent productions. The Patents Company soon discovered that it could not control the film industry and secure monopoly profits by influencing the production end of the business alone. By 1910, MPPC members had formed the General Film Company in an effort to control distribution. Once again, competitors refused to be cowed, and by 1912 two distribution companies, Mutual and Universal, had formed to represent seventeen large producers.[2] These companies owned exchanges in major cities and distributed their films virtually on a national basis. By the 1920s, as theater chains and producers united and vertical integration intensified, independent distribution companies became less important. With the major companies operating their own distribution exchanges, the states' rights system was left to the smaller firms unallied with the dominant concerns.

Most exploitation producers and many other Poverty Row outfits barely had the funds to make movies, much less to set up and maintain a national distribution system. Under the states' rights system, they would sell the rights to distribute a film or films to an independent exchange or individual. The rights were sold for a given territory and for a specified length of time, usually three to five years. Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn explain the advantages of this arrangement for low-budget producers: "A single firm, of course, could handle product from several studios, and most did. It was the most economical method of distribution, because it required no outright advance investment by the producer for distribution (other than the cost of producing the film in the first place). The states' rights franchisees received a percentage of each film's income for their efforts."[3] Some independent exchanges, such as Astor, First Division, and Cavalcade, had

offices in a number of cities across the country. Others operated on a regional or state level and they were never organized in any fashion, which makes it difficult to know how many individuals or companies may have been operating in the states' rights market at any given time. The percentage of film trade handled by these firms was small. Ruth Inglis claimed that prior to 1940, independent distributors handled "less than five percent of the films exhibited in this country" and that the movies they rented fell into two dominant types: "some are the 'quickie' films which are shown in the cheap 'flop-house' theaters in the interstitial areas of large cities where bums may spend a few hours for a nickel or a dime. Others are shown in movie theaters catering to foreign-language groups in urban areas."[4] Those "quickie" films would have included both Poverty Row westerns and potboilers as well as exploitation movies.

How did states' rights product differ from that of the majors? In a 1918 *Exhibitor's Trade Review* article, Samuel Cummins, already being described as a "prominent operator in this field," discussed states' rights productions, describing the problems he perceived in a specific case: "Before making a production the producer should consider the market in which he intends to dispose of his wares; he should try to meet the demands of the market, and remember that he is making a picture for the masses, and not the classes, or for art sake [*sic*], if he expects to derive any financial benefits. Only recently a picture was released by one of the leading directors. While this production is an exceptional one, as is considered by the trade, the subject is a little too deep. . . . Notwithstanding these facts, I cannot see how this picture will ever get over in the state right [*sic*] market, as it goes over the heads of the majority of theater goers."[5] Cummins was calling for states' rights films to have a direct emotional appeal for the audience and not to be "symbolic" or "allegorical." As the states' rights market developed over the next two decades, his prescription for product was filled. By the mid-1930s, those states' rights films not falling into the foreign-language category tended to be exploitation, action, and western films or the occasional religious drama. All were motion pictures that had an affective rather than an intellectual or aesthetic appeal. This is not to say that movies made and distributed by the Hollywood majors lacked the same affective dimension, but it does suggest that Hollywood, and particularly its prestige productions, at times espoused loftier goals.

When a company bought the states' rights to a picture, it was responsible for the movie's destiny in that territory. The states' righter had license to determine how the picture would be presented unless bound by some

contractual restrictions. With the rights to a film came the leeway to change the title, add or subtract footage, as well as design new posters and advertising art. At times, producers facilitated this by providing artwork with open space into which the distributor could insert the title of his or her choice.[6] Whereas a film from a major company was often backed by advertising in national magazines, publicity tours, and product tie-ins, the states' righter had to rely on his or her own ability to promote a film to theater owners and the public.[7] The number of prints that distributors bought for a given area depended on its size and the zeal with which they planned to sell the film. Dan Sonney has indicated that when his father was buying the rights for films to distribute in the eleven western states, he would normally purchase seven or eight prints.[8] Smaller territories could be served by one or two prints—but problems did crop up. Roadshowman Claude Alexander explained, "I went into Philadelphia [with *The Lonesome Road,* aka *No Greater Sin*] and they wanted to show the picture in eight drive-in theaters, but I only had one print. So I just had a bunch of titles run off and went down to the film exchange and got any pictures they had in mothballs and put new titles on them. In one town it was a sex picture and in another a cowboy picture. I wasn't going to pass up those dates!"[9] Once a contract expired the producer had the option of renegotiating with the distributor, finding a new distributor for the territory, or letting the film "rest" for a time before sending it out again.

Purchasing the rights to a film could be a fairly inexpensive proposition. From the producer's vantage point, Sonney informs us that getting money for cheap pictures "was like pulling teeth. Christ, if we got $2,000 [up front] out of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, that was big money."[10] The exchanges would retain a percentage of the gross film rentals and remit the rest to the producer. In some instances, no "up-front" money was involved. For example, the contract between producer Don Kay and distributor William Mishkin for the New York territorial rights on *Secret Scandal* (aka *Hometown Girl,* 1949) did not involve a purchase price for the rights. In this case, after recouping double the cost of the prints, Mishkin agreed to pay Kay 65 percent of the gross box office receipts up to $5,000, after which Kay's percentage dropped to 60. Mishkin also agreed to obtain the necessary New York State Censors Seal, the costs to be deducted from the producer's share.[11] With older pictures it appears that the rights were normally sold for a flat fee without an additional percentage of the gross.

Roadshowing was the other distribution method utilized by the exploiteers. To stretch a point, the roadshow is any form of entertainment

that travels from one population center to another to bring that entertainment to an audience. Troubadours, circuses, medicine shows, theater troupes, magic lantern projectionists, and vaudeville shows all have a history of traveling from town to town to present programs for a fee. This tradition was taken on by early entrepreneurs in the movie business. From the earliest days of projected motion pictures, itinerant showmen traversed the countryside with projectors and reels of film, setting up shop for a night or two in places that did not yet have a permanent picture show or lacked the population to support one.[12] As nickelodeons spread, the traveling exhibitor gradually disappeared, but the roadshow continued in two distinct veins.

By the 1930s, two types of roadshowing had emerged in the motion picture business. The first type of roadshow can be traced back to the presentation of early features in the United States. In 1911 *Dante's Inferno,* an Italian spectacle, was booked into legitimate Shubert playhouses. Other films, such as Adolph Zukor's import *Queen Elizabeth* with Sarah Bernhardt and *Quo Vadis* soon followed. *The Birth of a Nation, The Covered Wagon, The Big Parade,* and *Wings* were some of the silent films that received the roadshow treatment. The practice, accorded to prestige productions, usually consisted of two-a-day screenings in deluxe—often legitimate—houses, reserved seating, printed programs, full symphony orchestras, and appropriately higher ticket prices. The film was showcased in the best possible light without the distraction of shorts, newsreels, or live acts. Multiple roadshow units could operate simultaneously in different cities. All of this was an expensive proposition, with only 20 percent of roadshows in the silent era showing a profit for producers, who bore all the costs. What they failed to make at the box office they made up for with high-visibility publicity which could benefit a film when it moved down to a normal first-run situation, where profits began to accrue.[13] By the 1930s roadshowing as a showcase was on the wane. In the five years from 1933 to 1937, only thirty pictures were roadshowed by the majors, with MGM topping the list with eight. It was generally conceded that there was little direct profit in the practice. Other techniques replaced the roadshow's function "to arouse interest and to serve as the backbone of exploitation and advertising campaigns when the picture is released generally."[14] Roadshowing was occasionally used for some of Hollywood's most opulent productions during the 1950s and 1960s before being buried by techniques like saturation openings.

The other type of roadshow program was associated with the exploita-

tion film. Again, it entailed a traveling show, but unlike the exclusive nature of major roadshows, these were standard exploitation movies: low-budget, adults-only features. The "exclusive" nature of these roadshow films lay not in a class appeal of high ticket prices, reserved seats, and a lush orchestra, but in the fact that children and adolescents were excluded from the audience. Clearly, those in the film business knew what the term "roadshow picture" meant. In a letter to Irwin Esmond, director of the New York State Board of Censorship, Dwain Esper said of *The Seventh Commandment,* "This picture will be used entirely as a 'road show' entertainment, and we do not desire to place it in neighborhood houses, but to confine it, if possible, to adult audiences only."[15] In a similar vein, the 1948 pressbook for *Savage Bride* (aka *Rama,* 1932) claimed that "*Savage Bride* is a road show picture!" while also promising "Sex in a jungle setting!" A postwar J. D. Kendis campaign book addressed "Exchanges & Roadshow Owners & Distributors of Pictures." The movies offered included burlesque, narcotic, hygiene, and vice films as well as exotics. Many were also labeled "an exploitation picture," and virtually all would have played for adults-only audiences.

Roadshowing exploitation films was at times undertaken by the producer of the film or his employees. Roadshowmen would either rent the film to the exhibitor on a percentage basis, or they would rent the theater for a set number of days and keep the entire box office, a practice known as four-walling. David F. Friedman has said that "roadshowing was really the first essence of exploitation"; Dwain Esper, the Sonneys, J. D. Kendis, and Kroger Babb are just several of the exploitation producers who roadshowed their films.[16] In other cases, states' righters would send a film out on the road. The roadshow operation could range from something as simple as one person tossing a few cans of film in the trunk and moving from town to town, to the deployment of multiple roadshow units. Babb had as many as twenty-six units on the road with *Mom and Dad,* each with an advance man, several individuals traveling with the show as lecturers and nurses, as well as lobby displays. In either case, the roadshowman would carry nearly everything necessary to put on the show. Dan Sonney says, "When I was on the road I would service the whole show. I'd have to make a two-hour show of it. I'd bring the whole show, the first feature and whatever made the rest of the show."[17] That could include a program of shorts, a square-up reel if necessary, and the appropriate advertising and lobby displays. The pressbook for Kendis's *Jungle Virgin,* a retitle of *Jaws of the Jungle* (1936), promised that exhibitors would receive "a complete

exploitation campaign and special lobby gratis with every Continental road show unit."

Accounts of life on the road in show business are usually romantic. Troupers fight the odds and unscrupulous bookers, sheriffs on the take, and grousing audiences to put on a show. Friedman's entertaining stories of roadshowing postwar hygiene films are filled with colorful, hard-drinking characters who could put one over on the local bluenoses as deftly as they could cinch a deal with a recalcitrant theater owner. Dan Sonney's recollections of being on the road for his father's company in the 1930s are far more somber:

> [I'd be out] three or four months at a time . . . one movie at a time. Then I'd come back and my dad would have another one for me. I would go from state to state. Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana . . . Christ, it was tough. Hell, I'd be alone. I remember I was showing Omaha, Nebraska, and I had a 1937 Plymouth coupe that I'd got new. And I was playing the Town Theater. . . . And the next day I was showing in Des Moines, Iowa, at the Family Theater. There was a snow blizzard that had come by right before Thanksgiving. . . . I don't know what the hell I was doing there—it killed all the livestock, turkeys and everything. That's one thing I remember from roadshowing! I wouldn't want to live one day over again of that business.[18]

Sonney explained that the key to success was a good relationship with the exhibitor. Yet roadshowing in small towns was not very profitable in the 1930s: "It was three, four months and I'd go back to the same chain again. It was all independents. And you'd leave them with a good taste in their mouths. We never had an enemy with any of the shows I did. . . . We're talking about the Depression times. A lot of [the movies] didn't do any business. Christ, in those days you could get a room for three dollars, not like now. After you settled up, if you got $27 that was big money." Although roadshowing often meant slim profits, especially during the Depression, some companies had handsome returns, particularly in the postwar period.

With units spread out across the country, often playing in small towns or cities, the roadshow system could be easily abused. Friedman has noted that one old roadshowman, Howard "Pappy" Golden, was known to steal film from exchanges and hit the road with the purloined prints. Golden was accused of practicing a "scorched-earth policy" because of his tendency to burn customers, souring theater owners to other roadshows. Friedman recounts how Golden once issued a phony FBI wanted flier on

Esper (who in turn sued the Sonneys).[19] In 1938 Mike Levinson charged Golden with infringing on the copyright of his picture *Lash of the Penitentes.* In a Dallas courtroom, Levinson asserted that he had tracked Golden "over twenty states for . . . eight months."[20] There can be little doubt that the Forty Thieves earned the nickname not so much because they cheated theater operators or moviegoers—although some did—but because the openness of the states' rights and roadshow systems of distribution allowed them to take advantage of each other.

## Advertising

In 1929 a reviewer for *Variety* expounded on the technique of selling exploitation films:

> When [ticket buyers] slap down their six bits and penetrate the veil of "the truth about white slavery" they may, or may not, feel like umchays, but unless they left school at the fourth grade they probably notice there's a long swim between what the lobby promised and what the screen delivers. This, of course, has been going on for some little while. Every burlesque house in the country operates on the same principle, putting its best show in the lobby. Time has built up the technique and frequently a very high order of showmanship is represented in the exploitation of sex shows. The law allows managers to arouse curiosity, but does not permit its gratification. So the boys strike a balance. It's an organized business.[21]

Since Barnum's days of promoting Joice Heth as the 160-year-old nursemaid of George Washington and some stitchings of skin and bone as the "Fejee Mermaid," American audiences had willingly participated in extravagant claims, hoaxes, and humbugs—as long as these stimulated their curiosity. Barnum's efforts to provide the public with "visions, emotions, and sensations in excess of their bland daily life" was accomplished through the ballyhoo that was part of the show.[22] Ballyhoo, that noisy, vulgar spiel that drew audiences to circuses and sideshows, was a hyperbolic excess of words and images that sparked the imagination. Just as Barnum's ballyhoo had to be "stimulating to the intellect and the senses, to be expansive and exotic, and yet they had to find a place in the community," so too did the ballyhoo of the exploitation producer and distributor.[23]

Product differentiation was crucial in the mainstream motion picture business. Dozens of films competed against each other in any single week,

hundreds in a given year. The use of stars, genres, technological features, and even the studio logo helped audiences sort through a morass of movies to find those that intrigued them. At the same time exploitation films were becoming established in the 1920s, the major studios were joining with advertising agencies to create sophisticated campaigns that linked movies and stars to products and services, helping to forge the growing consumer culture.[24] Because the hundred-odd theaters that regularly showed exploitation films could count on a steady clientele of thrill seekers and single men, and because other theaters played the films only occasionally, little effort was made to distinguish one exploitation film from another. Because exploitation films were in competition for the same entertainment dollar, their primary task was to promote their difference from mainstream movies. Allusions to sex and other forbidden topics, as well as their educational intent, were the primary signifiers of this difference. The graphic advertising and publicity and the sensationalized exploitation schemes that lent exploitation films their name were all charged with a brash ballyhoo, designed to lure the public into theaters.

By 1930 vertical integration of the film industry had been solidified, allowing for standardized, national advertising by the major film companies.[25] Because exploitation films were distributed on a states' rights or roadshow basis, because they opened in independent or subsequent-run theaters, and because they were blocked from some states and cities due to censorship, national advertising was never a consideration. However, this does not mean that advertising was not standardized to some extent. Like the mainstream industry, the exploiteers relied heavily on graphic advertising to sell a film, including ads placed in newspapers and the posters and window cards used by exhibitors. Exploitation producers generally designed posters and ads and cut a trailer while the film itself was being edited. Dan Sonney recalls that one-sheet posters cost between ten and fifteen cents apiece, and that he would usually order one thousand at a time.[26] States' righters would order posters, pressbooks, ads, and stills from the producer, although on occasion they would produce their own paper, such as when they retitled a film. Most exploitation films were augmented with the same complement of material that was used to sell mainstream movies: posters, lobby cards, and window cards. All the material was for use in the theater except for the window card, which would be displayed in cooperating businesses, most often in exchange for a pair of passes to the show. As older films continued to be rereleased, the amount

of advertising material available tended to diminish, often limited to one-sheets, lobby cards, window cards, and stills.

Mary Beth Haralovich has demonstrated the preponderance of heterosexual imagery in Hollywood film posters in the 1930s and 1940s. Almost all of the posters in her sample foreground the heterosexual couple within the bounds of a courtship relationship, just as the movies did. According to Haralovich, mainstream posters place the characters within the narrative of the film at the point of narrative enigma while they also "engage the desire of the spectator for a particular kind of closure"—usually that closure found in monogamy and marriage.[27] Exploitation posters and ads often place characters at the center of an enigma as well. But in contrast to Haralovich's findings that mainstream movie posters presented "heterosexual bonding in process," exploitation posters and advertisements seldom did this. Lacking conventional narratives, stars, or genres with which to sell their films, exploitation producers relied on a marketing address that transposed to paper the key attributes of their films: spectacle in the form of education and titillation. Several major themes are consistent throughout exploitation advertising: (1) the aftereffects of heterosexual bonding; (2) blatant sex and nudity; (3) the unusual, aberrant, or forbidden; (4) timeliness or exposé; (5) veracity; and (6) pedagogic appeal. Elements of titillation and education weave their way through all of these categories.[28]

Ads and posters for exploitation films, like the movies themselves, show the aftereffects (usually dangerous) of heterosexual bonding or focus on unusual, aberrant, or culturally forbidden sexual bonds. Some ads frame the aftereffects of sexual union as a series of questions or enigmas. For instance, a poster for the 1933 version of *Enlighten Thy Daughter* screams "A smashing indictment of parental prudery!" over the film's title. Beneath this is a scene depicting a man and woman embracing at right. They have concerned looks on their faces. A physician stands at the left, his right hand out, palm up. Test tubes and medical equipment are on a table next to him. Beneath the art is the legend, which we ascribe to the doctor: "There is only one thing you can do now. There is no other way." While the poster appears to concentrate on a moment of narrative rupture, as most mainstream posters in Haralovich's survey do, it represents a crisis that has occurred as a result of the couple's relationship. We are not privy to the nature of the crisis. Unwed motherhood? Disease? What will be the outcome? The ads for *The Desperate Women,* an abortion film, are constructed

**19** One of the many ads for *The Desperate Women* (1954) posed a series of titillating questions.

of combinations of shots of women looking ashamed, fearful, or in agony; a sinister-looking physician, his face partially obscured by a surgical mask; a medical examination; a couple in a passionate embrace; and a woman wearing a low-cut gown. Ad copy—"Are you next? A million women every year try the impossible"; "Ashamed and afraid, one indiscretion sealed her lips"; "What sort of man is this?"—in concert with the images paints a picture of the tragic outcome of a heterosexual union. Material from both these films revolves around titillating narrative questions: What indiscretions have led these people to be in such dire situations? Will the film reveal the scenes to the spectator, and in what degree of detail? The desire for answers to questions posed by ads and posters could prompt the purchase of tickets.

Other ads that concentrated on the aftereffects of heterosexual union instigated spectator interest through direct promises of spectacle. Among the most frequent was "See a baby born before your very eyes!", a line used in advertising material for *Birth of a Baby* in 1937 and variations of which were often repeated. "You actually SEE the birth of a baby!" was the promise delivered by *Mom and Dad,* and *We Want a Child* made the unqualified assurance "The beginning of life itself before your eyes." Some later ads embellished the direct appeal in an effort to combat possible

audience boredom with decades of birth-of-a-baby movies. Posters for Claude Alexander's *No Greater Sin* roadshow program, a late entry in the field, not only said "See the actual Birth of Triplets," but promised "You'll gasp, you'll wince, you'll shudder . . . so powerful many will faint."

The aftereffects of a sexual union are also manifested through the graphic depiction of shame and guilt, a dominant theme in hygiene films. *Marriage Forbidden,* a retitled version of *Damaged Goods* (1937), was accompanied by ad art of a woman in a half-slip and bra, covering her face and crying, "Help! Save me!" Additional copy warned "Don't dare get married until you've seen it!" and depicted a horrified woman gazing at a baby. Ads for *Daughters of Today, Enlighten Thy Daughter, Illegal Wives,* and *Street Corner* all depicted women with faces buried in their hands or some other visual expression of shame. Posters for *Because of Eve* showed the heroine pulling the collar of her trench coat up to hide her face while a line asked "Where is your daughter tonight?" Desire often produced victims of one kind or another, according to such ads as "Young Victims of Man's Desire!" for *Child Bride.* Men were victimized by their lust in ads for *Escort Girl:* "Men who play . . . must pay"; " 'Playboys' exploited by ruthless men and lovely 'playgirls' "; and "Innocent lives wrecked by an 'Innocent Evening.' " The ads featured art of women in skimpy costumes, as did those for *Forbidden Women,* in which "Death was the penalty for all men who dared enter the forbidden chamber!" Such warnings played on deeply ingrained fears about sexuality and spoke to anxieties for oneself as well as parents' concerns for their children. Moreover, they capsuled exploitation's critique of individual desire that was at the center of most of the films.

Images of women in skimpy costumes or in the nude (often indicated by silhouette) sold the films through blatant appeal to sexual interest or curiosity. Burlesque film posters and ads offer the most obvious example of this tactic. They tended to feature images of the star dancers and, on occasion, the comedians. As in the burlesque movies, women in skimpy outfits filled the ads, with little descriptive copy. What copy there was generally promised things like "the most exotic stars in one great show" (*Striporama*) or "Saucy! Spicy! Naughty but Nice!" (*A Night in the Moulin Rouge*). Vice and nudist films emphasized the sexual sell with lines like "Can youth be protected against demons of lust and desire?" and "Can they get away with it? Peeping through the keyhole at intimate adventures of modern unconventional youth," both used for *Slaves in Bondage.* Artwork accompanying the lines featured young women lounging provoca-

tively in their underwear. *The Unashamed* was billed as "A Romance in the Nude!" Though these ads and posters may have elicited some female curiosity, the fact that they presented women in daring costumes, or none at all, indicates that producers were attempting to appeal to a heterosexual male audience through this particular address.[29] Of course, nudity and bald sexual appeal could cause problems for exhibitors and distributors if town elders pressured them into modifying ads, posters, or theater fronts.

Exploitation films were also advertised as being different from mainstream movies by stressing the unusual, the aberrant, and the forbidden. Unusual couplings were emphasized: *Jungle Virgin* promised "Forbidden Love in a Tropical Paradise!" and crude drawings showed a dark-skinned man carrying a white woman, suggesting miscegenation, a Hays Office taboo. Along similar lines, an ad for *Blonde Captive* featured an aboriginal warrior grasping the arm of a white woman with blond bobbed hair. He fends off other "savages" as the copy asks "Can a civilized woman find love, happiness, peace in being a Primitive Wife?" Though mixed-race couples may have shocked many in the 1930s, other couplings offered by exploitation films were just as unusual. "Old wives traded for new" was the pitch of *Polygamy*'s alternative title, *Illegal Wives.* One ad pictured a disheveled young woman and copy that read "Sacrificed to the strange doctrine of *Illegal Wives,* brides of 15, husbands of 50." Ads for *Child Bride* did not have to go far to suggest the atypical pairing by showing the pubescent heroine pulling away from the grip of her middle-aged hillbilly husband and announcing that the film was "a throbbing drama of shackled youth!" Posters for *Chained for Life,* a fictional film starring the real-life Siamese twin Hilton sisters, asked "What happens in their intimate moments?" and ads promised to show "Siamese twins—playthings of desire." The one-sheet for *The Gorilla Woman,* as the postwar reissue of *Angkor* was titled, pictured an ape carrying a smiling, semidraped woman and offered "Giant monsters enthroned as love gods! Startling in its weird action." Other exotic and unusual sights were highlighted in ads. *Forbidden Women* claimed to be "A vivid picture that dares tell the secrets of the harem!" *Marihuana,* the 1936 narcotic feature, ticked off the forbidden sights it would display in a print ad: "Wierd [*sic*] Orgies; Wild Parties; Unleashed Passions." The aftereffects of sexual union, nudity, and the taboo all contributed to the adults-only status of almost all exploitation films. That designation was then prominently displayed in the ads to ensure differentiation from mainstream pictures.

Because exploitation films often drew on the headlines for their story

material, they emphasized timeliness in their ads. Exploitation's roots in progressivism were continually reaffirmed through claims that films were exposés of contemporary problems. Some ads for *Gambling with Souls* emphasized women in underwear, but other ads proclaimed, "Soiled souls in the marts of a great city! . . . a true exposé of the sensational events recently seen in the nation's headlines." *Escort Girl* claimed to show "Secrets, Sex-posed, Sensationally!" and to reveal "A treacherous racket masking as legitimate . . . exposed by facts." The process of revelation was associated with sexual teasing with lines such as those used for *Secrets of a Model,* which said that any theater playing it would be "Laying bare the private lives of glamorous girls in glittering Hollywood!" *The Devil's Sleep* was billed as a "Daring exposé of the devil drug traffic in 'bennies,' 'goofies,' and 'phenos' as it really exists." Ads for *Teenage* played on the juvenile delinquency scare of World War II: "Tears Aside the Black Veil of Ignorance and Exposes the Grim Horror of Teen Age Delinquency; Explains the Horrible Penalty of a Girl's Ignorance of the Biological Urge." And according to one catch line used in advertising material for *Main Street Girl,* the film was so up-to-the-minute it was positively prophetic: "New as tomorrow's headlines!" Ads and posters that pursued a timely pitch seldom referred to specific incidents or individuals. The mention of, say, Lucky Luciano on a poster could relegate it to the scrap heap a year or two after Luciano had faded from public memory. Generic timeliness, however, did not age, thus allowing material to be used year after year.

Closely tied to the timeliness of a film, but also to sexual and other aspects, was veracity. In *Illegal Wives,* spectators were guaranteed to find "Startling Facts that outstrip fiction!" *Jungle Virgin* was "Unbelievable but true!" Audiences were encouraged to put aside what reservations they might have about seeing a disreputable film because it was "true" or "factual." Nudist movies were often advertised as being authentic. *Isle of Levant* included "Actual films of this most famous rendezvous of the nudists of the world. Filmed with fidelity and taste." Ad slicks for *Garden of Eden* showed the silhouette of a naked woman in a garden setting and promised the film was "Photographed in COLOR in a REAL Nudist Park under the supervision and with the approval of The American Sunbathing Association." And posters for *The Story of Bob and Sally* asked, "Just How Much Truth Can You Stand? Concerning Sex, Marriage, Alcoholism?"

Ads also contained a pedagogic address, sometimes implicitly but in other instances overtly. For instance, *Secrets of a Model* said it would be "A lesson in life for every girl . . . a warning for every parent!" In addition to

**20** Ads assured ticket buyers of the authenticity of exploitation films, such as this one for *The Isle of Levant,* a French nudist movie released in the United States in the 1950s.

being able to "strip the soul bare," posters for the drug picture *The Thrill That Kills* claimed, "This picture is a lesson for every teen-ager—and a warning for every parent!" Ads for *She Shoulda Said "No"!,* another drug film, directly addressed would-be ticket buyers: "To Our Patrons—A dynamic film thunderbolt! It's Enlightening, it's Educational, it's Entertaining! To miss it will most definitely be to forever regret it." Ads for *Street Corner* shouted, "It lifts the iron curtain of fear and ignorance! Sweeps away superstitions, illusions and hypocrisies! Every mother . . . every father . . . every young man and woman MUST SEE IT!" Audiences were encouraged to look on their attendance at an exploitation film as an experience with multiple dimensions, one that would arouse, thrill, entertain, and educate.

In some cases, a producer or distributor was able to cover all the bases with advertising. The back of the pressbook for *Skid Row,* the retitle of *Confessions of a Vice Baron,* provides a prime example of a campaign that covered almost all the major appeals made by exploitation advertising.

1. The aftereffects of heterosexual bonding: "I was an innocent virgin, now a victim of desire."
2. Blatant sex and nudity: images as well as various references to sex, and catch lines such as "See the queens of burlesque in their sexsational strip tease dances!"
3. The unusual, aberrant, or forbidden: "Sex maniacs . . . murders . . . women of scarlet . . . victims of passion."
4. Timeliness or exposé: "Scoop! The picture that dares expose the naked and shameless truth about the scarlet street of sin. Timely as today's headlines."
5. Veracity: "See and know the truth."
6. Pedagogic appeal: "This could be your daughter . . . why should she suffer for your ignorance . . . don't let it happen . . ."

The *Skid Row* ads and posters were a distillation of all that was exploitation. The pressbook promised, "Mr. Exhibitor . . . you'll say the greatest picture of its type ever filmed," but, as I have indicated, it was considerably less than that.

Of course, such promises of sex, sin, and forbidden sights violated everything for which the mainstream industry had come to stand. As Haralovich and Janet Staiger have shown, the Advertising Code of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) restricted what could and could not be presented in ads and posters. Yet, as I explain in the next chapter, the independents who made exploitation movies were not signatories to those codes and generally ignored, and in many cases flaunted, their provisions. Though advertising for exploitation films came under attack from local law enforcement officials from time to time, little could be done to stop it. Audiences, whether because they were satisfied or because they were embarrassed, never asked for their money back from an exploitation show. As Dan Sonney has said, "If they had, I'd have given it to 'em."[30] A film could be completely misrepresented by the advertising and could disappoint spectators, yet the ballyhoo that preceded it was part of the overall entertainment experience, a fact the audience evidently recognized and appreciated and in which they were complicit.[31]

Trailers for exploitation films followed some of the patterns used in print advertising. Technically, the coming-attraction reels were no more sophisticated than the films they promoted. Most employed a series of titles over cheap artwork, intercut with scenes from the film. Often, the

**21** Examples of two of the ads for *Skid Row,* a retitle of *Confessions of a Vice Baron,* mobilized most exploitation advertising tropes, including the aftereffects of heterosexual bonding, blatant sex, the unusual, aberrant, or forbidden, and timeliness and exposé.

scenes used were put together abruptly, with little regard for continuity or pace. Few used any sort of voice-over narration, relying on jazzy stock music that popped in and out, often in jarring fashion. Exploitation trailers depended most heavily on sex and timeliness to sell the films. They usually emphasized that the coming feature would be shown to adults only. The trailers employed scenes that promoted the spectacle of the film; shots of women in scanty costumes or in compromising situations were among the most popular. Just enough was shown to tease the audience. Titles like "How far can a girl go . . . and remain decent?" (*Dance Hall Racket*) and "Sexsational! Dramatic!" (*Child Bride*) encouraged spectators to believe they were getting only a taste of what was to come when the feature arrived on the local screen. "Don't miss this true-to-life story" and "The picture that will make you think" were among the stock lines that appealed to timeliness and veracity. Burlesque trailers usually offered little more than the title of the film, several segments displaying different dancers, and at times a brief bit of a comic scene. Titles such as "See beauties, cuties, nudies" were cut in for those on whom the obvious might have been lost. If audiences were unsure about the differences between mainstream and exploitation movies based on graphic advertising, trailers pounded home the distinction with titillating shots from the films.

**22** Grindhouses with a "mainly masculine patronage" would have used racy photos such as this to promote the "sex angle" in *It's All in Your Mind* (1938) with Byron Foulger. (Something Weird Video Collection)

Finally, advertising, like the films themselves, could come in hot and cold varieties. In most instances, it was contingent upon the exhibitor to know what the limits were in his or her community and how far those limits could be pushed. Putting the proper spin on the pitch could mean the difference between attracting and alienating an audience. For instance, *Boxoffice* suggested that the "selling angles" for *It's All in Your Mind* would be dictated by the nature of the theater in which it played: "In the grind houses with mainly masculine patronage—which are the feature's natural outlet—the sex angle should be stressed, with semi-nude art studies featuring lobby displays and advertising. . . . If shown for family trade, it must be exploited as a moral preachment against sin and lust."[32] There are other instances in which the production company furnished alternatives, such as the "sensational" and "special situation" campaigns for the postwar hygiene film "*We Want a Child!*" The former combined graphics and text to emphasize the "startling" qualities of the adults-only presentation. The ads for "special situations" still used a fistful of exclamation points but

were more subdued visually and verbally, promising that the film was "never shocking . . . never offensive."

Publicity—the dissemination of interesting reading material—was another way that exploitation pictures, like Hollywood films, attempted to sell their product to a prospective audience. Pressbooks for mainstream films were always filled with publicity stories to be planted in local newspapers. Such pieces often included biographies of the stars and supporting cast, human interest stories, background information about the production, special features on new "discoveries" or technical angles, prepared reviews, plus many short items and blurbs that mentioned the production and could be used as filler by newspapers. Exploitation films pursued a similar path, although without the depth and diversity of mainstream efforts. Lacking recognizable stars, exploitation pressbooks attempted to promote their players as new discoveries with stories like "First-Timers in Shock Drama" (*The Desperate Women*) and "Picture Boasts All-Native Cast" (*Forbidden Women*). Or they were simply disingenuous, such as *Mom and Dad*'s boast of an "All-Star Cast" or the "Brilliant Cast" billed in *The Devil's Sleep.*

For the most part, publicity followed the same patterns as posters and ads. Selling the sexual or forbidden angle through publicity stories was a more delicate operation than slapping up posters or even buying space for newspaper ads. At times, the method of expressing the sexual nature of a film or promoting its forbidden qualities was to note in stories or prepared reviews that it was being shown to adults only. *The Desperate Women* went so far as to prepare a story titled "Frank Drama For Adults Only," which detailed why children were not permitted to see the film. Some article titles, such as "Orgy Brings Couple to Senses in Test Tube Babies Film," headlined rather dry stories, but the implication of what the film would show was held in the title of the piece. No elaboration was necessary in the text.

Timeliness was often at the forefront of exploitation film publicity. In many instances, exploitation movies were able to piggyback on topical stories in the news or on editorial pages. The nudist craze in the early 1930s, the Lucky Luciano case in the mid-1930s, postwar stories about "test tube babies" (artificial insemination) and juvenile delinquency were often still fresh in the public mind when movies exploiting the topics appeared. Publicity stories in the *Mau Mau* pressbook were titled to give the appearance that they were actual news items from the mid-1950s: "British Child Hacked To Death By Mau Maus!"; "Crazed Mau Mau Killers Slay

Women and Children!"; "Mau Mau Women Let Their Babies Starve!"; and so on. Most of the short items then featured a pitch for the film embedded in the "story." If there was a chance that incidents were beginning to fade from the media, prepared stories and reviews pointed out the "recent" interest. Stories contained in the pressbook for *Slaves in Bondage* referred to "the recent Dewey vice investigations in New York City," which served as the factual basis for the film. The *Test Tube Babies* pressbook cited recent stories on artificial insemination in publications such as the *New York Times* as a means of signaling currency and respectability. Even the most general of vice films could be given a patina of timeliness. *Escort Girl*'s pressbook featured a publicity story that begins, "During recent investigations of Escort Bureaus in many large cities, the officers working on the case were particularly interested in the difference between a legitimate night club and a 'Clip Joint.' " The selection of a few choice adjectives for a publicity blurb could make almost any film seem "ripped from today's headlines"—whether it was or not. In similar fashion, "exposé" was often attached to the publicity of a film to lend a sense of urgency to the material.

Prepared stories in the pressbook of *Savage Bride,* a postwar retitle of *Rama,* were addressed to several potential markets: "Man, Woman and Nature Star in a New Picture"; "*Savage Bride* Is a Thrill Picture"; "Wild Primitive Sex in *Jungle Bride* [*sic*]"; "Monsters of the Deep in Picture"; "*Savage Bride* Powerful Picture of Love!"; and "Critics Acclaim New Picture." Some of these stories were gender-directed. For instance, "*Savage Bride* Powerful Picture of Love!" frames the film as a love story of a "modern Robinson Crusoe and his love for a wild savage maiden." The story was aimed at those viewers most often seen as the primary audience for love stories: women. Contrast it with the address of "Wild Primitive Sex in *Jungle Bride* [*sic*]," which was directed at men: "If you think your wife, or perhaps your sweetheart, can be wild at times, then wait until you see the gal in *Savage Bride* handle her man. This brown-skinned atomic bomb of passion makes her white man husband toe the line. But, like all big he-men, he tames her." Obviously the story also addressed prevailing postwar gender dynamics. Stories that push thrills or adventure were also directed at the male audience, while "Critics Acclaim New Picture" was geared to those who might avoid exploitation films but would attend a "quality" film that had received "critical acclaim."

Some publicity material was intended to reassure ticket buyers that what they were going to see was in fact educational, and that it would be

presented in a wholesome and convincing fashion. Sex hygiene films accomplished this through association with medical organizations or public health bodies. From the earliest days of the form, producers and distributors gave their companies highfalutin names such as Samuel Cummins's Social Hygienic Films of America and Public Welfare Pictures, and Babb's Hygienic Productions; *Because of Eve* was presented by the "Women's Research Guild," and the list goes on. Publicity material often included letters of commendation from physicians and health officials, in some cases real but often fabricated by the distributor. Testimonials from educators, the clergy, and concerned parents were also a fairly standard part of publicity campaigns. The classic example of such a faked letter was used in Babb's pressbook for *Mom and Dad.* The anonymous mayor of a small burg wrote to Babb that he had opposed the showing of *Mom and Dad* in his town. He related how the seventeen-year-old daughter of a local, church-going couple found herself "in trouble." She happened to see *Mom and Dad* with a friend, and as a result had the courage to tell her parents about her predicament. They were shocked, but forgave her. The girl was sent to a "none-too-distant city" where she gave birth to a healthy boy who was adopted by a childless couple. The girl completed high school and was engaged to a fine young man. The letter ended with the mayor thanking Babb for having the courage to "tell young people what their parents didn't" and then finished with the kicker "P.S. That girl was my daughter."[33] Thus the publicity for the films often reinforced the ways in which they positioned the audience, like the characters, as requiring education.

As with their films, exploitation producers were not averse to reusing promotional material from old pressbooks. J. D. Kendis attempted to stir some interest in two starlets who had failed to score in major motion pictures by using essentially the same story copy ten years apart. The pressbook for *Slaves in Bondage* contained the story "Lona Andre Scores in Heroine Role," which began, "Lona Andre, originally one of the Wampas Baby Stars of 1932, and afterwards featured by Paramount in many big box office attractions, makes a decided hit as the heroine of *Slaves in Bondage,* the Jay Dee Kay Productions melodramatic thriller now packing 'em in at the —— Theater. Miss Andre was selected for this important part, not only for her beauty and dramatic talent, requisite as those qualities are, but because any actress called upon to play a lead in such a dynamic-action film as *Slaves in Bondage* needed nerve and plenty of it." When *Youth Aflame* was released some eight years later in 1945, the same story was used verbatim for Kay Morley, the only change was that Morley

was identified as a former Goldwyn Glamour Girl instead of a Wampas Baby Star. It would be impossible to determine how often the prepared material was actually picked up by newspapers, but a scrapbook of clippings for Esper's films *Narcotic* and *Marihuana* shows prepared stories and photos being used in major market dailies in Boston and San Francisco as well as such smaller market papers as the *Evening News* in Del Rio, Texas.[34] The fact that some pressbooks contained only ads and lists of accessories indicates that exploitation producers realized that posters and advertising were far more important factors in selling their films to the public. It may also mean that some newspapers, which might run ads for pictures because they were receiving payment, would not give "free" publicity to disreputable films for fear of alienating a segment of their readership.

The exploitation—the special selling techniques—of exploitation movies was largely limited to their unique exhibition policies. With adults-only showings, performances segregated by gender, age restrictions, and lecturers and nurses in attendance, there was little need for additional ballyhoo to mark the distinction between mainstream movies and exploitation films. Pressbooks for Hollywood movies often contained at least a page or two of exploitation suggestions. For instance, the pressbook for *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), a Billy Wilder war film from Paramount that starred Erich von Stroheim as Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, contained eight pages of exploitation suggestions. Among the tips were tie-ins with the war effort, including scrap and bond drives and a waste fats collection. The pressbook instructed exhibitors to put up signs reading, "Your old grease gave the skids to Rommel! Keep slipping it to 'em!" Other ploys included a five-day newspaper contest, Rommel "wanted" posters, a lobby display built around the "secret weapon angle," and, because much of the film's action took place in a hotel, tie-ins with local hotels.[35]

Exploitation of mainstream movies often entailed tie-ins with manufacturers of consumer products or other national companies. The pressbook for United Artists' *Body and Soul* (1947) with John Garfield featured eight pages of exploitation ideas, most revolving around product tie-ins. Playing on the boxing backdrop of the movie, one of the key tie-ins was with the Everlast Sporting Goods Company, which had prepared special displays for sporting goods stores and sponsored boxing contests for boys. Beyond that were product tie-ins with McGregor sportswear, Princess Pat Liptone lipstick, Decca, RCA, and Disc Records. A series of seventeen black-and-white stills featured the stars engaged in various lei-

sure activities, which the pressbook encouraged exhibitors to tie in with local businesses: clothing stores, pet shops, travel agents, hunting supply dealers, and more.[36] Obviously, without national ad campaigns or significant stars, exploitation film producers had no way to concoct elaborate cross-promotions with consumer products as a means of exploiting their movies. It is difficult to imagine that any respectable company would have been willing to engage in tie-in promotions with exploitation movies, although the collaborations are fun to consider: Pharmaceutical companies doing tie-ins with venereal disease films to promote penicillin? Bail bond outfits promoting their services with drug and vice movies? The mind boggles at the possibilities.

Instead, exploitation movies had to rely on older, less "sophisticated" forms of ballyhoo to draw crowds. Lobby displays were usually suggested: dressing a foyer as a jungle for exotic pictures, using standees of strippers for burlesque films, and so forth. Street bally—men wearing sandwich boards, "nurses" passing out heralds, loudspeakers on cars or trucks—was commonly encouraged. Exploiteers also advised exhibitors to do displays in cooperation with the local police force, "progressive" physicians, and women's clubs. Kroger Babb's pressbooks tended to badger and bully theater managers into submitting to his highly aggressive campaigns. "When a stupid jerk tries to outsmart proven facts," Babb wrote in the *Karamoja/Half-Way to Hell* pressbook in the mid-1950s, "he should be in an asylum—not a theater." Acknowledging that his films were unknown quantities, Babb advocated a "100% saturation campaign." In his sample situation—The Deadwood Theater in Movie-hater, Missouri, with a potential audience base of twenty-four thousand—Babb suggested sending tabloid heralds to all seven thousand homes in the area at a cost of $196, spending $65 for newspaper ads, $50 on radio, plus an additional $65 for three hundred window cards, hand-out teaser cards, pennants, and posters. The total came to almost $400, or the same amount the theater owner would normally spend on advertising in the course of an entire month. Babb always claimed that with his formula the profit would outweigh the investment, but on his less controversial films such as *Prince of Peace, One Too Many,* and *Why Men Leave Home,* exhibitors who followed his plan wound up larding money onto losers. Even if Babb's exploitation efforts were unusually assertive, they do point to the fact that most exhibitors and roadshowmen relied on a very direct address to catch the eyes and ears of moviegoers. Plastering a town with window cards, placing tabloids or heralds into the hands of the locals, and jazzing up the theater lobby

were all part of the Barnum-like ballyhoo that indicated something different or special would be playing. But it was the carnivalesque tenor of the exploitation film's unique exhibition practices that provided the clearest indication that the films were not the typical Hollywood fare.

## Exhibiting and Attending Exploitation Films

The dominant image of exploitation exhibition was summed up by Ruth Inglis's description of the grindhouse circuit in *Freedom of the Movies:* "There is a fringe of producers who operate on a shoestring and whose membership is constantly shifting. Their function is to produce inexpensive films, some of them for the 'sex circuit,' i.e., cheap theaters in the downtown areas of large cities featuring horror pictures and sex thrillers for transients. There are about a hundred and twenty-five such theaters in the country. Even the best pictures of these small producers are very inexpensively made and have only a limited access to the theaters affiliated with the Big Five."[37] If there was a regular "home" for exploitation movies it was in grindhouses in the skid row sections of cities across the country. It was an image promoted by Hollywood as well. In Twentieth Century–Fox's *I Wake Up Screaming* (1941), Victor Mature and Betty Grable hide from the law in the Rex, a New York City grindhouse, playing something called *Flames of Passion* for adults only. The auditorium is small and seedy. A few bums doze in the stiff wooden seats.

The mainstream motion picture industry, which worked long and hard opposing exploitation during the studio era, might have been happy if such movies had been confined to only 125 theaters. However, this image was something of an exception to the rule. Quite obviously, exploitation films could not have survived with only a handful of houses as outlets for their product. Inglis claimed that exploitation films had limited access to the theaters affiliated with the Big Five. This was true after 1934, although prior to the institution of the Production Code Administration, theaters owned by or affiliated with the majors did at times play exploitation. Yet even without the affiliated movie houses, thousands of independent theaters were available to exploiteers in those states and municipalities without censorship. Many theaters that relied on Poverty Row and B films played exploitation films at times, and even "respectable" houses in cities and neighborhoods would, at times, run an exploitation program to generate some extra action at the box office. An exploitation flick could pull in

**23** The lavish displays Dwain Esper provided for *Marihuana*'s run at the Columbia in Detroit almost obscured the theater's entrances. (Something Weird Video Collection)

a tremendous amount of money, often eclipsing mainstream hits on a seat-for-seat basis. No comprehensive collection of box office reports is available, nor did *Variety* or other trades regularly report the figures. But occasional tallies can give us some sense of how important an exploitation film could be to the independent exhibitor during the course of a year. Consider the following figures:

—*The Naked Truth* made $37,000 in three weeks during June 1927 at the Randolph, a 650-seat theater in Chicago's Loop. The Randolph normally did only half that figure in the same time span.[38]

—In Minneapolis *The Road to Ruin* pulled in $14,000 at the fifteen-hundred-seat Strand in June 1928. Compare this with an $18,500 take for Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus* at another local theater during the same stretch.[39]

—Bryan Foy's *Elysia* scored an "excellent" $1,200 at Lincoln, Nebraska's State Theater in April 1934 despite a lack of newspaper ads and having the house's

telephone disconnected. But, as *Variety* noted, "every drug store counter helper is babbling about the nudes."[40]

—After a long fight with Pennsylvania censors, *Damaged Lives* was licensed in 1937 and did $26,500 in two weeks at Philadelphia's two-thousand-seat Erlanger. The hygiene film was topped only by the Marx Brothers' comedy, *A Day at the Races.*[41]

—*Damaged Goods* (1937) did $10,000 over twelve days at Kansas City's twenty-four-hundred-seat Music Hall during the municipal auditorium's first week as a picture house in August 1938. During the same time, the eight-hundred-seat Downtown did $5,000 with a double bill headed by Bryan Foy's *High School Girl* with a twenty-five cent admission price.[42]

—A three-week run of *Marihuana* at Chicago's Garrick in January 1938 took in $22,600, a figure that was considered a very respectable showing for a nine-hundred-seat house.[43]

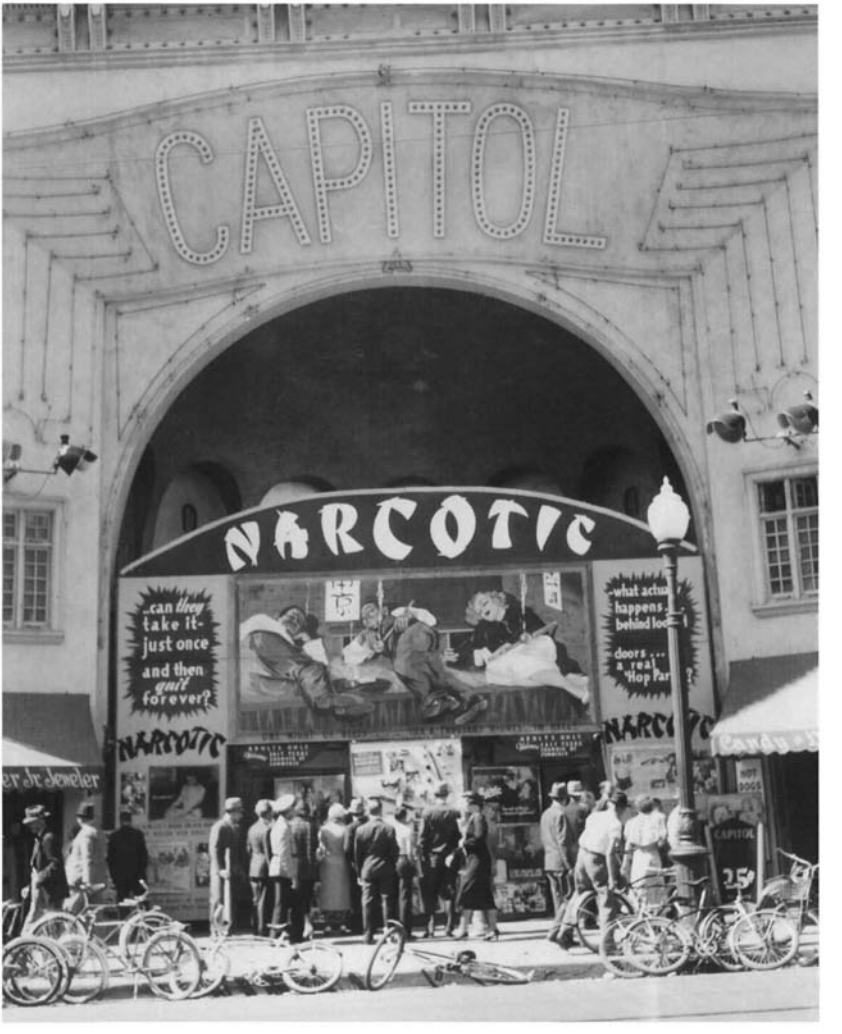
—*The Birth of a Baby* made $11,000 at the Lyceum in Minneapolis during one week in February 1938, out-grossing all the other films in town. The film "had customers fighting to get in" during the opening days.[44] The same movie pulled in $34,500 in a three-week run at the Adams, a seventeen-hundred-seat Balaban house in Detroit in June 1938. With prices hiked 35 percent and nine shows daily, the film was considered the town's top grosser.[45]

These reports are not conclusive, nor do they offer a basis on which to generalize, especially given Dan Sonney's bleaker account of roadshowing in small towns. However, it is important to remember that the production costs for exploitation movies were extremely low, so that when a profit was made it could be quite substantial.

The experience of the spectator of mainstream motion pictures in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s cannot be fully replicated today. "Going to the movies" was a regularized ritual; theaters were vastly different from those we now attend; programs were filled with shorts, newsreels, and second features. Historians can think and write about films from the past but cannot reclaim the factors that affected how people "saw a movie." Indeed, different genres are capable of changing the exhibition space through the range of permissible behaviors they evoke in an audience. The same theater showing a serious drama one night, a Marx Brothers comedy the next night, and a Saturday afternoon of serial chapters, cartoons, and B westerns would probably seem very different in each instance. If our understanding of the experience of mainstream moviegoing is impaired by this

historical/experiential gulf, the act of viewing an exploitation film is even more distanced, more difficult to comprehend. The exploitation film itself was usually only the core of a larger event. The act of seeing a film during the heyday of the exploitation roadshow was like attending the theater, the carnival, and the lecture hall. Exhibition of exploitation films was far from orderly. Films stopped and started for lectures and book pitches. Depending on the type of exploitation movie being shown, a range of "unacceptable" responses could emanate from the audience, including hooting, groans, fainting, vomiting, and more.[46] We might speculate that an audience would grow increasingly restless as it waited for the promised moments of spectacle to appear on the screen, whether the birth of a baby, the tour of a venereal disease ward, or the performance of a racy dance. Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian literary scholar and theoretician, has been reclaimed by modern critics for his work on carnival and ritual inversions of normal social hierarchy.[47] Bakhtinian notions of the "carnivalesque" are particularly suited to any examination of exploitation film, as the movies privilege the "lower body stratum," overturn a classical aesthetics based on formal harmony and good taste, and foster "antigrammaticality." But of most interest at present are the ways the films and their presentation erased the barriers between spectator and spectacle.[48]

Roadshowmen often traveled with lobby displays, and exhibitors who picked up exploitation movies from states' rights distributors were encouraged to draw ticket buyers by creating their own. Some hygiene films came with detailed medical models fashioned out of wax or plaster to illustrate the stages of the birth process or the effects of venereal diseases.[49] Hildegarde Esper related how she created a display for one of the narcotic films that she wrote and her husband Dwain produced: "I made a display board to put in front of the theater. I faked how they packaged all the different kinds of drugs, and it was behind glass—just made like a great big picture frame, three by five. I would stand in the lobby. And you know that people would come and stand there for an hour looking at things? We would drive by every night where our picture was on and people would be standing looking at those boards and they really wanted to know what dope looked like. It was so good the police came and took it out of the lobby and thought it was real. When they got it down to the police station was their face red!"[50] Thus, for the ticket buyer, the show began before he or she entered the auditorium. Dwain Esper regularly shipped large lobby displays via railroad express to theaters booking his pictures; for a time he even displayed the mummified remains of outlaw Elmer McCurdy with




**24** Large displays of drug paraphernalia such as this one in Indianapolis around 1933 drew crowds for Dwain Esper's *Narcotic.* Hildegarde Esper said, "People would come and stand there for an hour looking at those things. It was the funniest thing." (Something Weird Video Collection)

his films, billing the stiff as a victim of drug use. The exploitation experience spilled out into the lobby with displays that augmented the "educational" experience the audience was to receive by watching the film.

As already indicated, virtually all classical exploitation movies were shown to adults only. Since the 1960s, that designation has usually implied

men only due to its association with sexploitation films and then hardcore pornography. This was certainly not the case with classical exploitation films. Nudist, drug, vice, and exotic movies could appeal to both genders. Even burlesque films in the postwar era, though aimed primarily at men, seem to have had some female viewers. Striptease dancers were a mainstay on the nightclub circuit at the time, so women who attended performances in those venues may have been willing to see the films as well. Discussions with Hildegarde Esper and Gidney Talley Jr. confirmed that women often made up the largest segment of the audience for films on sex hygiene and birth because those movies promised to impart knowledge that was difficult or embarrassing to obtain. When the city attorney prevented the showing of the birth control picture *No More Children* in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1930, police were used to disperse the crowd of three hundred, "mostly women and girls."[51] Exclusively male audiences—outside of gender-segregated hygiene films—were probably less a product of a film's content than of theater location. Men would have made up the bulk of the audience in grindhouses, which were usually found in male-dominated skid row neighborhoods.

The adults-only designation, also known as "pinking" after the color of the Chicago permit that forbade the admission of children to a film, served two purposes. First, by prohibiting minors from a movie, the distributor and exhibitor were able to diffuse some of the wrath of their critics. An adults-only label gave the appearance of responsibility to the community by indicating the willingness of exploiteers to protect children from material they might not be mature enough to understand. Because no standardized rules governed pinking, a distributor or exhibitor could impose an adults-only tag to avoid confrontation with censorship boards or local law enforcement. Second, adults-only shows acted as powerful beacons, promising audiences sights that were not found in the average Hollywood film.[52] By declaring that a movie was suitable only for adults, the exhibitor of exploitation films was drawing a distinct line between exploitation and Hollywood product. It was perhaps the most direct and convincing mark of differentiation for the ticket buyer. From all indications, age limits imposed by distributors and exhibitors were honored—although this did not prevent underage viewers from sneaking into the auditorium through an exit door.

One technique that may have kept youngsters away from exploitation films was the special midnight show. At least as early as the 1930s, distribu-

tors and exhibitors ran midnight programs, such as distributor Albert Dezel's presentation of *Gambling with Souls* under the title *The Vice Racket.* A Saturday "midnite" show kicked off the film's run at the Orpheum in Battle Creek, Michigan, on 6 November 1937. Not only did the heralds caution that the show would be for adults only, but they promised "Bold Bare Facts" and "The Naked Truth": "This is life in the raw . . . life stripped of its outer clothing . . . a flaming drama of the consequences of sin." The lurid tag lines, the racy artwork of half-naked women in shackles, and the fact that the show took place at a time when "respectable people" were asleep at home conferred a particularly taboo quality to the program.[53] In the postwar years, Dan Sonney four-walled burlesque films as midnight shows. He recalled that his idea was "not just to show regular shows, but to show midnight shows. So I would get in those big theaters . . . on a Friday, Saturday midnight show and we'd raise the price to fifty cents or something and we'd really come out. [The theater owner] would get fifty percent, I'd get fifty percent. And we really made good money on that."[54] In the 1950s, Babb plugged *She Shoulda Said "No"!* as a special single-performance midnight show. Babb's pressbook claimed that his company was cooperating with Treasury Department officials in a shared sense of urgency to release the antimarijuana film "in as many towns and cities as possible in the shortest possible length of time."[55] David Friedman has countered that the film was so bad, the one-time midnight show was a ploy to clean up and get out of town as quickly as possible.[56]

In addition to restricting shows to adults, another method that set exploitation movies apart from the mainstream was segregation by gender. Proto-exploitation movies such as *The Twilight Sleep* (1915), a film about a controversial anesthetic treatment used in childbirth, were shown to women only.[57] The World War I–era VD films *Fit to Fight* and *Fit to Win* were designed for males, whereas *The End of the Road,* made by the same concern, was pitched to a female audience. As the 1920s progressed, hygiene movies like *The Naked Truth* were shown with separate clinical reels for male and female audiences, and some cities that allowed the films to play required that they be shown to audiences segregated by gender. Gender segregation was the standard for hygiene films in the 1920s, and by the time *Mom and Dad* was released in 1944, the segregation was contractually mandated. To a large extent, such strictures sprang from social inequities surrounding matters of gender. The emergence of organized

medicine in the nineteenth century had solidified the concept of "separate sexual spheres." Men left home to work in the public sphere of paid labor and women remained in the private, domestic sphere to perform reproductive and household labor.[58] Although those strict divisions began to show signs of erosion following World War I, change was neither immediate nor rapid.[59] The impulse that had produced such medical specialties as obstetrics and gynecology continued to isolate female sexuality, to mystify it for both men and women. Knowledge of menstruation, childbirth, and female "problems" was difficult for women to obtain and considered unnecessary for men as it had no bearing on their labor. Exploitation movies may have claimed to "lift the veil of ignorance" with education, but in many respects they maintained barriers and continued to perplex the opposite sex through segregated exhibition. The standardized practice of showing the movies to gender-segregated audiences became an expedient way of avoiding problems with censors or other local authorities. Such showings may have made some audience members more comfortable with the material being presented, but they may also have perpetuated a "boys club" or "locker-room" atmosphere at the men-only showings.

Lecturers had been a part of the moviegoing experience even before exploitation movies were segregated from the mainstream. During the early silent era, narrators or lecturers often provided a context for the images on screen. *The Twilight Sleep* was a hygiene movie that used a lecturer to supplement information contained in the film in 1915.[60] Others quickly followed, and by 1922 the lecture was a regular part of exploitation film presentation.[61] At some point during the show, usually midway through the film or at the end of the movie, the lecturer would address the audience on the subject of the film. The talks were prepared and tended to run from fifteen to thirty minutes. Lecturers were often given phony credentials or were affiliated with bogus health organizations. As the ploy evolved, the speaker was given a fake name and biography that announced, usually him, as "an eminent sex commentator." Though men dominated the lecturer role, women did speak at some films. A 1941 showing of *Married Love* (a retitle of *Childbirth*) in Los Angeles was accompanied by a lecture by a "Mrs. Jardine McCree." An MPPDA report on the presentation claimed that "the lecture was [the] usual stuff about dangers of ignorance, venereal disease, touched on birth control."[62]

Hildegarde Esper explained that having a female lecturer for all-male audiences and having a male lecturer for female audiences had a special appeal:

> We had very good success . . . having a woman make a lecture about the facts of life—a regular sex lecture. Good information and nothing slimy. The women were accepted. . . . We had two men for lectures and we had two or three different women. When they went on a date—when they were billed—they would have one show that the man lecturer would lecture to the women and the woman lecturer would lecture to the men. And you shoulda seen how people would flock to those with the women and the men doing the opposite lecture. [One of our women] was a humdinger, and she loved it. She liked explaining and she had a good voice and all. And we had another one—she was a little too prissy. It was hard for her to kowtow to that kind of a lecture. It would have done her good![63]

Precedent for filmed lectures had been set with *Damaged Lives* (1933) but did not catch on until the 1950s. By the end of the 1950s, a short film, *The Carleton Howard Lecture,* appeared with several K. Gordon Murray presentations, and drive-ins often played a prerecorded lecture over their speaker system.

Lectures served to reinforce the educational component of the exploitation experience by physically embodying and emphasizing the movie's pedagogic elements. Through the discursive mode of the lecture, exploitation films were linked with the more conventional form of educational address found in the classroom, at conferences of learned societies, or at chautauqua meetings. As I will explain, the role of theatrical motion pictures as a vehicle for education was constantly in question. Roadshowmen could counter those who believed that motion pictures either could not or should not be used for education by having an individual who functioned as a teacher perform with the film. Such legitimization was important because of the continuing disreputability of the movies. But the major function of the lecturer was to sell books.

Sideshows had long taken advantage of their captive audiences to sell admission to an additional attraction, the "blowoff," or to pitch photos of or booklets about their "curiosities."[64] Books were a blowoff for exploitation promoters, another opportunity to separate the audience from its coin. At least since the release of *The Naked Truth* in 1924, exploitation films were accompanied by the sale of small books or pamphlets on the movie's subject, whether hygiene, white slavery, or drug use. It appears that by 1928 the practice of selling sex books or pamphlets in conjunction with hygiene films was becoming standard practice. A *Variety* story noting the National Board of Review's approval of the Ufa production *Fools of*

*Passion* (aka *False Shame*) mentioned that a book had been contracted for simultaneous sale with the film.[65] Hildegarde Esper recalled, "We had a book sale. We had a darn good book too, it was *Facts of Life*—that was the name of it. Then it was *Your Sex Questions Answered.* And there was a great big question mark on the cover. God, we sold two hundred thousand of them . . . 'til we got sick of seeing them. . . . You'd be surprised how many books would sell. . . . I compiled [the] book—*Your Sex Questions Answered*—they came at a dollar a copy and they were just stiff paper cover, but they had a lot of good information, all I could find. And I took it to the Medical Society and had them see if I had made a mistake anyplace. They were very nice about it and checked it for me."[66] Some representative booklet titles include *The Digest of Hygiene for Mother and Daughter* and *The Digest of Hygiene for Father and Son, Modern Women* and *Modern Men, Life and Its Problems,* and *Sex Happiness or Tragedy.* The money from book sales almost always went directly into the distributor's or roadshowman's pocket and was never shared with an exhibitor.[67] Friedman has recalled that a four-week showing of *Mom and Dad* in Baltimore in 1957 grossed $82,000. Forty-five thousand copies of *Man and Boy* and *Woman and Girl* were sold during the run at a dollar a throw. After printing, shipping, and other expenses were figured, Modern Film, *Mom and Dad*'s distributor, netted nearly $31,000 on book sales.[68]

The more sophisticated lecturers were "eloquently accusing, then forgiving, startling, then soothing, entertaining, then warning, arousing, then embracing" as they waged their war on the twin threat of venereal disease and unwed motherhood.[69] As the combination of sermon and biology lesson wound down, the sales pitch geared up. Friedman has recounted segments of the lecture used to pitch books for *Mom and Dad.* "Elliot Forbes" (the fictional name given to the lecturer) described the booklets:

> They cannot be obtained on newsstands or at booksellers, or anywhere else. No, these books are offered exclusively to the patrons of this presentation at a slight charge over the actual costs of printing and distribution. That price—one dollar. One dollar a copy, two dollars for the set. Now think of it—for less than the cost of a carton of cigarettes, you can have a set of the vitally important books to be read in the privacy of your own home, and I believe with all my heart that a set of these books belongs on the bedside table of every home in this great land. They will be offered for sale at this time. Attendants will pass among you in the audience. Simply raise your hand, and

> please, if possible, give the attendant the exact amount of your purchase. Thank you for your kind attention. In closing, I'd like to wish each of you a very long life, a very happy life, but above all—a very healthy life. Thank you, good night, and God bless you.[70]

The "attendants" who sold the books were often dressed as nurses. There ostensibly to aid those who passed out or became ill during a movie's more shocking scenes, the nurses' real duties were to run the aisles and make transactions for the booklets.[71]

Some books were dominated by general information about physiology, with definitions for various biological functions. Others were made up of cracker-barrel wisdom on dating and intimacy that reinforced gender stereotypes while stressing continence. As Suzanne White has indicated, much of the information in the original pitchbooks for *Mom and Dad* was outdated at the time of publication.[72] Some books were periodically updated to reflect more recent—if not up-to-the-minute—knowledge, but many were simply reprinted again and again. The range of attitudes can be illustrated by sections on masturbation and homosexuality from *The Art of Love,* a booklet prepared for Esper's Road Show Attractions in 1955 by "Doctor Homer Blodgett" (possibly a pseudonym for Hildegarde Esper) with the 1957–1958 edition of *Father and Son,* sold at showings of *Mom and Dad. The Art of Love* described masturbation as "a powerful habit, exceedingly difficult to conquer, and growing progressively more damaging as the unnatural acts become more frequent and violent." The effects of the "solitary sin" were described as "physical weakness, pale unhealthy skin, dull sunken eyes, gaping mouth, nervousness, back ache, and in the worst cases weakmindedness and insanity."[73] Esper's booklet claimed that the male "homo-sexual," "known variously as 'Pansies,' 'Fairies,' 'Queers,' 'Janes' and other equally opprobrious names . . . can be easily identified by his mincing walk, effeminate speech and propensity to lay hands on or become offensively familiar with chance male acquaintances." Sending these "unfortunates" to prison was no cure, the book claimed, because they use the opportunity to "spread their propaganda among sullen sex hungry inmates." The section concluded with a plea to study sex delinquents: "After all, we can't kill them so it would be wise to rehabilitate as many as we can."[74] *Father and Son,* edited by the woman who would become Babb's wife, Mildred Horn, seemed positively enlightened compared to *The Art of Love.* The booklet drew in some measure on the Kinsey studies, describing masturbation as a normal activity that need not be

accompanied by guilt.[75] Horn's book admitted that science was unsure about whether homosexuality was "inborn or acquired" and stated that "Male homosexuals are not necessarily effeminate in appearance nor are female homosexuals always mannish."[76] Even though the two books are from roughly the same time, they display radically different takes on the topics they cover.

Like the films, most of the booklets promised a great deal more than they delivered. There was always the implication that they would contain racy pictures and frank descriptions. Though some did include descriptions of intercourse and orgasm, they were by no means "hot" books. Illustrations were usually line drawings from medical texts, although some made use of ad mats and stills from exploitation films to spice things up. Other features included graphs on which women could chart their fertile and "safe" days during their menstrual cycle, referred to by Friedman and others as "Vatican roulette."[77] *The Art of Love* even included a "Wonder Diet" for women to help "melt off excess poundage"; one subsisted on eggs, grapefruit, lamb chops, lettuce, and fruit juices.

Hygiene books were the dominant pitch with exploitation movies, but other books and items were also sold. Babb sold Bibles or books on spirituality with *Prince of Peace,* a tract on alcoholism with *One Too Many,* and books on beauty hints for *Why Men Leave Home. The Road to Ruin* (1928) offered a novelization of the film illustrated with photos from the movie, some rather racy. The book also contained a treatise on juvenile delinquency. Pitchbooks were also sold at showings of nudist and burlesque films and, like the movies themselves, were geared to offer more unadulterated spectacle. Burley pitchbooks, sporting titles like *Fever, Blush, Flame,* and *Wolf Bait,* included photos of strippers or models in pinup poses. Like *Playboy* and other men's magazines of the postwar period, as well as the films, the poses in these pitchbooks were discreet and there was never any full-frontal nudity. Photographs were accompanied by spicy cartoons, fiction ("An Illusion of Obscenity"), and feature stories ("A Hollywood Model Tells All"). Many burlesque pitchbooks contained advertisements for 8 and 16mm adult movies, stag stories, photo packets, joke books, and lingerie. In some instances, the books were made specifically for sale with a single picture, such as the program book for the 1954 nudist picture *Garden of Eden.* This twenty-page 8½ x 11 booklet had a color cover and a full-color center spread with four stills of the film's topless star. Like program books for prestigious releases that were popular at the time, such as *The Ten Commandments* and *Around the World in 80*

*Days,* the *Garden of Eden* program included behind-the-scenes information on the film, biographical sketches of the cast and production personnel, and stills. It also contained testimonials from leaders of nudist associations and a directory of American Sunbathing Association Clubs. All this was yours for the price of just one dollar.

Exploitation pictures were usually the primary draw with a roadshow, but on some occasions the lecture itself would be the center of attention. In 1932 the silent Greta Garbo film *Street of Sorrow* (aka *The Joyless Street*) made the rounds with a "stage sex show" alternately called "Married Love" and "Truth About Married Love."[78] When police pulled the lecture in Cleveland, a women-only audience rioted. *Variety* reported, "Warhoop started 400 irate seekers of sex knowledge on a rampage to the b.o., nearly tearing it apart. One promoter scrammed out a side door, but femmes ripped up all lobby posters before a carload of cops appeared on the scene."[79] In this case, the audience had paid to hear a sex lecture, and the inclusion of a seven-year-old silent picture was of little interest. This incident again reveals how eager women were to obtain information on sexual topics. Some of the "sex shows" not only featured lecturers but also live models, a risky proposition evidently attempted by the most daring showmen. When *Elysia* played Minneapolis in March 1937 under the title *Valley of the Nude,* lecturer Robert Marcus and model Margaret O'Keene, who posed as "a sun-kissed nudist," were arrested. Local officials had no quarrel with the film, but Marcus and O'Keene, who testified that she had a perfectly formed body, were found guilty of "disorderly conduct."[80]

It should be noted here that discontinuity of the exploitation film was often a product of the exhibition process itself. Many exploitation movies, notably those that dealt with some aspect of sex hygiene or birth, were accompanied by live slide shows and lectures. Such extrafilmic events would interrupt the movie. The projection would stop at a given point, the lectures would be delivered, followed by the sale of books or pamphlets on hygiene, and then the film would resume. Such added external spectacle served to compound the delirium of the viewing experience. Lobby displays, lecturers, and "nurses" selling books disrupted the more routinized attendance patterns associated with mainstream movies. In exploitation, the conventional barriers between the audience and the film text were not as rigid as they were with mainstream motion pictures. The exploitation audience became part of the show, in a limited way, by asking questions and interacting with lecturers, buying books from the "nurses," and building on their experience through their engagement with lobby displays.

**25** Smiling caricatures of Kroger Babb turned up on much of his publicity material. The smile disappeared when exhibitors refused to follow his "proven" showmanship techniques.

Most smaller cities, towns, and rural areas would only see several exploitation movies at most in a given year, therefore their novelty and disrepute allied them with entertainments that appeared irregularly, such as the traveling carnival or circus. Exploitation provided a parenthesis in the moviegoing experience where Hollywood's hegemony was disrupted, if only for a day or two. In many small towns the arrival of an exploitation film was treated as a special community event, often bringing in residents of outlying areas in much the same way that a carnival or county fair would. Babb and other showmen meticulously documented showings of their films with photographs. Because women exited from gender-segregated shows before the men entered, these photos reveal a carnival-like atmosphere of people milling around on the sidewalks and streets. And of course the photos of overflow crowds helped showmen sell theater owners or managers on the idea of booking the films.

Babb's *Mom and Dad* (1944) can be considered the pinnacle of these exhibition ploys. Exhibitors who agreed to play his film found that every old exploitation technique, such as adults-only showings, audiences segregated by gender, nurses in attendance, and book sales, were contractually mandated by Babb, setting *Mom and Dad* apart from its precursors.[81] By obligating showmen to accept a rigidly determined exhibition strategy, Babb limited the possibility of error or censure while at the same time ensuring a uniformity of viewing experience for his audiences. From all indications, exhibitors followed Babb's guidelines, hoping to cash in to the

greatest extent possible. In the pressbook, Hygienic Productions explained that *Mom and Dad* and the Elliot Forbes lecture constituted a complete program and that no other short subjects or newsreels were to accompany it. The only things the exhibitor was permitted to show were previews at the beginning of the performance.[82] Admission policy dictated that all seats would cost the same at all times; this meant that exhibitors were effectively able to jack up the box office by eliminating matinee pricing. The restriction to high school age and older was uniform but allowed flexibility in each venue because a high school freshman could range from thirteen to sixteen years of age depending on the local school district. This allowed Hygienic to get the largest possible audience while remaining respectable. The presentation policy called for 2 and 7 P.M. showings limited to women and high-school-age girls, and a 9 P.M. showing for men and high-school-age boys. Further respectability was gained through a policy that kept the film off screens on Sundays.

In addition to the contract stipulations outlined above, Hygienic Productions operated as a self-contained publicity dynamo from their Wilmington, Ohio, headquarters. Friedman recounts how during the early years of *Mom and Dad*'s release, Babb employed six booking agents in key cities around the country. Every agent booked units on twenty-week routes. After the bookings, an advance man "would visit each town on the route, placing newspaper and radio advertising, posting window cards, and mailing thousands of four-page, two-color, tabloid newspaper-sized heralds to boxholders on RFD rounds."[83] Screenings of *Mom and Dad* were often held for the town fathers and local religious leaders to convince them of the film's moral and educational value and to forestall possible protest or censorship action, another tactic Babb borrowed from earlier hygiene films. One unit even played black theaters and featured Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens making personal appearances.

Following the advance man, the roadshow units would then arrive in town, consisting of an individual to pose as Elliot Forbes and two women to act as nurses. No one ever seemed to question how Elliot Forbes could be in twenty-five places around the country at once. It was in the character of Forbes that Babb perfected the book pitch. Billed as an "eminent hygiene commentator" from radio, the Forbes figure was more than simply a pitchman. Stories in the pressbook, which could be placed with local newspapers, said Forbes was "best known to radio listeners in the Middle West, Southwest and West-coast areas because of his network broadcasts on health and hygiene subjects."[84] Strategically, no network or towns were

ever mentioned. The stories claimed that Forbes had spoken to university, college, high school, and PTA groups from coast to coast, but again there were no specifics. These claims allowed Hygienic Productions to lend an aura of seriousness, credibility, and intellectual weight to their fictional creation as well as to the books that were sold because they seemed to have the seal of approval of a nationally known and respected authority. In a similar fashion, Babb's promotion of the presence of nurses—though another old ploy in itself—gave the event an air of seriousness.

Pearce Parkhurst, managing director of the Lansing Drive-In in Lansing, Michigan, won a $500 prize for his exploitation of *Mom and Dad* in 1949.[85] In addition to the usual *Mom and Dad* promotion (which included distributing thirty thousand tabloid heralds), Parkhurst labeled each speaker in the drive-in with "coming soon" tags, stamped all outgoing mail with teasers, had car hops pass out five thousand matchbooks plugging the film, distributed one thousand menus to local restaurants with the film's play dates on them, erected a special box office for advance ticket sales that was topped by a flashing neon sign spelling out "Mom and Dad," put up a billboard that counted down the days to the attraction's opening, distributed promotional giveaways such as pencils and ashtrays, and invited President Truman, the governor of Michigan, and a senator to the show. Good politicians all, they sent letters of regret. Hygienic sprang for a buffet for the press and town fathers that Babb attended and where he was presented with the key to the city. A marching band led a parade from the restaurant where the feed took place to the drive-in for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and *Mom and Dad*'s Lansing debut.[86] Despite lousy weather, the movie played for two weeks, the lengthiest run at the drive-in up to that time. Parkhurst's efforts were perhaps the zenith of Babb's famous adage, "You gotta tell 'em to sell 'em."

Robert Stam and others have pointed out that there is nothing intrinsically radical or conservative about carnival: "Real-life carnivals are, of course, politically ambiguous affairs that can be egalitarian and emancipatory or oppressive and hierarchical."[87] Indeed, the exhibition of exploitation films was just as politically ambiguous. They often espoused a very conservative ideology, particularly with regard to individual pleasure. This will become abundantly clear. The radical aspect of exploitation movies came through their challenge to the system of orderly presentation of material to well-mannered spectators that was encouraged by Hollywood. Exploitation films subverted the formal qualities of Hollywood films while carnivalizing the presentation process through the techniques just ou

lined. The marginalized independent producers used such tactics to differentiate their films from the mainstream industry to attract ticket buyers. At the same time, they succeeded in agitating the large companies who had effectively kept those producers out of the mainstream and out of the big money—a point I develop in the next chapter, on the censorship of exploitation films.

# 4. "Thoroughly Vile and Disgusting"

## *The Exploitation Film and Censorship*

The Hays Office—they hated us. You see, they couldn't stop us and that made them awful mad . . . they didn't like anything we were doing. The only reason we liked it so well is because it was making money for us.
—Hildegarde Esper

Screenwriter Hildegarde Esper, along with her producer-director husband, Dwain Esper, made some of the most notorious exploitation films of the 1930s: *Narcotic, Maniac, Marihuana,* and *How to Undress in Front of Your Husband.* The fact that the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) did not like anything the Espers were doing was summed up in Production Code Administration (PCA) head Joseph I. Breen's 1935 assessment of the Espers' sex hygiene drama, *The Seventh Commandment:* "The whole play is the most thoroughly vile and disgusting motion picture which the three members of this staff, who saw the picture last night, have ever seen. It is thoroughly reprehensible in all its details. In addition, it is poorly produced and poorly photographed. The portion of the film given over to the Cesarean operation suggests a foreign picture, possibly a foreign medical picture. The whole thing is very offensive and disgusting."[1] The MPPDA had been touting its success with the recently strengthened Production Code, but exploitation movies remained outside the organization's sphere of influence—hence Breen's vexation.

**26** Innocuous advertising aside, Joseph Breen declared *The Seventh Commandment* (1933) to be "the most thoroughly vile and disgusting motion picture" he had ever seen. (Something Weird Video Collection)

There was trouble long before Esper ever produced a film and Breen ever watched one for the PCA. The period immediately following World War I has been characterized by Ruth Inglis as one of harassment of the motion picture industry. Box office receipts were steadily falling and the intense competition had resulted in "morally objectionable pictures." State and municipal censor boards banned and cut films with little or no uniformity, and the Hollywood scandals resulted in public outcry. The industry had become particularly vulnerable to the attacks of pressure groups, resulting in a rise in state and city censor boards along with the threat of federal regulation.[2] I have already detailed the emergence of the most "objectionable pictures," sex hygiene films, why they were suppressed, and the role their censorship played in the formation of the exploitation industry. In this chapter I explore how the relationships among exploitation films, censors, and Hollywood continued to evolve. Scholarship on state and municipal censorship has been limited, and work on self-regulation in the film industry has focused on the role of scandal

and the cycle of Mae West and fallen-women films as the major causal factors in establishing censor boards and the Hays Office. But the significant role that exploitation films played in the formulation and maintenance of censorship and self-regulatory policies has been virtually ignored.

## State and Municipal Censorship

From the earliest days of motion pictures, censorship was justified on the grounds of protection.[3] As Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman have noted, movies and nickelodeons became the bête noire of progressives, often considered little better than the saloon or pool hall.[4] Children required protection from their potentially evil effects, as did other easily influenced cohorts such as foreigners and the mentally unstable.[5] Civic leaders and social welfare workers feared that movie viewing could incite impressionable spectators to commit crimes or other immoral acts. The second group requiring protection, understood but seldom stated, was made up of adults who might be offended, embarrassed, or degraded by certain material. A cursory glance at early articles or documents on film censorship point to protection as the overwhelming motivation for prior censorship.[6] Just prior to Christmas 1908, Mayor George McClellan closed all the movie theaters in New York City on the grounds of safety and threatened to revoke the license of any theater that showed movies "which tend to degrade or injure the morals of the community."[7] In retrospect, it is not difficult to understand the mayor's reasoning, considering the inflammatory anecdotal evidence that often had children and adults imitating crimes depicted on the motion picture screen.

Producers in the nascent exploitation industry had to contend constantly with state and municipal censorship, a daunting prospect. Chicago passed the nation's first motion picture censorship law in November 1907. The law required the police, and by 1914 a civilian board, to issue permits before a film could be shown in the city.[8] Other large cities with censorship boards included Detroit, Milwaukee, and Memphis. By 1929 about one hundred incorporated cities with populations over twenty-five hundred had some sort of censorship, although no uniformity existed in the reasons for adopting censorship or in the way the censorship was conducted.[9] Of the states, Pennsylvania was the first to establish a censorship board, in 1911; it was followed by Ohio (1913), Kansas (1914), Maryland (1916), New York (1921), and Virginia (1922). These states required a review before a

motion picture could be shown within their borders. Florida also established censorship in 1921; its central feature was not a state-controlled board, but the provision that no film could play in Florida unless it had been approved by the National Board of Review.[10]

State censor boards tended to be more highly structured than most, but not all, local censorship, which in many instances kicked in only when police received complaints. The Pennsylvania board set the pattern for the state organizations that followed. Its members were appointed by the governor, had to be residents and citizens of the state, and were to be "well qualified by education and experience to act as censors."[11] Censors were invariably upper-middle-class men and women who possessed the tastes and prejudices of their social station and education. Most of the boards had at least three censors, who were required to examine every film intended for commercial exhibition in the state, including cartoons and short subjects. Newsreels were generally exempt from examination, and films not intended for commercial exhibition were issued permits without examination. Motion pictures were given an initial screening by a portion of a board except in those instances where it appeared a film would present censorship questions; in those cases, the entire board might view the movie. If a motion picture did not pass the board, distributors could appeal through administrative channels, and if the board's rejection was upheld, the matter could be taken to the courts. All of the licensing boards had auxiliary inspection systems that would conduct spot checks on theaters to make sure that prints of films playing had the appropriate permits and that required cuts had been made. Violations of licensing laws entailed fines and possible seizure of prints in question. The standards of state boards tended to be broad, allowing censorship for reasons of "immorality," "indecency," "tendency to incite to crime," and "sacrilege."[12] New York often abbreviated its reasons to filmmakers and distributors with the inscription "Inhuman, immoral, indecent and will incite to crime." Furthermore, for a number of years the applications for a New York license asked, "Is this film or any part thereof to be exhibited in connection with lectures upon sex or sex hygiene?"

Given such standards, exploitation movies were usually greeted with hostility by state censorship boards. In 1922 Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, a historian and member of the Pennsylvania State Board of Censors, wrote about the role of the censor with a fervor usually reserved for tracts on saints and martyrs: "Only decision, courage, vigilance, indifference to criticism, when you know you are right, will avail. Then, after great toil of

the eye and some derangement of the nervous system, your reward will be satisfaction in well-doing. I know there is treatment in Heaven for an honest public servant of this kind. He is beset with temptation."[13] On the other hand, he had harsh words for producers, reserving particular animus for the makers of "sex pictures," that is, exploitation films.[14] The "shabby fellows" whom Oberholtzer wrote about purveyed films about white slavery, abortion, venereal diseases, and drug use. He held that some good might come from instructing the young about such topics "under proper circumstances" but castigated "the general circulation of pictures of this kind for the profit of speculators."[15] The promoter of exploitation pictures was a moralist, according to Oberholtzer, until he left the censor's office, whereupon he became "a shameless adventurer who would prey upon the salacious tastes of the people." The audience for such motion pictures did not fare any better with Oberholtzer: "They do not come in a frame of mind for learning. They are wrought up to the point of believing that they are to see hitherto unseen and to hear hitherto untold things, having to do with their procreative organs. The lesson goes astray; if it shall ever be taught them at all it must be conveyed by wiser teachers under more favorable conditions at some later day."[16]

Obviously Oberholtzer did not have the protection of children in mind in his role as censor in these instances, because by this time exploitation films were shown only to adult audiences. Oberholtzer believed that the motion picture theater was a place for entertainment, not education. In 1931 Baltimore City Court found on behalf of Culture Films, Inc., which had appealed cuts in its film *Birth* ordered by the Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors. The court concluded that "a great deal might be said affirmatively in favor of the exhibition of this film." Moreover, it decided that the Legislature of Maryland had not set up a Board of Motion Picture Censors "to determine what is and what is not 'entertaining.' "[17] But the question of what was entertainment and what was education often swirled around exploitation films in censorship states and within the organized motion picture industry.

State boards kept most exploitation films out of some of the largest markets, including New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. The National Association of the Moving Picture Industry's Thirteen Points and Standards, the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls," and the Production Code were justified by the industry on the grounds that they restricted the scenes and themes most frequently cut by those state and local boards. Much of the impulse for self-regulation was rooted in the majors' desire to keep print costs

reasonable. The mainstream industry and its distribution network may have had scores of prints in release in censorship territories, which meant customizing those prints to suit the whims of individual boards. Customizing prints could be a tremendous financial drain for the majors. For states' righters, who operated in a limited territory with a small number of prints, the problem was not overwhelming—as long as a film was licensed and capable of pulling in a profit. Although customizing prints was certainly an annoyance for those who distributed or roadshowed exploitation movies, it became an accepted part of doing business.

This points to the dominant complaint about state censor boards: they did not have consistent standards. Although the problem had been discussed for years, it was neatly summed up by Edward M. Barrows in 1932: "We have so wide a field for varying opinion that the producers complain that the censorship boards rarely make the same cuts in a given picture. What Kansas censors think is harmful to morals, Ohio censors may pass without a murmur, while Pennsylvania will discover immoralities that neither of the others thought of. This reduces the whole concept to absurdity."[18] If observers like Barrows found the system absurd, exploitation producers must have been constantly perplexed. For instance, *Tomorrow's Children,* Bryan Foy's 1934 movie about forced sterilization of the "unfit," was approved with deletions in Ohio and Kansas.[19] But it was rejected in Virginia, Maryland, and New York. The New York board refused to issue a license on several of their standard grounds, including that the film was "immoral" and would "tend to corrupt morals" and "incite to crime." It is notable that the Appellate Division of the New York court, in upholding the board's rejection, did so primarily on political and ideological content rather than obscene material. The original version of *Mad Youth* (1939) was rejected in Ohio and New York; a revised print of the film was eventually passed in both of those states but was still rejected by Maryland. *Mad Youth* was apparently not even submitted in Kansas until 1945, when it was rejected.

Even when a film was eventually passed with some deletions, the cuts could differ greatly from state to state or city to city. Esper's *Marihuana* (1936) was rejected outright in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York (where it was submitted under the title *Sinister Weed*) but allowed to show with some deletions in Chicago and Ohio. A comparison of the required cuts shows the differences between the city and the state and illustrates the inconsistencies that faced motion picture distributors, but especially those whose stock-in-trade was exploitation. In Chicago, *Marihuana* was passed

CUTS ORDERED IN *MARIHUANA*

| CHICAGO | OHIO |
|---|---|
| Reel 1 | Double Reel 1 |
| Eliminate the following dialogue: "Just a sweet little love child." Cut girl taking shot in leg. | Eliminate the following dialogue: "But no honeymoon until after we are married." In scenes showing the interior cottage, eliminate all views showing boy and girl scuffling on floor. |
| Reel 2 | Double Reel 2 |
| Scene of girl smoking and laughing (trim this scene). Cut scene of nude bathers. Scene of man taking dope from heel of shoe. | Eliminate all scenes showing girl preparing to go swimming. Eliminate all scenes showing bathing party on beach. Eliminate underlined portions of the following dialogue: "I a going to send you away -- to have your baby." |
| Reel 3 | Double Reel 3 |
| No cuts. | In the scene where the man is visiting hospital eliminate all scenes and dialogue including "With my baby" said by the girl where one of the men says -- "If you will listen to me you will make plenty of money." Eliminate scenes showing the following news headlines -- "Federal Authorities Powerless to Suppress Marihuana Traffic." Where girl returns to apartment after seeing sister's home eliminate all scenes and dialogue including "get it," said by girl, to and including -- "you know what the rap is for a snatch job," -- said by one of the men. |

**27** This chart illustrates the difference in cuts the Chicago and Ohio censor boards required in *Marihuana* (1936).

on the order of Lt. Harry M. Costello, head of the censor board and a member of the city's police department. The only cuts ordered were of the nude bathing scene and shots that showed the use of drugs or methods for their concealment and transportation—one of the dope peddlers hides his stash in the hollow heel of his shoe. It appears that Lt. Costello found some value in *Marihuana*'s antidope theme but wanted to ensure that viewers did not learn anything from the movie that might lead to a crime, such as using or concealing drugs. The Ohio board also eliminated shots of the women disrobing and scenes of their moonlit nude romp in the surf; in contrast with the Chicago censors, the scenes of drug use and concealment

remained. Ohio did cut many references to the protagonist Burma's "love child," which she gives up. Her rich sister eventually adopts the child and Burma concocts a plot to kidnap her; the scene where she hatches the plan was eliminated in Ohio. Also cut was the newspaper headline "Federal Authorities Powerless to Suppress Marihuana Traffic." Evidently Ohio censors were more concerned about Burma's having a child out of wedlock, her subsequent plan to kidnap it, and what might have been construed as disrespect toward the federal government. This lack of uniformity in state censorship, and the often perplexing rationale for the cuts, was common.

Although perhaps self-evident, it is worth pointing out that the cuts dictated by a city or state only served to increase the discontinuity of exploitation films—and censors often required massive cuts before licensing an exploitation film. In some instances, a license was issued only to be withdrawn later. In other cases, a movie may have been licensed, but when rerelease was attempted years later it was denied a permit. Exploiteers were no strangers to courtrooms, where they often had to fight censorship orders to get their films played. Friedman has estimated that Babb was in court over four hundred times with *Mom and Dad.*[20] Exploitation films were at the center of a number of legal challenges to state and local censorship during the 1950s that led to the dismantling of the motion picture censorship system in the United States. (These cases are covered in the conclusion.)

## The MPPDA and Self-Regulation

I have detailed how the rash of sex hygiene films released immediately after World War I prompted increased calls for censorship across the country. Fear of further censorship led to an industrywide crackdown by the NAMPI, which issued a 1919 resolution declaring war on sex hygiene films. The Thirteen Points and Standards, adopted by the NAMPI in 1921, codified the exclusion of subject matter such as sex, drug use, nudity, white slavery, and other "salacious" topics. The perceived failure of the Thirteen Points to take hold, the passage of a state censorship law in New York coupled with the threat of others, and the public outcry generated by the Hollywood scandals of 1921 and 1922 forced the industry to vigorously embrace self-regulation in the form of the MPPDA under the leadership of Will Hays in 1922. At the most conspicuous level, this self-censorship

allowed the mainstream industry to keep salacious subjects out of its films, while at the same time the ongoing war against exploitation movies served to present the MPPDA as an active organization committed to keeping all American screens "clean."

Stallybrass and White have theorized about the recurrent cultural pattern in which "the 'top' attempts to reject and eliminate 'the bottom' for reasons of prestige and status quo, only to discover that . . . it is in some way frequently dependent on that low-Other."[21] By positioning exploitation movies as a threat to average Americans, Hollywood threw into sharp relief its motion pictures and those made by the independent exploiteers. The Hays Office and other elements in the organized industry presented exploitation films as the antithesis of their product, in part to deflect attention from mainstream movies that otherwise might have attracted negative criticism. At another level, the clash between the mainstream and exploitation industries created a series of discourses on sexuality, taste, mores, the nature of entertainment, and the function of motion pictures. The discourses in turn were marked by tensions and fissures and were neither fixed nor uniform, what Foucault would have called the "tactical polyvalence of discourses."[22] Thus, some of the same discourses marshaled within sex hygiene films themselves (clean/dirty, wholesome/unwholesome, entertainment/education, etc.) and used in their defense were also employed by Hollywood against the unorganized exploiteers. Largely because the mainstream industry could not dominate the discursive formations that attended renegade exploitation movies, the films proved beyond the reach of the Hays Office. The fact that some movies fell outside of the organized industry's self-regulation helped to undermine the very concept of self-regulation.

Once instituted, the Hays Office brought about several immediate successes in the early 1920s; the most obvious of these was the defeat of a Massachusetts referendum on censorship. The Committee for Public Relations and later the Public Relations Department, both within the Hays Office, absorbed many of the criticisms directed at motion pictures while the Hays Office solidified its control over the organized film industry. The primary impulse for self-regulation was an economic one, as Hollywood hoped to stave off further censorship and the costly necessity of creating customized prints for each area with censorship. Additionally, protests against disreputable films and subject matter had the potential to erode audiences and profits for all motion pictures. The nation's "movie czar," Will Hays, had made some strides in repairing Hollywood's image. But

when a group of low-budget but high-profile sex hygiene films began to sweep across the country in 1927, prompting protests, the Hays Office began its first concerted effort to rid the screen of exploitation movies since their initial expulsion from the mainstream.

In the summer of 1927, itinerant roadshowman S. S. Millard released *Is Your Daughter Safe?* A compilation of footage, some up to fifteen years old, the film featured scenes of white slavery and venereal disease. *Variety*'s reviewer characterized the picture as "possibly the strongest and most daring of so-called hygiene and sex warning pictures ever made." He went on to claim, "This reporter has seen many of the Lilies of the Field, stage and screen. But this one is the prize pip. If the censors let it get by in communities where they want to see hot stuff, it is a cinch this will be a wow."[23] Millard promoted *Is Your Daughter Safe?* by having a woman in a glass case outside theaters, which *Variety* termed "a flash for the boobs." Agitating censors from coast to coast, this "hot stuff" was banned in New York, Maryland, Ohio, and Virginia, as well as in Portland, Oregon. But many communities did see the film—far too many to suit the Hays Office.

The MPPDA began its campaign against hygiene films in June by organizing a screening of Millard's picture for a group of women. Col. Jason Joy, head of the MPPDA's Studio Relations Department which was charged with coordinating policy with the studios, assumed that the women would condemn the film. But in his report to Carl Milliken, the chief of the MPPDA's Public Relations Department, Joy expressed confusion: "I was somewhat surprised . . . when they reported to me a moment ago that they think [*Is Your Daughter Safe?*] teaches a very splendid lesson and that every girl over sixteen years of age ought to be compelled to see it. Of course, the difficulty for us is the kind of publicity they are sending out which leads the people who don't see the picture to believe that we are responsible and have slipped back a long way in our progress toward bigger and better things."[24] Joy's postscreening analysis had hit upon two problems that would continually confound the organized industry's efforts to deal with exploitation. The first was the public's inability to distinguish between films made by the organized, mainstream companies and those made by the independent exploitation producers. Calls for movie reform invariably were directed at Hollywood, but not necessarily at Hollywood *films*.[25] Had the difference been as clear to the average moviegoer as it was in the minds of the representatives of the MPPDA, Hollywood's ability to attack exploitation might have been easier. As it was, the MPPDA was forced to call for the elimination of sex hygiene films

**28** S. S. Millard's *Is Your Daughter Safe?*, "perhaps the strongest and most daring of the so-called hygiene and sex warning pictures ever made," became a prime target in the MPPDA's efforts to eliminate sex hygiene films in 1927.

and other "offensive" movies while not appearing to support censorship—a delicate maneuver. Second, exploitation films usually claimed some educational merit. The mainstream industry eventually made this a crucial distinction between its films and those of the exploiteers, a point I expand on below.

The Association's attack on *Is Your Daughter Safe?* was oblique, initially carried out through other organizations and institutions. The MPPDA was always circumspect in its dealings with independents for fear that unaffiliated producers and exhibitors would charge unfair competition and restraint of trade.[26] Though the attempt to have the group of women Joy organized denounce the movie had backfired, the Association quietly persuaded the corresponding secretary of the California Women's Christian Temperance Union to withdraw her endorsement of *Is Your Daughter Safe?*[27] Other sympathetic organizations were lobbied by Hays to bring pressure on the film. The National Better Business Bureau issued a notice

to Bureau Managers and Chambers of Commerce on 1 August 1927, claiming that contrary to ads, Will Hays did not approve of *Is Your Daughter Safe?* "Should this film be shown in your city," the notice read, "will you kindly advise us immediately how it is being advertised and forward a sample of advertising that may be used?"[28] Local and regional film boards of trade were enlisted to pressure exhibitors. The Northwest film board of trade succeeded in convincing the operator of a theater chain to withdraw *Is Your Daughter Safe?* from uptown and suburban runs in Seattle and limit the film to one "Main Street" house that did not advertise in the newspapers.[29] The Motion Picture Theater Owners of America issued a red flag to its members, warning them about Millard's picture and more than a half-dozen others that constituted a "wave" of sex films. The organization claimed that playing such films would "breed" censorship.[30] Once established, such censorship would not discriminate between exploitation films and movies made by the organized industry.

In October 1927, the MPPDA endorsed the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls." Joy formulated the list to help the industry negotiate the perils and pitfalls of the varying state and municipal censorship boards. He included eleven "Don'ts," things generally forbidden or cut from movies by the censor boards, and twenty-five "Be Carefuls," a catalogue of subjects that required special care in presentation. As with prior forms of self-regulation, the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" were inspired by economics, but the stakes were suddenly higher. Although censorship had been expensive and nettlesome to the majors during the silent era, a silent picture with cuts was still playable. The rise in talking pictures posed a potentially devastating problem because scissoring a talkie, particularly a sound-on-disk movie, virtually destroyed it. By following the "Don'ts," sound films were made more viable in censorship states.

Bearing a strong resemblance to the NAMPI's Thirteen Points and Standards, the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" were also inspired by the desire to restrict exploitation films.[31] Seven of the eleven "Don'ts" were generated by topics that were the subjects of exploitation films: nudity, drug traffic, "sex perversion," white slavery, sex hygiene and venereal disease, childbirth scenes, and children's sex organs (another control over scenes of childbirth, among other things). An eighth would become the subject of the exploiteers by the early 1930s: miscegenation.[32] These topics provided the spectacle (scenes of nudity, drug use, childbirth, etc.) that exploitation producers relied on to differentiate their films from the mainstream and to draw an audience. The other three restrictions of the "Don'ts" were on

profanity, ridicule of the clergy, and willful offense to any nation, race, or creed; the last two were the subject of concurrent protests.[33] In all, these eleven topics regularly prompted censors to ban or cut movies, drew the ire of protest groups, and left the entire film industry vulnerable to increased censorship. Thus, the Thirteen Points and the "Don'ts" were not random lists of sensitive subjects. Any number of other "offensive" topics (e.g., excessive violence, sexual intercourse, sadomasochism, and necrophilia) conceivably could have been included on the lists, but because those subjects were not a part of the commercial cinema at that time, there was no reason to include them on any inventory of forbidden topics. The list created by Joy arose out of a reaction to real-world experience, not theory or assumption. The adoption of the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" at the same time the MPPDA was confronting a "wave" of exploitation movies was no mere coincidence, but was instead an effort to react to a specific threat. In many respects, the exploitation film came to be defined by its embrace of the topics made taboo by the "Don'ts" and, later, the Production Code.

The MPPDA drive to rid America's screens of sex hygiene films reached a peak in late 1928, when Paramount's theater chain, Publix, announced that it would no longer play the pictures. *Variety* reported that Publix and other "distributor-chain operators" were motivated by efforts of the Hays Office "quietly to suppress the sex films." Hays attempted to extract pledges from member exhibitor chains not to play the movies and went further by instructing distributors not to supply any house with regular films once it had opened its screen to "the obnoxious sex film."[34] At the same time, a strict proposal for censorship had been introduced in the New Jersey legislature because the state's theater owners had "repeatedly broken faith by showing obscene sex pictures after promising not to."[35] The major offenders were reportedly chain-owned and -operated theaters in Newark, Jersey City, and Union City, rather than independent exhibitors. The independent operators who formed the Motion Picture Theater Owners of New Jersey adopted resolutions favoring support of the censorship measure.[36]

The MPPDA had always publicly taken an anticensorship stand. However, calls for the elimination of sex hygiene films put the association in the precarious position of appearing to advocate some form of censorship. For instance, when censorship was threatened over the San Diego screening of *Is Your Daughter Safe?* (under the title *The Octopus*), Joy instructed

an employee to advise the club women of the city to withdraw their support for censorship but to continue to work against hygiene pictures in their territory.[37] In a letter to Carl Milliken ten days later, Joy confessed, "The San Diego episode makes it apparent that we are dealing with a very dangerous vehicle, and that censorship is apt to be the resulting remedy. Of course, in setting up a machine to censor this type of picture, they are also putting into operation something which may prove to be embarrassing to us in the future."[38] Such embarrassing contradictions were unavoidable. One such instance occurred at an MPPDA-sponsored conference in September 1929 between film industry leaders and individuals from a variety of community and religious organizations. The meeting in New York was, in part, a response to new threats of federal censorship and an increase in the number of deletions ordered by state and municipal censors. C. C. Pettijohn, general counsel of the MPPDA, offered the organization's standard response to the issue of censorship by declaring "I believe that censorship in any form of human expression is silly and ridiculous and absolutely devoid of any accomplishment or result." He went on to speak out for diversity on the screen, saying, "A reasonable number of pictures should be made each year for children but we can't make all pictures for children. Adults still have some rights." The next day, when confronted with a question about what the industry was doing about sex hygiene pictures, Pettijohn toed another stock MPPDA line by replying, "Now you are getting to a class of pictures which should never be shown in theaters. I would like to see every producer of them put out of business. The organized industry does not stand for those pictures." Milliken ventured, "When the industry resents censorship as it does, it does not mean that no control by the public should be permitted."[39]

Despite the public and private attempts the Hays Office made to eliminate sex hygiene films, the organization was paralyzed in its efforts by a philosophical conundrum regarding censorship. As long as some states and communities did not have censorship laws, exploitation films had a venue. And censorship of certain pictures could conceivably be extended to others and soon impinge on those films made by mainstream companies. Moreover, by publicly declaring that some movies were worthy of censorship, the MPPDA admitted that self-regulation of content was not a workable alternative to state-sponsored censorship as long as some producers could operate free of self-regulation's constraints. The internal contradictions within Hollywood's response to the situation prevented the

organized industry from developing a coherent, long-term policy for controlling exploitation films. Instead, the skirmishes would continue, especially once the effects of the stock market crash and the Great Depression finally caught up with Hollywood.

## The Production Code and the Exploitation Film

In 1930 the MPPDA refashioned the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" into the Production Code. Martin Quigley, the prominent Catholic layman and publisher of the exhibitor-oriented trade publication *Motion Picture Herald,* teamed with Father Daniel Lord, Jesuit priest and professor at St. Louis University, to expand Hollywood's "Don'ts" and give them a philosophical base. Under rosier financial circumstances, the studio chiefs might have been able to shrug off the new Code, but another bill to establish federal censorship had been introduced.[40] More important, the feeble economic situation, coupled with the support of distributors, exhibitors, and the all-important investment bankers, meant the producers had little choice but to accept the Code. Hays trumpeted the Code as a new moral doctrine that would guide Hollywood through the brambles of state censorship. Critics, however, saw it as more of the same, and producers quickly learned that they could ignore it with much the same impunity with which they had shirked the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls."[41]

Riding on the popularity of talkies, the major studios managed to coast through the first year of the Depression without too much pain. But between 1931 and 1934, the frail economy left the majors with only slim profits at best, bloodied with red ink at worst. Theaters darkened across the country and those that remained open were forced to cut back services as attendance dropped by a third between 1930 and 1932. In an effort to draw patrons back into theaters, exhibitors tried schemes ranging from admission price cuts to double features to gimmicks like Bank Night, Dish Night, and games such as SCREENO. Production companies responded by sprinkling more spice into their films. Gangsters shot their way across the screen. Mae West rolled her corseted hips and leered suggestively. A parade of prostitutes and good-time girls plied their trade on back lot versions of the "big city." The exploiteers weren't holding back either. Between 1931 and 1934 over thirty new exploitation features were produced or imported for distribution in the United States. Nudity, sex education, drug use, and all manner of vices were proffered in *Damaged Lives* (1933), *Narcotic*

(1933), *The Road to Ruin* (1933), *Enlighten Thy Daughter* (1933), *Elysia* (1933), *Maniac* (1934), *Tomorrow's Children* (1934), and others, providing the largest concentration of new exploitation features since 1927–1928. Small companies in the organized industry edged into exploitation as well. In 1933 Columbia produced *What Price Innocence?*, a film that advocated sex education, and, in defiance of earlier MPPDA rulings, at least some of the company's exchanges distributed the venereal disease picture *Damaged Lives.*

The screen was not the only place where one could find racy entertainment. Depression-weary Americans were momentarily diverted from their economic woes in 1933 by newspaper coverage of the nudist movement. Long established in Europe, cults of sun worshippers were beginning to gain a foothold in the United States. Camps in California and other states popped up, and the press covered the phenomenon, eagerly printing plenty of pictures to satisfy those for whom words alone would not suffice. The return of newspaper circulation to 1929 levels was attributed to "the extremely hot art work on the nudes."[42] Press material from *Elysia* included a still of the alleged crew of the movie "filming 'au natural' " and encouraged exhibitors to "submit this to your most progressive newspaper. It ought to be a cinch." As a result of the daring nudist shots in the dailies, Hollywood still photographers and press agents began to display more flesh of female stars in publicity shots. Hays issued another edict to curb the practice.[43] But while Hays was occupied with stills, nude figures were traipsing across the screen in many theaters. *Elysia* and other nudist movies were causing a stir at the box office and in censors' offices.

The nudist films ran into censorship trouble in a number of cities as well as in Maryland and New York.[44] Bryan Foy, the producer of *Elysia,* was forced to get an injunction against the Los Angeles police to restrain them from interfering with local showing of the picture.[45] The organized industry blamed the nudist movies for a renewed wave of state and municipal censorship bills, and yet another measure proposing a federal motion picture commission was introduced.[46] Hays had hoped that the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), signed by Franklin Roosevelt on 16 June 1933, would finally bring the moral standards of movies in line under the Production Code. The National Recovery Administration (NRA), created by the act, was intended to regulate wages and prices to stimulate the depressed economy. Each industry scripted its own code because if they failed to do so the federal government would write it for them. Douglas

Gomery and others have shown that the MPPDA lobbied to have the film industry included in the NIRA because it offered the potential to solidify monopoly control under the aegis of the federal government. In fact, the NRA Motion Picture Code had been written by representatives of the MPPDA, who made sure the position of the Hays Office was strengthened. Article VII of the Code committed the industry to maintenance of "right moral standards."[47]

Mary Beth Haralovich has described the motion picture industry as in a state of "near-hysteria" at the time in its efforts to avoid federal interference.[48] The strengthened position of the Hays Office in the midst of this panic may have given Hays and others in the business an inflated sense of their ability to control the content of all motion pictures. An analysis of the nudist picture problem in *Variety* during the first month of 1934 disclosed the spurious assumptions under which the majors had been operating:

> First of all while the Hays production code specifically prohibits nude poses, and while the advertising code is being so administered as to excise various limb displays in stills, nudist makers are able to escape all of this because they are non-Haysites. Hence exhibitors can do as they please in the matter of lobby displays.
>
> Therefore, official spokesmen declare, it is about time to get a ruling on all-industry morals, not just the Hays percentage, but from the NRA.
>
> Here again a snag is struck. The code does not specify any set rules for morality in either production or advertising. The clause, regarded as ambiguous from the start, simply says that the industry shall pledge itself to maintain highest moral standards.
>
> It was assumed in major circles, at first, that the clause was sufficient to make it understood the business would bow to the Hays writings. But independents have successfully held out against these and today are doing much as they please in the matter of morality.
>
> With a few nudist pictures holding the industry up to a general attack, as is evidenced in more censor activity than has been witnessed in years, the morality issue is admitted coming to a definite head.[49]

Hays and the majors had expected the independents to accept the Production Code when the NRA went into effect, if only because it would mean "a large financial saving to them."[50] But, as the article indicated, independents continued to pursue their own path with little regard for the industry as a whole. Their pictures had been singled out and placed the entire

film business under siege. The organized industry, in turn, had singled them out for elimination.

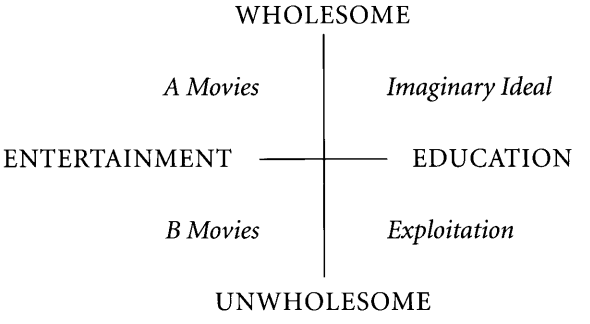
Embracing the Code might have meant saving money for exploitation producers by allowing their films to play in territories with censorship, but it also would have stripped them of that aspect that differentiated them from the majors. In time, the Hays Office began to realize that the exploiteers were out to carve their own niche, regardless of who might be offended inside or outside the industry. An MPPDA interoffice memo about exploiteer Bryan Foy recognized his goal: "[Foy] is certain to be increasingly troublesome as time goes on. He is avowedly out to make pictures off the beaten track, with the idea that in this way he may be able to make a good living. He has gone on record, repeatedly, as of the opinion that he cannot compete with other companies making the usual type of pictures and that he must resort to the sensational, the shocking and the lurid."[51] Without suggestive content, the movies made by Foy and other exploiteers simply would have been more low-budget fare, similar to that produced by Chesterfield, Majestic, World Wide, and other Poverty Row outfits being picked off by the Depression one by one. Contrary to what the organized industry thought, there was little financial incentive for the exploiteers to accept the Production Code. The exploiteers remained afloat by offering moviegoers the forbidden spectacle that was lacking in other movies. By the mid-1930s Willis Kent, who had produced a variety of genre cheapies, had made the complete transition to exploitation. There can be little doubt that his decision was dictated by economics.

In the face of Catholic boycotts and the newly formed Legion of Decency, the Production Code Administration was established within the MPPDA in July 1934. Joseph I. Breen was placed in charge of the office. Geoffrey Shurlock, who worked under Breen in the PCA and eventually headed the office, claimed, "We never refused seals. We were in the business of granting seals. The whole purpose of [the PCA's] existence was to arrange pictures so that we could give seals."[52] Once created, the PCA worked in the interest of the majors, taking a proactive position of suggestion and negotiation rather than a reactionary stance of restraint. However, as shown above, considerable concern about nudist movies—and other exploitation films—existed within the organized film industry and among censors. Just as surely as "the Breen Office" was another strategy to consolidate power in the hands of the majors, it also functioned to marginalize the exploiteers by denying seals to their pictures. Without Code seals, exploitation films were, for all intents and purposes, barred from the

lucrative first-run houses in large cities that were run by the majors.[53] The Code and its enforcement also served to shape the dominant image of what movies should be vis-à-vis exploitation.

Since the time exploitation subjects were first segregated from the mainstream, producers, states' righters, and roadshowmen pointed to the educational intent of their films in an effort to lend them an air of responsibility. Claims of instructional merit could mitigate the prurient content with censors, reformers, and the general public. Or so the exploitation producers had hoped. Whether or not the exploiteers were sincere about the educational content of their films, Hollywood and the censors turned their argument back on them by insisting that the role of movies was entertainment and that education did not have a place on American screens. The role of education, or propaganda, on the screen had been at issue for years. As Stephen Vaughn has shown, with the acceptance of the foundations for the Production Code the majors affirmed the entertainment-education polarity. The companies contended that "motion pictures were first and foremost entertainment and could not be considered education or even indirectly as an essentially moral or immoral force."[54] The organized industry's desire to separate education and entertainment was codified in the preamble to the Production Code: "Though regarding motion pictures primarily as *entertainment without any explicit purpose of teaching or propaganda,* [the signatories to the Code] know that the motion picture within its own field of entertainment may be directly responsible for spiritual and moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking. . . . On their part, they ask from the public and from public leaders a sympathetic understanding of their purposes and problems and a spirit of cooperation that will allow them the freedom and opportunity necessary to bring the motion picture to a still higher level of wholesome entertainment for all the people." Establishing clear divisions between entertainment and education allowed the mainstream industry to differentiate its movies from those of the renegade exploiteers.

In his treatise on the social construction of taste, *Distinction,* Pierre Bourdieu writes that principles of division "function within and for the purposes of the struggle between social groups": "What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization: the evocative power of an utterance which puts things in a different light . . . or




**29** This figure graphically depicts the way the Production Code divided theatrical features into categories along traditional moral lines of wholesome and unwholesome, as well as by their function as entertainment or education.

which modifies the schemes of perception, shows something else, other properties, previously unnoticed or relegated to the background . . . a separative power, a distinction, *diacrisis, discretio,* drawing discrete units out of indivisible continuity, difference out of the undifferentiated."[55]

It is clear that the writers of the Production Code attempted to break undifferentiated theatrical features into categories along traditional moral lines of wholesome and unwholesome (in this case, as constructed by the Code), as well as by their function as entertainment or education. This scheme is represented in Figure 29. The vertical axis divides entertainment and education, and the horizontal axis separates wholesome from unwholesome. The films that the mainstream industry tried to create through self-regulation fall into the field bound by wholesomeness and entertainment, whereas the films made by exploiteers fall into the opposing conjuncture of unwholesome education. By suggesting that education did not have a place on the screen, Hollywood drove a major wedge between their films and those of the exploiteers. Films that fall into the lower left portion of the schematic, unwholesome entertainment, are many of the B movies made by the organized industry, as well as those pre-PCA entertainments (Mae West et al.) tagged as unwholesome by the Catholic Church and others. Lea Jacobs has explained that B films were often labeled "trashy" or "lurid" by critics and that Hollywood maintained certain hierarchies through its distribution and marketing of A and B features.[56] The upper right field, wholesome education, is that ideal that

many social and moral reformers saw as the medium's proper function. This pairing remained imaginary, for no group of theatrical features ever seemed to fall fully within the conjuncture.

As Bourdieu has noted, in matters of taste, "all determination is negation."[57] Because of their "low" categorization (often literally dealing with the lower strata of the body in the form of sex, birth, venereal disease), exploitation films were the antithesis of what Hollywood was constructing as "better film." Jacobs explains that the so-called better film movement, which had the support of the MPPDA, eventually formulated criteria that prescribed narrative coherence, plausibility, and realism as the hallmarks of acceptable screen fare. Narrative was privileged over spectacle.[58] As we have seen, spectacle was the stock-in-trade of exploitation films. This, coupled with the affective response exploitation movies provoked, made them diametrically opposed to the definition of what constituted a "better film." Censors and critics who held similar views had always seen their function as not merely one of limiting choices but, through those limitations, of *elevating* public taste. Martin Quigley wrote that the function of art was to ennoble, or "the least that may be expected of art is that it shall not debase."[59] Allied with the elevation of taste in the masses was the fear that the spread of the unwholesome or dirty, such as exploitation movies, might drag down the "good taste" that the more refined had so carefully cultivated. Thus a series of definitions shaped exploitation as unacceptable screen fare. At the same time, these negations served to reinforce the conception of Hollywood film as something morally unobjectionable, narratively coherent, plausible, realistic, and noneducational. Bourdieu's observation that "any legitimate work tends . . . to impose the norms of its own perception and tacitly defines as the only legitimate mode of perception the one which brings into play a certain disposition and a certain competence" seems particularly apt in this instance.[60]

Once the Breen Office was in place, exploitation producers generally ignored it, choosing to release their films without seals in unaffiliated theaters rather than fight for approval. Some producers, such as Esper, did seek MPPDA approval on a fairly regular basis; others, like Cummins, tried to get a seal only for movies that had the potential to be major box office draws. On those occasions when an exploitation film was submitted for a seal, the states' rights distribution system worked against the MPPDA in their efforts to enforce the Production Code. Because regional distributors could insert scenes—or take them out—with a large degree of impunity, the MPPDA was always at risk when it passed a states' rights film. The

organization depended on reports from the field to convey violations, and those reports were sporadic at best. Some producers played cat-and-mouse with the Breen Office, getting approval for their motion pictures but never actually making the cuts dictated by Code officials. Esper regularly engaged in this game.

In 1937, Esper submitted the exotic picture *Angkor* to the PCA and agreed to make deletions, primarily of exposed breasts, to obtain a seal. On 17 March 1937, Breen wrote to Esper, granting the seal in light of the producer's assurance that the requested cuts would be made. One year later, Francis Harmon in the New York MPPDA office wrote to Breen stating that *Angkor* had been playing in some areas under the title *Forbidden Adventure.* Harmon took it upon himself to see the film and reported that "a number of terrible jumps gave evidence of the censor cuts. . . . But I am reasonably sure that in states without censor boards these people are showing this picture in a form different than they agreed to do when the certificate of approval was issued."[61] Breen withdrew the certificate.[62] During the same period, the Breen Office reviewed *The Scarlet Flower* (aka *Man's Way With Women*), a Swedish film acquired by Esper that contained a number of code violations. The movie was finally certified after many cuts. Later in the spring, Harmon informed Breen that the film was submitted to the New York censor board with an MPPDA seal but still containing scenes that were to have been scissored.[63] Breen's reaction was both prompt and furious: "It is so patent and brazen a double cross that, immediately upon receipt of your letter, I wrote a formal letter to Esper advising him that we have withdrawn our approval and made a demand upon him to return our certificate of approval."[64]

Some exploitation features that received a Code seal reinserted cut material but were never caught by the Breen Office. *African Holiday* (1937) was awarded a seal in July 1937, yet when a print was submitted to the New York censors a month later, it was not the same one that had been passed by the PCA. New York required various deletions of nudity. *African Holiday* probably played in its uncut version in many areas, and there is no evidence that the Breen Office ever rescinded its certificate of approval.[65] Other films may have been paired with square-up reels, leaving the motion picture itself conforming to the Code, in theory if not in practice. Some exploiteers not only undermined the integrity of the seal system but mocked it in the process.

On those occasions when exploitation producers sought an MPPDA seal for a movie to gain broad distribution and access to better theaters—

which were generally owned by members of the MPPDA or major chains that abided by the Code—they found the deck stacked against them. Samuel Cummins received a mountain of publicity when he attempted to bring the Czech film *Ecstasy* (1933) into the United States in 1934. Initially barred by the Customs Department as "obscene and immoral," the film finally was permitted to enter the country in December 1935. Throughout the next year, it played to huge crowds in some cities, but other states and towns barred the movie. Cummins found that *Ecstasy*'s notoriety had exhibitors beating a path to his door. He submitted the film for a Production Code seal but was rejected on 28 May 1937. Cummins appealed the decision to the MPPDA Board of Directors. In a letter to the Board he complained that many theaters controlled either directly or indirectly by MPPDA members were anxious to show *Ecstasy* but that they could not do so until the film had a Production Code seal. The refusal of a seal, according to Cummins, caused "considerable embarrassment and loss of revenue and has jeopardized our business considerably."[66] When he met with the Board at the MPPDA's New York offices he found them waiting with plenty of ammunition to use against him. Harmon wrote to Breen, "When Cummins saw the two pages of exhibits taken from his own advertising and heard comments by Mr. [Sidney] Kent and others indicating that his own advertising convicted him, he hopped to his feet and declared that I had been unfair in selecting these five ads to use before the Board, whereupon I hopped across the hall to my office and returned with a stack of advertising a foot high, which I placed in front of Mr. Kent who thereupon had a very enjoyable time holding up various ads and forcing admissions from Cummins that they were all part of his exploitation campaign."[67] Such appeals were understandably rare. Usually when an exploitation film was submitted for a seal and rejected, the producer or distributor did not press the issue. The MPPDA was seldom given the opportunity to shame the exploiteers as they did with Cummins and *Ecstasy.*

By the late 1930s, the economic circumstances of censorship were changing. The cost of multiple prints to suit various censor boards was still a concern, but the organized producers were equally worried about the tolls imposed by states with licensing procedures. For instance, the New York censor board exacted a $2 per reel fee on every film approved for exhibition in the state except newsreels. The state made a net profit of $204,202 from censorship in the fiscal year that ended on 30 June 1936. *Variety* estimated that companies releasing fifty features annually paid more than $150,000 to have a year's product passed in states with censor boards and

in Chicago. There was a growing suspicion that other financially strapped states were "getting the yen to grab off that sort of coin," and most film companies felt powerless to resist because they did not want to appear antagonistic.[68] The producers' fears were justified given the economic climate. While Loew's/MGM, Twentieth Century–Fox, and Warner Bros. were recovering their financial health, the other majors were still feeling the effects of the Depression. Paramount was just coming out of receivership, and RKO, which made a slim profit in 1937, managed only to break even in 1938. Universal, Columbia, and United Artists were either operating in the red or scraping by with a slim net profit. Additional censorship fees would have been an irritation for all of the companies at the very least, but for some they could have meant the difference between profit and loss.

Another major "cleanup" occurred in 1937 and continued into 1938. The effort was spurred by a rise in the number of exploitation films in circulation coupled with their subsequent state and municipal censorship and notoriety. By the spring of 1937, "a flood of 'sex' pictures" swept over theaters in the Chicago territory. That flood found Hedy Lamarr floating in the nude in *Ecstasy,* two vice films based on the Lucky Luciano case (*Gambling with Souls* and *Smashing the Vice Trust*), *Damaged Goods* serving up venereal disease, and the return of Esper's *Maniac* under the more marketable title *Sex Maniac.* The movies were successful. When the *Motion Picture Herald* article appeared announcing the "flood," *Ecstasy* was in its seventeenth week in the Loop and business for all the theaters showing exploitation features was described as "better than average." Observers directly linked two censorship bills that had been introduced in the Illinois legislature to the release of the exploitation movies. Their sponsors intended "to point to the 'sex picture' as necessitating such censorship."[69] At the same time, Hays and leaders of the mainstream industry were reassuring St. Louis members of the Motion Picture Theater Owners of America that sex was not returning to the screen.[70] Hollywood once again was forced to paint a sanguine, if deceptive, picture of the situation because they had been unable to exert any control over the movies that were causing the stir. Over the next year, the trade press repeatedly invoked the "success" of the Production Code while it inveighed against exploitation films. Quigley's *Motion Picture Herald* let few such opportunities pass. When a Denver court ordered cuts in *Smashing the Vice Trust,* the *Herald* quoted at length from Judge Philip B. Gilliam's statement. He applauded Hollywood's self-regulation, which had resulted in "pictures of a high moral plane," and asked, "Why, then, should Denver allow the tearing

down of this commendable effort by permitting the showing of such sex pictures—films that the industry as a whole is against?"[71]

Creation of the Breen Office, strict enforcement of the Production Code, and efforts to separate entertainment and education had not succeeded in curbing production or exhibition of exploitation pictures. Such a conspicuous failure prompted the mainstream industry to change tactics again. Instead of targeting the production of exploitation films, a concerted campaign was initiated to intimidate the independent theaters that exhibited the movies. Articles appeared in the trades with such titles as "Protests Made on Sex Films," "Foreign and 'Sex Hygiene' Films Invite New Decency Offensive," "U.S. Is Probing 'Lewd' Pictures," "Censorship Activities Increase," and "New Arguments over Sex Films."[72] Each detailed protests and legal action, not to mention the arrests of theater managers. The message was indirect but unmistakable: One could reap financial rewards from playing exploitation, but it was always at the risk of incurring the wrath of the community, large legal fees and fines, possible incarceration, and the disapproval of the organized film industry. The exhibitor who chose to run exploitation movies was putting the entire industry at risk by inviting increased censorship.[73]

In addition to generalized threats, exhibitors who played exploitation found their patriotism questioned. Earlier, I noted that NAMPI's 1919 call for "100% Americanism" on the screen tacitly associated hygiene movies with things "un-American."[74] In 1937, the appeal to exhibitors' patriotism and anxiety about the increasingly tense situation in Europe was far less subtle. At the close of that year, A. L. Finestone reported in *Boxoffice* on the Legion of Decency's new offense against sex hygiene films and foreign movies that had been deemed filthy. The Legion was "sounding the tocsin for a public offensive against 'the major onslaught from Europe.' " Among the foreign product that trespassed the bounds of decency were *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), *Carnival in Flanders* (1935), and two movies playing the exploitation circuit, *Ecstasy* and *Club de Femmes/Girls Club* (1936). Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati, the Legion's executive secretary, pointed out that foreign producers were not bound by the provisions of the Production Code, "Hence, all the filthiness and perversion that has been so largely wiped out of American pictures is appearing in newly-imported films." Also under attack was the "increase in offensive product from small independent producers and its exhibition by independent exhibitors over whom [the Hays Office exercised] no control." Kendis, Foy, and other exploitation producers were linked with the "new film-

devil that comes from foreign studios."[75] Associating exploitation with the overseas "film-devil" and characterizing it as an infection of the clean, wholesome American screen added yet another element to exhibitor concerns. Judge Gilliam's and Archbishop McNicholas's comments drew clear distinctions between the "good" movies made by Hollywood and the "bad" films made by independents and foreigners, reinforcing the organized industry's cultural and economic dominance.

In addition to the aforementioned tactics, the organized industry attempted to deploy the unwholesome/education characterization to keep exploitation films off the nation's screens. But the timing could not have been worse. In 1936, Franklin Roosevelt's new surgeon general, Thomas Parran, had initiated a major public information campaign designed to combat venereal diseases. Articles on the subject appeared in popular publications such as the *Readers Digest* and *Time,* and a Gallup poll found that 90 percent of respondents favored government distribution of information on venereal diseases.[76] Some of the subjects forbidden by the Production Code were receiving wide attention and could no longer be deemed inherently objectionable, so much so that some state censor boards began passing hygiene films. In 1937, the previously intractable New York board licensed *Damaged Goods* and *Damaged Lives,* a film that had been denied permits for four years. Boards in Ohio, Virginia, and Kansas also passed *Damaged Goods,* yet the PCA refused to issue a seal for the picture. In addition to pointing out the technical violation to the film's producer, Breen added, "*Damaged Goods* is not the kind of picture which should be exhibited publicly, before mixed audiences in theaters."[77] The Legion of Decency maintained that the disease films might be suitable for specialized exhibition before selected audiences, but as "clinical studies" they were not entertainment and thus were "improper material for a theater screen."[78] And Quigley's *Motion Picture Daily* advanced the same position in its review, claiming the film's "subject matter does not properly fit into the entertainment formula and that films of the nature of *Damaged Goods,* therefore, do not belong in commercial theaters."[79] Self-regulation generated by the MPPDA no longer reflected the position of state and municipal censorship boards—its original intent—but had adopted the more reactionary stance of the Legion and Quigley.[80]

In April 1938, Will Hays called in heads of the major circuits to remind them not to play pictures without a Code seal.[81] The organization estimated that thirty exploitation movies were receiving widespread distribution at the time.[82] It was becoming clear that the organized industry

could do little to prevent unaffiliated exhibitors from playing exploitation movies. *The Birth of a Baby* (1937), a sober, unsensational movie that stressed education and contained little titillation, had received wide play, garnering the support of numerous organizations along with many positive reviews and editorials.[83] The film became something of a cause célèbre for those who supported a free, or more liberal, screen and served as a concrete example of the draconian position held by the supporters of censorship and self-regulation. But due to the very nature of its subject—childbirth—it was still considered unwholesome by the organized industry.[84] The warnings from Hays seemed to have little effect—a fact finally being acknowledged by his office. An MPPDA executive described how sex films were "barred in 1,200 to 2,000 houses" that were operated by members of the Association and that there are "about 800 theaters affiliated with circuits but in which the circuits may not hold a controlling interest."[85] This still left thousands of theaters over which the MPPDA had no direct influence. Paramount and Fox attempted to dissociate themselves from the exploiteers by adding clauses or riders to exhibition contracts forbidding dualing pictures with Code seals with those that lacked them. The companies were moved to action when a Shirley Temple movie, *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937), was reportedly paired with *Sex Madness*.[86] Those instances undoubtedly were rare, but they did make for good copy and allowed the organized industry to give the appearance to its critics that it was taking action. Still, other majors expressed ambivalence about contractual mandates, reasoning that "such a clause might be construed as dictating what the exhibitor could or could not play" and thus might be found illegal if challenged in the courts.[87]

The organized industry's fear of legal action was probably the single largest reason for the sudden suspension of industry offensives against exploitation films. The Department of Justice filed the *Paramount* case on 20 July 1938, charging the eight majors with violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act.[88] Among the counts in the government's bill of complaint was that the majors had shut independents out of the first-run market.[89] Although the MPPDA was not named in the suit, the action effectively ended its attempts to eliminate exploitation movies. The United States' entry in World War II robbed Hollywood of some of the ammunition it had used against exploitation as the industry began to openly produce films with an avowed moral and educational intent. In the climate of change that followed World War II, the mainstream industry did not mount any serious efforts to purify the screen. This is not to say that the

majority of exploitation movies submitted to the PCA were approved. Most were still refused seals, but in the increasingly permissive atmosphere of postwar America, the stakes seemed smaller, the issues more picayune. For instance, three PCA employees screened *I Married a Savage* (1949), which starred the stripper Zorita, prior to an expected appeal on the denial of a seal. Gordon White wrote to Breen, "Miss Young felt that the worst of the breast displays, both in the snake dance and in the apartment scenes, were 'disgusting.' On the other hand, Arthur [DeBra] did not seem to be worried at all about the sweater costume. . . . The costume is certainly not good, since it shapes the breasts too definitely, and occasionally shows definite shadows of the nipples. However, it does not seem to me to be nearly as bad as the worst of the close-up shots in the dance; and the censor boards make no mention of it."[90] Discussions of nipple shadows did not seem to hold the same stakes as debates on the nature of entertainment and the mission of motion pictures.

The role exploitation film played in the formulation of self-regulation was complex. The MPPDA and others such as Martin Quigley wanted to eliminate exploitation and thus project the image of a clean and responsible business. At the same time, they did not want to appear to advocate censorship, which was an economic and creative drag on the industry. Self-regulation was the resulting remedy. The organized industry created much sound and fury about vulgar exploitation movies and their attempts to eliminate them. By periodically raising a fuss over the exploitation industry, they succeeded in pointing out Hollywood's accomplishment in bringing "high-quality" entertainment to millions of Americans week in and week out. But as Hildegarde Esper informed me, the Hays Office could not stop the exploiteers. Some vocal elements in American society may have decried movies about vice, nudity, sex hygiene, and other controversial topics, but that still left enough ticket buyers to support exploitation movies. By the 1950s, changes in morals, the First Amendment status of motion pictures, and film business practices led to the reintegration into the mainstream of most of the traditional topics of exploitation film.

The discourses of good and bad taste, acceptable and unacceptable screen fare created by, and apparently so obvious to, Quigley, Breen, and company, were not mastered by them, illustrating Bourdieu's statement that "every essentialist analysis of the aesthetic disposition, the only socially accepted 'right' way of approaching the objects socially designated as works of art, that is, as both demanding and deserving to be approached

with a specifically aesthetic intention capable of recognizing and constituting them as art, is bound to fail."[91] The classifications promoted by the MPPDA and other Hollywood institutions were either lost on most Americans or simply may not have mattered in the long run. We must bear in mind that motion pictures had their roots in the middlebrow culture of vaudeville and the low culture of tent shows and dime museums. Associations with "higher" forms such as legitimate theater and opera came later in an attempt to secure a "class" rather than "mass" audience. The industry's efforts to cut sharp distinctions between "Mr. Nice and Mr. Nasty," or high and low, were not easily made within the broad sphere of mass culture in the early decades of the century.[92] Not until a large body of films could be widely and consistently equated with high art (through popularization of the art film movement and the auteur theory) and exploitation films were able to shuck off their mantle of education and remain viable could contrasts between high and low motion pictures penetrate deeply into the American cultural fabric.

# 5. "No False Modesty, No Old-Fashioned Taboos"

## *The Sex Hygiene Film*

Where did you learn the Facts of Life? Millions of people in America every year find themselves innocent victims and social outcasts because "they weren't told things" when they were young. Don't let this happen to your boy or girl. It happens daily to untold thousands with tragic results. It happens in every city or town, it may even happen on your own street, strike your own family. Play it safe by seeing *Because of Eve.*
—*Because of Eve* herald, ca. 1948

Now that I have established how exploitation films differed from mainstream movies and how they operated in the marketplace, an exploration of what the films said to their audiences can be undertaken. The fact that classical exploitation films have been seen as so "bad" from a formal standpoint—both in the past and in the present—has meant that the messages they conveyed have been written off as nothing more than shrieking warnings delivered with all the subtlety of a baseball bat to the back of the head. Although this may be true on a superficial level, the lessons and information imparted by exploitation films were often complex and contradictory. In this and succeeding chapters, I examine the major classical exploitation genres, beginning with the one that launched the form, the sex hygiene film. Sex hygiene encompassed a number of topics revolving around sexuality and reproduction. Among the most common subjects of

the "clap operas," as they were called by the exploiteers, were sex education, venereal disease, childbirth, and abortion. Sterilization, artificial insemination, homosexuality, transvestism, and other "perversions" were also touched on, but much less frequently. Some films dealt exclusively with one topic; others attempted to cover as much ground as possible, as if excess were the key to understanding sexuality—or at least to ensure box office success.

If the exploitation industry was sparked by concerns over disease and class anxiety during World War I, as it moved into the 1920s it was fueled by apprehensions about the rapid shift to a neoclassical, or consumer-oriented, economy. The emergence of a culture of abundance driven by individual desire and satisfied by consumption brought about numerous social changes. Industrial expansion, a shorter work week, and increased leisure time drew great numbers to expanding urban areas, where the old rules no longer applied.[1] "Work," historians John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman explain, "was no longer an end in itself, but a means to something else."[2] That "something else" was increasingly suggested by advertising of consumer products, many of which catered directly to aspects of sexual desire, such as makeup, personal hygiene products, and fashion. Money spent on such items as well as home decorations increased eightfold from 1914 to 1924.[3] D'Emilio and Freedman point out that "an ethic that encouraged the purchase of consumer products also fostered an acceptance of pleasure, self-gratification, and personal satisfaction, a perspective that easily translated to the province of sex."[4] So, as Lawrence Birken indicates, economic marginalism and sexology were intimately linked, and popular culture increasingly became the vehicle for and expression of individual desire.

Lary May has written that in the movies and literature of the late teens, characters "shed Victorian sexual inhibitions and take on 'fun' morality and a consumer lifestyle," and that middle-class urbanites increasingly modeled their purchasing habits on images from the movies. In Cecil B. DeMille's films of the 1920s, the "hero is less involved in public endeavors, he wants his wife to take on a more sexual appeal. This meant that women had to shed the ascetic tradition, and its civic function as well. . . . this allows an exploration of personality, fun, and the hitherto forbidden realm of sex. As a result, the respectable women could shed the little girl image for a more mature sexuality. This opens up a unique aspect of the twenties. Motherhood, as an ideal which had lasted for a century, virtually disappeared from films as the main aspiration of women. Now heroines

**30** "Sex ignorance, the black plague of adolescence," mentioned in the square-up of *Guilty Parents* (1933), led to scenes such as this.

become flappers or erotic wives, like DeMille's characters."[5] But in order for that sexuality to be benign rather than disruptive, it was channeled into consumption and the home. "It was no accident," May writes, "that the screen player set up models for the consumption economy. . . . Hence unlike the heroes of old, male stars were not producers who helped build the society, but figures heavily oriented toward spending. Even that great

American symbol of American manhood, the cowboy, experienced this change." It was not only the images on the screen but the lavish lifestyles of stars who rose from averageness and obscurity to command the admiration of the public that encouraged consumer spending. May suggests that "they were the models, not the enemies, for the middle class."[6]

Hollywood's economies of scale demanded that it maintain the illusion of newness and change, necessitating its embrace of the consumer ethic. Lacking such scale, exploitation movies had no compelling reason to take that tack. The productivist aspects of sex were stressed while a general critique of the increasing focus on individual pleasure was also offered. In some measure, this conservatism stemmed from the producers of the pictures, who tended to be native-born, white, middle-class men. At the same time, the conservatism of the films served as a buffer between the titillating spectacle and the threat of censorship. Because they critiqued the emerging status quo, sex hygiene films and other exploitation movies operated out of a nostalgia trope in which the present was unfavorably compared to an ill-defined but idealized past. As such, the conservatism of exploitation films was linked to the fears over convulsive social change that had inspired much of the progressive agenda.

## 1922–1926

The production and import of sex hygiene films appeared in several distinct waves following the initial 1918–1919 cycle. Between 1922 and 1926, only about a half-dozen new movies were made or imported, constituting the first group of new post–World War I films, although some of the movies manufactured during the World War I era continued to be in release.[7] As the country returned to "normalcy," concern about disease and the body politic diminished. The progressive impulse that had bolstered the prewar and wartime hygiene films was degenerating into its last aberrant incarnation, Prohibition, described by Richard Hofstadter as "pseudo-reform, a pinched, parochial substitute for reform."[8] Bickering among various health organizations about the nature and extent of efforts to combat venereal diseases reached a new high without the unifying influence of the war. The American Medical Association (AMA) fretted about government intervention in the burgeoning health care industry while the American Social Hygiene Association became even more resolute in its stand against prophylaxis, fearing it would lead to promiscuity

and greater numbers of venereal infections.[9] Health department officials stepped down from their soapboxes and returned to the quiet collection of venereal disease statistics.[10] Even without a wartime imperative those statistics proved to be alarming. By the early 1930s, it was generally conceded that one out of ten Americans suffered from syphilis and that seven hundred thousand new cases of gonorrhea appeared every year.[11] But as Allan Brandt has observed, many social hygienists refused to equate the continued problem of venereal disease with the drop in public health measures, instead blaming the persistence of the diseases on "the new morality."[12]

Many aspects of life for young people in the 1920s were far different from those for their parents. High school was becoming a mass experience. Adolescent boys and girls were thrown together in the classroom on a daily basis, contact that then extended to social functions such as school dances. For high school students, as well as others, the spread of the automobile meant mobility and escape from parental control and older standards of courtship and conduct. Robert and Helen Lynd, in their pioneering study, *Middletown,* published in 1929, observed, "The extensive use of [the automobile] by the young has enormously extended [youth's] mobility and the range of alternatives before them; joining the crowd motoring over to dance in a town twenty miles away may be a matter of a moment's decision, with no one's permission asked."[13] A judge of the juvenile court complained, "The automobile has become a house of prostitution on wheels."[14] One of the standard scenes in exploitation films had boys and girls tooling off down the road to sin in their jalopies. Dance halls, movie theaters, and roadhouses provided destinations where young couples could develop relationships away from the restrictions imposed by family. Girls were as eager to experiment with this new freedom as boys. The Lynds found that mothers from both working and "business" classes, "whether they lament the greater frankness between the sexes or welcome it as a healthy sign, agree that it exists and mention the dress and greater aggressiveness of girls today as factors in the change."[15] Some feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman worried that women were accepting the "masculine" assumption that "the purpose of sex [was] recreation."[16] To her chagrin, and that of many others, the greater awareness of contraception through the teens and 1920s weakened the tie between sexual activity and productivity in the form of childbirth, thus increasing its links to leisure and consumption.

The drop in production of sex hygiene films between 1922 and 1926 can be attributed to the decline of progressive concerns coupled with the

setbacks dealt to the films in 1919, the rise in censorship, and the formation of the MPPDA. Thus 1921 and 1922 can be viewed as a shakedown period in which the mainstream industry began to form its position against exploitation subjects and would-be producers assessed the economic viability of such projects. The films released in 1922 also suffered from the instability in the marketplace. *Crusade of the Innocent,* evidently a film about venereal disease, and *Tell Me Why!,* another apparent hygiene film, ran into censorship trouble in New York and Chicago, respectively, and from all indications neither received wide play. The situation slowly began to change in 1924, when Samuel Cummins acquired *The Solitary Sin.* Adding clinical reels he had picked up from the American Social Hygiene Association on the effects of venereal diseases, Cummins retitled the package *The Naked Truth* (sometimes known simply as *TNT*). It is unclear whether Cummins actually bought the rights to the ASHA films because the organization denied it had cooperated in any way with his efforts. Cummins regularly advertised the availability of state's rights in *Variety* under the banner of Public Welfare Pictures. By 1927 *The Naked Truth* had played across the country in independent theaters as well as on large established circuits, and even in cities and towns with censorship.[17] Writing in response to a questionnaire from the New York censorship board, James M. Dean of the city of Memphis claimed, "We considered the picture to be very inferior in subject matter and photography. However, the whole production was of such a nature that we felt no harm could be done under restrictions imposed."[18] Those restrictions, becoming standard for hygiene films, included age limits and separate showings for men and women. Another developing standard was to associate the film with a legitimate-sounding organization, in this case "The John D. Rockefeller Foundation of the National Public Health Association," even though the association did not actually exist.[19]

Though *The Solitary Sin* may have provided the core of Cummins's new package, the spectacle in *The Naked Truth* came in the form of the three documentary reels, generally known as the "male," "female," and "clinical" reels. The male and female reels featured diagrams and information on venereal disease, and the clinical reel offered shot after graphic shot of the effects of syphilis and gonorrhea. The paralyzed, the blind, withered limbs, ulcerated faces, diseased sex organs, and an army of "idiots" ("parents had syphilis," the titles informed) passed before the camera. Intertitles, often containing misspellings and errors in punctuation, dutifully identified the shots while providing a series of stern warnings: "Fathers,

tell your sons—that some prostitutes are diseased all the time, and nearly all prostitutes are diseased part of the time"; "Mothers, tell your daughters—that a large part of the operations on women are due to gonorrhea"; "A chance acquaintance in a store, public dance hall, restaurant, on a train or on a street may be more dangerous than a leper. A chance acquaintance at a public dance may tempt a girl to acts that will bring to her disease and disgrace." If the prospects of disease and disgrace were not enough to dissuade one from sex outside the bonds of marriage, the images of decayed organs probably were. Although the titles made reference to the "double standard" (which gave men but not "good" women license to engage in sex prior to marriage) and noted that syphilis was preventable and curable, the strident appeals to virtue and nauseating visuals gave these reels of *The Naked Truth* the air of a horror show.

The graphic images in *The Naked Truth*'s clinical reels can be traced to their origins with ASHA. The Association, which had seemed so progressive before World War I, continued to cling to its ideals after the conflict. Despite the availability of reliable chemical prophylaxis, ASHA opposed its use to curb the spread of venereal disease, instead directing its efforts toward modifying behavior.[20] The ASHA stance became the prevailing attitude among state health officials during the 1920s and it was maintained in hygiene films for many years to come. Fears among moralists and most medical officials about the dangers of unproductive sexual intercourse were at the core of hygiene films. The very same fears also generated protests against the movies, for it was a standard claim that the very discussion of sex or its presentation on a screen could break down the moral barriers that held promiscuous behavior in check. This sentiment was expressed by B. R. Rickards, the director of the Division of Public Health Education in the Albany, New York, Department of Health: "It would be a question as to whether or not the audience would use [*The Naked Truth*] as a health issue or merely as a sex appeal."[21] In claiming it had not cooperated with Cummins in the preparation of *The Naked Truth,* ASHA asserted that the "Association has not approved his methods of public exhibition of these pictures in the theaters."[22]

Venereal diseases were not the sole concern of hygiene films during the period. To digress briefly, before World War I, birth control and abortion had been the subject of several high-profile motion pictures. Since the passage of the so-called Comstock Law in 1873, it had been illegal to teach, write about, use, import, produce, or sell contraceptives.[23] Legally, contraception was obscene. In 1916, Lois Weber and her husband Philips

Smalley made *Where Are My Children?* for Universal. The film was an indictment of the use of abortion as a birth control method among middle-class women but also contained a plea for the legalization of contraceptive information. Playing on contemporary middle-class fears about race suicide, the movie had been a controversial success. Margaret Sanger's crusade to make birth control available to women inspired Weber and Smalley's 1917 Universal film, *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle.* The second effort was met with far greater criticism, in part because it made a pointed issue of class and the dire effects that lack of birth control information had on the poor. At about the same time, Sanger produced and appeared as herself in her own film, *Birth Control,* which met with similar attacks. New York City License Commissioner George Bell refused to license Sanger's movie because it violated the city code barring films that were an "offense against morality, decency, or the public welfare." Bell's refusal was also based on the film's contrasts between rich and poor families, which he believed would promote class hatred.[24] The cold reception of *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* and *Birth Control,* coupled with the United States' entry into the war, put an end to birth control films for some time.

Contraception reemerged as an important issue after the war when Sanger opened the first physician-staffed birth control clinic in the United States in New York City in January 1923. A 1919 court decision "engineered" by Sanger had allowed contraceptive information to be given to patients by a physician, but only in cases where it was necessary to cure or prevent disease.[25] Sanger faced not only an intractable patriarchal system of laws and regulations, but an equally obdurate foe in the medical community. Physicians had been reluctant to accept birth control because it was associated with the system of patent medicines and "irregular" practice that organized medicine had fought to eliminate. Second, doctors as a group were overwhelmingly male, white, and middle to upper-middle class, positioning them as both conveyors of and a prime audience for fears over declining birth rates. Third, the most effective, safest, and widely available method of contraception, the condom, was seen as interfering with male sexual pleasure. Fourth, the Comstock Act made the dissemination of contraceptive information a crime, causing it to be cut out of post-1873 editions of medical texts—leaving many physicians ignorant of the subject. Finally, many doctors believed that the family might be weakened and its authority undermined if contraception allowed sex to be separated from procreation.[26]

Sanger championed birth control to reduce the economic and physical

burdens childbearing had on poor women, to produce planned, healthier babies, and to permit wives to enjoy sexual pleasure without the fear of pregnancy. She berated the opponents of contraception, speculating that their opposition stemmed not so much from concerns over race suicide as from "loathing, disgust or indifference to the sex relationship."[27] In a 1924 article for *American Mercury* Sanger wrote, "Today American 'purity' is protected by an interlocking directorate of professional meddlers, a bloodless but bloodthirsty tribe, scanning the horizon for any and every outbreak of human passion, galloping post haste to the scene of every *verboten* manifestation like a tribe of Indians descending upon a pioneer's wagon. Any Dogberry clothed in brief authority, any psychopathic person with an 'obscenity' complex may inaugurate the hunt."[28] Sanger's own view of sex may have carried to an opposite extreme of idealized spirituality, but her insistence that women should have fully satisfying sex lives can be linked to the changing position of sex as an act of consumption rather than production. Moreover, with domestic space situated as the hub of the emerging consumer culture, the female role in sexual relationships was undergoing considerable change. According to Angus McLaren, "a new, twentieth-century role of sensuous wife and conscientious mother had been created that could only be fulfilled if family size were limited."[29] The Lynds confirmed that women of the consuming or "business" class in Middletown overwhelmingly used contraception, whereas fewer than half of the working-class women practiced birth control. Among those who did, few used "scientific" techniques.[30]

Two films produced in the mid-1920s returned to the theme of birth control: *Motherhood: Life's Greatest Miracle* (1925) and *The Miracle of Life* (1926). *Motherhood* followed the stories of two couples, the wealthy Sinclairs and the poor Martins. Mrs. Sinclair is afraid that her pregnancy will damage her social life and she seeks an abortion, but her doctor refuses to administer one. Mrs. Martin happily accepts her condition and prepares for her delivery with the help of her physician. Scenes of two births shot in New York hospitals were shown, and by the end Mrs. Sinclair is happy that she did not have an abortion. *The Miracle of Life* told the similar story of Janet Howell, who seeks an abortion to maintain her freewheeling lifestyle. Before her appointment she dreams that she has the procedure, is divorced by her husband, and, after pursuing a life of pleasure, becomes a poor, dissipated crone. Janet wakes, resolving to have the baby.

Sanger and most other proponents of contraception could not countenance the use of abortion as a birth control method. Despite the fact that

working-class women did not discriminate between first trimester abortion and other methods of contraception, birth control supporters were obliged to campaign against abortion to claim a moral base for their pro–birth control stand.[31] *Motherhood* and *The Miracle of Life* were not simply taking a stand against the use of abortion as birth control but were pronatalist, ideologically sympathetic with the opponents of contraception in the fear that any form of the practice was antisocial. This position was summed up in an *Atlantic Monthly* article at the time: "The reduction of the number of children through contraception is an established practice among city dwellers belonging to the salaried class and among those who are economically best off. Such activity is distinctly antisocial, for it enables selfish people to escape their responsibility, ultimately to their own detriment and the injury of the State."[32] *Motherhood* and *The Miracle of Life* did not present birth control and childbearing as the "consumption-oriented, far-sighted, rational, middle class" process envisaged by Sanger. Instead, childbearing was still production-oriented and left to chance. The women in the films who must decide between abortion and motherhood are presented as torn between a life of selfish frivolity and a life of self-sacrificing productivity. The contradiction between the productive aspects of sexuality and the growing consumer culture was to become even more evident in sex hygiene films.

## 1927–1929

Between the beginning of 1927 and the last days of 1929, around fifteen new sex hygiene films were produced or imported. The majority of movies released during this period can broadly be described as warnings about the dangers of the "new morality." The titles of the films—among them *Is Your Daughter Safe?, Pitfalls of Passion, Unguarded Girls, Scarlet Youth,* and *The Road to Ruin*—indicated their stance as cautionary tales. Their stories were remarkably similar. S. S. Millard's *Is Your Daughter Safe?* (1927) and *Pitfalls of Passion* (1927) both featured women lured into prostitution. The latter film found May being drawn to the city by Jimmy with promises of marriage. After losing interest in May, Jimmy pawns her off on Madame Francine, who runs a house of prostitution. The jilted girl winds up with VD, and the heel is killed by the police after he murders another woman with whom he has been living.[33] *Scarlet Youth* (1928), produced by Cummins, also featured a country girl's seduction by a criminal and move to

the city after a promise of matrimony. In the city she sees her husband with another woman. "This convinces her that she not alone [*sic*] must make her own way, but also seek her pleasures, realizing that she was 'young but once.' "[34] The young woman goes to work at Madame Celeste's brothel and becomes infected with venereal disease. In Cummins's 1928 release of *Trial Marriage* under the more marketable title *Sex Madness,* Marion, adopted by wealthy Mrs. Payson, is blackmailed by her foster brother, Billy. He proposes to Marion that they have a companionate marriage.[35] Upon discovering that Marion and Billy have slept together, Mrs. Payson kicks the girl out of the house. Marion becomes a prostitute in Madame Ethel's brothel, where she is attacked by Lawrence Gray. During a struggle, Ethel realizes that Gray was the husband who left her years ago and that Marion is her daughter. She shoots Gray and herself. Marion is reunited with Billy, who offers to marry her. The other Cummins film from 1929, *Unguarded Girls,* was evidently quite similar, *Variety* concluding, "It is very definitely on the side of the fundamentalists. Its theme song would be, if it had a theme song, 'Say No, Little Girl, Say No.' "[36] Most of these films were allied with the earlier white slave movies in their representations of rural purity and urban corruption. A trip to the city for any girl inexorably led to Madame Francine's (or Celeste's, or Ethel's) and a case of VD.

Most of the Cummins and Millard pictures are lost.[37] This is particularly unfortunate in the case of Millard films because they inspired so much furor and prompted such lurid descriptions by reviewers. One film from the era that does survive is *The Road to Ruin* (1928), written and "presented" by Willis Kent for Cliff Broughton Productions. Its story of seduction and betrayal was similar to the Cummins and Millard films, and because it was probably the most widely seen hygiene film from the period it deserves close scrutiny.

*The Road to Ruin* follows Sally Canfield, an innocent high school girl from a middle-class family. Sally spends the night at the home of her more worldly friend, Eve Terrell. The two girls read passages from a racy novel, and when Mrs. Terrell goes out for the evening with friends, Eve and Sally finish off dregs of the adults' cocktails and cigarettes. The next day, Eve coaxes Sally into taking a ride with fellow students Jimmy and Al. Jimmy seduces Sally after drinking by the lake and soon the girl is spending all her time away from home. At a roadhouse Sally meets Don, an older, more experienced boy with whom she makes love. One night Sally, Don, and Eve attend a strip poker game. The police raid the joint while Don is out

buying liquor. Sally and Eve end up in juvenile hall, where Eve is held for treatment of venereal disease. Sally is released to her mother, who is indignant and upset about Sally's arrest—but not half as upset as Sally is when she discovers she is pregnant. She tells Don, who refuses to marry her, convincing her instead to see an abortionist. He makes a bargain, telling Sally he will accompany her to the abortionist if she will go to the party his boss has arranged at Nick's Place, a dive where anything is available to the tired businessman "for a price." Sally has the abortion but feels weak afterward. Don takes her to Nick's, where she is led to a room. A man arrives and starts to grope Sally. She looks up, realizes he is her father, and collapses from the shock.[38] Sally is taken home, where she dies as a result of the botched abortion.

*The Road to Ruin* was characterized as an "obnoxious sex film" by *Variety* and banned in several cities and states around the country.[39] Kent responded with claims that he possessed letters "from hundreds of prominent people in all walks of life commending the subject and stating that it conveys a great moral lesson and will do a great deal of good."[40] *The Road to Ruin* did offer a moral lesson, although just how receptive young people would have been to such a lesson at the end of the Roaring Twenties is questionable. The first puffs of a cigarette and the backwash of a cocktail send Sally sliding down the road to perdition. These sensual pleasures, once tasted, are presented as a virtual addiction that leads to the pursuit and consumption of more substantial physical pleasures. Sally's sense of shame and guilt are shown as she sobs after losing her virginity to Jimmy. But by the time she takes up with Don her guilt has given way to unreflexive, wanton abandon. After her arrest by juvenile authorities, she declares her new philosophy to her mother: "We were only having a good time!" In *The Road to Ruin* a good time leads to self-indulgence and then dissipation. Title cards literally spell out the film's "moral message," notably when Sally discovers she is pregnant: "Some weeks later Sally found that those who transgress the moral laws must pay a bitter price." In *The Road to Ruin* desire unchecked by restraint is deadly. Two title cards tell us "This was the first of many such evenings made possible because Mrs. Canfield 'knew Sally and trusted her implicitly'—and blindly," and " 'The Barn' where youth may dance and drink—without restraint." Sally's mother and father are typical examples of exploitation's Bad Parents, failing to give their daughter proper sex instruction and not reining in her youthful desires. And Sally is presented as lacking in self-restraint, which results from her parents' refusal to control her behavior. The innocence exter-

nally enforced by Sally's parents turns the girl into a sexual pressure cooker, resulting in an explosion of her pent-up desire. The ostensible solution proffered by the film comes at the end, when Mrs. Canfield berates herself at Sally's deathbed for not having explained the facts of life to her daughter. Those facts, presumably, would not have dealt with contraception, but instead would have concluded that disgrace and death are the result of premarital sex. Armed with such warnings, Sally would have dampened her desires, allowing her to rationally rebuff her corrupters.

*The Road to Ruin* embraced the stance held by the social hygienists who hoped to control venereal disease and "sexual delinquency" by controlling behavior. Yet ASHA and its followers, alarmed by phenomena as diverse as Freudianism and new dance steps, were becoming increasingly isolated. For women who "came of age" in the 1920s, the rate of premarital sexual intercourse jumped to around 50 percent.[41] Desire was slowly being acknowledged as heterogeneous by society and the movies, exemplified by all those country girls taking off for the city in search of adventure and by Sally Canfield's sexual experimentation. But there was clearly a divergence between publicly espoused morality and private practice. Although this change did not mean promiscuity was rampant, a significant shift from the preceding decades was underway. The moral stance of *The Road to Ruin* and similar exploitation films represented that of parents and grandparents, and the "warnings" of the films were demands that elders promote their standards of morality as much as they were cautionary tales for errant teens.

The sex hygiene exploitation pictures from the late 1920s may have been seen as morally corrupt, in bad taste, and perhaps even radical to some because of their willingness to deal frankly with intimate sexual matters. Yet the movies were as fundamentally conservative as those hygiene pictures made prior to the war—especially in their attitude toward women. Changes in courtship rituals meant that fewer young men were initiated into sex with prostitutes, instead becoming sexually active with girlfriends from their own socioeconomic background.[42] Exploitation filmmakers reacted to this change by simply transferring the location of danger and Otherness from the lower-class prostitute to the sexually active young woman, regardless of her social status. Films like *The Road to Ruin, Pitfalls of Passion,* and *Sex Madness* equated the unproductive sexual activity of unmarried women with prostitution by having the woman enticed or forced into prostitution by film's end. Some of the movies may have had males pay a penalty if they committed criminal acts, but men who trans-

gressed "the moral laws" seldom paid the "bitter price" women did. In *The Road to Ruin,* Jimmy and Don suffer no consequences as a result of engaging in premarital intercourse, nor does Mr. Canfield, who, we are led to believe, has had extramarital affairs and visited prostitutes for years. Blame is focused on Sally for her lack of restraint and on her mother for failing to instill that restraint in her daughter. If sexology and society were beginning to recognize the heterogeneity of desire, exploitation films still constructed the only *appropriate* sexual desire as male.

The city-country dichotomy represented in the movies further divided sexuality along gender lines. The country, and increasingly the suburbs, contained and domesticated female desire. The consumer impulse was channeled into the family, the home, and the growing number of products and appliances that were said to be necessary to manage the modern household. By contrast, the city was a masculine space where men worked and played and fed their appetites. Any woman snared in the whirl of the city was bound to have her wishes misdirected toward the masculine pursuit of pleasure for its own sake rather than the wholesome and pure consumption focused on home and family. A woman who dared to step out of the domestic sphere was heading down the road to ruin. Sally's desire is portrayed as deviant, a threat to the order of her family and society as a whole. In sex hygiene exploitation films, the woman, usually young, who is sexually active outside the bonds of marriage becomes stigmatized. This process of stigmatization, along with the resulting shame that she feels, is redoubled when she finds she is pregnant and unmarried, or in some cases has picked up a venereal disease.

In his classic study, *Stigma,* Erving Goffman suggests that those with the same stigmas share a similar "moral career," a set sequence of personal adjustments, upon learning of their stigma.[43] Hygiene films and other exploitation genres present this as a gradual restriction of the social space in which the Other is allowed to operate. She is ostracized from family, old circles of friends, school, and perhaps a job where she is no longer accepted, or would not be were her condition known. She is able to move in "civil" places where she is accepted but often is treated as a problem (in medical offices, juvenile hall, the courts). And finally she is reduced to moving in the "back places," which, in the case of hygiene films, is inevitably a whorehouse, a seedy club, or skid row.[44] Much of the "educational" point of sex hygiene exploitation films was to recount the moral career and gradual restriction of the stigmatized Other. That this career also had its titillating aspects, that what was presented as restriction might have

seemed to some like freedom from a repressive family unit, illustrates the ambiguity of the discourses at work in exploitation films.

From the foregoing we can see that discourses in *The Road to Ruin* and other exploitation films operated out of two central tropes: productivity and nostalgia. The education in hygiene and other exploitation movies was geared to instruct the viewer to reject or postpone physical pleasure in favor of hard work that resulted in concrete production, whether making a home, a child, or some other product. Under this formation, consumption, particularly for short-term, personal pleasure, is considered wasteful if not dangerous to personal well-being and social order. Educational discourse in the movies also had a profoundly nostalgic tone, harking back to "simpler" times when a woman "knew her place" and children were dutiful and obedient. This nostalgic trope could be manifested in the attitudes of characters, in the moral lessons imparted, or, often, in a generalized suspicion of "fast-paced" modern life. I have already indicated how small-town and rural life and community were glorified at the expense of the vast, impersonal, and dangerous modern metropolis. The continued prevalence of these tropes in exploitation discourse will become exceedingly clear as we move forward.

## 1931–1934

Another lull in the production and import of hygiene films occurred after the 1927–1929 cycle. This may be attributable to producers playing off their silent product and assessing the impact of sound on the motion picture industry. In 1931 *Birth,* a Swiss picture released by Culture Films, Inc., was imported for the American roadshow circuit. The film was a plea for better prenatal care, a presentation of birth and venereal disease footage, and an indictment of illegal abortions. During the same year, the German import *The Song of Life* played in New York City and possibly other locales. Even after cuts were made in a scene of a cesarean operation to suit the New York State Board of Censors, *Variety*'s reviewer concluded that the film was a "foreign monstrosity" and claimed it had been banned in its home country.[45] S. S. Millard released a new production, *Innocent,* in 1932, although from all indications it never received the broad release that *Is Your Daughter Safe?* and *Pitfalls of Passion* had been accorded. Mainstream films were becoming increasingly daring in their presentation of sex and violence, so the sharp jump in the release of hygiene films in 1933

and 1934 can be viewed as both a need to replace old product as well as an effort to compete with Hollywood's more suggestive fare. During those two years, at least a dozen new hygiene films appeared on American screens.[46] Some films, such as the German *Dangers of Love* and *The Wrong Road* from Greece, were seen by limited audiences; others, such as *Red Headed Baby* and *Pitfalls of Youth,* appear to have played only in selected regions around the country. These movies were, however, in the minority; others were widely seen and played the exploitation circuit for years.

Two motion pictures released during the period were knockoffs of *Damaged Goods,* Esper's *The Seventh Commandment* (1932) and *Damaged Lives* (1933), produced by Maxwell Cohn, brother of Columbia's Harry Cohn.[47] With *Damaged Lives,* ASHA again attempted to become associated with a topical drama that would promote its doctrine of continence and health. Though the prospects for cure were held out for the troubled couple at the end of *Damaged Lives,* it was only after much horror and hand-wringing. ASHA prepared a separate lecture film showing venereal disease footage that was to accompany the feature. Moreover, the company organized to distribute the film in the United States assured ASHA that promotion of the film and lecture short would maintain a "high plane of dignity and wholesomeness" and that the picture would be withdrawn from any exhibitor who resorted to "publicity or other promotion which [was] sensational or salacious."[48] ASHA had reason to worry, given the state of hygiene film exhibition and its own diminished status. Some years later, it withdrew its support of the film.[49] *Damaged Lives* was withheld from New York audiences for four years, was cut in Maryland and Ohio, and was never submitted in Kansas. Still, the film was seen by large numbers when first released. In Baltimore it played to sixty-five thousand people, fully one-tenth of the city's adult population.[50]

Other motion pictures continued the tradition of earlier sex warning films with little change. Trade ads for Columbia's *What Price Innocence?* promised exhibitors "25 live wire exploitation stunts," "50 newsy, ticket-selling, easy-to-plant press stories," and "15 features that are certain to click." Writer, director, and star Willard Mack replicated the by now standard story of a young woman who, due to her mother's neglect, does not learn the facts of life, winds up pregnant, and commits suicide before the baby is born. Mack did not fare well with reviewers, who considered his dialogue "domestic prattle" and the picture "embarrassing."[51] Even though it lacked the requisite spectacle of an exploitation film, it rattled around on the roadshow circuit for ages, usually under the title *Shall We Tell Our*

*Children?*[52] In a similar vein was a plea for sex education called *Enlighten Thy Daughter* (1933), a remake of a 1917 film that still bore the plot and sentiments of pre–World War I films.[53] By the time Foy's *High School Girl* (1934) was reviewed in the *New York Times,* reviewers were able to flippantly recount the plot conventions of hygiene pictures: "Any one who has encountered films of this ilk on earlier picture-shopping excursions must be familiar with the formula: the wide-eyed high school ingénue; the glib, sub-collegiate Romeo; the parents who are too absorbed in their own duties to pay much attention to the daughter; the night under the Spring moon. It leads inevitably to the girl's flight to a sanitarium in the hills and to the scene when the crushed parents exclaim: 'Oh, what blind fools we've been.' "[54] Though relatively benign, all three of these films were forced by some state censors to make deletions, and Chicago officials required an adults-only permit in the case of *What Price Innocence?*

Kent produced an almost frame-for-frame talking remake of *The Road to Ruin* in 1933, the addition of sound being the only substantive change. Kendis's *Guilty Parents,* also released in 1933, was introduced with a square-up calling the lack of sexual knowledge the "black plague of adolescence," warning that shrinking from "sex truth" only leads to youth "who must pay the inevitable penalty for sex ignorance." The film opens at the murder trial of Helen Mason, and through a series of flashbacks reveals how drinking led to sex with her boyfriend, then pregnancy. Unlike the young women in *What Price Innocence?, Enlighten Thy Daughter,* and *High School Girl,* Helen falls into a life on society's fringes. She eventually finds a job at a dance school that serves as a front for a vice ring that supplies women to wealthy men. After one of her friends is killed by a bungled abortion, Helen shoots the leader of the vice ring and is put on trial for murder. Before the jury returns the verdict, Helen jumps out of the courtroom window to her death.

In addition to basic plot similarities, *The Road to Ruin* and *Guilty Parents* shared other elements found in many sex education films from the period. As in their pre–World War I antecedents, alcohol is almost always shown as the first step toward destruction. Consuming liquor strips inhibitions and leads young women to indulge in other vices. Both films, as well as several others from the period, contain strip poker or strip dice games, which, if exploitation scenarists were to be believed, were America's real national pastime. Such scenes were presented as the height of decadence and also provided the producers the opportunity to display women in slips, underwear, or less. The class politics of *The Road to Ruin*

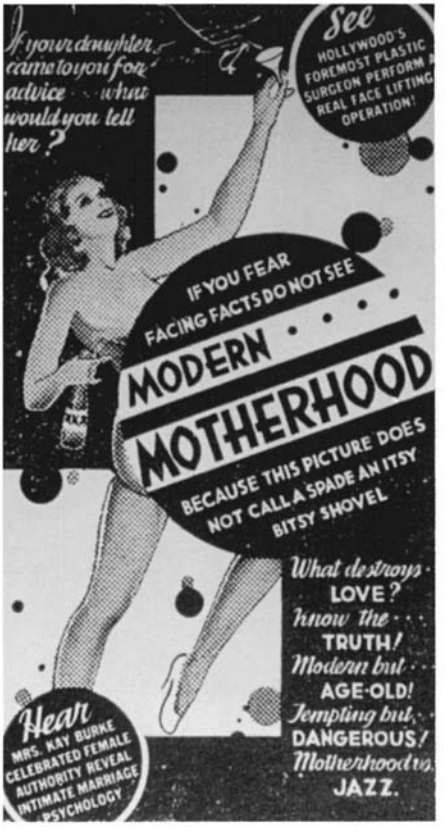
and *Guilty Parents* differed from those earlier movies in which the wealthy were usually at the mercy of the diseased lower classes. In these films and several others, the middle class often suffer at the hands of their betters. Playing off class antagonism resulting from the stock market crash and the Depression, the movies portrayed wealthy businessmen as powerful degenerates who used their money and position to buy the sexual favors of young women. The corrupting influence of the rich may have been acceptable to the predominantly working and middle classes who apparently made up the films' audiences, but it did not endear the films to censors, club women, and other powerful forces.

The most blatant example of class antagonism is found in Foy's *Tomorrow's Children* (1934), a film about sterilization. The topic was a hot one in 1934 as debate raged over whether criminals and the mentally ill should be subject to sterilization. A proposal put forth by the Human Betterment Foundation of Pasadena at a national meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1932 had recommended the sterilization of eighteen million Americans deemed "unfit" to have children because of physical or mental disabilities or criminal propensities.[55] The debate reached a higher pitch in 1934 with the implementation of a mass sterilization policy in Nazi Germany. Twenty-seven of the forty-eight United States had laws permitting sterilization at the time.[56] Ten thousand men and women had been sterilized in California alone by mid-1934 when *The Literary Digest* ran a feature article on Oklahoma's efforts to sterilize those the state declared unfit to bear children. During the first round of hearings in Norman, Oklahoma, fifteen women and one man were ordered to undergo the operation.[57] The article noted that the all-male panel ran into one protest from a girl who claimed she wanted to get married and raise a family. A similar incident formed the central conflict in *Tomorrow's Children.* Foy's film concerned the travails of Alice Mason, who lives with her alcoholic parents who rely on her for support. She is unable to marry her boyfriend, Jim, a truck driver, because of her position as the family breadwinner. Dr. Brooks reports the Masons to welfare workers after Mrs. Mason delivers a stillborn baby. Officials decide to sterilize the whole clan, including Alice, the only family member lacking an impairment. Dr. Brooks and Jim protest to the court that Alice is normal and productive, unlike her shiftless parents and siblings. As Alice is prepared for the operation, Mrs. Mason, in a drunken stupor, reveals that Alice was not her biological daughter but actually a foster child. Alice's sterilization is stopped in the nick of time and she and Jim announce their plans

to marry. Reviews suggested that *Tomorrow's Children* could be read as either a pro- or antisterilization film, but the movie's stance on class was unmistakable.

In a crucial scene leading up to the court's decision to sterilize Alice, several other cases are shown coming before the judge. Judge Beacon orders a criminal and then a mental defective sterilized. In an anteroom, the son of a utilities mogul rips the clothes off his attending nurse. A senator, representing the young man, calms him and appears before the judge, appealing the sterilization decree. As the boy leers from under his beetle brows and smacks his lips, the judge kowtows to the family's powerful name and reverses the order, freeing the boy from forced sterilization. Dr. Brooks comments on the scene, muttering that it is "the rawest thing I've ever seen," only to find his testimony on behalf of the penniless Alice ignored. The indictment of the rich and powerful in *Tomorrow's Children* did not go unnoticed. The New York State Censor Board's rejection of the film was based on the film's political and ideological content, rather than on grounds of indecency. Foy took his appeal to the courts, eventually losing the case in 1937. The majority of the Appellate Division found that the censor board's decision to deny a license was neither capricious nor arbitrary and took pains to note that the film taught "the corruption of the courts" and "tends to inculcate the fact that venal judges in court dispense injustice."[58] Class sympathies of exploitation films had come to rest squarely with the productive working and middle levels, in contrast to those earliest venereal disease movies in which the well-to-do were presented in a more benevolent light. By the 1930s, the idle rich and the idle poor were equally culpable for society's ills.

Along with *Tomorrow's Children,* the only other film in the early 1930s to break with established plots was Esper's *Modern Motherhood* (1934). Molly Marsden, the oldest daughter of a cultured middle-class family, prepares for her marriage to Ted Wayne. She tells her parents that she and Ted plan to have a modern marriage of "Highballs, high gear, and hygienics." "You know," she tells them, "I've got knee action and stream lines and am not going to let a baby back me into a garage before I have a chance to show my speed . . . I'll stick to jazz and v-8s. We're going to live as one—on two salaries." Molly's paean to conspicuous consumption, pleasure, and the fast life is echoed by Ted, who asks, "What's the good of a wife if she's tied down and can't go places with you?" Molly plans to use birth control to enjoy regular sexual relations with her husband without the burden of babies. The couple express their desire to consume early and often and




**31** Molly and Ted's philosophy of "highballs, high gear, and hygiencs" was incorporated into the festive ads for *Modern Motherhood* (1934).

their home is filled with all the new electric appliances that make life easy. Molly and Ted are continually associated with automobiles, speed, dancing, and streamlined design, which serve as metaphors for both modernity and their childless "modern" marriage.

The couple lead a free and easy life, but as time passes the ticking of Molly's biological clock becomes louder and she shows more interest in having children. Ted finds his aversion to kids growing, particularly after they spend time with their friends Bob and Helen and their brood. Ted exclaims that he is "a candidate for a padded cell" after the visit. He and Molly speak of how their friends are "tied down" and that their lives have been "spoiled" by children. Molly soon realizes that she is pregnant and considers an abortion. Before going through with it, she attends a sex hygiene film, *Sins of Love*.[59] Scenes of *Sins of Love* are shown, and Molly is so distraught over an abortion sequence that she resolves to have the baby.

Returning from the movie, she tells Ted she is pregnant. He's shocked and goes out on an extended drinking binge, eventually showing up at his mother's house. Mom tells him Molly has been calling frantically. Returning to the bar, Ted rushes to the defense of a kid who is being beaten up. As Ted chats with the tyke, he realizes his place is with Molly. She gives birth to a boy, and Ted becomes a loving father.

Effects of the Depression had reinvigorated the debate over birth control. "The country," wrote Dorothy Dunbar Bromley in 1934, "is becoming birth control conscious. Economic conditions make family limitation in both the white-collar and the working class imperative. There can, therefore, be no turning back."[60] Birth control advocates such as Sanger, Mrs. Thomas Hepburn (mother of actress Katharine), and some legislators claimed that the practice of birth control could help raise per capita income and ease the employment crisis.[61] Opponents pointed to the long-term effects of birth control, which they said would leave the country with a large elderly population who would be a drain on those still contributing to the economy.[62] And old arguments persisted. Professor Raymond Pearl of Johns Hopkins University attempted to show that although contraception decreased birth rates in the higher classes, among presumably poorer black women the birth rate actually rose when contraception was employed. "It appears," an article said, "that the effect of birth control is to lessen the birth-rate among the better classes and to increase it among lower types."[63] Concerns about race suicide persisted and may have been fueled by national schemes to increase the birth rate in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

In *Modern Motherhood,* Esper attempted to address directly, however crudely, the basic conflict at work in sexology. Ted and Molly struggle with the seemingly contradictory impulses of a life filled with physical and material pleasures and the "productive" life of parenthood that deprives one of personal pleasure. Issues of freedom and constraint developed in the film all revolve around how couples allocate their money and time—whether it is spent on children or themselves. Esper rendered birth control advocates' claims about the economic benefits of fewer, carefully planned children into a doctrine of hedonistic self-absorption. But the desire to consume could be harnessed and made productive if channeled toward child rearing. After seeing the hygiene film, Molly lectures Ted about their attempts to be "modern": "We kid ourselves that we're something different, that we've put the world on a new basis—made love a bedtime cocktail to be bootlegged or legalized at the marriage bureau. . . .

We think we've changed things but we haven't. We've only perverted them. Behind it all is the same old mating instinct. A woman can't get away from it no matter how hard she tries." Molly rejects her own pleasure in favor of a sort of patriotic biological determinism that defines her role as a woman solely on her ability to bear children. Ted finally realizes that sacrificing his pleasure for children brings him true happiness. So, although Esper was willing to examine the rift between consumerism and productivity, his film fell clearly on the side where sex was acceptable only when used for procreation.

## 1937–1941

The establishment of the PCA in July 1934 slowed the production of new hygiene films to a trickle. But an equally important factor in this slowdown was the large number of productions from 1933 and 1934 that took time to play off on the roadshow circuit and through the states' rights system. The years 1937 through 1941 saw another jump in production of hygiene films, with roughly twelve new features released. This increase can be tied to events in the health community that not only had an impact on exploitation film production but that influenced the content of the movies as well. The AMA had long resisted becoming involved in the birth control issue. The profession, characterized as "passive, if not antagonistic,"[64] on the issue, often attacked birth control advocates in shrill articles in the Association's *Journal.*[65] By 1937 the birth control industry was a $250 million-a-year business, but it still operated in a half-lit world between legality and illegality.[66] Often referred to as "feminine hygiene," the industry had mushroomed since the start of the Great Depression. According to an extensive piece in *Fortune* on the economics of the contraception business, "Two things happened. On the one hand, people who dared not face the prospect of having children on curtailed incomes sought out the clinics and patronized the lucrative 'feminine hygiene' branch of the industry, which had been born in the twenties. On the other hand, small businessmen who had been wiped out in the depression discovered that birth control products could be produced at a quick and enormous profit and with very little capital investment."[67] Moreover, the Comstock Law had gradually been liberalized, culminating in a 1936 decision by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the law had not been designed to "prevent the importation, sale, or carriage by mail of things which might intel-

ligently be employed by conscientious and competent physicians for the purpose of saving life or promoting the well-being of their patients."[68] The mail was suddenly open to contraceptive materials and information for doctors.

By 1937 the social and economic changes that had made contraception a quarter-billion-dollar-a-year enterprise could no longer be ignored. The AMA finally relented to decades of lobbying by Dr. Robert Latou Dickinson, a long-time intermediary between organized medicine and birth control proponents, by accepting a resolution admitting that contraception information was important for patients and that the subject should be taught in medical schools.[69] In short order, states began to integrate birth control into public health services—though not always for humanitarian reasons. North Carolina became the first state to support contraception with tax dollars. It was followed by six other Southern states, motivated by fears of black population growth.[70] A study conducted by the *Ladies' Home Journal,* published in the spring of 1938, found that 79 percent of American women favored birth control, and fully half of Catholic women advocated its use.[71] Among the leading reasons women cited for using contraception were to avoid economic strain, to prevent the birth of "defectives," and to remain healthy themselves and "not grow old prematurely under the burden of bearing child after child." Although debates on the merits and safety of birth control continued among medical authorities and religious leaders, the contraception cause had clearly won in the court of public opinion.

Birth control had always played a large role in hygiene films, but with the battle for the acceptance of contraception largely over, attention turned more fully to the "mystery of birth" itself and the health and welfare of mother and child. The film to capitalize on this was christened with the simple, descriptive title *The Birth of a Baby.* In roughly thirteen segments it told the story of newlywed Mary Burgess's pregnancy and the birth of her daughter. Mary visits Dr. Wilson for a prenatal exam. He then counsels another woman on the dangers of intentional abortion. As the months pass, Mary continues to visit Dr. Wilson; he shows her charts and pictures (often animated for the benefit of the spectator) describing gestation and labor. Mary finally gives birth in her home, and the spectacle of a live birth is inserted into the film. A few days after the event, a nurse comes by to give Mary information about the care of her newborn. The final scene of the film finds Mary with her daughter and husband, who addresses his wife as though she has just returned from a week at a fat farm:

"You're just as slim as you used to be. . . . Oh Mary, you've been such a wonderful sport."

*The Birth of a Baby* was a detached, often dull, picture, yet notwithstanding its prosaic qualities, it became one of the most controversial motion pictures of the 1930s. In the spring of 1937, A. E. "Al" Christie began production on an educational obstetrical film at the Astoria Studios on Long Island. The film was planned as a nontheatrical presentation for medical conventions and physician training. By year's end it was being "presented" under the auspices of the American Committee on Maternal Welfare, Inc., a group made up of representatives from twenty-one organizations including the American College of Surgeons, the American Gynecological Society, the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, and the U.S. Public Health Service. The Committee also claimed the approval of a roster of religious groups, editors, and even First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The supporters of *The Birth of a Baby* were loudly trumpeted, but its production history is not entirely clear because most of the contemporary information about its origins was contained in the *Motion Picture Herald* and *Daily,* two Quigley publications with an unconcealed vendetta against the movie.

*The Birth of a Baby* was made under the banner of Christie Productions, Inc., produced by Jack Skirball, a former rabbi and the sales manager of Educational Pictures, and directed by Christie. Skirball released the film under the name Special Pictures Corporation.[72] Though the film was presented by the American Committee on Maternal Welfare, production funds were merely funneled to Skirball through the Committee by Mead Johnson & Company, manufacturer of baby products such as Mellan's Food. The company left its name and products out of the finished film but expressed the hope "that in partial return for this contribution . . . it will continue to merit the high esteem and good will of the medical profession."[73] For all its alleged good intentions and high-powered endorsements, in the final analysis *Birth of a Baby* did not seem any more virtuous than the average Esper or Cummins exploitation epic.

Mead Johnson & Company's "high esteem and good will" from the health community were ensured through *The Birth of a Baby*'s presentation of physicians. Dr. Wilson is shown as a conscientious, businesslike, and up-to-date practitioner. He has ready answers for all of Mary's questions and provides her with plenty of additional information in his mellifluous voice. Medical intervention is set forth as the modern and desirable goal in the birth process. As Mary's due date draws near, Dr.

Wilson promises that he will use drugs to ease her pain. When she is ready to give birth, the doctor is called away from a dinner party. He picks up his nurse and they ride to the Burgess home. During the ride he complains about not having access to a good hospital and how much simpler hospital deliveries are. His voice-over about the advantages of hospital birth is accompanied by images of people going to a hospital filled with modern equipment such as sterilizers. *The Birth of a Baby* documents the transition of childbirth from a home-based, woman-centered, natural activity to a process that required professional, male control in an institutional setting.[74]

Much like the sufferers of venereal disease or the transgressive females of other hygiene films, Mary Burgess is constructed as Other in *The Birth of a Baby.* Pregnancy is viewed as a pathology. One of the founding fathers of modern obstetrics, Joseph B. DeLee, used his famous "pitchfork analogy" to describe the birth process in 1920: "Labor has been called, and still is believed by many to be, a normal function. It always strikes physicians as well as laymen as bizarre, to call labor an abnormal function, a disease, and yet it is decidedly a pathologic process. Everything, of course, depends on what we define as normal. If a woman falls on a pitchfork, and drives the handle through her perineum, we call that pathologic—abnormal, but if a large baby is driven through the pelvic floor, we say that is natural, and therefore normal."[75] This analogy carries over to *The Birth of a Baby* as Mary's life during her pregnancy becomes abnormal. She is given a series of instructions at the beginning of her pregnancy about diet and exercise, told to avoid constipation and long auto trips. Mary asks if she can continue to have sex with her husband. The doctor responds, "There is no objection to marital relations in moderation," then adds, "But of course, after the sixth month the answer is *no.*" Mary is given special clothing—a maternity bra and corset. Like the diseased and transgressors in other hygiene films, Mary requires education. She, and the audience, are lectured to by both Dr. Wilson and his nurse, Julia, on several occasions.

Although *The Birth of a Baby* presents medicalized birth as overwhelmingly positive, it does suggest that Mary gradually loses control over the process as her doctor becomes increasingly central—a fact that many women complained about in the move to hospital births.[76] Robbie E. Davis-Floyd has noted that the birth process has always been at the center of gender differentiation in America: "Early feminists eagerly sought technological hospital birth, in the hope that it would constitute a positive step toward true equality of the sexes through removing the cultural stereo-

types of women as weak and dependent slaves to nature. Many of these early feminists went to great lengths to achieve anesthetized births." She suggests that instead of leading to equality, the concept of the female body as an "inherently defective machine" perpetuated the belief in the superiority of men, who "more closely mirrored our cultural image of the properly functioning machine."[77] Even though birth-of-a-baby films advocated the use of modern medicine and technology, they did so in the service of perpetuating traditional views of women and mothers and their place within the family and society. The film did represent increasing negotiation between productive and consumerist impulses; for example, much of the nurse's function seems to be to tell Mary what she will need to purchase for the care of her baby—diapers, clothes, and so on. Consumption was no longer presented as inferior to production, but that was so only as long as consumption was redirected from satisfying personal desire to rearing children. Consuming for a child was an appropriate sublimation of individual desire and a necessary component of pro-natalist values. The shift from children as a source of labor to consumable durable goods began as America started to come out of the Depression but only became a national trend after World War II.[78]

*The Birth of a Baby* was the object of generally positive reviews. *Time* said, "The picture is an absorbing example of visual education," and *Cue* characterized it as a "quite extraordinary film."[79] *Variety* may have given its highest praise by saying it was "not in the class with so-called sex films."[80] In reaction to New York State's rejection of the film, editorials praised the movie's frankness, citing the high U.S. infant mortality record and need for prenatal education.[81] At the opposite extreme, Martin Quigley's publications delighted in reporting every controversy surrounding the picture and editorialized against it.[82] One of the biggest debates over the film occurred when *Life* magazine printed photo spreads from the movie, including birth shots, in its 11 April 1938 edition. Publisher Roy E. Larsen sent letters to subscribers before the issue was mailed, advising parents that the section with the pictures could be removed. But in many instances the magazine arrived before the warning letter. The issue was banned in some communities and news dealers were arrested. Larsen pushed the matter by having himself arrested in New York City for selling an "obscene" magazine. He was promptly acquitted, and so were the other arrested dealers in every city except Boston.[83] Only ten thousand copies of the two million run were confiscated and the issue promptly sold out.[84] The film itself did tremendous business. In those places where *The Birth of*

*a Baby* played it was always a hit. For instance, in Minneapolis it took in a "smash" $11,000 at the Lyceum Theater in just one week and "had customers fighting to get in [during the] opening days."[85]

If *The Birth of a Baby* inspired controversy, it also inspired imitation—lots of imitation. In short order, *Childbirth from Life* (ca. 1938) appeared, as well as *Life* (1938), *Childbirth* (1940), and Cummins's none-too-subtle knockoff, *The Birth of a Child* (1938). A series of suits and countersuits ensued. Cummins was enjoined for a time from exhibiting films or stills similar to *The Birth of a Baby* on an application filed by the American Committee on Maternal Welfare.[86] Independent producer Maurice Copeland sued the Committee and Special Pictures, Inc., in U.S. District Court in Chicago for damages of $350,000. Copeland claimed that the defendants had interfered with the distribution of his film, *Life,* through intimidation and slander.[87] The American Committee on Maternal Welfare did not succeed in quashing its competitors, nor did it ever produce or sponsor another movie. However, *The Birth of a Baby* continued to play in theaters for the next twenty years.

The issue of birth control may have been disappearing from the exploitation canon, but abortion, a related subject in the minds of many, remained.[88] Although hard figures are difficult to come by, the Depression had forced the abortion rate to new heights. By the 1930s it was clear that medical abortions in the first trimester were actually safer to the mother than delivery at term, and many women chose abortion over the economic burden of children in hard times. Arguments defending laws that criminalized abortion based on the risk to the mother were being undermined as the procedure became safer.[89] The class bias in the laws was also apparent: a wealthy woman could usually find a doctor who would justify her need for a therapeutic abortion, but working-class and poor women were forced to choose among riskier self-induced abortions, charlatans, and other neighborhood women "who provided services as much out of kindness as for any monetary gain."[90] Some estimates put the number of abortions in the United States during the period at more than one million annually, creating a $100 million-a-year underground industry.[91] Though a portion of the press coverage of the issue in the 1930s was concerned with medical, legal, and ethical issues, most newspaper space was devoted to exposés of abortion rings and the political corruption that permitted them to thrive.[92]

Such exposés were undoubtedly the inspiration behind Willis Kent's 1937 exploitation drama, *Race Suicide,* supposedly "gained from news-

paper accounts." Exploitation companies were in the midst of producing a string of exposés on vice rings (discussed in chapter 7), so the mechanics of changing a plot about a prostitution ring into one on an abortion mill were fairly simple. In this instance, the coroner and D.A. perform the "crusader" function, as the abortion racket run by Mr. Randall and Dr. Von Hertsen (Kent regular Willy Castello) is smashed. The exposé nature of *Race Suicide* and its generic connection to vice films tended to obscure the larger issues surrounding abortion and its legal status. The abortionists were portrayed as heartless criminals who preyed on innocent or confused women in the same manner as did the vice lords. The intertextual similarity was increased by the fact that Castello usually played underworld figures, typecast by his thick accent and a listless manner that was to be construed as continental suavity. Like most Kent productions, the story was secondary to the spectacle, in this case a couple of acts in a drawn-out scene in a seedy nightclub and several flashes of nudity. The social and economic reasons that led to abortion were only hinted at as *Race Suicide* chugged toward its last-minute-rescue finale.

One film that did attempt to deal more fully with the issues surrounding abortion was *Unborn Souls* (1939), written and directed by Del Frazier. The film opens with a statement about quacks and illegal abortions and claims its intent is to see the eradication of the evil while neither supporting nor denouncing birth control. In the movie, the crusading Dr. Kent tries to convince the district attorney to clean up the local abortion racket and help open a birth control clinic. When Kent is dismissed from the hospital for performing emergency surgery to save the victim of a mangled abortion without getting a second opinion, he opens his clinic. He finds himself caught between the D.A. and an abortionist, Dr. Paris. Kent eventually succeeds in exposing the abortionists, but not before he is framed for murder, the D.A.'s daughter has an abortion, and Paris is killed in a car wreck with a suicidal patient. The motives for women seeking abortions are explored to a degree, including social pressure (the D.A.'s daughter is unmarried) and economic necessity (one of the patients cannot afford to support any more children). Dr. Kent is shown pushing for the dissemination of sensible birth control information in order to eliminate illegal abortions. But like *Race Suicide, Unborn Souls* did not question the laws that made abortion illegal in the first place, thereby evading what was becoming the core of the debate. We may account for this unquestioning attitude as partly due to some censorship statutes that forbade the approval of films that would "incite to crime." Many censors interpreted this

broadly, prohibiting exhibition of films that even questioned existing laws. In the abortion movies of the late 1930s (and those that occasionally followed), abortion was presented as a criminal act to be eradicated by eliminating the abortionist rather than by changing nineteenth-century laws originally written to protect women's health rather than to preserve moral doctrines.

From all indications, *Race Suicide* and *Unborn Souls* did not fare especially well with the audiences for exploitation pictures. Even though *Race Suicide* contained some nudity and an abundance of titillating material, the subject of abortion was not an ideal vehicle to transport it to spectators. Sander Gilman argues that "the erotic and reproduction are linked for the turn of the century in the concept of hereditary syphilis."[93] VD was seen as the end result of passion and sexual abandon in exploitation films; thus they were invested with a titillating quality that abortion did not possess. *Race Suicide* and *Unborn Souls* were eventually retitled *What Price Passion* and *Sinful Souls,* respectively, titles with a more exploitable ring that gave the films an extended life in the market.

In 1936 venereal disease returned to the center of the public stage. Not since the years around World War I had syphilis and gonorrhea been the object of such intense concern. The architect of the new awareness of VD was Dr. Thomas Parran, appointed surgeon general by Franklin Roosevelt in the spring of 1936. As a public health official, Parran had advocated wresting control of the venereal disease issue from the hands of social hygienists and moralists and placing it firmly under the aegis of medical experts. As with birth control and childbirth, VD was becoming medicalized. Parran opened his campaign with an article on syphilis in the July 1936 *Survey Graphic;* "The Next Great Plague to Go" was promptly reprinted as "Why Don't We Stamp Out Syphilis?" in the *Reader's Digest,* reaching over half a million subscribers.[94] Within six months almost two million reprints had been sold.[95] Statistics, among them that one out of ten Americans suffered from syphilis, were presented graphically and without moralizing. Unlike the social hygienists who had tried to prevent VD by changing behavior, Parran advocated a program of free diagnostic tests, "Wasserman dragnets" for high-risk groups, prompt therapy for the infected and identification and treatment of their sexual partners, premarital blood tests, and public education.[96] His initial article sparked a veritable crusade in the press. Even *The Ladies' Home Journal,* which had lost thousands of subscribers when it published articles on VD early in the century, jumped on the bandwagon. The stage was again used as a forum

**32** *Damaged Goods* (1937) appeared in the wake of Surgeon General Thomas Parran's anti-VD campaign. Douglas Walton (second from left) played George Dupont; Arletta Duncan (third from left) was his fiancée, Henrietta; and Ferdinand Munier (right) was her father, who becomes indignant when George asks to postpone the wedding.

for discussion of the diseases, with *Damaged Goods* revived on Broadway and the production of the Federal Theater Project's "living newspaper" documentary, *Spirochete*. By 1937 the definition of "decent people" had transformed from those who never uttered the word "syphilis" to those who were willing to rally in support of the national campaign to stamp it out.[97]

Exploitation producers and roadshowmen were all too eager to help Parran educate the public about venereal diseases. With the weight of the federal government and a national public health campaign behind them, the producers of *Damaged Lives* resubmitted their film in New York. The four-year-old movie was rejected again, a decision eventually reversed by the commissioner of education, who oversaw board of censors operations. Within two months, the board had to certify Phil Goldstone's remake of *Damaged Goods* (1937), distributed by Grand National. Although Gold-

stone's version was not appreciably different from the 1914 film, it featured the marquee value of novelist and 1934 California gubernatorial candidate Upton Sinclair as adapter. The film's crusading physician, Dr. Walker, stood in for Parran, echoing that "syphilis must be the next great plague to go." Even more than most crusaders in hygiene pictures, Walker operated as a walking, talking compendium of statistics. According to the doctor, syphilis "is responsible for more than ten percent of all insanity, fifteen percent of all blindness, and eighteen percent of all disease of the heart and blood vessels." Like many contemporary AIDS education programs, Walker's prescription was continence; he maintained that anyone who had an affair and did not contract syphilis was the beneficiary of pure, dumb luck.

Given the scope of and public support for the antisyphilis campaign, it may seem surprising that the new hygiene films were not met with the same hosannas that greeted the original *Damaged Goods* and its immediate imitators in the teens. But the motion picture industry had changed markedly in twenty years. Even though state censor boards were beginning to permit public performances of VD movies, the Hays Office remained adamant about not passing the films, and most reviews were circumspect in their treatment of them. No suggestion came from any quarter that every mother, father, and adolescent see the films, although *Film Daily* said of *Damaged Goods* that due to its taboo subject, "the picture will not want for onlookers . . . it will teach them a good deal they should and must know."[98] Quigley's *Motion Picture Herald* flatly stated that *Damaged Goods* was "unsuitable for theatrical entertainment" and later editorialized against the VD films: "Let it be pointed out once again that syphilis is not a motion picture responsibility. . . . The present tide of publicity attention is not to be construed as either invitation or license to those who may feel inspired to screen expression. The place for syphilis is in the doctor's office."[99] But that was precisely the point of the latest movies. Even the decidedly more lurid *Human Wreckage* (1938) stressed the need for quick, responsible treatment for venereal disease while giving a nod to Parran in the character of Dr. Hampton, a public health crusader. One thing had not changed, even in light of efforts to reframe VD as a health rather than a moral problem. Despite Parran's effort to show that "even nice people *did* have syphilis," the status of a venereal disease sufferer in hygiene films was still that of a stigmatized Other.[100] By putting a face on what was beginning to be treated as a faceless problem of vectors and infections and by having that individual acquire syphilis through what

was still constructed as a moral lapse (having sex with a prostitute or engaging in premarital sex), the movies did little to advance the public health campaign.[101]

The last major hygiene film to appear prior to the United States' entry into World War II was *No Greater Sin* (1941), a VD drama that exploited the same preparedness themes that had been used by hygiene films during World War I. *Variety* called it "the first initial attempt in a non-sexer film to bring into the open the scourge of syphilis and rip from it the years-old mask of mystery, ignorance and hush-hush."[102] The trade paper, which seemed to lack an institutional memory that went back four years, much less to World War I, noted that producer Edward Golden's film appeared to have altruistic intent, but that there were no assurances "exhibs wouldn't sensationalize advertising to turn it into nothing more than a common exploitation picture . . . the likelihood is too great that it will wind up with the roughest ads newspapers will accept and the wildest marquees and houseboards the cops will allow."[103] Within a year the prediction came true as the film was dualed with a Columbia potboiler, *Under Age* (1941), the program touted as "2 Daring, Spicy, Naughty, Sexational Hits" on the marquee of a New York theater.[104]

Golden, who had been a sales manager with Monogram, quit to form University Pictures which produced *No Greater Sin.* He succeeded in having the film passed in most censorship states and even prevailed upon representatives of public health and religious organizations to write the Hays Office urging that the film be granted a seal of approval. The MPPDA was not swayed, even by arguments that the film would be an aid in war preparedness. *No Greater Sin* was nothing if not topical. Set in a Midwestern town with a large defense plant and an army encampment nearby, the film warned about sick soldiers and disabled defense workers. But although the preparedness angles were up-to-date, the attitudes expressed by the town officials toward the crusading public health commissioner were not. In spite of four full years of a nationwide war on syphilis, the city council was shown to be unmoved by the health commissioner's efforts to stamp out venereal disease in the community. Such attitudes were far less common in 1941, but they were still the stuff of drama. *No Greater Sin* contained most of the standard melodramatic elements of hygiene films, including the exposure of the local vice ring, a married couple who find that the husband was not really cured by a quack, plus the added attraction of a courtroom finale where the husband is tried for murdering the charlatan. Public attitudes about sex, birth, and VD had slowly progressed

as the nation prepared to enter World War II. But the sex hygiene film had, to a great extent, remained a durable presence from an earlier age.

## 1944–1949

A difference in the titles of pre–World War II and post–World War II hygiene films is indicative of changing attitudes about sex and sex hygiene. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, titles pointed to the potential dangers of sex by concentrating on aspects of physical and moral degradation: *Pitfalls of Passion, Damaged Lives, Human Wreckage, No Greater Sin, Unwelcome Children,* and so on. The pitfalls, the damage, and the wreckage caused by sex pointed to the underlying ideology of the films, which was overwhelmingly patriarchal, heterosexual, monogamous, and based on productivist impulses. Some post–World War II film titles still focused on the dangers of sexuality, but after the war the majority of the titles were far more neutral. *Mom and Dad, The Story of Bob and Sally, Test Tube Babies, Children of Love, Hometown Girl, Mated, Miracle of Life,* and *We Want a Child* displayed an emphasis on heterosexual coupling and the joys of family and childbirth that were to become so central in postwar American culture. Yet in spite of changes in the nature of their titles, postwar movies continued to place a heavy emphasis on the dangers of sex while placing increased faith in science, medicine, and other forms of expertise.

Millions of American servicemen had been exposed to gruesome venereal disease films as part of their basic training during World War II. Unlike their predecessors from World War I, these films did not make the transition to the public sector. By the end of the war, exploitation producers were ready to fill the void and some ten new movies were issued in the last major cycle of hygiene films from 1944 and 1949. Leading the pack of postwar hygiene films was *Mom and Dad* (1944), which would become not only the most successful sex hygiene film in history but the biggest pre-1960 exploitation film of any kind. At the end of 1947, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that *Mom and Dad* had grossed $2 million. By 1949 *Time* estimated that *Mom and Dad* had taken in $8 million from twenty million moviegoers.[105] And publicity issuing from *Mom and Dad*'s production company indicated that by the end of 1956 it had grossed over $80 million worldwide. Net rentals of around $22 million by 1956 would easily place it in the top ten films of the late 1940s and early 1950s had it appeared on conventional lists. Some estimates have placed its total gross over the years

**33** Crowds gather for *Mom and Dad* at the little Jefferis Theater in Piedmont, Missouri, in the winter of 1947.

at up to $100 million, and it was still playing drive-in dates into 1975.[106] *Mom and Dad* was not made by one of the existing exploitation firms, but was the brainchild of a new player in the field, Kroger Babb.

Howard W. "Kroger" Babb, self-described as "America's Fearless Young Showman," began his movie career as the advertising and publicity director for the Chakeres-Warners theater chain in 1934. He eventually hooked up with two roadshowmen, Howard Russell Cox and Howard Underwood, who were promoting a program titled *Dust to Dust* in the early 1940s. *Dust to Dust* was nothing more than a birth reel slapped onto Foy's *High School Girl,* with Cox lecturing on the "Evils of Sex Intolerance." The three Howards made *Dust to Dust* a small-town hit throughout the Midwest. For instance, it was held over twice in its run at the five-hundred-seat Broad Theater in Lancaster, Ohio, in October 1940, and Babb claimed that the five-week Cleveland run in 1944 grossed over $54,000.[107] While traveling with *Dust to Dust* Babb hit on the idea of making his own hygiene epic. Unable to find backing from the majors, he secured funds from twenty investors and produced *Mom and Dad* through his new company, Hy-

**34** Members of the happy Blake family—Dan (George Eldridge), Sarah (Lois Austin), and Joan (June Carlson)—of *Mom and Dad* (1944) on the train to Centerville, where shame and tragedy await.

gienic Productions. The film was made for around $65,000 with a crew of Hollywood veterans including director William "One Shot" Beaudine, cinematographer Marcel LePicard, and a cast that sported old stalwarts Hardie Albright, Francis Ford, and John Hamilton. Babb's coproducer, J. S. Jossey, was a Monogram stockholder and the company's Cleveland rep. He arranged for *Mom and Dad* to be shot on the Monogram lot in Hollywood over the course of a week.

The finished product was familiar in every respect. Following shots of the American flag and a request that the audience sing the national anthem, *Mom and Dad* opens with a square-up telling us "Our story is a simple one! It happens every night somewhere. It is the story of Joan Blake—a sweet, innocent girl growing up in this fast-moving age." The crawl magnanimously proclaims that "In this modern world youth is entitled to a knowledge of hygiene—a complete understanding of the facts of life," concluding, in typical fashion, that if the film "saves one girl from unwed motherhood . . . or one boy from the ravages of social disease . . . it will have been well told!" In this instance, Centerville high school student Joan Blake is knocked up by rugged prep school grad and flyer Jack

**35** Pregnant high school girl Joan Blake (June Carlson) realizes that she can no longer fit into her clothes in this frame enlargement from *Mom and Dad* (1944). (Video Dimensions)

Griffin. He is killed in a plane crash while rushing to be at Joan's side when she realizes she is "in trouble." Joan's brother directs her to Carl Blackburn, the high school biology teacher whom their shrewish mother had gotten fired for answering sex hygiene questions in class. Blackburn tells Joan's parents about her condition, blaming Mrs. Blake for the girl's predicament. Mother and daughter steal away to Boston so Joan can have the baby away from prying eyes. Mr. Blake has Blackburn rehired by the school, where the teacher institutes a class on moral and social hygiene; he brings experts to show films on childbirth and venereal disease to his students. Joan gives birth to a stillborn son, "Little Butch." Presumably everyone lives happily ever after, having learned a hard lesson.

*Mom and Dad* was not a great film by any measure, although it was somewhat slicker than the majority of exploitation films. Boasting a higher budget and better production values, it was comparable in look and style to Monogram films of the period. What set it apart from other exploitation films, and from most other movies in general, was the vigor of the salesmanship behind it, which, as *Time* magazine said in 1949, left "only the livestock unaware of the chance to learn the facts of life."[108] The success of *Mom and Dad* did not go unnoticed by other producers. By

1947–1948 its box office totals were news in the industry. Though this alone would have been enough to spur imitation, the publication of Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 prompted an unprecedented public discussion of sexuality. The dry, scientific treatise was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for twenty-seven weeks. Kinsey found that among American males, masturbation and heterosexual petting were "nearly universal," that "ninety percent had engaged in premarital intercourse and half in extramarital sex, and that over a third of adult males had had a homosexual experience."[109] His findings were delivered matter-of-factly, avoiding the judgment and moralizing of most of the previous work on sex. Moralists who were shocked by the male report were floored when *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was published in 1953 and "demonstrated that American women were not models of sexual propriety."[110] D'Emilio and Freedman note that much of the interest that greeted the Kinsey reports occurred because "Kinsey's statistics pointed to a vast hidden world of sexual experience sharply at odds with publicly espoused norms."[111] Journalists were able to openly discuss sex by reviewing or commenting on Kinsey's study. In short order, the pretense of reporting on Kinsey was not even necessary as articles with titles like "Love and the Single Woman," which promised a "frank analysis" of sex without marriage, became magazine staples.[112]

Three productions unabashedly traded on *Mom and Dad*'s marketing strategies, becoming its most direct competitors. Wilshire Picture Corporation's *Street Corner,* which appeared in mid-1948, closely followed *Mom and Dad*'s story line as it told the tale of Lois Marsh, another high school girl who becomes pregnant. Again, the girl's prudish mother is too busy to give her proper sex instruction, and again the boyfriend is killed in an accident before he can help his sweetheart. In *Street Corner,* Dr. Fenton, the family physician, substitutes for the concerned teacher, and there is the additional angle of the back alley abortion that almost kills Lois. As noted earlier, *Because of Eve,* released by Crusade Productions in the latter half of 1948, found Bob and Sally Stevens reminiscing about their premarital physicals with Dr. West. Joseph Crehan played the crusading doctor and part-time projectionist in both *Street Corner* and *Because of Eve.* Crehan was not on hand in *The Story of Bob and Sally* (1948), but as in *Because of Eve* the central characters are named Bob and Sally. *The Story of Bob and Sally* was produced at Universal. That one of the eight majors would be involved with a hygiene film indicates that Hollywood realized money could be made with the films, but profit motives continued to be held in check by

**36** Dr. West (Joseph Crehan) tries to talk some sense into Sally (Wanda McKay) in *Because of Eve* (1948), the "tender, vital story of a man and wife who were ignorant of the facts of life!" (Something Weird Video Collection)

the Production Code, which placed industry self-interest over the financial consideration of individual companies. When it became clear that *The Story of Bob and Sally* would not receive an MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America, the MPPDA's new name) seal, it was sold to Gidney Talley, a Texas exhibitor. Tally created Social Guidance Enterprises to market a film about Helen and Sally, the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Wright. Helen's frigidity sends her husband out boozing and whoring and Sally, pregnant by her boyfriend Bob, is almost killed by an abortion. Like the other films, *The Story of Bob and Sally* ends with lives back on track thanks to a progressive doctor and the modern miracle of 16mm instructional films. Also like *Mom and Dad,* the three other movies featured shows segregated by gender, attendants posing as nurses, and book pitches by fictitious lecturers: *Street Corner*'s "Curtis Hayes," "Alexander Leeds" with *Because of Eve,* and "Roger T. Miles," "the man who calls a spade . . . a spade!" appearing for *The Story of Bob and Sally.*

On the surface, *Mom and Dad* and its imitators expressed the wartime and postwar moral panic about juvenile delinquency, a panic that continued to grow through the 1950s. Concern about unsupervised youth had blossomed during the war and led to a number of films on the subject,

such as Monogram's *Where Are Your Children* (1943), PRC's *I Accuse My Parents* (1944), and exploiteer J. D. Kendis's *Teenage* (1944). Most of the early delinquency movies dealt with teen violence, but *Mom and Dad* and many of the movies that followed in its wake tackled "sexual delinquency," which was mentioned in *Mom and Dad*'s prologue. Beyond the real crimes that may have been committed by young people, "delinquency" emerged as a code word for any adolescent behavior that met with the disapproval of adults.[113] Even though shifts in attitudes about sex had occurred several decades earlier, they were only becoming publicly acknowledged for the first time. According to James Gilbert, teenage culture "helped focus a larger dispute in American society over the advisability of liberalized social and sexual mores. Not only were adolescents acting like adults sooner; adults themselves were beginning to recognize and worry about extensive changes in American social mores."[114]

The nuclear family became the symbolic battleground in this war over social mores. In *Mom and Dad,* the Blakes are framed as the ideal/average postwar family unit: husband, wife, daughter, and son. The privilege of the Blakes' position permits them to have a maid, Junella, who dotes on the family, makes buttermilk pancakes, and serves as Joan's confidant. The family lives in Centerville, a name designed to convey bourgeois comfort and lack of extremes, whether social, political, or sexual. But, as the film demonstrates, this averageness is susceptible to disorder. In this case, the disturbance brought about by Joan's premarital sexual experimentation threatens to ruin her reputation and, perhaps, her health. Moreover, the entire Blake family is confronted with the specter of losing social standing within the community due to Joan's "disgrace," a point driven home several times during the course of the movie. "Delinquency" has the potential to damage the status of the middle-class family, which in turn disrupts the entire social fabric.

Public attitudes about sexuality were beginning to outpace the attitudes expressed in exploitation movies. Kinsey's studies, and the general move toward quantifying and controlling desire and sexual behavior through secular means, contributed to the broad "scientification" of sex and its removal from strictly moral domains. The air of scientific authority that surrounded *Mom and Dad* extended to the name of Babb's company, Hygienic Productions, which conjures images of scientists in crisp white coats using the latest technology in antiseptic environments to create the best in modern entertainment. The pressbook "biography" for *Because of Eve*'s lecturer, Alexander Leeds, describes his inability to choose between

teaching and the ministry, leading him to seize "an opportunity to conduct a survey of urban living conditions for a celebrated foundation." This thinly veiled attempt to connect Leeds with the Kinsey study is evidence that sex hygiene exploitation films further legitimized themselves by coating their educational discourse with a layer of science. Many of these movies indicated that they had the help and approval of various medical or scientific associations, but that due—conveniently—to "professional ethics" they were unable to list said associations.

The productivist impulse of sexology continued to maintain a strong hold on the narrative aspects of the postwar films as they addressed desire in much the same way the prewar films did.[115] The acknowledgment of changes in postwar sexual standards was documented in Ira L. Reiss's 1960 book, *Premarital Sexual Standards in America,* the culmination of a twelve-year sociological project that attempted to identify attitudes about sex. Reiss affirmed that abstinence from premarital intercourse under any circumstances for men and women was America's formal sexual standard. This formal standard was linked with productivist ideologies which held that sexual intercourse was appropriate only within the bonds of marriage and for procreation. Reiss also identified three informal standards operating within the culture: permissiveness with affection, in which premarital intercourse was right for both men and women under certain conditions when a stable relationship with engagement, love, or strong affection was present; permissiveness without affection, wherein premarital intercourse was considered right for both men and women regardless of the amount of affection or stability present, providing there was physical attraction; and the age-old double standard, which held that premarital intercourse was okay for men but unacceptable for women.[116] Working with his own data as well as information from other studies, Reiss constructed a picture of postwar sexual attitudes in the United States, particularly among middle- and upper-middle-class whites. According to Reiss, about 50 percent of women born after 1900 entered marriage as nonvirgins, and the spread of "heavy petting" and other practices meant that the majority of women went into marriage with a fairly large degree of sexual experience.[117] Around 70 percent of men were coming to marriage as nonvirgins, and almost 90 percent had petted to climax before marriage.[118] Despite the dominance of the permissive standards, the postwar hygiene film rigorously promoted the single standard of abstinence and the productivist ideology that it entailed.

These movies, like their precursors, elided the sex act itself. Typical

Hollywood motion pictures would follow the progress of seduction only up to a point, and then after an ellipsis, perhaps some crashing waves or fireworks, we find the postcoital couple basking in afterglow. In the case of the hygiene films, they are awash in feelings of guilt, so we actually have accounts of the aftermath of the sex act and the consequences it produced. Reiss suggested that the three permissive premarital sex standards he identified were integrated with five "negative" consequences of premarital intercourse, " 'negative,' that is, on the basis of general American cultural evaluation."[119] Those five consequences were pregnancy, VD, social condemnation, guilt feelings, and weakening of marriage.[120] The positive consequences Reiss outlined (physical satisfaction, psychic satisfaction, and aid to marital adjustment) never appeared in postwar sex hygiene films or their predecessors, but the first four negative consequences were always present.[121] If the scientification of sex hygiene separated the postwar films from their earlier counterparts, the negative consequences linked them ideologically.

In support of the single formal standard of abstinence, *Mom and Dad* and the other films greatly stressed the negative consequences of pregnancy and guilt, while also putting great emphasis on the possibility of venereal disease. Sex education in the postwar hygiene films becomes a horror show of blood, amniotic fluid, and flesh opened surgically and through destructive diseases. This worked in the service of the single standard of premarital abstinence rather than encouraging responsible sexuality regardless of marital status. Premarital sex for personal pleasure, even if it took place in a loving, affectionate relationship, was characterized as unproductive and hence dangerous to both the body and mind—especially for women. Despite claims that hygiene films told bold truths, they were in fact bold fictions, bearing little relation to the sexual behavior of Americans at the time.

The postwar hygiene films more strictly divided the dangers of premarital sex along gender lines than did prewar movies. The greatest danger was to women because of their capacity to get pregnant, which could result in the ruin of a reputation, early marriage, complications from childbirth, abortion, and perhaps even death. On the other hand, men were more often the victims of venereal disease. In the films, men alone are shown movies and given instruction about VD. The traditional scare tactics remained, but information about cures was evident. The guiding assumption seems to be that "boys will be boys," that they will engage in premarital sex, so they may as well be aware of the symptoms of venereal diseases

and the remedies. The double standard was implicitly reinforced in the films through the way in which educational information was addressed to each gender. For males, education might include a scare but it was accompanied by knowledge that conveyed a certain amount of the freedom of sexology, in this instance that venereal diseases can be cured. Sex education was used for female subordination and restriction by indicating an increasing range of terrors faced by sexually active girls, from social ostracism to death. However, the films may have provided savvy women with enough basic information about sexuality to permit them to exert a measure of control over their bodies and choices, control that might not have been possible without the films. Certainly the mobilization of spectacle in exploitation films fractured the coherence of their ideological position, leaving a space for audience members to extract the information that was of most importance or interest to them.

In addition to the four major postwar hygiene films, several other movies were released during the period. Canada's *Sins of the Fathers* (1948), inspired by *Mom and Dad* and its kin, featured a crusading doctor and the inclusion of medical reels that are shown to the characters. *Street Acquaintance* (1949), a German picture with a neorealist influence, centered on a poor Berlin laundress who contracts syphilis. The Southern Educational Film Production Service, sponsored by nine Southern states and the Tennessee Valley Authority, produced *Feeling All Right* (1948), a three-reel subject about venereal disease among blacks in Mississippi that was released theatrically in some parts of the country. *Hometown Girl* (1949) dealt with unwed motherhood, and Cummins released *Miracle of Life* (1949), a compilation sex hygiene film made up of old European footage. The most unique entry in the field was George Weiss's *Test Tube Babies* (1948).

*Test Tube Babies* followed on the heels of articles on artificial insemination in such popular magazines as *Colliers* and *Woman's Home Companion* and provides an apt example of the increased emphasis on science in the postwar hygiene movies. The film boasts such catch lines as "nature outwitted by medical science with test tube baby," "science can produce supermen thru insemination," and "scientific laboratories create children." The film's square-up addressed medical and scientific achievements; according to the credits, technical data were approved and supervised by "The National Research Foundation for Fertility, Inc." in New York. If such an organization existed it probably operated out of Weiss's basement. In the film, newlyweds George and Cathy have trouble adjusting to mar-

**37** Postwar sex hygiene films, such as *Test Tube Babies* (1948), featured an increased emphasis on science and technology.

ried life because he works late and she feels neglected. After trying without success to conceive, the couple visit Dr. Wright, who discovers that George is sterile. Artificial insemination is recommended and George and Cathy wind up with a healthy boy and girl. Dr. Wright spends much of his time onscreen explaining artificial insemination, donor selection, heredity, and chromosomes. Of course, this vital scientific information is sandwiched between some gratuitous nudity, a couple of wild parties, a striptease number, and a cat fight.

*Test Tube Babies* asserted that scientific advances could be used in the service of productivity. Artificial insemination is a technology employed to save George and Cathy's marriage, to help them conform to postwar standards, and to keep Cathy occupied in the home. Her homebound life has turned her energies toward the useless partying that threatens to alienate her from the workaholic George. Cathy's mother tells her, "It's obvious that you not only want a baby, you need one. You're getting neurotic!" Artificial insemination not only sets Cathy's productive capacity in motion, but according to the film's pressbook, it initiates a cycle: "The social and economic importance of [artificial insemination] can hardly be exag-

gerated. One cause of divorce is removed. Offspring are free from hereditary taints. Babies born of sound parents who never saw each other have a longer life expectancy and also a better chance to make their way in the world against competition. Their offspring, in turn, should be more productive, assuming they marry the right men and women. Lastly, they are less likely to need community or institutional care."[122] Such exaggerated claims about technology were common in the postwar years. Here, employed in the service of sex, technology could be used to reorient the unproductive in order to affirm the economic status quo, increasingly based on the act of consumption. At the same time, technology did seem to have a downside. Children may have been stronger, but childbearing women were less hardy than in previous generations. Commenting on Cathy's labor, Dr. Wright states, "A woman during childbirth is always in danger . . . mothers nowadays are not like our mothers were."

With a consumer economy firmly in place in the United States following the war, earlier divisions between production and consumption were no longer cut-and-dried in society or in hygiene movies. Douglas Gomery has observed that during this period some economists began to fit children into the model of durable goods to be "consumed" by parents. Children had guaranteed a continuation of the labor force in a production-oriented economy; in an economy based on consumption, purchases made to keep children healthy and happy and children's eventual entry into consumption maintained the system. As Gomery puts it, during the baby boom "families went out and acquired children as fast as they could."[123] In hygiene films, individual desire was beginning to be recognized as legitimate if it was directed toward consumption that maintained the consumer-based economy. In *Test Tube Babies,* Cathy's unproductive consumption (parties) is transformed into productive consumption (babies), socially validating her desire. This new distinction became more apparent in the films that appeared in the 1950s.

## 1950–1959

Following the postwar boom in sex hygiene films led by *Mom and Dad,* the genre declined steadily in the 1950s. *Mom and Dad, Street Corner, Because of Eve,* and *The Story of Bob and Sally* had succeeded in sewing up the market for hygiene movies. In an effort to maximize profits, the owners of the four films consolidated in the summer of 1950. Modern Film Distribu-

tors coordinated the distribution of the movies so they did not directly compete with each other, usually playing *Mom and Dad* in an area first and then bringing the other movies in over time. Record-setting marriage and birth rates spurred the import of new childbirth films from Europe, including *Children of Love* (1953) from France, Denmark's *We Want a Child* (1954), and *The Most Wonderful Moment* (1957) from Italy. However, the titillation once provided by hygiene films was being supplanted by burlesque movies, the reemergence of nudist films, frank foreign pictures, as well as increasingly adult Hollywood fare. *Playboy* magazine and a host of nudist publications were suddenly available on newsstands or through subscription. These forms shed the patina of education and offered sexual thrills in an undiluted form. Another factor in the decline of hygiene movies was that many of the exploiteers who had long made their living promoting such films—Cummins, Millard, and Esper—were aging and cutting back their operations.

A variety of shifts in attitudes about sex and sexual knowledge also helped bring about changes in the numbers and nature of hygiene films in the 1950s. Birth control was readily available from physicians and their stance on the issue had moved into the mainstream. Whereas in 1937 the AMA had reluctantly acknowledged the importance of contraceptive information for patients, by 1947 a poll showed that almost 98 percent of doctors approved of birth control to ensure the good health of mother and child, and almost 80 percent approved of contraception for economic reasons.[124] The controversy that had once attended the subject had disappeared and with it the impulse to use it as an exploitation topic. VD was on the wane as penicillin treatment that became widely available after World War II proved to be nothing short of miraculous in combating syphilis and gonorrhea. Early cases of syphilis dropped by 90 percent in New York City from 1946 to 1955, and Brandt notes that by the mid-1950s "it seemed that venereal infections could no longer be considered a major public health threat."[125] Both the *American Journal of Syphilis* and the venerable *Journal of Social Hygiene* ceased publication in the 1950s.[126] Diseases that could suddenly be cured with an injection or two lacked the crippling social stigma, nor did they seem to warrant divine retribution for transgressing moral laws. Even though some social hygienists and physicians still worried that easy cures for VD would lead to increased promiscuity, the exploitability of the topic had been seriously compromised.[127] Finally, movies that made pleas for sex education were becoming anachronistic as hygiene classes made inroads in schools. Movies about

reproduction were regularly used as part of this effort, beginning with the short film *Human Growth,* made by actor Eddie Albert's small, non-theatrical production company in 1948.[128] Adults who had sought out hygiene films for sexual knowledge found it more readily available as the numbers of "marriage manuals" increased in the wake of the Kinsey reports.

One motion picture that attempted to serve as a moving marriage manual was Gordon Schindler's *Mated* (1952), subtitled *An Illustrated Lecture on Film. Mated* was littered with a generous selection of pictures of classical Greek statuary and Renaissance paintings—as well as dozens of photos from nudist and physique magazines. Its compilation of older footage and newly shot material contained the usual descriptions of male and female sexual characteristics, menstruation, and conception, as well as a unique bit on female pubic hair patterns. A new addition to the standard mix, perhaps as a concession to the postwar fascination with large breasts, was an extended segment on bust development with hormone cream and suction devices. A good deal of the film was devoted to the discussion of sexual compatibility in marriage, with quotations drawn from old texts of Havelock Ellis and Krafft-Ebing. The material in *Mated* had more in common with pseudo-sciences like phrenology than with state-of-the-art medical knowledge. But because it was outfitted with charts and graphs, a serious-looking "gynecologist," and seemingly dispassionate narration, it gave the impression of being more up-to-date than many of the narrative hygiene movies that were made after the war. With traditional hygiene subjects lacking currency and impelled by the postwar fascination/fear of technology and science, exploiteers extended into domains of desire that had been constructed as even lower than "unproductive" pre- or extra-marital sex. Those included homosexuality and other forms of desire not constituted as "normal." Movies like *Glen or Glenda* (1953), *Please Don't Touch Me* (1959), and *The Lonely Sex* (1959) took hygiene films into new areas.

Homosexuality had been the subject of only one exploitation film prior to the 1950s. *Children of Loneliness* (1935) circulated on and off for years under several titles. It told the tale of Bobby, a vindictive lesbian obsessed with Eleanor, a young woman who works in a law office. A parallel story found the daughter of one of the partners in the firm falling for a gay artist. The gay characters don't fare well. Bobby tries to throw acid on Eleanor but it is tossed back at her. Blinded, she runs into the street and is killed by a car. Told he could never have a normal marriage, the artist

commits suicide. Anecdotal evidence indicates that gay viewers may have sought out *Children of Loneliness.* In his review of the film in the *Motion Picture Herald* in 1937, William R. Weaver made wisecracks about the audience at Tally's Criterion in Los Angeles, describing "the lisping comments of the young men on his left and the throaty whispers of middle-aged women on his right."[129] Weaver implied that the film would have difficulty making money even if millions of gay men and lesbians went to see it. The performances of *Children of Loneliness* at Talley's were accompanied by a filmed prologue and epilogue in which Dr. S. Dana Hubbard of the New York Health Department lectured on "perversion." The film itself constructed homosexuality as a pathology. Eleanor's psychologist tells her that because she was not born gay he can help her. But for Bobby and Paul the artist, who suffer from congenitally "perverse" desires, no cure exists and death is the end result.

Estelle B. Freedman has described the increased sociological and psychological work done on masculinity during the 1930s when, in the face of the Great Depression, millions of men lost jobs, their status as breadwinners, and their self-esteem. Concurrent publicity about sex crimes led criminologists and psychologists to sexualize the male psychopath and, "in the process, the male sexual deviant became the subject of special attention, particularly if he was inadequately masculine (the effeminate homosexual) or hypermasculine (the sexual psychopath). Both categories of deviant males were thought to attack children, thus simultaneously threatening sexual innocence, gender roles, and social order."[130] Although sexual assaults went up during the war years, the discourse on "deviance" declined for a time.

World War II has been characterized as "something of a nation-wide 'coming out' experience."[131] Mobility and gender-segregated institutions gave gay men and lesbians an opportunity to create liaisons and the foundations for community that carried into the postwar years. The war also allowed psychiatric and psychoanalytic conceptions of homosexual desire to move into the mainstream. Although they have become a point of dispute in recent years, Kinsey's findings on the extent of male homosexual experience hit like lightning in 1948. Cold war paranoia led to investigations and wholesale dismissals of gays and lesbians in government jobs and gave the green light to persecution at many levels. As D'Emilio and Freedman put it, "homosexuality took on the form of a contagious disease imperiling the health of anyone who came near it."[132] Renewed concern after the war about sexual psychopaths played a continuing role in the

construction of homosexuality and also "served to create or to clarify boundaries between normal and abnormal behavior."[133] According to Freedman, "First, the discussion of the psychopath influenced the redefinition of rape as not only a male psychological aberration, but also an act in which both women and children contributed to their own victimization. Second, it drew a strict boundary between heterosexual and homosexual males, labeling the latter as violent child molesters. Finally, the creation of the psychopath as an extreme deviant figure helped Americans adjust to a sexual system in which nonprocreative acts were no longer considered abnormal."[134] In keeping with this formulation of homosexuality and other "low" forms of desire that in the past could only be "cured" by death, a change in hygiene films took place in the 1950s. Although hardly enlightened by today's standards, the shift did point to the ongoing negotiation of individual desire within the shifting context of sexology.

*Glen or Glenda* was directed by legendary "bad" filmmaker Edward D. Wood Jr. The film was made in 1953, hot on the heels of news about the sex-change operation that transformed Bronx native George Jorgensen into Christine Jorgensen. The story created a small media sensation when it broke in late 1952, especially in the New York tabloids. Producer George Weiss's own tabloid sensibility was piqued and he planned to make a documentary about the Jorgensen affair. Exactly when Wood became involved is unclear, but the hiring of Bela Lugosi changed the film from a documentary to a more typical exploitation hybrid of narrative and documentary elements.[135] It was also a mixture of Weiss's typically stolid exposé and the outrageous genre pictures such as *Bride of the Monster* (1955) and *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959), on which the bulk of Wood's reputation now rests.

Lugosi played "The Scientist," sometimes referred to as "The Spirit," an omniscient character who comments on the human condition while sitting in a room decorated with skeletons and primitive totems. When a transvestite kills himself after being arrested for a fourth time, Inspector Warren (Lyle Talbot) visits Dr. Alton (Weiss regular Timothy Farrell) to gain insight into the death. In flashback, Alton relates two stories. The first is about Glen, a transvestite engaged to Barbara but afraid to tell his fiancée about his desire to wear women's clothing. Glen seeks council from another transvestite and has terrible dreams in which he is accosted by odd people and the devil. Glen tells Barbara about his "other self," Glenda, and the understanding Barbara gives him her angora sweater, which he

has long coveted. Alton then launches into the tale of Alan, whose mother wanted a little girl. While recovering from his wounds in a military hospital during the war, Alan learns about sex-change operations. He consults doctors and is found to be a "pseudohermaphrodite," outwardly a male but also possessing undeveloped female genitals. Because he has always felt like a woman, Alan has a sex-change operation and becomes Ann. Alton returns to Glen's psychodrama, explaining how Glen sought out his help. In therapy, Alton discovered that Glen's father didn't love him and that Glen's mother had hated her father. As a result, she gave all her love to Glen's sister. In an effort to gain some of that affection, Glen decided to become a daughter, creating "Glenda." Alton told Glen that he could only kill Glenda by transferring her characteristics to Barbara, which he does, and the two marry. Warren is left to wonder about the other, "less fortunate Glens the world over," a sentiment echoed by Lugosi as the delirious tale concludes.

Wood played Glen under the pseudonym Daniel Davis. He had long been a transvestite, and one of the key tales in Wood lore is how as a Marine in World War II he participated in the invasion of a South Pacific island wearing pink panties and a bra beneath his uniform.[136] A number of other transvestites had roles in the film, and producer Weiss even got into the act, appearing in a nonspeaking bit as a building super who shows police to the body of the suicide. Due to Wood's own proclivities, Glen's transvestism and Alan's transsexuality are treated sympathetically; the two conditions are presented as pathological but treatable. Through science—psychiatry in Glen's case and modern surgery in Alan's—both are capable of leading productive lives once their desire is reoriented. Dr. Alton explains that when Glen can transfer Glenda's characteristics to Barbara he will lead a happy life, presumably becoming a good father and husband. And even though Alan will not be able to have children, by surgically putting his body "right" he too will be able to lead a normal life.[137] An implicit hierarchy of deviant desire is constructed within the film, with the "curable" transvestism and transsexuality at the top and homosexuality at the bottom. Alton comments in no uncertain terms that "Glen is *not* a homosexual." He also condescendingly mentions that at times homosexuals dress as women to attract men, the implication being that gay men must resort to duplicity to find partners. The tensions between individual desire and the impulse to be "normal" are clearly conveyed in spite of the film's hodgepodge structure.

A similar pattern is evident in *The Third Sex,* a German import about

homosexuality from 1958. Klaus Teichmann, a high school student, has fallen in with a pack of homosexuals, including his classmate Manfred and Dr. Winkler, a middle-aged art dealer. The film presents homosexuality as a contagious, if treatable, condition if it is caught in its early stages. If not arrested, it leads to a dissipated intellectualism practiced by Manfred, Winkler, and their crowd, who spend time engaging in arid conversations about aesthetics and languidly contemplating beauty. Klaus's mother consults with a doctor who tells her that her son must have a woman if there is to be any hope. Mrs. Teichmann encourages the family's attractive young housekeeper, Gerta, to pursue her amorous interest in the teen. While the parents are conveniently out of town for a week, Klaus and Gerta become sexually involved with each other. Klaus's liaison with Gerta and his mother's "procurement" of the girl for him, both of which would have been condemned in earlier exploitation films, were presented as defensible in the late 1950s. By rejecting an unproductive form of desire (homosexuality) and embracing desire that will maintain the consumer-based economic and social order, what would once have been presented as a sin has become a therapeutic means of preserving the new status quo. In similar fashion, *Please Don't Touch Me* (1959) includes hypnosis and psychotherapy coming to the aid of a young woman whose marriage may crumble because of her frigidity, the result of an assault she suffered as a teenager. By film's end, her problem has been cured by her therapist (played by cowboy star Al "Lash" La Rue) and she announces to her mother that she and her husband are "planning an addition."

If there was some hope for homosexuals, there was none for the sexual psychopath, as illustrated in films like *Violated!* (1953) and *The Lonely Sex* (1959). In *The Lonely Sex,* a maladjusted loner identified only as "the man" kills a woman who laughs at his advances. We discover that as a youth he was encouraged by a group of friends to participate in a club initiation that included having sex with a woman. Unable to perform, he was held up to ridicule by his cohorts and by his father, who heard about the incident. "The man" is apparently ambivalent about his sexual orientation, and his continued efforts to focus on women result in increasingly disturbed behavior.[138] He cannot hold a job and becomes a peeping tom and a murderer. Anticipating John Fowles's novel *The Collector* by several years, the loner then kidnaps Annabelle, the daughter of Dr. Greene, and holds her in the isolated toolshed he calls home, hoping to win her over. He is eventually chased by the doctor and shot down by Matt Wyler, the

**38** The amorous overtures of "the man" (Karl Light) are rejected by a woman in the park in this frame blow-up from *The Lonely Sex* (1959). His sexual confusion prevents him from being integrated into the consumer culture.

boarder who lives with Annabelle and her father—and who is also a peeping tom.

We can see "the man's" violent death as the retribution for murder that we often find in motion pictures. But his death also operates at the educational/discursive level of 1950s hygiene films in its treatment of sexual pathology. Unlike Glen/Glenda, Alan/Ann, Klaus, or Viki in *Please Don't Touch Me,* the unnamed man in *The Lonely Sex* cannot enter into the role of consumer because his desire is undirected and uncontrolled. When Wyler and Dr. Greene discuss the crime in the park, Wyler asserts that the person responsible for the murder could be "cured" with "a good flogging." The psychiatrist responds, "He doesn't know what he wants. His twisted impulses drive him where he doesn't want to go." His resistance or inability to enter the proper position as a postwar consumer marks him as Other, someone who will not be able to integrate into society's mainstream. Without scientific intervention he is unable to redirect his desire into acceptable channels and is thus worthy of death. As Wyler tells Annabelle after he shoots the man, "Beasts like that deserve to be destroyed." The stigmatization of "perverse," unmanly behaviors served to legitimize "less violent, but previously taboo, sexual acts."[139] Although not as pro-

nounced, the nostalgia trope continued to run through the hygiene films of the 1950s, expressed by having desire limited to its heterosexual manifestation, even if its expression was altered with the aid of medical technology, as with Alan/Ann in *Glen or Glenda.*

As the sphere of desire was expanded by the science of sex in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it became stratified into a hierarchy in which some forms were acceptable (the productive) and others were unacceptable (the unproductive). Sex hygiene exploitation films operated to "educate" viewers about productive forms of desire and sexual behavior that reproduced the economic status quo. Sex hygiene films were often characterized as "renegade" as they crossed the bounds of what the mainstream industry had determined to be in "good taste" as film subjects. Indeed, the producers and distributors who challenged the restrictions on their movies seemed to advocate a liberal reading of the First Amendment and, by extension, a generally liberal philosophy. But the hygiene movies belied this impression by exhibiting a strong nostalgia for the passing production-based economic system and all that it entailed. Even as the films began to acknowledge individual desire and then advocate consumption, they still maintained a nostalgia for many of the attendant features of the earlier system, including the primacy of heterogenital desire, male dominance, and the concomitant low status of women, children, and teenagers. Far from expressing a radical social agenda, sex hygiene films offered a fundamentally conservative prescription for American life in the twentieth century, one replicated in most other exploitation genres. This will become clearer as I look at drug films in the next chapter.

# 6. "The Monster That Caters to Thrill-Hungry Youth"

## *The Drug Film*

A remark heard frequently by attaches of the Strand, where *Narcotic,* sensational "dope" expose, is now in its fourth crowded week, is, "Well, I'm certainly glad that I'm not addicted to drugs."
—*San Francisco Examiner,* 1934

Much like the subject of sex, drug use has been a source of great anxiety in the United States for decades. And drug movies, like sex hygiene films, have provided the culture with a series of socially constructed deviants upon whom these anxieties can be focused. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century, narcotics and the drug user have been regularly demonized, particularly during times of national stress. The first major incidence of this pattern was the anti-opium crusade in the late 1870s. Chinese immigrants who had helped build the railroad through the western territories of the United States became surplus labor during an economic depression. The Chinese, who were paid lower wages than whites, were seen as undermining the white working-class standard of living. Opium smoking, although not initially considered a harmful or addictive practice, was directly associated with the Chinese, and as such the practice was targeted as a method for controlling a troublesome minority. San

Francisco passed the first anti-opium-smoking ordinances in 1875, and they soon became law in other areas.[1] Opium was often held up as the reason China lagged behind the West as a military, technological, intellectual, and economic power. Critics claimed that the smoking of opium had sapped China of its national will.[2] As John Helmer has suggested, even though the California legislation had little effect at the time, it established a pattern that has been repeated "in nearly every period of active agitation on the drug issue ever since."[3]

As the import of opium for smoking, and then its other forms, was restricted in the United States in the early part of this century, a new drug problem began to emerge. This problem was also linked with a minority, and its alleviation was wrapped in the cloak of progressive reform. Dr. Hamilton Wright, a specialist in tropical diseases, had become the point man in the State Department's American Opium Commission. In short order, Wright had made himself an authority on narcotic addiction and the formulation of policy to deal with it. He is often credited as the individual most responsible for the initiation of a federal drive against drugs. In 1910, Wright pointed to the use of cocaine among African Americans in the South. Claiming that its use often prompted blacks to commit rape and other violent acts, Wright also linked the drug with "criminal classes," especially those involved in white slavery, and said that it threatened to creep into the higher social ranks.[4] For a number of years, anecdotes about cocaine-crazed blacks with superhuman strength had stirred fears among whites, particularly in the South. The peak of lynchings, Jim Crow laws, and voting restrictions coincided with white anxiety over the cocainized black.[5] As David F. Musto has suggested, evidence does not indicate that cocaine caused a crime wave among Southern blacks, "but rather that anticipation of black rebellion inspired white alarm."[6] Laws to restrict narcotics and narcotic users were then, to a large extent, aimed at minority control. Richard Bonnie and Charles Whitebread have noted that although progressive reforms were not overtly nativistic, a large segment of the progressive movement implicitly believed in the moral superiority of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, a superiority signaled by their ability to assimilate diverse cultural groups. When assimilation was difficult or "whenever fear—of economic adversity, internal subversion, or international militarism—gripped the population, national wrath turned toward the foreign born."[7]

At the same time, efforts to criminalize narcotics were part of the larger progressive movement to purify the cities, business, and politics. Such

reform necessitated the elimination of bad corporate and political habits, and because progress toward that end depended on the actions of individuals, personal behaviors that prevented participation in reform and the day-to-day operations of complex democratic and economic systems had to be swept away. The reformers, according to Bonnie and Whitebread, "aimed to remove the urban vices impeding individual productivity and perfection."[8] The passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906 was the first major federal step toward drug control. The legislation did not ban narcotics but required medicines that contained them to say so on their labels and indicate the quantity of the drug contained.[9] Negotiations among Hamilton Wright, the American Medical Association, the American Pharmaceutical Association, other industry and trade groups, and Congress, as well as input from foreign governments, finally led to the passage of the Harrison Narcotics Act, signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson in December 1914.[10] The Harrison Act regulated the production, importation, and sale of opiates and cocaine through a system of registration and taxation; anything outside the system of observation and control was potentially criminal. Moreover, the Harrison Act codified a national policy of restricting the availability of "habit-forming" substances.[11] This could not have been accomplished without the emergence of consensus about who was to blame for America's drug problem.

Several years earlier, meetings between the United States and foreign governments had failed because American representatives had been unable to convince members of other delegations that use of opiates for other than medical purposes was immoral and evil.[12] The Foster Bill, a precursor to the Harrison Act, had gone down to defeat in 1911 in part because no consensus for blame had emerged. Physicians and pharmacists were often implicated in the problem, but as constituencies with growing power and prestige, their culpability was soon disregarded as attention focused on the drug user. Although the words "addict" and "addiction" did not appear in the Harrison Narcotics Act, by the time it was signed into law a new profile of the narcotic addict had formed.

The dominant older images of drug users had been of the iatrogenically addicted Civil War veteran, the upper-middle-class matron, and the unfortunate child who had been given too much patent medicine. Most individuals in these situations were still able to function at work and at home as long as they had access to maintenance levels of the drugs from their physician or the local pharmacist. Because these addicts had not chosen their plight they were to be pitied. But the emergent addict profile was far

different. The new breed of addict was an able-bodied, city-dwelling young male who belonged to the lower, if not "criminal," classes.[13] Such people chose to use narcotics for pleasure, and

> as to the undesirability and immorality of the use of opiates or cocaine for pleasure, there was no debate. Such use was inconsistent with the entire ideology guiding public policy during this period. The "narcotic" drug severely impeded individual participation in the economic and political systems by enslaving its unsupervised users in the clutches of addiction. Increasingly associated with the slothful and immoral "criminal classes" who degraded the nation's cities, narcotics use threatened to retard national growth with pauperism, moral degeneracy, and crime. A consensus had emerged: the non-medical use of "narcotics" was a cancer which had to be removed entirely from the social organism.[14]

The drug habit was no longer viewed as an unfortunate condition that the user could deal with without becoming a burden on society. Drug use was suddenly seen as a threat to productivity and political vitality, and the Harrison Act became an instrument to undermine the penchant for sloth and the pursuit of individual pleasure that the new addicts seemed to embody.

Helping define this new addict profile and positing the ideology of drug use as the antithesis of productivity were a number of motion pictures made around the period of the Harrison Narcotics Act's passage. Among these were *The Cocaine Traffic* (Lubin, 1914, aka *The Drug Terror*), *The Drug Traffic* (Eclair, 1914), *The Derelict* (Kalem, 1914), *The Secret Sin* (Famous Players, 1915), and *The Devil's Needle* (Fine Arts, 1916). Most of these films, and others in the pre–World War I cycle of drug movies, featured middle- or upper-class individuals abusing a variety of substances and eventually becoming derelicts.[15] The movies owed a greater dramatic debt to old temperance tracts like *Ten Nights in a Barroom* than to the contemporary social realities of drug use.[16]

The films were not especially accurate with the facts. *The Drug Terror* claimed that heroin and cocaine produced identical physiological effects, when in fact heroin has a narcotizing effect and cocaine is a stimulant. Most films had drugs gnawing away at the productive capacity of the middle and upper-middle classes, a contention not borne out by contemporary reality. Such distinctions were lost on a public that could project onto the drug addict many of the same fears it felt of the prostitute and venereal disease carrier. Society's problems could more easily be ascribed to "deviants" who breached moral boundaries than to a system that main-

tained social and economic inequities. Creating laws to regulate the behavior of a powerless class of Others was a more palatable remedy than making radical changes in a system of industrial capitalism that was creating a consumer culture. By 1918, drug films were on the wane, exhausted as much by a glut on the market as by the U.S. entry into World War I and the more immediate threat posed by VD. Following the war, narcotics use was swept out of the roster of acceptable film subjects by the Thirteen Points and Standards. Such impropriety was a siren song for the exploiteer.

## The Twenties

With the war over, attention returned to domestic problems and drug use regained its place on that list. In spite of the Harrison Act, state laws were not uniform and some still permitted the sale of cocaine without a physician's prescription. The drug menace was still "a serious and growing evil," according to some critics.[17] The Harrison Act was strengthened in 1918, but estimates of a million drug addicts in the country signaled a worsening situation. Although that figure was exaggerated, concerns were that Prohibition and its enforcement would bring about a real increase in narcotic use.[18] In the years following the implementation of the Harrison Act, the Treasury and Justice Departments had worked with law enforcement agencies and the courts to criminalize the maintenance of addicts through physicians' prescriptions, an effort that culminated in the Supreme Court's 1919 decision forbidding nonmedical maintenance. The Red Scare of 1919–1920 bred a general climate in which dissent was not tolerated, and as Musto has pointed out, with narcotic use officially described as "leading to antisocial acts and individual degeneracy," the public readily opposed anyone who advocated maintenance of the "evil."[19] The theme of internal subversion recurred throughout the 1920s, expressed in one article with the sentiment, "The work in hand then is to rid the country of the leeches who are sucking at the very lifeblood of American stability."[20]

Lay groups began to spring up to fight the narcotic menace, including three started by Prohibition propagandist Richmond P. Hobson: the International Narcotic Education Association (1923), the World Conference on Narcotic Education (1926), and the World Narcotic Defense Association (1927). Hobson, never a slave to facts, painted a picture of a nation awash in drugs and popularized the notion that narcotics prompted crime and caused their users to commit unspeakable acts. He actively promoted the

metaphor of drug addiction as a communicable contagion less curable than leprosy.[21] Even though federal officials may have disagreed with Hobson's figures and tactics, the popular press and radio became willing tools in his cause.

A 1924 *Harper's* article rigorously followed the Hobson line. It may have also served to date his influence on the drug issue, for it noted the sudden upsurge in the drug problem a year earlier, coincidentally the year that Hobson founded his first organization: "Early in the spring of 1923, after the problem had been slumbering for a number of years, the entire country was aroused by the sudden increase in smuggling of narcotic drugs, the growing number of addicts, and the appalling rise in crime which physicians and penal authorities laid directly to the door of habit-forming drugs."[22] As Musto has indicated, the information disseminated by Hobson's groups was often inaccurate, but they dominated the discourse and helped forge the prevailing image of addiction that was tainted with fear and disgust. Not long after Hobson's efforts began, Arthur M. Smith of the Detroit *News* characterized drug users as "too emaciated and nervously disorganized to take any job and hold it." He continued, "Here is a great army of diseased people, robbed of moral sense, if they ever had any—without it anyhow—physically and mentally unfit for economic or social use, and every one of them, if not cured or checked, liable to make other addicts."[23]

There were occasional challenges in the press to this picture of the drug addict. One of the few appeared in an article by Robert A. Schless in *The American Mercury* in 1925. "One pictures a wild-eyed trembling wretch, who jumps at a shadow," wrote Schless. "One sees instead a group of rather quiet and easy-going men and women who look no more like 'dopers' than criminals resemble the so-called criminal-type."[24] Schless challenged the views that sex crimes were committed by drug users and that narcotics caused more physical damage than alcohol. He suggested that use among blacks was caused to some degree by Southern plantation owners who tried "to chain them to their source of supply."[25] Schless placed blame for the increasing drug problem on the Harrison Act, which he concluded had created the new and profitable role of dope peddler. The addict was forced to turn to crime to buy the now costly drugs from a pusher, when once they could be obtained cheaply from a druggist. Dope peddlers, unlike pharmacists and physicians, had economic incentive to create more users. In attacking the "unsound theories of our legislators," Schless concluded by mentioning the growing number of reform institu-

tions where addicts were weaned from narcotics and returned to health: "They step out of the reformatory gate vigorous and restored—and ready to be accosted by another peddler."[26] In his carefully reasoned analysis of the drug situation and challenge to the standard view of addicts and addiction, Schless did not conform to the prevailing sentiments and thus remained a whisper against the roar of antidrug propaganda, propaganda that the movies played an increasingly important role in disseminating.

In 1923 alone at least four exploitation movies on drug addiction were released. Hobson's efforts may have accounted for some of the impetus to create new films on the issue. The other major factor was the drug-related death of film star and director Wallace Reid in January 1923. Reid had been a popular matinee idol for several years when he was committed to Banksia Place Sanitarium in March 1922, the same month Will Hays was appointed czar to clean up Hollywood. The source of Reid's morphine addiction was unclear, possibly a back injury sustained during production, a spinal problem that resulted from a train wreck, or the "help" of another actor who tried to alleviate Reid's exhaustion. Reid's actress wife, Dorothy Davenport, gave police a list of "Bohemians" at the time of his death, whom she said dragged him into addiction. After her husband's death, Davenport became known professionally as Mrs. Wallace Reid as she battled drugs and stumped for a number of social causes.

On the heels of Reid's demise came two movies, made quickly and intended to cash in on the notoriety of the case. No information remains on Warning Films' *The Drug Monster,* released in the spring of 1923, although it apparently contained scenes of opium smoking. *The Drug Traffic,* also presented in the spring of 1923, by Sol Lesser, was produced and directed by Irving Cummings, who later helmed Shirley Temple films for Fox. It concerned a successful surgeon who begins taking drugs to keep up with the demands of his career and social obligations. His slide into addiction leads to life in the slums and then to jail. Realizing that his life means nothing, he tries to quit cold turkey but dies in withdrawal. Neither film was reviewed extensively, nor did either apparently receive wide play. Most states with censorship would not have passed them, and the Hays Office, smarting over Reid's death and the industry's tarnished image, frowned on the subject. Some had implicated the studios in Reid's addiction. We may never know whether the effects of a grinding production schedule or an injury caused by studio negligence made the actor turn to morphine. However, we can assume that *Human Wreckage* (1923) was an attempt to atone for the perception that Hollywood and the lifestyles of its stars were

in some way responsible for Reid's premature demise. Mrs. Reid attended a conference on narcotics in Washington with Hearst newspaper reporter Adela Rogers St. Johns and then returned to Hollywood to prepare a film with an antidrug message. Thomas H. Ince agreed to produce the movie, which was granted a special dispensation by Hays.

*Human Wreckage* fell into a gray area between legitimate Hollywood movies and exploitation films. Though sanctioned by Hays and the industry, Mrs. Reid's effort featured many exploitation conventions, including a square-up about the viciousness and power of dope rings. The case of Jimmy Brown, a heroin addict who has stolen a watch to pay for his habit, is brought to Ethel McFarland (played by Mrs. Reid), the wife of prominent attorney Alan McFarland. He takes the case and Jimmy is acquitted because he was not "morally responsible." McFarland, who has been driving himself too hard, is introduced to morphine by a doctor at his club. Soon he's hooked, getting his morphine from dope peddlers and being blackmailed into representing drug dealers at trial. A drive to stamp out the dope ring ensues, and Jimmy Brown, now a taxi driver, kills himself and the chief pusher in a wreck with a locomotive. McFarland makes a plea for strong antidrug laws and Mrs. Reid appears at the end of the film imploring viewers for help in her crusade.[27] In spite of cooperation with the Los Angeles Anti-narcotic League, *Human Wreckage* was little different from its predecessors. According to *Variety,* "It's perfunctory and futile, written no better nor worse than the others, and hardly could have been written in any other way, played about the same and with the same result—nothing."[28] Mrs. Reid's film soon had additional competition. *The Greatest Menace* was actually completed prior to *Human Wreckage,* but according to its producer, independent Al Rogell, Ince used his considerable influence to delay release of the movie and to prevent its review in the trades while *Human Wreckage* was being completed. In *The Greatest Menace,* Charles Wrightson, son of the D.A., spends time with drug addicts, intending to write about "reality." Ignoring the warnings of his sister, who is a lawyer, he becomes addicted and is arrested for the murder of the girl who introduced him to drugs. His father and sister plan to prosecute the case until they learn that Charles is the defendant. With his sister defending him, Charles is acquitted and reunited with his family.[29] Because the mix of drug addicts and lawyers was similar to *Human Wreckage,* Rogell's account of Ince's efforts to quash *The Greatest Menace* has some credibility.

From the earliest examples prior to World War I to entries made in the

**39** An ad for *The Greatest Menace* (1923) offered an illustration of what had become the dominant addict profile: a young, city-dwelling male who was a member of the "criminal class."

late 1950s and beyond, drug films displayed a remarkably consistent position. Although narcotic addiction was in truth a problem most prevalent in the underclasses, movies claimed its real threat to the nation's stability was in its encroachment into the economically and culturally productive middle and upper classes. Laborers in the working class were replaceable; elimination of the "criminal classes" through the terminus of drug-induced death was no great social loss. But the loss of a single doctor, lawyer, businessman, or potentially productive middle-class youth was a boundless evil. Tied to the drug issue were many of the same fears that had been contained in the ideology of "race suicide." The native-born, white, Protestant population dreaded the possibility that it would be forced to support a racially and ethnically diverse underclass that leeched away their wealth and personal privilege.

It was probably only a matter of time before the paranoia surrounding drug use would lead exploitation filmmakers back to impose the good country/evil city framework on a drug film. The next major drug film, Willis Kent's *The Pace That Kills* (1928), contrasted the country, with its pastoral image of home and benign control exerted by a loving if naïve family, with the evils of the big city. Opening scenes of the film show the bucolic countryside as farmers make hay in the sun-drenched fields. Eddie and his sweetheart, Maryjane, profess their love for each other under the sheltering limbs of a lush tree. His mother announces that he has received a letter from the city and that his "big chance has come." She says it will also be his opportunity to look for his sister, Grace, who went off to the city and never returned. Tearful good-byes are made and Eddie heads off. His mother asks, "I wonder what will happen to my boy! So many good clean boys leave home and never return."

In the city, Eddie takes his job in the wrapping and delivery section of a large department store. He meets Fanny, who is soon plying him with cocaine in the guise of a headache cure. At a nightclub, Eddie sees his sister with the King of the Underworld, but she denies knowing him. The next day at the store, Snowy the peddler delivers a dose of cocaine to Fanny. Titles describe the thin, shifty character as the "arch fiend of society! You will find him next door, in your community, in your offices, your theaters, your stores." Eddie asks Fanny for more cocaine and titles inform us "One of the most dangerous features of the dope evil is that each addict has the burning desire to induce all of his—or her—associates to 'try it just once.' And experience teaches us that after two or three trials the initiate becomes an addict." Eddie and Fanny are hooked, fired from their jobs, and graduate from cocaine to morphine, then smoking opium, and finally heroin, "the drug that soothes and stimulates while destroying the soul." Fanny prostitutes herself to get money to buy Eddie a fix. In an opium den, Eddie meets his sister, on the run for killing the King of the Underworld. She asks, "Why did you come to the city?" Eddie replies, "I came to find you, Grace, and take you home." The den is raided and Eddie escapes only to return to Fanny, who tells him she is pregnant. He reacts in horror: "God—a baby born to a dope fiend!" While Eddie sleeps off a fix, Fanny goes to the dock and jumps into the river. Eddie reads about her death in the paper and goes to the same dock, where he dives into the murky water calling, "Fanny honey, I'm coming." A final title asks "How many mothers—how many sweethearts are waiting for the boys who will never

come home? What can you do about it? Write your Senator and lend your support for the Porter Bill for the segregation and hospitalization of narcotic addicts."[30] The Porter Bill, which established federal narcotic farms, or hospitals as they would later be called, passed and became effective in January 1929, although the first institution did not open until 1935 in Lexington, Kentucky.[31]

As in the sex hygiene films, the stigmatized Other in dope movies finds the social spaces in which he or she is allowed to move increasingly restricted. By the end of *The Pace That Kills,* Eddie and Fanny are limited to skid row and their filthy apartment. The Porter Bill was designed to legislate the dramatic stigmatization that took place in films by segregating addicts from the general population in an effort to contain the contagion and prevent its spread to the normal population. But testimony at hearings on the bill made it clear that only some addicts had to be isolated. John Joseph Kindred, a New York physician and congressman, stated that addicts "among the so-called better classes . . . should receive proper medical treatment, if possible, outside of public institutions, and without the publicity of legal commitment, provided such legal detention is not absolutely necessary."[32] Lower-class addicts were self-indulgent, to be reviled and removed from society, whereas addicts from the "better classes" were deserving of pity and special treatment.

*The Pace That Kills* located the dope evil as an exclusively urban problem, which, to a great extent, it was. But the cause of the problem was never explored. Instead, Kent (who may have written the story) and directors Norton S. Parker and William A. O'Connor construct the city as an intrinsically evil place where dope and peddlers flourish as naturally as weeds in the cracks of a sidewalk. To compound matters, people openly flout Prohibition laws. The clean air and hard work in the country were no match for the city's corrosive influence, so it comes as no surprise that Eddie commits suicide. *The Pace That Kills*' antidrug message was completely intertwined with its antiurban sentiments. One other aspect of the film is worth noting. The movie presents cocaine as a stepping stone to other drugs. This feature would be picked up by marijuana films of the 1930s and played an important role in the discourse on that drug. Kent remade *The Pace That Kills* in 1935 without any substantial changes. Not only does this indicate that Kent thought that the property had done well enough at the box office to warrant a sound version; it also suggests that little had changed in the perceptions of drug use and addicts.

## The Thirties

Whether it was known as hemp, cannabis, marijuana, or any of its myriad street names, the innocent-looking roadside weed, as it was often described, became America's new drug menace in the 1930s. Three exploitation pictures, *Marihuana* (1936), *Reefer Madness* (1936), and *Assassin of Youth* (1937), helped shape several important aspects of the public perception of marijuana that dominated into the 1960s, elements of which persist today. Marijuana was introduced in motion pictures as early as 1924 in *Notch Number One,* a western in which its use at a ranch leads to violence and death. That film was probably not widely seen and may have been given more play in theaters where westerns dominated than on the exploitation circuit. The majority of Americans were introduced to marijuana through songs, notably those in two Paramount features. In 1933 Cab Calloway sang about the "Reefer Man" in a segment of the all-star comedy *International House,* and the next year "Sweet Marijuana" was the subject of a Gertrude Michael number in *Murder at the Vanities.*[33]

During the 1930s, the hemp plant underwent a rapid metamorphosis in the United States. Since colonial days it had been a cash crop used for fiber, birdseed, and as an oil for paints and varnishes. Despite doper lore that George Washington liked to take a few hits after a hard day at Mount Vernon, most literature indicates that the practice of smoking marijuana entered the country through the Southwest in the early part of the century with migrant Mexican laborers who used the weed as a relaxant and folk remedy. Although the labor of the Mexicans was welcome, as a group they were also "feared as a source of crime and deviant social behavior," feelings that intensified as their labor became surplus during the Depression—a situation analogous to that of the Chinese in the 1870s.[34] Moreover, marijuana's use among poor blacks in gulf port cities, particularly New Orleans, grew during the 1920s.[35] By 1931 efforts by Dr. A. E. Fossier and New Orleans District Attorney Eugene Stanley linked the use of the weed to criminals. Fossier asserted that the use of marijuana produced deviants, rather than the alternative possibility that some criminals happened to be marijuana smokers.[36] This began the transformation of the benign hemp plant into marijuana, an insidious weed from Mexico that threatened to enslave America's youth, turning those who smoked it into sexually depraved murder machines. Of course, the plant had not changed, but the name and the cultural Otherness associated with its minority users served

to create a threat. The popular press, law enforcement officials, the medical profession, reformers, and exploitation movies worked in concert to construct a new drug menace and a fresh moral panic.

Marijuana burst into the public consciousness in the mid-1930s. In its efforts to establish and increase enforcement of state and local marijuana laws, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) and its commissioner Harry Anslinger mounted a vigorous campaign to alert the public to the alleged dangers of the drug. Anslinger, the son of Swiss immigrants, had worked as a railroad detective and for the War Department before taking a position with the State Department. Assigned to the Bahamas in 1926, he took an active role in the enforcement of Prohibition laws, as the islands were a major post for bootleg operations. His success in negotiating greater cooperation with the British led to a position in the Treasury Department as head of the Division of Foreign Control of the Prohibition Unit. There, Anslinger advocated severe penalties for violations of the Volstead Act, an advocacy that carried over to his work with narcotics. Following passage of the Porter Bill, an independent Bureau of Narcotics was formed under the Treasury Department in June 1930 and Anslinger was appointed as its chief.[37]

Debates continue about whether Anslinger began the FBN campaign against marijuana in response to regional anti-Mexican sentiment, as part of a strategy to gain status for the Bureau in the face of the mountainous positive press J. Edgar Hoover was engineering for the FBI, or to ensure the survival and growth of the FBN.[38] We do know that Anslinger was initially disinclined to add marijuana to the list of federally controlled drugs.[39] Whatever the reason, the commissioner eventually relented and led the charge in the war on marijuana. He had succeeded in establishing a strong political base from which he was immune to opposition both within and outside the federal government.[40] Evidence of Anslinger's and the FBN's influence on the marijuana issue can best be seen in the number of magazine articles during the mid-1930s, which went from none before 1935 to over twenty in the next four years; fully half showed the influence of the Bureau on the public perception of marijuana.[41] The articles were designed to arouse the public to the dangers of marijuana and, according to Howard Becker, they "identified use of the drug as a violation of the value of self-control and the prohibition of the search for 'illicit pleasure,' thus legitimizing the drive against marijuana in the eyes of the public."[42] Similar appeals had been used by factions seeking the prohibition of alcohol and opiates.

Stories about marijuana's origins and contemporary use were repeated

as fact so often that they were never questioned. Anslinger often recounted the etymology of the word "assassin," which he claimed was rooted in the myth of the eleventh-century Persian "Assassins." According to the commissioner, the term was actually a corruption of the word "hashshashin" and the Persian sect committed their barbarous acts under the influence of marijuana or hashish. Anslinger's excursion into linguistics has since been resoundingly discredited, notably by Lester Grinspoon.[43] But during the 1930s the assassin myth was swallowed whole and used as evidence that marijuana caused violent behavior. Magazines such as *Popular Science, American Mercury,* and *Christian Century* repeated the tale in articles on the dangers of marijuana while presenting it as a drug of racial minorities and elements on society's fringes.

According to these articles, the prime reason for criminalizing the weed was its potential to induce violent behavior, which eventually terminated in irreversible insanity. One of the most oft-repeated stories concerned a Florida youth who killed his family with an ax when he hallucinated that he was being pursued by people who wanted to hack off his arms.[44] Stories of unprovoked murder pepper the articles and most contain at least one tale of sexual assault. Anslinger's array of atrocities often began with rape and ended with murder.[45] Describing the bust of a dope den in Detroit, Anslinger wrote about the haul of sixty marijuana cigarettes, "enough fodder," he claimed, "for sixty murders."[46] Prejudices were exploited in magazine articles and booklets. A 1938 piece in *Christian Century* claimed, "In some districts inhabited by Latin Americans, Filipinos, Spaniards and Negroes, half the violent crimes are attributed to marijuana craze."[47] The *American Mercury* suggested that "some Harlemites smoke the weed as an aphrodisiac," and the *Literary Digest* described mixed-race parties where "sensuous pleasure is the beginning and the end."[48] The stories contained a barely hidden horror over the mingling of the races, especially if that mingling led to sexual union. Anslinger reportedly would often relate stories with a racist slant: pot parties from which white women emerged impregnated by black men, the rape of children by blacks, and more.[49] By linking marijuana with Mexican laborers, black musicians, bohemians, and criminals, antimarijuana forces were able to play on the fears of white middle America. The weed's ultimate danger was shown to be its potential spread to white, middle-class children. Virtually all articles in the popular press emphasized that peddlers were selling the weed to youngsters in primary and secondary schools, a fact evinced by many article

titles: "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," "Marijuana Menaces Youth," and "Youth Gone Loco."

Implicit in the arguments for the control of the drug was that the minorities who used marijuana were in some way unproductive. For middle America, the Mexican migrant farmworkers identified as the original source of the drug were at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum, jazz music was not yet respectable (and blacks who played it even less so), and "Bohemian" was hardly a vaunted job classification. The fear that marijuana use by white youth would lead to their "unproductivity," either through lethargy or its crime-inducing effects, was palpable in the articles. Such stories also displayed a mistrust of any kind of physical pleasure that was inevitably linked, directly or indirectly, to sex. The idea that young people might have their sexual instincts unleashed by the use of a drug, that they might engage in adult behaviors, played on growing insecurities about the loss of parental influence and control. Yet in spite of all the intense propaganda about youth and reefers, all indications are that marijuana use prior to the 1960s was neither large-scale nor prevalent among adolescents.[50]

The FBN and the press may have led the way in shaping perceptions about marijuana and its users, but when exploitation films began to take on the topic, they were not content to simply follow the FBN's lead. Dwain Esper and his screenwriter and wife, Hildegarde, milked the drug theme more than anyone else in the 1930s. This may have been in part because of Hildegarde Esper's personal experience: "I knew enough about drug addicts. I had an uncle that smoked opium and he was the one that supported us when I was a little kid and my father died. . . . So I got to doing a lot of things for him and learned a lot about narcotics that people don't usually know. Then I got so I actually wanted to know what these drugs consisted of, so I got busy and did some research."[51] During the 1930s, the Espers produced at least three films that dealt with drug use, *Sinister Harvest, Narcotic* (both 1933) and *Marihuana* (1936), the film that would come to be a mainstay for them and the first to directly deal with pot since *Notch Number One. Sinister Harvest* was a short comprising documentary footage that Mrs. Esper claimed was given to them by Anslinger. It purported to show the debilitating effects of hashish on Egyptian men and women as well as the methods employed in smuggling the drug. Scenes in the film showed packets of hashish being concealed in fruit and under flaps of hair on camels. The short was often paired with one of their features.

**40** The connection between drug use and illicit sexual pleasure was evident in ads for *Narcotic* (1933). (Something Weird Video Collection)

*Narcotic* dealt with a range of narcotics, including old standbys like opium as well as "newer" drugs such as heroin and marijuana. Hildegarde Esper recalled that the central story of *Narcotic* "was about a doctor that got hooked, which quite a few doctors do. I don't know that they do so much now but they used to. And I had someone in our family who was a doctor who was hooked on drugs so I had a little first-hand knowledge. I wrote a couple of scripts using background of theirs. And they didn't care, they were glad to see me make something of it."[52] *Narcotic* owed at least as much to older dope films, especially *The Drug Traffic* (1923), as to stories about Mrs. Esper's relatives. Following a square-up, the film opens with a letter addressed to "Dwain," which states, "You can take it out of the body, but you can't get it out of the mind . . . but I have found a way." The missive is signed by "Will." Esper then presents the tale of Dr. William G. Davis,[53] a turn-of-the-century physician, who begins smoking opium with his Chinese friend, Gee Woo, to relieve the pressures of his job. Davis sinks into opium addiction and decides to help pay for his habit by concocting a

patent medicine. Davis's wife and Gee Woo consult a federal narcotics agent about the doctor's addiction. He takes the cure, only to relapse when he is injured by a doped-up cabbie in a hit-and-run accident. During his recovery, Davis becomes addicted to heroin. His wife leaves him and he hits the medicine show circuit selling his cure-all, "Tiger Fat." His condition deteriorates. Davis becomes a decrepit slave to the drugs, finally turning a gun on himself to relieve his misery.[54]

*Narcotic* is an interesting film for several reasons. From a production standpoint it is rather elaborate for an exploitation movie and especially for an Esper film. It features several complicated camera setups (looking out into a room from behind a blaze in a fireplace; extreme low-angle shots of Davis listening to a street huckster). It is a period film, perhaps the only pre-1960 exploitation film to fall into that category. Moreover, it is probably the only dope film from the 1930s that graphically depicts the use of smoking opium as well as snorting cocaine and close-ups of needles entering veins to inject narcotics. Most of this takes place in a party scene where a group of elegant, upper-crust dopers sample a tray of drugs, including marijuana. Like most of its predecessors, but unlike the marijuana films that would soon follow, *Narcotic* focused on adult addiction.

Esper's motion pictures always promoted an ethic of hard work and the dangers of being seduced by the fast life. Gee Woo serves as Esper's mouthpiece in *Narcotic,* spouting epigrams like Charlie Chan. He observes that opium smoking is a mere diversion for the Chinese but that "[Westerners] are overwhelmed with progress and speed which might make any diversion become a vice." He later intones, "Labor is the only prayer that is ever answered." This seems to have been the philosophy of Esper, a former carny and self-made contractor who had built a career in motion pictures from scratch, someone who traveled the country with his movies and was involved with every aspect of their production, distribution, and exhibition. Even though Gee Woo takes Davis to his first opium den for "diversion," he doesn't function as a typical exploitation Corrupter and is not depicted as being culpable in the doctor's addiction. In *Narcotic,* Davis's moral laxity is to blame; his desire to escape from the demands and stresses of his profession are at the root of his character flaw.

The marijuana movies that followed in the middle part of the decade featured young protagonists and reinforced the notion that drugs were a problem of youth. *Marihuana* was released in 1936 by the Espers. It follows the story of Burma Roberts, an upper-middle-class high school girl who lives with her mother and her sister Elaine, who is engaged to wealthy

**41** Burma Roberts (Harley Wood) giggles insanely after taking her first toke of weed in this frame enlargement from *Marihuana* (1936). Soon she is dragging her reluctant boyfriend to the beach for a romantic encounter that leads to her pregnancy and dependence on dope.

Morgan Stewart.[55] Burma gripes that Elaine gets all the attention, so she begins to spend time with a fast crowd at a dance hall where she meets Tony, a gangster and dope dealer. Tony invites the kids to hold a weenie roast at his beach house, where they drink and dance wildly. The pusher passes around marijuana, which causes the young women to laugh hysterically and drop their inhibitions. Burma drags her boyfriend to the beach and makes love to him while other women skinny-dip in the surf. Burma eventually discovers that she is pregnant and leaves home, taking up with Tony. She becomes his top pusher and a heroin addict herself, hatching a scheme to kidnap Elaine and Morgan's child. Upon discovering that the child is the baby she gave up for adoption, Burma dies—from a self-induced drug overdose.

*Marihuana* was soon joined by other films. *Reefer Madness,* originally known as *The Burning Question* or *Tell Your Children,* was produced by G&H and follows a group of high school students who become marijuana users.[56] Dr. Alfred Carroll tells a group of parents and teachers about Mae Coleman, who ran a dope center in her apartment. Jimmy kills a man while driving under the influence of pot. His sister Mary is almost raped by Ralph, another dope fiend. Mary's boyfriend Bill comes to her aid with

a gun—but since he is high as well, he kills Mary instead of the would-be rapist. Ralph goes hopelessly insane, the chief dope dealer goes to jail, Ralph's girlfriend, Blanche, flies out the window of the court house to her death, and Bill is reprimanded by the judge for killing Mary.

The third pot film of the mid-1930s was BCM's *Assassin of Youth.* Yet another high school girl, Joan Barry, will inherit her grandmother's fortune if she can lead a clean life. Her cousin Linda, a pusher, tries to foil her by hooking Joan and her younger sister, Marjorie, on pot. Marjorie becomes a dope fiend and attempts to stab a young woman while under the influence at a pot party, but she is stopped by her mother and sister. Joan, with the help of Arthur, a reporter from the big city, gets enough evidence to expose Linda and the dope ring during a climactic trial at which Arthur passionately reads a warning from a newspaper: "Marijuana, scourge of our country, is reaching out like a mad killer, mowing down the youth of our land, distorting their minds and leading them into lives of degradation and crime." In typical exploitation fashion, Arthur and Joan announce their plans to marry once they have exposed the threat to the community.

In addition to the American-made films, a Mexican movie called *Marihuana* (*The Green Monster*) was also released during the period, although it appears to have had limited distribution. The film is about the efforts of the police to stop a gang engaged in the distribution of marijuana. It contains scenes of murder, poisoning, and torture, as well as the use of pot. Marijuana also played an incidental role in several other exploitation films, such as Kendis's *Paroled from the Big House* (1938), which has a marijuana "addict" as a character, and Kent's *Wages of Sin* (1938), in which the weed is offered to the heroine. All of the films accept without question the proposition that smoking marijuana was not just a bad habit, but a deadly one.

It is impossible to determine exactly how many people saw the marijuana films in the late 1930s, although box office figures in *Variety* show that the films did a healthy business. For instance, when *Marihuana* played an eighteen-day run in Minneapolis in late September and early October 1936, the film took in $8,000, with the first week described as "huge."[57] Crude calculations show that to accomplish these numbers, the 290-seat theater would have had roughly twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand admissions during the run of the film. A three-week run at Chicago's Garrick Theater in the Loop in early 1938 pulled in close to $23,000, which translates to roughly forty-five thousand admissions.[58] Given such figures,

there was ample opportunity for the attitudes, information—and misinformation—in these movies to work its way into the culture.

Like the magazine articles, the marijuana films of the 1930s played up the alleged violence-inducing capacity of marijuana. Because a major component of exploitation movies was their use of timely and sensational topics, the lurid stories about pot would have been very attractive to the exploiteers. Many of the violent acts and graphic stories circulated by the FBN that appeared in print also found their way into the exploitation movies. The ax-slaying story is recounted in *Reefer Madness,* and Blanche's suicidal leap from a window is similar to another one of the often repeated tales. *Assassin of Youth* borrowed its title from an article by Anslinger and Courtney Ryley Cooper that had appeared in the July 1937 *American Magazine* and was then reprinted in a condensed form in *The Reader's Digest.*[59] Not only did the movie use Anslinger's title, but the trailer mimicked the opening of the magazine piece. The article began with a vivid description and declaration: "The sprawled body of a young girl lay crushed on the sidewalk the other day after a plunge from the fifth story of a Chicago apartment house. Everyone called it suicide, but actually it was murder. The killer was a narcotic known to America as marijuana."[60] The trailer for *Assassin of Youth* opened with one H. P. Crane standing behind a desk, rattling off a roster of "facts" about the number of criminals addicted to marijuana. He then introduced scenes from the film, opening with a shot of a girl splayed across a sidewalk, visually realizing Anslinger's description. Accompanying the shot is a voice-over: "Suicide to most everyone, but to me it's murder by marijuana!" The trailer also depicted the confession of the ax slayer, a scene that does not appear in existing prints of the movie. The scene may have been shot and not used in the film or may have been in versions that circulated in the 1930s and were later cut.

Although obvious similarities exist between the journalistic presentation of marijuana and that of the exploitation movies, the differences between the two are interesting because they reveal the most direct evidence of the influence the films had on the general discourse about pot. The marijuana movies relied on past narcotic films as generic guides, showing drugs as a menace to the white middle and upper classes, resulting in the personal degradation, unproductivity, and economic downslide of the addict. This pattern was incorporated into the marijuana films, which differed from magazine articles in their construction of the threat of marijuana by showing it not as a potential threat to white, middle-class children, but as an existing evil. Though pushers may have been character-

**42** "Suicide to most everyone, but to me it's murder by marijuana!" *Assassin of Youth* (1937) not only borrowed its title from an article by Federal Bureau of Narcotics Commissioner Harry Anslinger, it also borrowed his rhetoric.

ized as foreigners (*Marihuana*'s Tony is dark and sports a mustache; his henchman speaks with a heavy accent), the minority equation so prominent in the popular press was eliminated in exploitation films. Like Hollywood movies, exploitation films generally ignored stories in which minorities might be the identificatory group. Thus, the central image of marijuana users in these films is that of pleasure-seeking, attractive, white, middle-class youth.

Along with the depiction of the crime-inducing effects of pot, the films emphasized the alleged aphrodisiac properties of the drug. When BCM attempted to get a Production Code seal for *Assassin of Youth,* PCA employee V. G. Hart commented, "In my opinion, this is a tawdry, poorly done feature which should not be shown on any screen. It is the worst picture I have seen since I have been on Code work. Moral value, none; Direction, poor; Acting, terrible."[61] Although the picture was turned down mainly because of the marijuana theme, Joe Breen told the producer that other reasons included "a number of questionable bedroom scenes,

scenes suggestive of attempted seduction, some dance movements and other minor items which, as portrayed in the film we reviewed, also seem unacceptable from the standpoint of the Production Code."[62] The opportunity to show performers in intimate situations, going so far as to provide some female nudity in *Marihuana,* may have meant the lack of an MPPDA seal but guaranteed box office success in the exploitation market. In the films, users are shown smoking the weed at parties and weenie roasts. Weenie roasts appear in both *Marihuana* and *Assassin of Youth,* indicating the degree of cross-pollination in exploitation films during the period—or the fact that weenie roasts were a major activity among high school students in the 1930s. Soon the kids are feeling carefree, then engaging in energetic dancing. As inhibitions dissolve, kissing and petting follow, culminating in sex. The young people succumb to the pleasurable effects of the drug and begin to pursue pleasure for its own sake without thought of the possible consequences.

The pursuit of pleasure leads to the second major effect marijuana use has on its young aficionados in the films: a diminution of productive capacity. The laziness of marijuana users was implicit in the journalistic accounts of the drug through its association with those at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum. But in the films, the use of pot is an explicit threat to the productive capacity of white, middle-class users as the pursuit of physical pleasure dulls their initiative and drive. In *Reefer Madness,* Dr. Carroll, noticing that Bill's grades are falling off, questions the boy in his office, asking if he has acquired "a harmful habit." Bill's fidgeting and evasive answer convince the knowing Dr. Carroll that his suspicions are correct. In *Marihuana,* Burma's use of the weed disrupts her studies, and exposure of her drug use threatens her sister's engagement to her wealthy fiancé. Most important, smoking pot leads to Burma's illegitimate (i.e., unproductive, as it takes place outside of marriage) pregnancy and the death of her boyfriend, Dick, who is killed when he takes an illicit (i.e., unproductive) job running marijuana for Tony to get money to marry Burma. Joan's association with dope-smoking friends in *Assassin of Youth* almost prevents her from inheriting a fortune. In the films, the equation is marijuana use equals pursuit of pleasure for its own sake, which in turn equals unproductivity. The absence of productivity is presented as an evil on a par with the capital crimes committed under the influence of the weed.

Like the sex hygiene films of the period, the drug movies were about the ongoing struggle between the ethic of production and the ever increasing

impulse to consume. The liberation of desire, as expressed in the movies through marijuana smoking, is counterbalanced by the demands of production through school, job, and sexual relationships. In certain respects, the marijuana films expressed adult fears of the incipient youth culture in which individual desire, for the first time, began to outweigh productive impulses. The films were titillating shockers for adults and parents who, while maintaining their moral indignation, could vicariously experience the youthful abandon and abrogation of responsibility said to result from drug use. The so-called antimotivational syndrome found its first full manifestation in exploitation films. Their representation of undisciplined and unproductive young, white, middle-class users would eventually take hold in the popular imagination. The classic image of the "pothead"—the listless, pleasure-seeking slacker—came to dominate discourses on marijuana and its users by the 1960s.[63]

The pot films of the 1930s also played a crucial role in establishing the mythology of marijuana as a "stepping-stone" drug, one that causes the user to graduate to hard narcotics such as cocaine and heroin. The idea that marijuana led to hard drugs had been around since 1931 when an article in the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* by Dr. A. E. Fossier postulated the pattern.[64] However, this was not among the motives the FBN mentioned for outlawing the weed. Those reasons revolved exclusively around its alleged crime-inducing effects. During the House of Representative's hearings on the Marijuana Tax Act in May 1937, Anslinger was asked if marijuana users graduated to heroin, opium, or cocaine. The commissioner replied with a flat "No, sir. . . . The marijuana addict does not go in that direction."[65] Because the stepping-stone hypothesis was not part of the Bureau's official position on the drug, and given that the Bureau was the source of most information on marijuana, it was not mentioned in magazine and newspaper articles about the sinister weed. Yet both *Marihuana* in 1936 and *Assassin of Youth* in 1937 drew a clear connection between the use of pot and advancement to the "white drugs." In *Marihuana,* Burma makes the leap from weed to heroin as she falls in with the dope dealers and becomes a pusher herself. Newspaper headlines in the film scream, "Marihuana Smoking Shows Alarming Increase. Drug Evil, of Which Marihuana Often the First Step, Is a Fast Growing Menace." And Tony tells Burma, "You're doing all right, Blondie. The way your marijuana customers are hooked on the stronger stuff, like H and C, you'll soon be ice queen of the snow peddlers." In *Assassin of Youth,* Linda first gets kids hooked on pot and then moves them onto a "stronger kick." The

films may have adopted the notion of progress to harder drugs from such earlier dope films as *The Pace That Kills* (1928). Several books and articles in 1938 and 1939 mentioned the stepping-stone hypothesis, including *Marihuana, America's New Drug Problem* and *On the Trail of Marihuana,* put out by the White Cross organization.[66] The White Cross publication went so far as to assert that cigarette smoking led to the use of marijuana, which in turn led the user to opiates or cocaine. The circulation of these publications, associated with the remnants of the temperance movement, was probably fairly limited. But the films made the rounds time and again, popularizing the stepping-stone hypothesis.

Both the stepping-stone theory and the antimotivational syndrome would become the key components of arguments to maintain the criminal status of marijuana and its users in the 1950s and 1960s before finally being debunked by scientific studies in the 1970s.[67] All the publicity about marijuana generated in 1936 and 1937 led to the hearings on the Marijuana Tax Act in April and May 1937. Marijuana, which as cannabis had been left out of the Harrison Act, had become the evil of the moment, and the Tax Act proposed to eliminate it by a series of restrictive taxes and regulations. The bill passed with virtually no opposition and went into effect on 1 October 1937. Although the law placed the federal government on record as opposing marijuana, its enforcement still rested primarily with local officials. The FBN continued its educational efforts unabated for a time, but as Musto has pointed out, the publicity of other organizations about the "killer drug marijuana" was soon causing public concern—and making it appear that the FBN was ineffective. The bureau lashed out at the doomsayers, in part because it was writing its own antimarijuana literature and perhaps also because Anslinger and his subordinates believed that the problem was under control in most places.[68]

The triumvirate of domestic marijuana movies along with the Mexican import, continued release of *Narcotic,* and the remake of *The Pace That Kills* meant that the production of new dope films slowed to a trickle. Interest on the part of the producers waned as well. Hildegarde Esper said, "We went along about five years on [the drug] cycle, but we just got so tired of it."[69] In 1942, J. D. Kendis contributed a late entry in the marijuana cycle with *The Devil's Harvest,* in which dope peddlers preyed on school kids using a hot dog stand as a front for selling reefers. Scenes of dope smoking were augmented with superimposed artwork of the devil. The film was given a degree of wartime cachet with the ad line "a fifth column sowing destruction in the youth of America." World War II diverted atten-

tion from the drug issue—and most other exploitation topics—for the duration of the conflict. But the respite from concerns about drug use in the United States was brief, for those fears returned with a vengeance in the postwar years.

## The Postwar Years

Internal subversion became a national obsession after World War II. Whether it came in the form of communists, juvenile delinquents, organized crime, homosexuals, comic books, or rock and roll, middle Americans girded themselves for an assault from within on the values they believed had helped them win the war. One of the major antagonists proved to be drugs, with heroin becoming the latest high-profile nemesis. To help combat the new domestic foe, in 1948 the PCA granted a seal for the first time since its institution to a film that dealt with the narcotics traffic. *To the Ends of the Earth,* produced by Columbia and starring Dick Powell, had been made with the cooperation of Anslinger and the FBN. With the FBI, the Secret Service, and others opening their files to Hollywood after the war, it was only a matter of time before Anslinger would do the same to ensure that publicity for his bureau was on an equal footing with other federal law enforcement agencies. The film featured agent Powell following shipments of opium to the ends of the earth, hopscotching from Shanghai to Egypt to Cuba. Anslinger not only gave his stamp of approval to the film but appeared in a brief cameo role. Soon, majors and minors were producing other films about the international trade in drugs, such as *Johnny Stool Pigeon* (Universal, 1949), *Port of New York* (Eagle-Lion, 1949), and *Slattery's Hurricane* (Twentieth Century–Fox, 1949). These films tended to approach drug smuggling and the heroics of law enforcement officials in much the same way that movies like *T-Men* (Eagle-Lion, 1948) and *Border Incident* (MGM, 1949) dealt with counterfeiters and illegal aliens. The addict and the problem of addiction were left out of the picture and remained staples in exploitation films—for a time.

In September 1948, Hollywood braced itself for the shock waves from a new scandal. In the early morning hours of 1 September 1948, popular RKO player Robert Mitchum was arrested for smoking marijuana at the L.A. home of would-be starlet Lila Leeds. Mitchum, Leeds, and two others were charged with felony narcotics possession. When asked "Occupation?" at the police station, Mitchum reputedly replied, "Former actor."[70] An-

slinger, who had been trying to engineer a mass arrest of popular jazz and swing musicians for marijuana possession, was pleased that police netted a high-profile movie star.[71] David O. Selznick, who with RKO owned Mitchum's contract, called the actor "a very sick man in need of medical treatment."[72] But the reaction of the public surprised industry insiders and law enforcement officials alike. During trailers for *Rachel and the Stranger,* audiences greeted Mitchum with applause, a reaction so sympathetic that RKO rushed out previews around the country and pushed up the film's release. Most moviegoers either believed that Mitchum had been the victim of a frame-up or that his marijuana use was an illness rather than a crime.[73] Even Selznick changed his initial impression as he considered Mitchum for the role of black marketeer Harry Lime in *The Third Man.*[74] Mitchum was eventually charged with the lesser crime of conspiracy to possess marijuana and sentenced to sixty days. The "serious industrial crisis in the making" predicted by *Time* never materialized as the scandal blew over.[75] Persistent rumors that the arrest had been a setup eventually led to an investigation by the D.A., and in 1951 the Los Angeles court ordered the verdict in Mitchum's case set aside, a plea of not guilty entered, and the complaint dismissed.[76] If anything, the incident only boosted Mitchum's popularity with younger audiences, bolstering his image as a laconic, authority-be-damned loner. While the actor's stock went up, Leeds, without the backing of a studio publicity apparatus, went the way of exploitation.

When Leeds got out of jail in the spring of 1949, she discovered that, unlike Mitchum, she was persona non grata in the film industry. "There was no work for me in Hollywood," she remembered. "I had only one offer—the lead in a quickie called *The Wild Weed,* which was an obvious attempt to capitalize on the Mitchum-case notoriety. I took it. I was broke."[77] Richard (Dick) Kay of Franklin Productions hoped to cash in on Leeds's notoriety, a fact that had the Motion Picture Association of America and narcotics enforcement officials worried. Walter P. Creighton of California's Division of Narcotic Enforcement wrote to the MPAA, expressing his concerns that a dope film was in production: "We are informed that persons recently arrested and convicted of narcotics violations will play the lead or major roles. . . . From past experience we are fearful that the production of any film relating to narcotics where important roles are played by persons recently arrested and prosecuted for narcotic violations will only tend to glamorize the use of narcotics, will glorify the principal actors, and will have a very adverse effect, particularly on the

youth of the country."[78] Kay's production was filmed in six days.[79] Slickly shot and boasting art direction by Eugene Lourie, it featured a number of Hollywood character players including Lyle Talbot, Alan Baxter, and a young Jack Elam. Leeds starred as Anne Lester, an orphaned chorus girl who is trying to put her young brother, Bob, through college. She is introduced to Markey, a dope peddler. Anne is soon using reefers, fired from her job, and forced to sell drugs for Markey. When Bob discovers his big sister's new occupation, he takes it rather hard, hanging himself in the garage. Anne is finally arrested for dope dealing, and in a scene reminiscent of sequences in many hygiene films, Captain Hayes takes her on a tour of jails and psycho wards to show her the devastation caused by the drug evil. Sixty days in the slammer clean Anne up and she cooperates with the cops to set up Markey and his boss. The film ends with a plea to "make your nation a better place in which to live and raise a family."

A letter to Anslinger from George H. White, district supervisor of the Los Angeles Bureau, expressed the suspicion with which the FBN viewed any film that it had not sanctioned: "I found this film to be completely objectionable in that the emphasis was placed on lewd and lascivious conduct of men and women under the influence of marijuana. . . . At the studio, I interviewed Mr. Kay and when I asked him who had been his technical advisor on this picture, he laughingly remarked that Lila Leeds had supplied most of the technical information, but that he had received 'pamphlets from Washington,' which gave technical information as to the usage and effects of marijuana. . . . I will add that the film, generally, is based on the circumstances of the arrest of Lila Leeds and Robert Mitchum."[80] Initially, *Wild Weed* was distributed by Cummins's Eureka Productions, but it was soon picked up by Kroger Babb's Hallmark. Babb promptly changed the title to *She Shoulda Said "No"!,* and concocted an ad campaign that emphasized Leeds's figure and blonde tresses with a provocative tag line that asked, "How bad can a good girl get?"

By the late 1940s, attitudes about marijuana had undergone a major shift. No longer was it an "assassin of youth" that turned kids into raving sex fiends and crazed killers; now it was firmly positioned as a gateway to hard narcotics. Concern about the growing use of heroin among young people in cities was supplanting the marijuana hysteria of the 1930s, but as Jerome Himmelstein has suggested, "the stepping-stone hypothesis may have served the interest of the bureau by allowing it to justify continued controls over marijuana despite skepticism about the drug's dangers."[81] The Bureau had done an about-face on the marijuana question: "[By 1950]

the Federal Bureau of Narcotics . . . was testifying that the main danger of marijuana use was no longer the pre-1937 charges of immediate near-compulsion to commit murder, rape, theft (coupled with the onset of insanity), but rather that marijuana use provided 'schooling' for future heroin and other opiate addicts."[82] Jerry Mandel has located the first widely read indication of this shift in the public attitude to an article by Earl Wilson that appeared in *Collier's Magazine* in 1949. In the piece, Wilson advanced the stepping-stone hypothesis, which was based largely on personal comments made to him by narcotics agents in Los Angeles.[83] But by 1949, *Marihuana* and *Assassin of Youth* had been advancing the theory for over a dozen years. It was also picked up as a key component of *She Shoulda Said "No"!,* where the stepping-stone hypothesis was put forth in the first few minutes of the movie. Articles in the press and the FBN itself also began to promote the stepping-stone hypothesis as the major reason for marijuana control beginning in 1949.[84] Exploitation films about marijuana from the 1930s and moving into the 1950s may have been the primary vehicle for the dissemination of the notion that marijuana inevitably led to hard narcotics. Leeds contributed to the anecdotal evidence with her own account of experimentation with opium and an eventual bout with heroin addiction when she was down on her luck.[85]

*She Shoulda Said "No"!,* like most of the 1930s dope movies, emphasized the way drugs caused users to lose jobs and eventually turn to crime to support their habit. And like some of the films, notably *Marihuana,* in which Mrs. Roberts's neglect sends Burma out in search of attention, the Leeds movie paints a picture of imminent destruction by drugs in households where parents are either absent or uncaring. Lacking guidance, Anne Lester falls in with the wrong crowd and begins using marijuana. Her own use of drugs then foments a crisis with her brother, leading to his suicide. Lack of cohesion of the postwar nuclear family was often cited as a leading cause of drug use among young people. Anslinger claimed that most drug addicts came from broken homes, but assured parents that there was no need to fear for their own children, "not if [the parents] look after their children properly. We don't find addicts among children from good homes."[86]

*She Shoulda Said "No"!* was successful enough to inspire the importation of an Argentinian film known as *The Marijuana Story* in 1951. Although the film played grindhouses and drive-ins for several years, its story of an adult doctor who goes undercover among addicts to get infor-

**43** Lila Leeds brandished her bustle to sell *She Shoulda Said "No"!* to exhibitors in the 1950s.

mation about the death of his wife—in the process, becoming a marijuana addict himself—lacked the currency of most American films. Of far more concern to the American public and to exploitation producers was the effect that drugs were having on young people.

Juvenile crime had increased some during the war years. How much it actually rose was debatable, but the attention accorded the issue was immense, helping fan the flames of national outrage. J. Edgar Hoover's speeches and articles described wild children infected with a spirit of wartime abandon, engaging in crimes ranging from drug use to murder. Hoover, whose reputation was still untarnished, laid the blame for the problem on domestic upheaval caused by the war. Fathers were absent, mothers worked, and teenagers could earn the wages of adults. When Claude Pepper's Senate subcommittee held hearings on the educational and physical fitness of the American civilian population in November and December 1943, many critics cited women who neglected home for work

as a leading cause of juvenile delinquency. Others protested this conclusion, but it became a central issue in the discourse on delinquency during and after the war.[87]

Following the war, Hoover and Attorney General Tom Clark continued to focus public attention on the delinquency issue. Clark appointed the Attorney General's Panel on Juvenile Problems in 1946 to head off the postwar kiddie crime wave that Hoover had predicted the previous year.[88] In doing so, Clark and the government perpetuated adult fears during a period that was already rife with anxiety about a possible postwar depression, international communism, and atomic destruction. The subsequent Continuing Committee on the Prevention and Control of Delinquency went further by widely publicizing the issue without offering any solutions. Indeed, the Committee may have exacerbated problems by inadvertently boosting the emerging teen subculture through its encouragement of teen fashion shows, discussion groups, and conferences.[89] Much of congressional and middle American apprehension about juvenile delinquency also rested on issues of class. For some, the lower class and criminal influence on youth culture was unquestionable.[90] Styles of dress, language, taste, and habits all seemed to point to a rejection of the "higher" values in favor of all that was ugly, inarticulate, and lawless. The predominant metaphor for delinquency, like that of drug use, was "contagion, contamination, and infection."[91]

Whether drug use was considered the result of delinquency or delinquency was thought to foster drug use, both became intertwined in the 1950s.[92] Prior to the advent of rock and roll, drugs were the most blatant and disturbing sign of youthful rebellion. By late 1950, stories began to spread about the sharp upswing in the use of heroin among young people. Part of this can be ascribed to the highly publicized Kefauver hearings on organized crime, which concluded that the Mafia was behind the narcotics traffic. Representative Hale Boggs's hearings on the issue in April 1951 gave the impression that narcotic use was primarily a problem among juveniles and that it cut across all class lines and segments of society to effect "normal and average children."[93] In fact, most narcotic users at the time, whether young or old, were poor, black, and concentrated in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.[94] Witnesses at the hearings and the public may have feared the spread of drugs to their "normal and average" (again, read "white and middle-class") children, but such anxieties said more about the tenuous condition of the postwar status quo than about the social and economic conditions that bred narcotic use.

Unable to exploit the dope angle due to renewed Production Code restrictions,[95] Hollywood began cranking out a string of movies about the Mafia, the mob, the syndicate, the combination, as it was variously known. But the popular press, publishers, and exploitation producers were even more interested in the threat that drugs posed to American youth. "Everywhere," according to one magazine account, "frightened and hysterical parents pleaded with narcotics experts and police officials to save their children."[96] Articles in the spring of 1951 described the problem as pervasive, affecting major cities from coast to coast.[97] Paperback publishers exploited heroin hysteria with titles such as *The Golden Spike* by Hal Ellson (Ballantine, 1952), *Hooked* by Will Oursler and Laurence Dwight Smith (Popular Library, 1953), and William S. Burroughs's *Junkie* (originally published as *Junk* under the pseudonym William Lee; Ace, 1953). Most of these were paperback originals featuring lurid artwork and cover blurbs such as "From the reeking slums of a big city, from the twilight world of escape-hungry 'junkies,' comes this novel of tormented adolescents—neglected by society, victimized by ruthless dope peddlers" (*The Golden Spike*). Murder, assault, and kidnapping lost their appeal in radio mystery programs as tales about dope addicts and dealers flooded the airwaves. Television's popular *Dragnet* often featured the taciturn Joe Friday arresting youthful dopers in Los Angeles. Even newspaper cartoon strips such as "Rex Morgan, M.D." took on drugs, with the pen-and-ink physician treating a college boy who, cracked one wag, "by the end of November had pumped nearly everything but vanilla extract into his veins."[98]

New York City's new police commissioner, Thomas F. Murphy, who had won the conviction of alleged Soviet spy Alger Hiss, was hot on the trail of the latest form of domestic subversion.[99] Additional hearings during the summer provided readers with exotic descriptions of scoring heroin in Chinese restaurants, in clip joints, and on the streets of Harlem; of heroin sales in junior high classrooms; of beautiful young women forced to turn to prostitution to pay for their drug habits.[100] Addicts were usually represented by all races, but the pushers in articles were overwhelmingly black, Puerto Rican, or foreign, such as deported vice czar Lucky Luciano.[101] Communist China was implicated as the major supplier of opium poppies to the dope rings. If many Americans thought that foreigners, communists, and urban minorities were conspiring to enslave the brains and bodies of "normal and average children" with heroin, law enforcement helped—however inadvertently—to prove that the new drug menace was real. For example, in Los Angeles, the average number of yearly arrests for

juvenile narcotics violations from 1940 to 1950 was 51. Between 1951 and 1961 that number rose to an alarming 487. But the establishment of a narcotics unit within the juvenile division may have helped to "create" the statistical leap because the juvenile division began to actively pursue narcotics cases.[102]

Some measure of the increased concern about youth and drugs centered on the use of barbiturates. "Goofballs" were cheap and widely available, yet laws controlling their sale were laxly enforced. Though deaths attributable to barbiturate poisoning had increased 300 percent between 1940 and 1951, the drugs were not covered by Federal narcotics laws.[103] Anslinger and the FBN worked just as hard to keep barbiturates off the federal list as they had to put marijuana on it. Already faced with a limited staff, Anslinger insisted that the use of "downers" was a medical problem and not one for the government.[104] Pill popping would not galvanize the public the way the marijuana issue had in the 1930s or the way heroin would shortly. That fact did not stop the redoubtable George Weiss from concocting a picture on the subject, *The Devil's Sleep* (1949). Like *She Shoulda Said "No"!,* it reaffirmed parameters from which subsequent dope films would not stray.

The convoluted plot of *The Devil's Sleep* found Weiss's stock reprobate, Umberto Scalli (Timothy Farrell), operating a spa as a front for his pill business. He sells uppers and downers to high school kids while plying the female clients at his gym with "nitro-phenol." "It'll burn the lard off these girlies without the exercise," he tells his henchman. Lita Grey Chaplin (Charlie's ex-wife and sometime actress) played crusading Judge Ballentine. Sounding much like a character from one of Esper's movies, the judge tells her associate, Inspector Darnell, that teenagers "grew up in a time of nerves . . . back of it all, speed. Everyone rushing nowhere, to get nowhere, and for no reason. Fast planes, fast cars. It's a fast life, Inspector." *The Devil's Sleep* and virtually all the postwar drug films, like many of the hygiene movies, were nostalgic for what seemed to be a simpler time in which children behaved like children and women stayed in the home. The judge blames herself when her daughter gets involved with pills. But ads for Weiss's movie still framed drug use, and by association delinquency, as a moral dilemma rather than problems with social or economic origins: "Today's Moral Menace! Daring expose of the devil drug-traffic in 'bennies,' 'goofies' and 'phenos' as it really exists."

The first heroin films were essentially amateur shorts rushed out to cash in on the headlines. *H—The Story of a Teen-Age Drug Addict* (1951) was

made by Larry Frisch, a twenty-one-year-old New Yorker. It was the case history of a schoolboy who becomes addicted and is then rehabilitated. *Teen-Age Menace* (1951), produced by William Free, used strong scare tactics as a bad batch of heroin results in the death of one of the characters and the dealer in the film goes to the electric chair. Stiff penalties, including death, were to become the stuff of fact as well. During the same year the two shorts were released, a mandatory minimum two-year sentence for a first conviction for narcotics possession became law. Within five years, the federal penalty for the sale of heroin to a minor by someone over eighteen was raised to death at the jury's discretion.[105] As earlier legislation had been aimed at the control of racial minorities, drug laws in the 1950s were constructed to intimidate a minority population. In this instance, heavy sentences were forged in the belief that they would act as a deterrent to drug use and sales. As deterrents, the sentences were directed at young people, whether part of the true addict profile (poor young blacks in urban areas) or the feared target of drug peddlers (young, white, middle-class kids). Police also conducted constitutionally suspect arrests to hassle teenagers in the hopes of obtaining information on dealers.[106]

*One Way Ticket to Hell* (1954) exploited the worst fears of middle American parents. B. Lawrence Price Jr. produced an extremely low-budget film (no synchronized dialogue, his parents among the cast) that linked motorcycles, broken families, teens, and drug use. Lt. David Jason, a narcotics officer, narrates the story of Cassandra Lee, a troubled teen. Cassandra hooks up with Russell Packard and his friends, all of whom drive motorcycles. As the narration tells us, "Cassandra first encountered one of the most damaging aspects of today's youthful gang associations. Reefers. Marijuana. One of the lesser narcotics whose use often constitutes the first faltering steps toward addiction to the harder drugs." At first Cassandra passes up the drug, but she soon caves in to peer pressure. She was "still flying high, but her scholastic average had fallen to an all-time low." Cassandra joins the ranks of the unproductive, a status she carries into her marriage with high school sweetheart Johnny Adams. She is frustrated and stifled by her do-nothing role as housewife, unable to provide a decent home for her hard-working Johnny. She returns to her motorcycle pals. Cassandra begins to abuse the Seconal prescribed by her doctor to keep her in line, forging prescriptions to get more barbiturates. Next she is on heroin. Alienated from her husband and parents, she begins selling dope to school kids, getting involved with a local hood, another pusher, and then with Cholo Martinez, an international smuggler. Cas-

sandra and Cholo lead authorities on a wild chase to Mexico, where they are finally apprehended in the desert. She is taken to a rehabilitation center, and the hapless Cholo is carted off to jail.

*One Way Ticket to Hell* managed to incorporate all the central anxieties that were swirling around the heroin scare and the attending delinquency issue. Cholo and his gang steal cars in Los Angeles and then trade them in Mexico for heroin, which they sell in the United States. This subversion of American kids by foreigners extends to one of the pushers, Sven Bergman, who is also characterized as an outsider. Note that at the end of the film Cholo is hauled to jail while Cassandra, who has committed just as many crimes, is taken to rehabilitation. As a minority, a foreigner, and a male, Cholo is unredeemable. Because she is white, middle-class, and female, Cassandra is a candidate for rehab. More important, though, is the status of the family unit and how its dysfunction plays a role in Cassandra's drug use. She comes from an unhappy home. Her mother has a business and is implicated in her daughter's problems because she is not around enough to supervise and care for her. Moreover, divorce has provided the fertile soil for Cassandra's delinquency and that of her friends. When Cassandra first meets Packard and company in the alley behind her mother's store, Lt. Jason says, "It was here that Cassandra first became acquainted with Russell Packard and his motorcycle pals, a fast bunch of kids all suffering in various degrees from the same kind of emotional insecurity that Cassandra had been afflicted with during a lifetime of being bounced from the knee of one stepfather to another by a much-married mother." As in the wartime hearings on delinquency, 1950s troubled-teen and drug movies indicted working women for the problems of their children. Cassandra proves to be a no more pliant, dutiful wife than she was a child. When she marries Johnny, Jason says, "Emotionally immature and badly maladjusted, Cassandra was ill-prepared for the adjustments and routine responsibilities of married life." Even the sleeping pills that her doctor prescribes are not enough to quell the "impelling fury" contained in Cassandra. She is soon out drinking and carousing with Packard and the gang while her husband tosses and turns alone in his bed.

The nostalgia trope was strong in Price's film, as it was in so many of the earlier drug movies. In these pictures, drugs were a problem, but they were only a symptom of the deeper ills. *One Way Ticket to Hell* contains an overwhelmingly patriarchal and patronizing attitude toward both women and young people. Everyday life has been disrupted because of the changing role of women in society. Instead of being at home, providing the

nurturing and support their children and husbands desperately need, they work. Young people have burst out of their traditional roles as well. They are mobile (with the motorcycle serving as the most disturbing symbol of that mobility), capable of escaping parental control, and open to the influences of lower classes and minorities. Cassandra's marriage just out of high school is an example of kids playing adult roles but without adult maturity. Instead of staying home, being a good consumer, and having children, Cassandra is intent on pursuing private pleasures: riding motorcycles, staying out all hours, using drugs.

By 1956, sorting exploitation films that dealt with drugs from those made by the mainstream movies became more difficult. Defying the Production Code, Otto Preminger released his film version of Nelson Algren's controversial best-seller, *Man with the Golden Arm,* through United Artists without a seal of approval. A major production featuring a major star, Frank Sinatra, *The Man with the Golden Arm* was a critical and box office success. Even the Legion of Decency eschewed its Condemned rating in favor of a "B" tag. To protest the MPAA's action and demand updates in the Code, UA withdrew from the organization. In late 1956, Eric Johnston announced that the Production Code would finally be amended. Changes included a modification in the outright ban on films depicting the narcotics traffic, abortion, white slavery, and kidnapping.[107] Within two years most majors had released their own dope films, ranging from more prestigious adaptations of plays like Twentieth Century–Fox's *Hatful of Rain* (1957) to low-end thrillers such as Columbia's *The Tijuana Story* (1957) and Warner's *Stakeout on Dope Street* (1958).[108]

Several more independent exploitation pictures on drug use were released in the final years of the 1950s, including the semidocumentary *The Flaming Teen-Age* (1956), *Hooked* (aka *The Curfew Breakers,* 1958), and *The Narcotics Story* (1958), a film made for police use but released on the exploitation circuit. Not only did these movies have to vie against productions released by the majors, as with hygiene features from the period they had to compete with the growing number of drug-abuse films being made for classroom use. The Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation issued *Wastage of Human Resources* in 1947; it was followed by *Drug Addiction* (1951), *Drug Addiction—A Medical Hazard* (1956), *The Dangerous Drugs* (1957), and *Assassin of Youth* (1957), to name only a few.[109] During the 1960s and early 1970s, the production of antidrug films for schools became a thriving industry, followed by more theatrical dope films promising the scoop on the growing "drug culture." American International

Pictures led the way with movies like *The Trip* (1967), *Maryjane* (1968), and *Psych-Out* (1969), and the majors contributed *Valley of the Dolls* (1967), *I Love You Alice B. Toklas* (1968), *Dusty and Sweets McGee* (1971), *Panic in Needle Park* (1971), and on and on and on.

All of these movies owed a large debt to the exploitation films that preceded them, just as recent antidrug campaigns do. The impulses behind narcotics control have changed little; such recent slogans as "Just say no" and "Users are losers" could easily have been intertitles or lines of dialogue from exploitation movies of the 1920s, 1930s, or 1950s. To a great extent, current images of drug addicts and addiction were fashioned by exploitation films. Like the exploitation films, sloganeering and "get tough" policies have been unable to come to terms with the social and economic pressures that lead to drug abuse. Moreover, the conflicted status of pleasure in a society that encourages personal gratification through consumption and at the same time restricts, if not demonizes, pleasure has resulted in the continual scapegoating of drugs and the addict for many of society's ills.

# 7. "Timely as Today's Front Page"

## *Vice, Exotic, and Atrocity Films*

Although there are no cannibals or hand-to-hand struggles with lions, *Latuko* is no dish for the blood-shy. One of the tribal customs is to gouge two front teeth from the mouths of little boys with a knife. Another is the ceremony of drinking fresh animal blood, the bravery test for a youth who has reached warrior status. It's all there—in color.
—*Hollywood Citizen News,* 1952

The sex hygiene film and the drug movie may have been the most visible exploitation genres, along with the nudist film and the burlesque movie, the subjects of the next chapter. However, there were quite a few other types of movies in the exploitation canon. Many were one-shots or oddities. For instance, *Chained for Life* (1950) starred Daisy and Violet Hilton, the Siamese twins who had appeared in Tod Browning's *Freaks* as well as vaudeville and stage revues, in a "daring" drama. Many of the successful European imports such as *Ecstasy* (1933), which featured Hedy Lamarr in the nude and in the throes of sexual abandon, and *Girls Club* (1936), with its lesbian subtext, did not lend themselves to formulaic repetition. Other films, such as *I Married a Savage* (1949) and *A Virgin in Hollywood* (1952) failed to inspire sufficient imitation to create distinctive exploitation genres. Although the exploiteers made several movies about juvenile delinquency, such as Kendis's *Youth Aflame* (1944), there was nothing

inherently objectionable about the topic and the field was crowded with competitors from the B companies as well as the majors. Other formulas, however, were pervasive enough to qualify as distinctive exploitation genres.

Vice, exotic, and atrocity films, like the hygiene and drug movies, could claim to expose social ills or provide enlightenment while titillating the audience. The vice film encompassed "immoral" activities such as adultery, gambling, and alcohol abuse, but usually took the form of a prostitution exposé. Elements of the vice film overlapped with other categories of exploitation movies, most often the sex hygiene film and the drug film. The "exotic," such as *Latuko,* dealt with people and behaviors that can best be described as those outside the experience of the white, middle-class mainstream of the United States. Whether narrative or documentary, exotics tended to feature revealing costuming or some level of nudity. Atrocity films, which became prevalent after World War II, were essentially about death and disfigurement; their spectacle centered on violent, "inhuman" behavior such as war, massacre, mutilation, and other grisly topics. Vice, exotic, and atrocity films hewed an ideological line similar to hygiene and drug films from the 1920s through the 1950s. Exotics and atrocity films also paved the way for new exploitation forms that would flourish in the 1960s.

## The Vice Film

As we have seen, white slavery movies of the early teens may have been the precursors to exploitation, but it was the sex hygiene film that launched the separate industry and proved to be its most resilient topic during the classical era. Although many hygiene films had some story elements involving prostitution, the manifest concern of the movies was with the physical and moral effects of venereal disease. Vice films focused on the personal and social impact of prostitution itself. Changing sexual standards contributed to the decline in public concern about white slavery and prostitution after World War I, so these became only sporadic subjects of exploitation films in the ensuing years.[1] *The Red Kimono* (1925) was Mrs. Wallace Reid's follow-up to *Human Wreckage.* Kevin Brownlow points out that the picture was a "curious exercise," a story of the white slave traffic as it existed in 1917 rather than an exposé of prostitution in 1925: "The story was set in 1917, but no attempt was made to depict the period. The cars were current, the fashions those of the twenties."[2] In fact, virtually all of

the vice films of the 1920s had more in common with the early white slavery movies than with contemporary social reality.

*The Red Kimono* is presented as the "true" story of Gabrielle Darley, "who loved too much." Gabrielle sees Howard Blaine on the sly. When her older brother tells their father about Gabrielle's subterfuge, Pops tells Gabrielle, "Go ahead, maybe he's the marryin' kind. I won't have to feed you." Gabrielle's excessive love has blinded her to Howard's true nature, and when they travel to New Orleans he leaves her at a brothel in Storyville. She eventually escapes and follows him to California, where she shoots him as he prepares to buy a wedding ring for his new sweetie. Most of the film concerns Gabrielle's subsequent exploitation by Beverly Fontaine, "a society dame," as *Variety* put it, who "takes her up, just for the newspaper space. She keeps the girl at home until the novelty wears off and then turns her loose, flat again."[3] Gabrielle drifts back to New Orleans, where she is saved from prostitution when she is hit by an automobile. After her recovery she scrubs floors in the hospital and is eventually reunited with her true love, Mrs. Fontaine's chauffeur. She promises to wait for him to return from the war in Europe, completing her regeneration. Brownlow describes the film's intertitles as being "as pious as Victorian samplers."[4] That *The Red Kimono* was set before World War I and had a tone of Victorian self-righteousness points to the antique nature of exploitation films in general and the vice film in particular. Two other films from the period reinforce this observation.

Kayanay's *Street of Forgotten Women* (1927) and Brenda Picture's *Port of Missing Girls* (1928) contain some remarkable similarities to each other as well as to *The Red Kimono.* In *Street of Forgotten Women,* Grace Fleming, daughter of a financier who owns some of the city's biggest factories and lowest dives, meets Magnus, a theatrical agent. Grace puts up the money to star in a show that bombs. She is left penniless and homeless, eventually falling into the clutches of a madam in the notorious Hester Place. Grace is rescued by a social worker and Mr. Fleming finally realizes that the vice districts must be cleaned up. In *Port of Missing Girls,* Ruth King, daughter of the mayor, goes to the "Rehearsal Club and Engagement Bureau," which is only a front for a ring that procures women for dissipated millionaires. Ruth hopes to be placed as a singer but is instead sent to the home of rich roué George Hamilton, who claims to be a theatrical manager. The police arrive just as he tries to maul Ruth and implicate Hamilton in the death of another "missing girl." Ruth escapes in the confusion and is reunited with her boyfriend in a church. Samuel Cummins's offering of 1929, *Unguarded*

*Girls,* also seemed to have a similar configuration, with the daughter of a wealthy lawyer for the underworld becoming caught in the roadhouse he owns only to be rescued at the last minute.

Barbara Meil Hobson has written that during the 1920s psychoanalytic theorists provided "a new language and set of categories that became part of the female delinquent profile." Labels such as "maladjustment" and "mental incapacity" were, Hobson notes, "[more] insidious than the earlier paradigm of the fallen woman because the new language pretended to be objective and scientific."[5] Such contemporary evaluations were not part of the cycle of vice films in the 1920s. The "fallen woman" paradigm that had prevailed prior to World War I remained in place in movies like *The Street of Forgotten Women* and closely paralleled sex hygiene films. In both genres, female sexual innocence and parental indifference combine to create a scent that attracts predatory males. That those rapacious men were often theatrical agents also points to the retrospective nature of the films. The theater, and by extension the growing film industry, had long been viewed by a sizable percentage of the public as little more than a haven for scarlet women and immoral men.[6] The theatrical manager was an emblematic corrupter in the stock company of exploitation characters. Like theater itself, the theatrical agent was illusory, presenting a false face. And as with hygiene and drug movies, the city was an ominous place for young women. Lusting agents, squalid skid rows, and anonymity combined to swallow up innocent girls. The young women who fell into prostitution in these movies had to depend on crusading reporters, district attorneys, or social workers to save them because they could not wait around for social change. Indeed, vice movies offered even less in the way of concrete solutions to the problems they presented than other exploitation efforts. Calls for municipal crackdowns and pleas for greater parental responsibility were just as formulaic as the plots.

It was not until the mid-1930s that the vice film was updated and saw a brief resurgence in popularity. The event that caused the largest and most sustained upswing in vice movies was the 1936 arrest and conviction of Charles "Lucky" Luciano on charges of compulsory prostitution and conspiracy. The dismantling of Luciano's vice racket made for great Depression-era drama. It pitted the Italian Luciano, usually labeled "swarthy" and invariably described as "droop-eyed," against the "tall, handsome young prosecutor," Thomas Dewey, whose "high square shoulders and young, intense face with the heavy black mustache [made] him stand out in the courtroom."[7] The discourse in newspapers and magazines framed

the battle as the foreign-born forces of darkness pitted against the WASP in shining armor. Luciano did not fare well in the press or the courtroom.[8] Nor did he have a chance when the exploiteers got their turn at the story. Cummins was apparently the first to capitalize on the Luciano affair. He was peddling an old Bud Pollard production, *Girls for Sale* (ca. 1930), in Baltimore and presumably in other eastern cities and towns, by November 1936, a scant five months after the mobster's conviction.[9] With *Girls for Sale,* which was about the white slave trade between Europe and South America, Cummins rode the wake of press coverage about Dewey's destruction of the infamous New York vice ring. The press continued to recount and reinterpret the investigation and prosecution of Luciano for the next several years.[10]

Along with Cummins's imported white slave film, four new domestic movies drew directly from the stories of the New York investigation: J. D. Kendis's *Gambling with Souls* (aka *Vice Racket,* 1936) and *Slaves in Bondage* (aka *Crusade Against the Rackets,* 1937) and Willis Kent's *Smashing the Vice Trust* (1937) and *The Wages of Sin* (1938). *Gambling with Souls* and *Slaves in Bondage* both featured Wheeler Oakman as a corrupting vice lord, and Kent employed the smooth, "droop-eyed" Willy Castello as his ersatz Luciano in *Smashing the Vice Trust* and *The Wages of Sin.* Even for the ticket buyer who regularly attended exploitation films in the late 1930s, seeing two actors appear in four films that played under at least six titles and utilized similar story lines must have been confusing.[11]

Briefly, *Gambling with Souls* told the story of Mae Miller, wife of a struggling physician. Mae begins gambling with her friend Molly and finds herself in debt to vice lord Lucky Wilder. To square her debt with Wilder, Mae goes "on call" for him, gradually slipping into the underworld. In typical exploitation fashion, other complications arise before Mae murders Lucky. Her husband is told that Mae's case will have to be decided by a jury. Oakman played the villain again in *Slaves in Bondage,* this time as Jim Murray. Murray entices women into prostitution using Belle, who runs a beauty shop, as his chief procurer. Dona, a manicurist at the shop, and her reporter-boyfriend Phil investigate. Murray frames Phil with some marked money and then agrees to help Dona bail him out. When Dona meets Murray at his cabaret, he attacks her, but the police and Phil, who has been released, arrive in the nick of time to rescue her and break up the gang.

Kent's *Smashing the Vice Trust* was the film that most closely followed the outlines of the Luciano story. Willy Castello appeared as Lucky Lom-

**44** Mae Miller (Martha Chapin, right) explains to her younger sister that she has had to sacrifice while her husband studies medicine in *Gambling with Souls* (1936). Mae's desire for the finer things drives her to gambling, prostitution, and murder. (Something Weird Video Collection)

bardo, who orders his gang to chase streetwalkers out of his territory and snag new girls from schools and other sites. Meanwhile, the D.A. promises a vice probe. Two of Lucky's underlings pick up gullible young Lois from a family in the country and take her to the city. But Lucky falls for her, convincing her that he is a theatrical agent. When Lucky's thugs try to shake down a madam who has opened a new brothel without his consent, she goes to the D.A. to complain, packing a sheaf of addresses. The police raid Lucky's vice dens, forcing him to lie low. While he does, Lois falls in love with Phil, a newly graduated physician. The vice lord tracks down Lois, kidnaps her, and threatens to "tame" her, but the police arrive and arrest Lucky in his hideout. Prostitutes and procurers testify against him at his trial and he is convicted.

In Kent's other vice film, *The Wages of Sin,* pretty young Marjorie Benton works in a laundry plant to support her entire family: her father, who is on strike; her brother, who plays the ponies and refuses to take a WPA

job; her shrewish mother; and her younger brother.[12] Defying her parents, Marjorie goes out with her friend Florence for a night on the town. At the Hideaway, she is eyed by Tony Kilonis (Castello again). The next morning, Marjorie is kicked out of her home and Tony puts a fix in at the laundry to have her fired. He then comes to Marjorie's rescue, vowing to marry her—as soon as his divorce comes through. The promised marriage never materializes and within a few months Tony is pimping for Marjorie. When she gets into a jam at a hotel Tony takes her up the coast to Fat Pearl's brothel, from which she escapes. Returning to the city, Marjorie finds Tony entertaining a new victim and kills them both.[13] The film ends with the jury at Marjorie's murder trial arguing whether her crime was justified; it then invited viewers to send in short essays on their choice of a verdict, promising $1,000 in cash prizes for the best answer.[14] The centerpieces of all of these films tended to be scenes in sporting houses and shots of young women shimmying about in their underwear.

Public concern over the white slave trade in the 1930s failed to equal the anxiety of the early teens, although that did not prevent some officials from weighing in with hyperbolic statements about morality. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, never one to let an opportunity for publicity pass him by, claimed in 1936 to be "alarmed by what he term[ed] the vice racket" and called for a nationwide drive to crush white slavery.[15] A magazine article that same year claimed that the white slavery "industry" turned over hundreds of millions of dollars a year and employed over nine hundred thousand.[16] With a population of around 128 million and unemployment still running in the double digits, such a figure would have meant that almost one out of every hundred citizens was involved in some phase of the prostitution racket. Such overstatement fueled the exploitation machine, and the films traded heavily on the topicality of the Luciano prosecution. Ads for *Gambling with Souls* described "Soiled souls in the marts of a great city! . . . a true expose of the sensational events recently seen in the nation's headlines," and "Stripping the veil from modern city life." Prepared stories for *Slaves in Bondage* drew parallels between the film's story and the 1933 case of Kid Ryan in Chicago while also offering catch lines that invoked the Dewey investigation, "which has racked and horrified the whole American nation."

Where did the vice films locate the "horror" uncovered by Dewey? On the most obvious level, the movies situated the immigrant male as a monster, as the Other, a threat to native-born American women. Dewey had characterized the prostitutes who testified against Luciano as victims,

**45** Police encounter some of the *Slaves in Bondage* in J. D. Kendis's 1937 take on the Lucky Luciano story. (Something Weird Video Collection)

and in all the movies the victims of the vice lords were constructed as innocent "Americans."[17] In fact, Marjorie in *The Wages of Sin* has the clipped cadence of a student from an upper-class finishing school, quite different from the "dees-dem-dose" dialect of her working-class family. The two Kent films, *Smashing the Vice Trust* and *The Wages of Sin,* both present Willy Castello as a dark continental wolf, bent on the systematic defoliation of clean, moral, lily-white American girls. The prosecutor at Lucky Lombardo's trial in *Smashing the Vice Trust* implores the all-male jury, "The truth must be self-evident! You've seen how they've debauched American womanhood!" The vice films that followed the Luciano conviction continued to present the city as the territory of predators who preyed upon single, usually young, females.

Needless to say, the films also constructed the prostitute as an Other. Though her flagrant sexuality served to position her as the transgressor of social norms, it was the relationship of the prostitute with the emerging consumer culture that was at the heart of the films and the core of her transgression. As Hobson explains, W. I. Thomas in his book *The Unad-*

*justed Girl* (1923) "analyzed a prostitute's motivations in terms of universal human desires for new experiences, security, and recognition": "He also viewed prostitution as a response to the rising expectations in a modern consumer economy. Prostitutes were women from the lower class who had no means of reaping the rewards of an affluent society and therefore decided to trade sexual favors, some on a casual basis and others with the man they expected to marry. The guiding motivation for prostitutes, according to Thomas, was a yearning for something better than the expected future."[18] In the vice films, sexual desire stood in for economic desire. The movies from the mid- to late 1930s positioned the woman who wanted to enter consumer life as inherently dysfunctional, caught between the impulses of production and consumption.

In *Gambling with Souls,* Mae Miller yearns for those things that she feels her husband should be able to provide as a physician but can't because he is just beginning his practice. She is attracted to gambling because of the thrill and quick money it provides, only to become ensnared in prostitution when she must pay off her debts. *Smashing the Vice Trust* finds Lois drawn to the city in hope of a better life, only to fall in with Lucky Lombardo and the world of white slavery. In *The Wages of Sin,* Marjorie, in exchange for a single night's "good time," rejects her Puritan work ethic in a moment of pique at her lagabout family. She supports the entire crew on her meager salary, but when she squirrels away a couple of dollars for a hairdo and a pair of stockings, she earns her mother's contempt: "Buying finery! And we need the money so bad." When Marjorie comes home the next morning she is kicked out of the house, told by her family that they can do better on relief without her paycheck. "Relief?" Marjorie asks incredulously. "You wouldn't go on relief?" "Why not?" her brother responds. "The government owes us a living, don't it?" Marjorie exclaims, "Oh you make me sick with your sit-down strikes, your relief, and your Bolshevik schemes for living without working!"

For Marjorie, the "work" of prostitution can be rationalized as more legitimate than the relief her family accepts. Tony forces Marjorie into prostitution, but she puts up only brief resistance to the idea. She stays with it because it is a condition for Tony's love and the security he provides. Moreover, it carries with it the promise of better things. Marjorie enjoys the clothes that Tony gives her and is excited at the promise of the "vacation up the coast" that he dangles before her. It is only when she realizes that the "vacation" is actually demotion to a brothel run by Fat Pearl that Marjorie rebels. Confined to a room, lacking the material pos-

**46** In *The Wages of Sin* (1938), Fat Pearl (former silent star Clara Kimball Young, right), introduces Marjorie Benton (Constance Worth) to the other women who work in her coastal bordello.

sessions and the mobility that her call-girl status conferred, without Tony, and pregnant—as she confides to a fellow inmate—Marjorie rejects her immediate situation but does not explicitly reject prostitution. Indeed, when she returns to the city, she goes directly to Tony's apartment. It is only when she discovers that he is luring another young woman with the very same lines and the same closetful of clothes he had used on her that murder enters Marjorie's mind. She kills Tony and his companion in a rage.

*The Wages of Sin* operated as a critique of the emerging consumer culture and the nascent welfare state, expressed in Marjorie's tirade at her family. The desire for material goods leads Marjorie, like the women in most of the other vice films, into both a figurative and literal whoredom. If, the movie seems to say, she had not wanted that one night of fun, she never would have met Tony, never would have been kicked out of the house, never would have fallen prey to Tony's wiles, never would have become a prostitute, never would have murdered him and been put on

trial. Marjorie's "work" as a prostitute is not condemned per se, but the desires that lead to her life as a prostitute are. Like the hygiene and drug films of the period, the vice movies exhibited a profound distrust of individual desire, whether for sexual pleasure or the products of consumer culture.

The Dewey investigation, Hoover's crackdowns, and the righteous indignation expressed in the vice films were again the products of an earlier time. Changing morals coupled with the cynicism that flowered after World War I and took deep root during the Depression led many to conclude that the prostitute and vice were permanent fixtures of the American city. James Benet was resigned when he wrote in *The New Republic,* "Investigations such as [Dewey's] . . . do nothing to eliminate the prostitute. Lucky Luciano and his associates were merely taking advantage of an already extant and thriving, though illegal, business."[19] "While economic pressure drives women to sell their bodies," the *Nation* claimed, "criminal prosecution of prostitutes will continue to reek of social hypocrisy. It will also retain the aspects of persecution, more especially since only the prostitutes suffer."[20] An article on "Vice in New York" in the July 1939 *Fortune* eschewed judgments in favor of bland reportage that served as nothing less than a guide for the businessman or traveler out for a bit of extracurricular activity. The article went into great detail about where call girls and streetwalkers could be found and what they charged for their services: "Unlike the call girl, who goes to her apartment with her man, the hustler takes hers to some ratty sidestreet hotel where the charge is $1, never more than $1.50, and no questions are asked; she'll have to work hard to make $75 a week. The cheapest circuit of all for white girls is on Ninth Avenue from around Forty-second to Fifty-ninth, with a fringe occasionally shading into Eighth Avenue."[21] The country was either giving up on or losing interest in vice and the plight of the prostitute as magazine articles acknowledged that the prostitute's dilemma rose out of economic, not moral, failings.

That did not stop the exploiteers from attempting to pump life into the vice theme with an occasional twist. Preview Pictures' *Highway Hell* (1938) moved out of the cities and into the countryside to expose "beauty for sale on the open road." In the film, Pop Bartlett's roadside bar and guest cabins become the target of Slavick, who runs a prostitution and extortion ring on the highway. *Secrets of a Model* (1939) from Kendis's Continental Pictures purported to be "A lesson for every girl, a warning for every parent!" by asking "Can a beautiful model stay pure?" Using the creakiest of melo-

dramatic plot devices, Rita, a carhop, becomes an artist's model to pay for her sick mother's operation. The issue of her "purity" has nothing to do with her vocation. Thinking she has been taken advantage of by cad-about-town Jack Thorndyke while she was drunk, Rita wanders the country before returning to her old boyfriend. Kent's *Mad Youth* (1939) brought Willy Castello back as a gigolo who courts both mother and daughter. And Kendis's *Escort Girl* (1941) trotted out Wheeler Oakman again, this time as Gregory Stone, the head of an escort bureau–cum–call girl operation and owner of a "clip joint." His partner, Ruth Ashley, has hidden her involvement in the business from her daughter, and when the girl arrives with her new boyfriend in tow—who happens to be the investigator assigned to uncover the escort racket—predictable complications ensue. Ad lines in the pressbook squealed, "A treacherous racket masking as legitimate . . . exposed by facts. Defend America! Unvarnished facts of a dangerous racket revealed." The ultimate vice film was Kent's compilation *Confessions of a Vice Baron* (1942), discussed earlier.

Although the war brought about an increase in concern about prostitution and camp followers, this did not translate into a concomitant rise in the number of vice films. Only *No Greater Sin,* which was far more interested in the spread of VD, had a subplot about organized vice. After the war, vice films again fell off precipitously while the number of hygiene films jumped with the rising birth rate. The prewar vice movies remained in release around the country, but new films were few and far between. *Tombolo Girls* (aka *Tombolo*), an Italian movie about black marketeers and prostitution, played in some areas in the late 1940s. Several movies released between 1954 and 1956 dealt with prostitution but seemed to draw more on exploitation tradition than any contemporary concern with the issue. *Bad Girls Do Cry* (1954) finds Sally arriving in a big city and getting hooked up with a prostitution ring. She falls in love with one of her johns, who is killed trying to help her escape. Sally eventually murders her procurer and is arrested. This ultracheap production relied on familiar vice film tropes, as did *The Flesh Merchant* (1955), which was similar to many of the films of the 1930s. Nancy shows up in Hollywood to become a fashion model. She takes a job working as an artist's model at a place that fronts for the Colony, a bordello for rich men. Nancy becomes a fixture at the place, but it is eventually closed down when her sister arrives, followed by the police.

One of the only aspects that sets *The Flesh Merchant* apart from the earlier films is Nancy's declaration that she likes her life at the Colony.

"Why, I'm having the time of my life," she announces to her sister, explaining that she likes the material goods that come with her job. The end result is much the same as in the pictures from the 1930s, as the police bust up the ring. But the fact that a character was allowed to express her desire, and claimed to have made a conscious choice to pursue it in the face of social disapprobation, was unusual.

## The Exotic Film

Sander L. Gilman has described the pre–World War I zoological gardens in Europe as places that provided " 'ethnological' exhibitions, representations of 'exotic' cultures, eating what were viewed as appropriate foods, living in appropriate housing, and undertaking appropriate tasks for 'primitives.' "[22] Dime museums, carnival sideshows, and fairs played a similar role in the United States before, Gilman states, film travelogues replaced the "ethnological" exhibition in the 1920s. Whether in live exhibition or on film, such displays placed exotic peoples within the daily experience of Americans and Europeans. The exotic exploitation films that emerged in the early 1930s presented an Other who was nonwhite, non-Western, and "uncivilized"—the title of a 1937 exploitation film.

Exotic exploitation films could hew to either a narrative or a documentary line, although most straddled these distinctions. To a large extent, the exotics grew out of early documentary practices in the silent era. The first of these was the adventure travelogue. Martin and Osa Johnson were among the first and most active practitioners of this brand of globe-hopping adventure. They filmed a number of their expeditions, which became pictures such as *Cannibals of the South Seas* (1912), *Head Hunters of the South Seas* (1922), *Congorilla* (1932) and *Baboona* (1935). Erik Barnouw has said of their films, "Self glorification was the keynote. Unabashed condescension and amusement marked their attitude toward natives. . . . [Martin's] idea of humor was to give a pygmy a cigar and wait for him to get sick; to give another a balloon to blow up and watch his reaction when it bursts; to give a monkey beer and watch the result."[23] Johnson's hijinks ended when he was killed in a plane crash in 1937. Big game hunter and adventurer Frank Buck brought a similar quality to the films he made in the 1930s, such as *Bring 'Em Back Alive* (1932) and *Wild Cargo* (1934).

In addition to drawing on the adventure travelogue, exotics can be

considered pseudo-ethnographic films: they offer scenes of everyday life and ritual, but fail to promote what Karl G. Heider describes as "ethnographic understanding."[24] Heider defined ethnography as "a way of making a detailed description and analysis of human behavior based on long-term observational study on the spot; other essential features of ethnography related to "specific observed behavior to cultural norms"; holism—understanding events in social and cultural context; and truth or, minimally, an attempt to be accurate and avoid distortion.[25] That definition is certainly open to debate; Marcus Banks, for instance, contends that the intention of a filmmaker is a greater marker of "ethnographicness" than is event or reaction.[26] But Heider's description and Banks's elaboration serve adequately for the present discussion.

As Heider points out, fieldwork-based ethnography was becoming firmly established in the 1920s, along with the "popularization of ethnographic insights."[27] Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Somoa* was published in 1928. Early ethnographic films of Robert Flaherty such as *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926), and Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *Grass* (1925) and *Chang* (1927) helped lay the groundwork for exotic exploitation films. All of these films included extended on-location observation, but they also employed staged or recreated events, a technique taken to its logical extreme in Flaherty and F. W. Murnau's *Tabu* (1931). But exploitation exotics invariably distorted the cultures and practices they show. In some instances, that distortion may have been the result of fairly innocent ignorance. Other instances involved blatant deception.

The film that initiated exploitation's exotic subgenre was *Ingagi,* produced by Congo Pictures, Ltd., and released in 1930. Often classified as a horror film, *Ingagi* drew on the adventure travelogue tradition and set a number of precedents in the exotic film.[28] If *Ingagi* is a horror film, it is about the horror of race. The movie is a compilation of old footage and material shot specifically for the production. It follows a 1926 expedition led by Sir Hubert Winstead and Capt. Daniel Swayne as they travel deep into Africa to investigate stories of a tribe that worships Ingagi, supposedly an African word for gorilla. Footage shows different tribes and a variety of wildlife as the explorers go about killing a seemingly endless procession of hippos, rhinos, lions, hyenas, and other animals. They also come across fake animals such as a "venomous reptile," actually a leopard tortoise fitted with the armor of a pangolin and "laminated bird wings."[29] The explorers eventually find the gorillas—shots of men in hairy suits are intercut with authentic footage of orangutans—and a group of naked women who con-

sort with the apes. Winstead and Swayne shoot a gorilla with their guns and then pose with the dead animal as they are shot with the cameras. One of the women comes across the body of the ape and runs off into the bush. Titles inform us, "At the sight of this vision, our boys fled in terror and we quickly made our way back to civilization. . . . If we have entertained you with our picture *Ingagi* we feel our efforts were not in vain."

The exploitation exotic had as much in common with sideshow traditions and Barnumesque hyperbole as with travelogues and early efforts at ethnographic films. Shortly after it appeared, charges were made that *Ingagi* was faked. In many ways, it's amazing that such a charge was necessary. Even when we consider the reception of the picture in historical context, only the most gullible spectator could have found the climax of the picture credible, let alone that it was the filmed record of an actual occurrence.[30] Members of a preview audience in California recognized one of the "native girls" as a regular at Central Casting. The American Society of Mammalologists protested the film, going so far as to inquire about Sir Hubert Winstead with the British Embassy. They discovered that no such man existed. The New York Better Business Bureau reported that the gorilla scenes were faked, and the producers were sued for lifting footage from a 1914 film called *Heart of Africa*.[31] Eventually the FTC weighed in with its assessment of the film; it found that the film's "best scenes" were taken at a Los Angeles zoo, that Winstead and Swayne "were both fictitious persons not existing in fact," and that the animal supposedly new to science, the Tortadillo, "was a turtle with wings, scales, and long tail glued to it while the so-called 'pygmies' said to be shown in their native environment were not pygmies at all, but colored children from five to ten years of age, living in Los Angeles. The native woman represented as being sacrificed by her tribe to the gorillas was a Los Angeles colored woman, while the people represented as 'strange creatures apparently half-human and half ape' were actually colored people living in Los Angeles and made up for the purpose of the picture." To top it off, the FTC declared that "Ingagi" could not be found as a word for gorilla "in any written dictionary of any African language."[32] The controversy surrounding the film's veracity coupled with censorship disputes over the naked "natives" served to boost the film's gross. It did "boffo" business, reportedly grossing over $4 million.[33]

*Ingagi* discloses the contours of the exploitation exotics that would follow in its wake. First, almost all exotics featured nudity in some form. In the 1930s, this was usually the bare breasts of the women of sub-Saharan tribes or South Sea islanders. Bare breasts and buttocks and, as the decades

**47** When it was released in 1930, *Ingagi*'s outrageous concoction of nudity, animal slaughter, half-baked zoology, and anthropology set the standard for exploitation exotics. In the best Barnum tradition, the film continued to draw audiences even after its authenticity was questioned.

wore on, full-frontal female and male nudity were always the target of state and local censors. Nudity prevented the films from getting Hays Office approval, especially after 1934, but it served as the primary spectacle of exotic films and was almost always alluded to in advertising and lobby displays. Tag lines were laced with words like "naked" and "raw." Some posters and ad art featured topless women or contained images of carefully posed nude natives or with foliage or titles covering portions of their anatomy.

The second characteristic of the exotic was shock. The line separating "legitimate" adventure travelogues, ethnographic films, and exploitation exotics is hardly distinct. Yet, we can look to the films, their advertising, and, as Banks might suggest, their intent, to provide some basic guidelines. Whereas many ethnographic films are designed to "bridge cultural differences" and may inadvertently shock "when shown to at least some audiences," many exploitation exotics are designed principally to shock. If, as David MacDougall indicates, one of the "underlying metaphors of

anthropological endeavor is to cure the disease of cultural intolerance," then one of the primary goals of the exotic was to focus on difference, to emphasize Otherness.[34] Advertising played on "strange weird sights" (*Blonde Captive,* 1932), "Savage hearts beating to the lure of strange customs" (*Jungle Virgin,* aka *Jaws of the Jungle,* 1936), and promised to "Divulge heretofore unheard of orgies of wild women" (*Forbidden Adventure,* 1936). The tag line for *Wild Women of Borneo* (1932)—"Where No Man Dares to Penetrate"—speaks for itself. Those "weird sights" might come in the form of body modification, human sacrifice, cannibalism, or sexual practices deemed outside the pale such as bestiality, polygamy, and child marriage.

Nudity and shocking rituals or other forms of behavior that could be labeled primitive were the qualities that made the exotic viable as an exploitation genre. Some movies relied almost exclusively on nudity as spectacle; others favored the grisly spectacle of human sacrifice and cannibalism; still others combined these elements. Nudity and shock were the factors that clearly set exploitation exotics apart from the jungle epics and island movies made by Hollywood, whether fictional or travelogues. The movies made at the mainstream studios did not go to great lengths to achieve ethnographic or zoological veracity, but exploitation movies invariably made no attempt whatsoever. Indeed, many of the movies that claimed to be "fact," such as *Ingagi,* were brazenly deceptive. Others were heavily scripted, sometimes shot on location with native casts, sometimes ground out in the canyons around Los Angeles with locals in strange costumes—or little costuming at all.

With so many exotics cobbled together from footage that was found, purchased, or pilfered from disparate sources, a kind of ur-jungle was created. This was the jungle of the middle-class American imagination. It was a place where strange beasts from many continents and vastly different ecosystems existed together. In this jungle, the animals were either furry friends, capable of being domesticated, or bloodthirsty man-killers that required extermination. There was no middle ground. The human inhabitants of this imaginary space were presented in much the same fashion; they were either lazy, childlike innocents gamboling in a twentieth-century Garden of Eden, or prehistoric savages, displaced in time for the sole purpose of reminding us how "civilized" our culture really is. Like other exploitation genres, exotics addressed the unease that mainstream Americans felt about race, sex, and modernity. In no other exploitation genre was the dichotomy of attraction and loathing so pronounced.

The ideological underpinnings of the exotic can best be examined by looking at a range of representative films. *Rama,* a French production of 1930, is a narrative film that played for decades on the American exploitation circuit. *Virgins of Bali* (1932) is one of several "Bali" pictures released in the early 1930s that straddled the line between documentary and fictional film. *Gow* (1933) contains extensive travel footage of an expedition led by Capt. E. A. Salisbury, probably during the mid-1920s. Kendis's *Jaws of the Jungle* (1936) is another scripted film, apparently shot on location in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. *Angkor* (1937), produced by Henry Warner and Roy Purdon, is an *Ingagi* knockoff in every respect. All five films were roadshow staples, retitled and reissued into the 1950s.

The "Bali" pictures were the least offensive of the exotics, although even these films remain exceptionally problematic. At least six features released on the exploitation circuit between 1931 and 1937 focus on the island of Bali and its inhabitants—primarily the women. These include *Balinese Love* (1931), *Goona Goona* (1932), *Isle of Paradise* (1932), *Virgins of Bali* (1932), *Legong (Dance of the Virgins)* (1935), and *Wajan* (1937). Collectively, the films were referred to as "Goona Goonas" in the trades, a term that often extended to other exotics, not just those set on Bali. With the exception of *Wajan,* which was heavily scripted, the other films are travelogues with an ethnographic spin. They usually look at daily life on Bali through the activities of one family and concentrating on a couple of "characters." The films were loosely scripted, having some narrative trajectory that was typically structured by voice-over narration.

*Virgins of Bali,* produced and narrated by Deane H. Dickason, follows the Wayan family of Bedula, concentrating on twelve-year-old Tagel and her sixteen-year-old sister, Grio, "the most eligible virgin of the city." Scenes of the girls tending the family's cattle, going to the market, and preparing meals are shown. Other segments provide information about Balinese shrines and religious beliefs, marriage and funeral rites, temple dances, growing and harvesting rice, and pastimes like bull racing and cock fighting. The spectacle of the Bali films was the partial nudity of the women. These exotics operated as moving *National Geographic* magazines. Many shots linger on Tagel and Grio as they gaze demurely at the camera, bathe, apply coconut oil to their bodies, and go about their daily business. If there was any doubt about the source of the spectacle of the film, Dickason's narration dispelled it: "Bali is a land of beautiful women. They outnumber the men five to three. They have fine features and well-rounded, slender bodies; they are firmly and harmoniously developed and

walk with a swinging, easy, rhythmic movement. . . . The young sisters, a sight for sculptor and artist, swinging rhythmically, down the road toward home." In a later scene, a bare-breasted woman sells peanuts to a group of children as Dickason comments, "In any other land a creature so naive, so timid, so charming would be the center of an admiring circle of masculine eyes. But in Bali beauty is the rule, and men [are] consequently very scarce [around the vendor]."

*Variety*'s review of *Virgins of Bali* pointed up its exploitable aspects. Noting that the Cameo in New York ran *Goona Goona* for nine weeks, the trade said, "The management figures the demand for bust pictures is still lively. At half past seven the opening day [of *Virgins of Bali*] the house was nearly full and not a score of women in the 300-seater." The review continued to speculate that "where the previous pictures have played, this one will stand up. Where the others have not yet reached, this will be a stag stand-out if properly advertised."[35] The seminudity of the girls was unquestionably the main draw of the film. The *Variety* reviewer continued, "Like the Samoans the Balinese women have regular features, clear olive skins and remarkable breasts. That's the sales appeal." At the same time, the film also spoke to other fears and fantasies of Depression-era Americans.

Exotics did not become a part of the exploitation industry until after the stock market crash of 1929. As the effects of the Depression deepened, many Americans questioned the ability of the country to regain its economic footing. By 1932, Herbert Hoover's efforts to deal with the Depression were seen as ineffectual. Discontent spread among farmers and industrial workers, and the so-called Bonus Army of World War I veterans marched on Washington in the spring. Some forecast potentially bloody revolution. Robert S. McElvane has written that "many people were prepared to believe the worst about the government and its agencies in 1932 . . . a reflection of how much the economy had deteriorated and the social fabric frayed by late in Hoover's term."[36] Exotics offered images of a way of life unconstrained by pressures of the modern consumer economy under capitalism.

In most exotics, and the "Goona Goonas" in particular, the primitive island or jungle is a place of plenty. Nineteenth-century discourse had constructed Africa and Africans as savages by "negative comparison" with Europe. Jan Nederveen Pieterse has commented that the savage was defined by absences: "the absence, or scarcity, of clothing, possessions, attributes of civilization."[37] But the Europeans did believe that Africa had an abundance of nature: "The iconography of Africans as savages was deter-

mined by association with nature and flora—often the kind of wild and overwhelming landscape which makes human beings appear small. To the image of Africa as wilderness belongs the tropical rain forest with its lush vegetation, and the jungle which is proverbially 'impenetrable.' "[38] Obviously, such images were not limited to Europe and had become a part of the bourgeois American mindset as well. It should also be emphasized that the construction of the jungle as a place of unexploited plenty was not limited to Africa, but extended to all tropical places populated by "savages." In *Virgins of Bali,* the life the Wayan family lead on their island utopia is simple, lacking in stress, but still filled with abundance. Dickason informs the viewer that the cattle raised on the island are among the best in the world. We are shown images of the market filled with strange, enticing produce. Even the harvesting and thrashing of the rice seems easy. Much of the day appears to be taken up with leisure activities: the bull race, the cockfight, and dancing. Life on Bali is carefree. Labor is effortless, time is undemanding, and there is no want.

For audiences during the Depression—especially the male breadwinner—the exotic exploitation film tapped into anxieties about a sour economy in which it was difficult, in many cases impossible, to be a productive participant. Elaine Tyler May has described how advertisers played upon male guilt at a time when men felt a personal responsibility for the security of their families: "[Some advertisements] pointed to the personal failures of men, rather than to the problems of the economy, and urged fathers to take measures so that the same fate would not befall their sons. . . . Even consumer goods could be an investment in a child's future during hard times, according to an ad for Lionel Electric Trains addressed 'to fathers who want to be proud of their sons.' "[39] As a counterpoint, life in the tropics was not directed by the demands of consumption as it was in modern Western societies. The American male's sense of self and masculinity, so closely tied to his job and the ability to provide all the products necessary for a family, was given balm in these films. In Bali, women willingly did much of the work and because they outnumbered men by such a large proportion, a male's "manliness" and value would not be so thoroughly entwined with his capacity to earn money and buy goods. Just as the land produced an abundance of fruit and rice, it also provided an endless array of beautiful, young—and presumably not overly choosy—women. "Goona Goonas" acknowledged the doubts of their spectators by presenting them with images of an economic and sexual utopia. Along

with the seminaked women, this utopian dimension may account for the longevity of many exotic titles on the exploitation circuit.

*Rama,* a French film made in 1930 by Léon Poirier for the Compagnie Universelle Cinématographique, was shot on Nossi-Be, off Madagascar. Originally called *Cain, Aventures des Mers Exotiques* in France, it was known in the United States as *Cain, Savage Bride, Rama, the Cannibal Girl,* and perhaps most often by the abbreviated title *Rama.* In the film, Cain, a stoker on a luxury liner, steals money and jewelry from a state room and then climbs overboard to an outrigger canoe. He finally washes ashore on a desert island. When a group of natives visit the island, the stoker captures a woman, Rama, and they build a life together. Cain begins to feel guilty about the theft that led to his flight and turns to a decayed copy of the Book of Common Prayer for solace. One day he sees a ship in the distance; he lights a signal fire and turns himself in to the shore party. He is put back to work in the stoke hole of the ship. Rama follows her captor, paddling out to the ship in a canoe. Cain realizes that he is leaving behind his new responsibilities and that his guilt vanished when he returned the jewels. He jumps overboard and returns to the island with Rama.

*Rama* had a long and varied career on the exploitation circuit. It was originally silent except for some sound effects and music and was first released in the United States as *Cain* in 1932 by an outfit ironically named Talking Picture Epics. The film was not very well made. In a number of shots where Cain is supposedly lost at sea, land can be spotted in the background. Stock shots of all sorts of animals are thrown in for good measure. The lack of quality in a film was never an obstacle for Dwain Esper, and he picked it up and placed it in copyright in 1942. Esper released the film as *Rama* and *Rama, the Cannibal Girl.* He added narration, additional music, and crudely dubbed dialogue into some scenes. In 1948 the film was acquired by H.K.S. Distributors and released as *Savage Bride.* The topless scenes of the energetic Rama-Tahé kept them lining up at the box office over the years.

Like *The Virgins of Bali, Rama* created a fantastic space where animals as varied as tigers and armadillos coexisted and where man had to labor only for his necessities. Cain's life in "civilization" is a symbolic hell. Not only does he work in the scorching lower depths of the ship, he is also very poor. His lowly position compels him to steal from the rich passengers on the luxury liner to better his situation. But the material goods he snatches are of no use to him on the desert island, and he only finds true satisfac-

tion in seeing his labor build a life with his "savage bride." There may be trials and tribulations; one of the children Cain and Rama produce dies from a snake bite. But life is better on the island than it is in the modern world, confirmed by the stoker's decision to go back to the island after he has eased his conscience by returning the jewels.

When Esper acquired *Rama* in 1942, he added a square-up that reinforced the film's critique of modernity and also addressed the war effort:

> The seed of discontent is sprinkled liberally over the world today. This may be laid directly to this generation's stupid thinking in terms of personal happiness or unhappiness. . . . This persistent pursuit of pleasure and ambition to obtain wealth without working as the sole aims of modern existence are stripping the vitality of our national life. The decay of democracy could well be laid at its feet. . . . As we give up this senseless aim, and apply ourselves to the task at hand, we realize that work well done, no matter how trivial the deed, is the greatest of human satisfactions. The simplest life well lived according to God's standards of common goodness holds more true happiness than is available to the greatest dictator on earth. With this thought in mind we present *Rama* as a simple tale of every man when shorn of superficial aspirations of present day civilization.

The foreword neatly summed up the values present in most of Esper's films and coupled them with the fantasy structure of the exotic exploitation film—a rejection of the modern economy in favor of a productive regime in which the worker was not alienated from his labor. When Cain leaves the island and is on the ship he hears a series of radio reports, dubbed into the soundtrack, that paint a grim picture of modern civilization. The broadcast ends with a topical plea to buy war bonds. After hearing the reports, he jumps overboard and returns to the island.

If such exotics as *Rama* and the *Virgins of Bali* were unequivocal in their presentation of the pleasures of "uncivilized" life in the face of modern consumer culture, others were far more ambiguous about life without the trappings of Western civilization. Kendis's *Jaws of the Jungle* from 1936 (aka *Jungle Virgin*) stands as a good example. Set on Ceylon, the film combines travel footage, a scripted story, native actors, and narration. The narrative centers on fourteen-year-old Teeto and his betrothed, twelve-year-old Minta. When flocks of giant vampire bats attack, the townspeople decide to move their village. Gukar, the suitor Minta rejected in favor of Teeto, attempts to sabotage the party as it makes its way to a new home. Upon their arrival at an inviting valley, Teeto arranges the sacrifice of an

old man and a baby boy to secure the gods' approval of their progress into the region. The sacrificial victims are loaded into a cart and shoved off a cliff, their deaths signaling the gods' welcome. But before the party reaches safe haven, a woman giving birth is attacked by a leopard and Minta's grandfather is eaten by a python. Gukar tries to lure an elephant into the camp to disrupt the travelers, but he and Minta end up being chased up a tree. The spurned suitor tries to force himself on Minta once again, and her cries bring Teeto to the rescue. Gukar falls out of the tree and is eaten by a hungry jaguar below. The group reaches the site of their new village and the narrator informs us that "the little brown people will resume their lives unmolested by the fox that flies like a bird."

*Jaws of the Jungle* shows the jungle as a more threatening place than the pastoral Bali films or even *Rama,* in which the island had its share of hidden dangers. Not only are the villagers forced to leave their homes by "the fox that flies," they are molested along the way by big cats, snakes, and rampaging elephants. The "little brown people" engage in human sacrifice and, unlike in the other films, women are not readily available to men but must be fought for. Still other films were very explicit in their disdain for the "savage" life and implicitly exalted the productive capacity of the white Westerner. Two such movies are *Gow* (1932) and *Angkor* (1937). Both purported to be filmed records of expeditions. *Gow* finds Capt. E. A. Salisbury skipping through the South Seas, stopping off at various islands and eventually locating tribes of cannibals and headhunters. *Angkor* is the alleged document of a 1912 expedition through the jungles of Cambodia to Angkor and the discovery of more ape-worshipping women.

Of the five films under consideration, *Gow* (reissued in 1956 as *Cannibal Island*) is closest to a conventional documentary in style, lacking "characters" and a carefully scripted framework. This does not mean that it is not without a narrative trajectory, reenacted segments, and faked passages. The square-up states, "These authentic pictures were not made in a studio but photographed at great personal risk to our cameraman on actual locations in the primitive jungle!" It goes on to claim that many of the scenes had to be shot with a telephoto lens "because closer contact with the natives during some of the scenes would have meant instant death." However, there is no evidence that telephoto lenses were used, and the tribespeople the narration claims to be among the most dangerous are photographed in close-up. Capt. Salisbury sets out in his ship, *The Gypsy,* on a tour of the South Sea islands. The expedition makes its first stop in the Marquesas, where the inhabitants eat raw fish and fruits and where

**48** *Gow* (1934) offered a tour of the South Pacific, moving "down" the evolutionary scale from lighter-skinned Balinese to the dark "Melanesian cannibals." (Something Weird Video Collection)

vegetables grow in profusion. The narration, read in a sneering manner by William Peck, states, "The girls. They're just lovely. They're happy, grown-up children. They spend their days dancing, swimming and singing on the beach." He goes on to say that some of the sailors are tempted to desert, "And you can't blame them. It's really a great place for a young man. Or an old man with young ideas."

The patronizing quality of the narration grows as the expedition makes its way to Somoa and then to the increasingly "primitive" islands of Fiji, New Guinea, and finally the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands. "These Melanesian cannibals," Peck tells us, "have the mentality of three- or four-year-old children and the bodies of adults." Their village is "a very evil, vile-smelling place." In a classic instance of exploitation hype, the promised cannibalism is preceded by a "Producer's Note" that reads, "Almost needless to state the public showing of motion pictures of the following repugnant native feast must be limited to certain preliminary scenes. These are parts, however, of the first motion pictures of such events. They were secured at no little risk." The scene amounts to nothing more than some shots of the natives dancing and an evidently faked shot of an arm roasting in an open fire. The dancing becomes more frenzied and Peck intones, "The whole spectacle is a very disgusting and revolting one to a white man . . . they go through many repulsive and obscene actions which naturally the censors would not permit us to show in a moving picture theater." What actions? Which censors? By ascribing the imposition of limits to censors, exploiteers could frame themselves as courageous fighters for truth in the face of prudes who would use their powers to obstruct the truth, no matter how grisly or "unvarnished."

*Gow* sets up a clear dichotomy between the civilized white and the abject black, a dichotomy that replicated the dominant racist ideology, but did so within the standard, cautionary tales about a modern, consumer economy of exploitation films. The exotics seemed to imply that a little savagery—abandonment of the corrupting influence of consumerism, the modern city, and so forth—may be good, but too much savagery meant an abrogation of "humanity." And the gauge of one's humanity in these films was marked by the color of one's skin. Exotics advanced a clear hierarchy atop which were white, Anglo-Saxon Americans, then the "regular features" and "clear olive skins" of the Balinese and Samoans, to the darker inhabitants of Ceylon who practice human sacrifice in *Jaws of the Jungle,* finally to the "black" cannibals of the New Hebrides and the Solomons of *Gow* who eat human flesh. According to this system of difference, institu-

**49** Decked out in pith helmets and phony beards, the "great white hunters" in *Angkor* (1937) take aim . . .

tionalized in the United States through Jim Crow laws and scientific racism and reinforced by popular culture, the darker the person's skin, the less human he or she is. Thus shots of a Solomon Islander plucking out his beard with sharpened clamshell tweezers could be accompanied by Peck's speculation, "I doubt very much that they have the same nervous system as we have."

The fullest expression of this difference came in *Ingagi* and the other films like it. *Angkor,* a 1937 film produced by Henry Warner and Roy Purdon, purported to combine footage of a 1912 expedition to the lost city of Angkor with recreations of scenes suggested by the explorers' diaries and notes, including the interaction between the expedition's female porters and a great ape.[40] Like *Ingagi,* the film combined shots of real apes with footage of an actor in a moth-eaten gorilla suit. Even though the film is supposedly set in Cambodia, the "native" women porters, often partially obscured by masking over the camera lens meant to be thick foliage, are quite obviously African American.[41] Other films, such as Cummins's *Love*

**50** . . . and fire on an amorous ape and the object of his affection. (Something Weird Video Collection)

*Life of a Gorilla,* were based on the spectacle of social, and implied sexual, intercourse between black women and gorillas.[42] Although only the most credulous viewers could have believed that what they saw in these films was "real," the movies did tap into very real prejudices of the white audience.

From at least the eighteenth century, the sexual union between apes and African women had been represented as fact.[43] Gilman explains that the French naturalist Buffon "credited the black with a lascivious, apelike sexual appetite, introducing a commonplace of early travel literature into a pseudo-scientific context. He stated that this animallike sexual appetite went so far as to encourage black women to copulate with apes."[44] For Buffon and those who subscribed to his views, "the black's position on the scale of humanity was antithetical to the white's. Such a scale was employed to indicate the innate difference between the races."[45] Pseudoscience was used to justify racist ideology. Gilman goes on: "It is commonplace that the primitive was associated with unbridled sexuality.

Blacks . . . remained at this most primitive stage, and their presence in the contemporary world served as an indicator of how far humanity had come in establishing control over the world and itself. The loss of control was marked by a regression into this dark past, a degeneracy into the primitive expression of emotions, in the form of either madness or unbridled sexuality."[46] George M. Fredrickson has described how the construction of the "negro as beast" was used to justify or "explain" lynching around the turn of the century. This was accomplished through Thomas Dixon's novels, for instance *The Clansman* (1905), which became the basis of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), and works of dubious medical and biblical scholarship.[47] That such notions circulated through popular culture into the 1930s and beyond cannot be disputed. But what role did such pernicious myths play for the white audiences?

Working from a statement made by W. E. B. DuBois, David R. Roediger convincingly argues that a belief in their racial superiority over nonwhite populations became a form of compensation for white wage laborers in the nineteenth century: "The white working class, disciplined and made anxious by fear of dependency, began during its formation to construct an image of the Black population as 'other'—as embodying the preindustrial, erotic, careless style of life the white worker hated and longed for."[48] For generations of American workers, "whiteness took shape against the corresponding counter-images, shunting anxieties and desires regarding relationships to nature and to sexuality onto Blacks."[49] The development of white racism thus grew with the industrial revolution and the discipline imposed by the wage labor system. According to Roediger, "Industrial capitalism and speedups in smaller shops joined cultural initiatives to eliminate holidays, divorce the worker from contact with nature, bridle working class sexuality, separate work from the rest of life and encourage the postponing of gratification. . . . But much of the new discipline was also internalized, both by those who used punctuality, regularity and habits of sacrifice to further labor organization and by those who saw the same values as necessary to accumulate wealth and move out of the ranks of wage labor."[50] The "wages of whiteness" became even more important during the Depression. Unemployment for the nation as a whole reached almost 25 percent. For African Americans, that number was closer to 50 percent. White males suddenly began to clamor for the undesirable jobs that had once been reserved for women and blacks. Slogans like "No Jobs for Niggers Until Every White Man Has a Job" were adopted in some parts of the South and white-on-black violence grew. A study conducted during

the period "showed a positive correlation between the number of lynchings in the Deep South and economic distress."[51]

Some exotics critiqued modernity and the demands of a consumer economy by playing on working- and middle-class fantasies that emphasized the utopian aspects of the jungle. Others, such as *Ingagi* and *Angkor,* served as warnings. A bit of fantasy about warm sea breezes, unlimited tropical fruits, and simple but attractive women could provide a brief respite from the rigors of work. But once the civilizing aspects of the time clock and job were rejected, it was a short step to the primitivism of human sacrifice, cannibalism, or even bestiality. Significantly, a number of exotic films—*Gow,* for instance—followed this pattern, moving from more "civilized" and whiter peoples to darker, "uncivilized" tribes. White anxiety about the myth of unbridled black sexuality was only partially attributable to fears of becoming a victim of black lust. Suppression of sexual desire and the ability to harness that energy and direct it toward the production of goods was, in this framework, what distinguished civilized from uncivilized, white from black. The Other was not simply black, not simply sexual in an unabashed way, but was, worst of all, unproductive.[52]

Exotic exploitation films reinforced the self-esteem of white workers in the middle and working classes through display of an abject, black primitive. Through implicit negative comparison, the lives and labor of white middle Americans were justified. Even if wage labor was often tedious and degrading and the demands of the consumer economy confusing, or for many simply out of reach, it was better than the repugnant (as the narration constantly reminds the viewer) lives of aboriginal peoples. Through this process, the films also confirmed the supremacy of Western capitalism at a time when its very foundation had been shaken, when its continued viability was being questioned not only by some political groups but by average families struggling to survive.

Exotics were also warnings by and for white culture about the supposed dangers of miscegenation. The word has its origins in "the late nineteenth-century vocabulary of sexuality. It embodies a fear not merely of interracial sexuality, but of its supposed result, the decline of the population. For interracial marriages were seen as exactly parallel to prostitution in their barrenness. If they produced children at all, these children were weak and doomed."[53] Miscegenation, like the concept of race suicide, was a threat to bourgeois productivity. In the exotics, blacks were degraded by their sexual liaisons with apes, and, by association, whites who engaged in sexual relations with blacks were also debased. Some of the other exploitation

genres displayed a more ambiguous relationship to dominant ideology. Exotics embraced the racist aspects of American culture without question because both white racism and the exploitation critique of modernity were rooted in a productivist ideology that dismissed anything characterized as unproductive as a threat.

Although most exotics dealt with populations outside the American scene, a handful of films constructed some groups within the United States as sufficiently exotic to qualify for exploitation treatment. These films dealt with small, remote groups who, according to the moviemakers, suffered from some sort of misplaced sexual energies. Three films from the late 1930s and early 1940s that continued to circulate long after initial release are worth a brief discussion: *Lash of the Penitentes* (1936), *Polygamy* (1936), and *Child Bride* (1941).

The most famous of the trio, Raymond Friedgen's *Child Bride,* combined the unusual culture of a remote community with the lure of forbidden sexual practices. At Thunderhead Mountain, young Jennie Colton leads a simple life—slopping the hogs and skinny-dipping—while her father, Ira, makes moonshine. Jennie's teacher, Miss Carol, who grew up in the town, wages a battle to stop the practice of child marriage. Miss Carol was lucky enough to get away from the community and improve herself through education. She and her boyfriend, Charles, work to get the governor's support for passage of a bill that would ban child marriage. She is roughed up by Ira's partner, Jake, and a group of townsmen who don't like her meddling in their traditions. Ira and two of his sidekicks, the dwarf Angelo and simpleton Happy, come to Miss Carol's rescue in the nick of time. Jake then kills Jennie's father and convinces Jennie's mother of her responsibility for the crime. He blackmails Ma Colton into giving permission for Jennie to become his bride. Jennie marries Jake as Charles informs Miss Carol that their bill has passed. Angelo, perhaps taking revenge for Ira's death or to save Jennie from her fate (an obvious motive is lacking), kills Jake as he prepares Jennie for their wedding night. She leaves with Freddie, her young boyfriend.

Mountain films, such as *Spitfire* (1934) with Katharine Hepburn, were not unusual in Hollywood's output. Exploitation films simply brought the sexual implications of backwoods life to the fore. In *Child Bride,* the denizens of Thunderhead Mountain can maintain their practice of child marriage because they are isolated from the influence of civilization: law, medicine, and education. Jennie has been instructed by her teacher not to skinny-dip with Freddie anymore because contact with the pubescent girl

will give him "ideas." Neither Jennie nor Freddie seem to be entirely sure about why they shouldn't swim together, only that Miss Carol finds it inappropriate. Her efforts to raise the age of consent in the unnamed state not only drew on the protectionist elements of older progressive reforms, but served an economic system that demanded that individuals enter into production before entering into reproduction. Writing about the purity crusaders of the late eighteenth century, David J. Pivar has observed that "legislating age of consent enlisted law on the side of civilizing forces and represented the 'culmination of centuries of effort in the rise of barbarism.' Legal change resulted in two benefits for purity reform. First, it categorized illicit sexual behavior as a crime, with law deterring and constraining evil. A successful age of consent campaign might reestablish norms of behavior, counter immorality, and reorient people in socially desirable directions."[54] By the turn of the century, purity reformers had succeeded in raising age-of-consent laws in many states, with the average age in the country at about fourteen years in 1895. Still, in five states the age of consent was ten, and in Delaware a shocking seven.[55]

The social function of *Child Bride* was much the same as that of the exotics set in Africa or the South Seas. Like the "savages" of the other films, Jennie and the "back yonder folk" are closer to nature and have a sexuality unencumbered by the strictures of civilization. Jennie in particular is capable of producing both desire, because of her incipient sexuality, and fear, because of her youth. Age becomes the corollary to race in *Child Bride,* and just as the foreign exotics warned that miscegenation would lead to a lack of productivity, precocious sexuality is shown to have the same outcome in this domestic exotic. Indeed, Angelo, the dwarf, and Happy, who suffers from some sort of developmental disorder, appear to serve as visual reminders of the potential result of child marriage. Miss Carol travels the community speaking to young women, advising against early marriage. "Don't you realize," she tells one, "at twenty-five you'll be an old woman!" Before a group of townspeople she cries, "You can't fight nature's law. Bearing children is a woman's responsibility. Child marriage must go!" She promises recovery from adverse social and economic conditions if the practice is stopped.

The marriage rate "plummeted to an all-time low" during the early 1930s as the Depression caused young men and women to postpone marriage.[56] By the time *Child Bride* appeared, the United States was preparing for World War II. The marriage age had fallen and the marriage rate had risen, "spurred, in part, by the possibility of draft deferments for married

men in the early war years and by the imminence of the men's departure for foreign shores."[57] At the same time, the wartime economy demanded the inclusion of vast numbers of women in the labor force. So, when many in the United States were rushing into marriage and families at an earlier age, *Child Bride* counseled against such rash moves. Early marriage is shown to be counterproductive, and during the war what was not productive was not patriotic.

Other cultural practices that seemed outside the norm of middle-class life were given similar treatment in the other exotics set in America. *Lash of the Penitentes* dealt with a religious cult in New Mexico that practiced flagellation and crucifixion. The package mixed footage of secretly photographed ceremonies and fictional material in which a woman is stripped and whipped—a combination that kept the film on the road through the 1950s. In some versions, *Lash* was supplemented with scenes of a nude African girl being anointed with oils before being thrown into what was supposedly a volcano, along with footage of fighting in Ethiopia, increasing its alliance with exploitation exotics that had a foreign setting. *Polygamy* was a thinly disguised swipe at the Mormon Church's practice of having multiple wives. Both *Lash of the Penitentes* and *Polygamy* are set in a literal and figurative desert (the American Southwest) where a lack of civilization results in "perverse" practices. In both cases, extreme practices in the name of religion came in for criticism.

Whether in a quasi-documentary form or as narrative films, exotics continued through the postwar era. Movies such as *Latuko* (1952) and *Karamoja* (1954) included full-frontal male nudity in addition to the usual female nudity. Many of these films focused on cultural practices that appeared, at least to the eyes of middle-class, white Americans (and likely to nonwhite audiences as well), to be unnecessary and cruel. By emphasizing the primitive or "freakish" aspects of these cultures, these movies invited audiences to feel superior about the United States during the postwar period when it was engaged in the cold war. As with drug films during the 1950s, it became more difficult to distinguish between classical exploitation exotics and those released by major companies as well as up-and-coming concerns like American International Pictures. Again, the thing that set the true exploitation exotic apart from the rest of the pack was the desire to shock. The apotheosis of the exotic came after the end of the classical exploitation period with the development of the "mondo movie." Beginning with the Italian *Mondo Cane* (1963), "shockumentary" mondo movies usually pasted a series of nauseating or titillating scenes

together for the sole purpose of disturbing the audience. Though some of these movies loosely connected their segments through geography (*Africa Addio,* 1966), or subject matter (*Women of the World,* 1963), many had little logical or thematic cohesion (*Mondo Bizarro,* 1966; *Mondo Balordo,* 1964; *Sadismo,* 1967). In the fashion of classical exploitation exotics, mondo films were juiced up with faked footage, a tradition acquired from their other major influence from the classical period, the atrocity film.

## The Atrocity Film

Along with the exotic, the other classical exploitation genre that fed into the mondo form of the 1960s was the atrocity film. If the exotic was meant to arouse feelings of sexual desire or disgust, the purpose of the atrocity film was primarily to repulse with images of violence, carnage, or bloody ritual. Sex hygiene films had long provided the gory spectacle of cesarean operations. According to Gidney Talley Jr., the bloodier and more graphic the operations, the better the attendance at hygiene films.[58] The atrocity film increased the level of unpleasant spectacle, shifting the focus from sex to death. Never as popular as other exploitation genres, the spectacle of the atrocity film still forged a fresh path which a new generation of exploiteers would explore more thoroughly with "gore films" in the 1960s.

The earliest extant atrocity films appeared in the mid-1930s.[59] In 1936, Roadshow Attractions created a series of shorts called *The March of Crime.* Each installment recounted crimes, embellishing the stories with grisly shots: decapitated Chinese criminals, John Dillinger's bullet-riddled body laid out on a slab in the morgue, and so on. It should come as no surprise that the largest source of fodder for atrocity films, both before and after World War II, was Nazi Germany. A couple years earlier, Samuel Cummins issued *Hitler's Reign of Terror* (1934) under his Jewel banner, probably the first anti-Nazi film to be produced in the United States. Director Mike Mindlin, who had compiled *This Nude World,* mixed reenactments with newsreel footage to sound a warning for Americans about Hitler's abuses in Germany, notably those directed at the Jews. Following the war, *The Love Life of Adolph Hitler* (1948) was compiled by Dwain Esper. Although Eva Braun popped up from time to time during the movie in a bathing suit, Hitler's real love, according to the film, was for power. Concentration camp shots were included in the movie, which *Variety* judged to be "packed with exploitational qualities." The trade paper also warned, "Title

chosen is cheap and lurid. No doubt it will stimulate interest of grindhouse patrons, but better situations will shy away."[60]

Other postwar films, such as *Half-Way to Hell* (1953), combined documentary footage from the war with material shot at the concentration camps, ostensibly to serve as warnings about totalitarianism and man's inhumanity to man. A series of films produced in the Philippines with such titles as *Beasts of the East* and *Outrages of the Orient* (both ca. 1950) found invading Japanese forces committing atrocities against the inhabitants of the islands, who fearlessly resist. The spread of communism and the Korean conflict provided additional grist for atrocity films. *Nightmare in Red China,* a Hindi film produced by Rajkamal Kalamandir Studios, was distributed in the United States by Lloyd Friedgen in 1953 and provides an apt example. The narrative begins in India. A young physician, Dwarkanath S. Kotnis, returns to his hometown to tell his father that he is going to China to help the guerrillas in their fight against the Red forces. Once there his assistant, Ching, tells him about the atrocities she witnessed; these are depicted in flashback. At this point, several scenes are inserted showing what appears to be a Soviet soldier pulling a cross off the neck of a Chinese woman. She stabs him. Topless Chinese women then run out of a shack, chased by what appears to be a Japanese soldier. In a scene that harks back to *The Birth of a Nation,* one woman jumps off a cliff rather than submit to her pursuer. A priest is then bayoneted while trying to protect a group of children. The flashback ends. A later insert shows men dressed in white smocks and lab masks drawing blood from a woman on a shoddy set. The young doctor soon discovers that many people are dying of a disease that leaves large open sores. To find a cure, he infects himself with tainted blood, gets progressively sicker, but finally discovers a cure. The valiant doctor collapses while an entertainment unit dances for the troops. He is told that he has epilepsy and has ruined his health. Word comes that the guerrilla general has been wounded at the front, but Dwarkanath manages to rise from his sickbed to treat the general, who recovers.

*Nightmare in Red China* is, in most respects, a standard, if rather abbreviated, Hindi film. It centers on a sentimental romance, contains elements of comedy, and features song and dance numbers. But it is the inserts of the staged atrocity footage that served as center of the film and the primary spectacle in the American exploitation market. These scenes shock not only through the violence they depict but also in their very style. Crudely photographed and just as crudely cut into the film, the scenes are

**51** *Mau Mau* (1955) was a fairly sober documentary. The insertion of staged atrocity footage and a lurid ad campaign turned it into an exploitation film.

a brutish contrast to the relatively slick Hindi film. This stylistic reinforcement of thematic content helps the scenes succeed in their purpose: to show the Red forces as violent and inhumane, particularly when compared to the selfless sacrifice of a young Indian physician.

*Mau Mau* (1955) was produced by Joe Rock and directed by Elwood Price. The film documented the anticolonial uprisings of the Mau Mau sect of the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya, who were often associated with Communism.[61] Tracing the clash of values between the indigenous Kikuyu and the white settlers, Rock and Price's picture described the rise of rebel leader Jomo Kenyatta. The film included the measured narration of newsman Chet Huntley and was, at points, rather sympathetic to the plight of the Kikuyu. Where *Nightmare in Red China* interrupts its narrative to insert faked atrocity scenes, *Mau Mau* pauses in its account of dramatic changes in the political and economic climate of Kenya to plug in phony footage of an attack on a village. Price had convinced Dan Sonney to distribute the film, but because it lacked exploitable material Sonney had the attack footage filmed with locals on a vacant lot in Los Angeles.[62] Topless "native" women run around while men chase them with machetes before the legitimate documentary footage returns to the screen.

The focus on barbaric spectacle in atrocity films was a product of the post–World War II era, forged in the years of fear and cold war dogma. Ideological similarities between atrocity films and other exploitation genres, which exposed the expanding sphere of individual desire and tensions over the growing consumer society, may not be immediately apparent. Yet the subject of atrocity films worked in concert with the

conservative ideological stance of most other exploitation genres. World War II brought with it a host of modern horrors, including bombings of civilian populations, the specter of nuclear destruction, and revelations of genocide in the Nazi death camps. The postwar years included civil wars, slaughters provoked by political uprisings, and incipient terrorism. With constant reminders of death and mass annihilation a part of everyday life, it was not surprising that Americans turned to religion for some sense of comfort. In his book on the effect of the A-bomb on American culture, Paul Boyer writes, "The business magazine *Fortune,* discussing the impact of the bomb early in 1946, predicted a 'religious awakening' and a 'reaffirmation of Christian values' that would sweep away the secularism, materialism, and political radicalism of the prewar years."[63] *Fortune*'s prediction was at least partially accurate. Church membership rose to 114.5 million in 1960, an overall rise from 50 to 63 percent of the population.[64] The dramatic jump can be tied to the war to some extent, but must also be ascribed to postwar anxieties.

Atrocity films drew on that anxiety by focusing on ghastly acts brought on by modern warfare, technology, and crumbling political systems. In effect, by presenting the darkest aspects of mid-twentieth-century life, the films asked viewers to ruminate on a panoply of human ills, thereby serving as a critique of the contemporary world. A rejection of the modern condition, the potential for a reaffirmation of Christian values that would "sweep away secularism, materialism, and political radicalism," could also reestablish the authority of the white American bourgeois ideals—a promise that had not materialized after the war. Gone would be the scourge of mass consumption, unproductive, troublesome political movements, angry players on the world stage demanding their share of wealth, all replaced by a pastoral life of hard work, simple values, and the promise of the kingdom of heaven. But this utopian dream—misguided in its simple-minded nostalgia, latent racism, and sexism—did not materialize either. The majority of Americans who might have been swayed by such messages at one time were too busy making payments on their new Dodges with push-button shift, clearing space in the den for the twenty-four-inch Zenith console television, or enjoying Beefeater martinis on the patio with friends.

Even if the atrocity film failed to shock viewers sufficiently to question, and perhaps reject, aspects of postwar life, it did inspire changes in the film business. The blood and gore of the atrocity films combined with elements of exploitation exotics to become the "mondo" movie, a generic

term for this "bastard child of the documentary and the peep-show," named for the 1963 *Mondo Cane.*[65] That Italian documentary combined authentic and faked footage of a variety of bizarre and repulsive scenes. It became an international hit, inspiring a number of similar globe-hopping pseudo-documentaries in the 1960s that exploited the worst of both human and animal nature. Among those films are *ecco* and *Taboos of the World* (both 1963), *Mondo Balardo* (1964), *Africa Addio, Mondo Bizarro,* and *Mondo Freudo* (both 1966), *Sadismo* and *Mondo Hollywood* (both 1967). Mondo movies have continued to appear, many given tremendous exposure on videotape, such as the *Faces of Death* series. More recently, lurid television specials such as *When Animals Attack* also draw on this old exploitation tradition. Atrocity movies also opened the door for the fictional gore films of the early 1960s. David Friedman and Herschell Gordon Lewis's *Blood Feast* (1963), *2,000 Maniacs* (1964), and *Color Me Blood Red* (1965) include special-effects scenes of torture and dismemberment in graphic color that provide the spectacle for a new class of exploitation films.

# 8. "They Wear No Clothes!"

## *Nudist and Burlesque Films*

Nudism has already proven itself a potent boxoffice attraction in [Chicago]. Nakeds have established a long-run record already at the Castle where the flicker *This Nude World* is now in its 18th week and still going without a sign of letup. It has the goona-goona pictures backed off the wharf.
—*Variety*, 1933

This chapter is devoted to those films that took as their primary subject the naked—usually female—body. Many exploitation genres relied on nudity as a source of spectacle. Whether it was the sight of a woman giving birth or the fleeting glimpse of a skinny-dipper under the influence of marijuana, unclothed bodies packed them into theaters. Two cornerstone genres of classical exploitation focused on the spectacle of the nude body: the nudist film and the burlesque film. The nudist film was a staple of exploitation in the early 1930s and made a strong resurgence in the mid-1950s with some modifications. Burlesque movies—essentially filmed strip shows—were primarily a product of the post–World War II era. Both helped to define the outer limits of the exploitation film in its classical period when, for many, the nude human form was something either hanging on a wall in a dank museum visited only by eggheads or pasted on a filthy postcard ogled at by perverse young men. The nakedness in both the nudist films and the burlesque movies, the fear and desire it evoked in

spectators and censors, exposed unease surrounding not only sexuality but also the shifting economic expectations placed on women. In the burlesque film, we can locate the one classical exploitation genre that went beyond the simple presentation of transgressive behavior to find a group of films that contained the potential for real social transgression. In addition to nudist and burlesque films, I will briefly discuss a minor, but related, genre, the glamour film.

## The Nudist Film

By the time nudist films became a staple of classical exploitation, nudism itself had been around for at least three decades. The nudist movement began in Europe around the turn of the century. In 1903, Richard Ungewitter self-published a small volume called *Die Nacktheit* in Germany in which he envisioned a Utopian society where everyone went without clothing.[1] His dream of a naked world was coupled with strict health guidelines including vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco. The book sold ninety thousand copies—although sales figures probably had less to do with Ungewitter's convictions than the fact that the book was illustrated with pictures of his naked disciples hiking in the woods.[2] During the same year, Paul Zimmermann opened the first nudist resort near Klingberg, Germany, *Freilichtpark* (Free Light Park). Guests came from all over the world to partake in the early morning two-hour calisthenics routines, meatless meals, and the clothing-free environment. Estimates in 1926 put the number of active German nudists at fifty thousand. Most were city-dwellers who turned to the rural camps on weekends and during vacations for fresh air and sunshine. The movement spread to France and, perhaps more surprisingly given stereotypes of British reserve, to England.[3]

Whether it was called nudism, naturism, *Freikorperkultur, Lichtfreunden* (Light Friends), or gymnosophy, all nudist movements followed some of the same basic tenets. Nudists believed in the beneficial effects of bathing the entire body in the sun's rays and outdoor air. The shedding of clothing meant that the body was capable of unrestricted movement. Clothes, they claimed, instilled shame and undo modesty. Nudists held that their clothing-free society was more egalitarian. Many advocated vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco. They stressed that children who grew up as nudists were comfortable with their bodies and did not suffer

from sexual neuroses. The principles and standards of the International Nudist Conference stated, "We believe in the essential wholesomeness of the human body and all its functions. We therefore regard the body neither as an object of shame nor as a subject for levity or erotic exploitation. Any attitude or behavior inconsistent with this view is contrary to the whole spirit of the society and has no place among us. . . . Our purposes are not exclusively physical or cultural or esthetic, but rather a normal union of all these."[4] Of course, exploitation filmmakers would soon have their own take on using the body as a subject of levity and erotic exploitation.

The nudist movement began in the United States in 1929 when an immigrant, Kurt Barthel, advertised in German-language newspapers to see if any other displaced nudists would be interested in joining him in renewing their clothing-free lifestyle in America. He had several responses and started a group called the American League for Physical Culture (ALPC). In 1932, the organization purchased a piece of land near Millington, New Jersey, obtained necessary permits and the approval of local authorities, and opened the first permanent nudist camp in the United States, Sky Farm.[5] The American nudist movement grew quietly. What little attention the press paid to nudism was initially directed toward Europe.[6] In 1931, *Among the Nudists,* a book by Frances and Mason Merrill, appeared. The American couple extolled the joys of nudism, which they had discovered while on a European vacation. The next year they followed their original volume with *Nudism in America.* But the small, cloistered nudist movement in the United States was soon to change largely due to the efforts of two media-savvy individuals, one a nudist, the other a movie producer from a famous entertainment family.

The Reverend Ilsley Boone, known as "Uncle Danny," was already over fifty when he discovered the nudist movement and joined the ALPC. By all accounts, he was a charismatic man, sporting a halo of white hair, a considerable vocabulary, and a gift for oratory. Boone decided to use his abilities to proselytize for nudism and became the movement's most venerated—and controversial—figure. He was elected vice president of the ALPC, but shortly after, he and his family either quit or were asked to leave Sky Farm.[7] Boone started his own organization and gave it a lofty name, the International Nudist Conference. In the spring of 1933, normally complacent New Yorkers were shocked to see a new magazine on their newsstands. *The Nudist* (later *Sunshine & Health*), published by Boone, contained not only articles about nudism but also pictures of European

nudists. Those who bought the magazine hoping for a sexual thrill were in for a bit of a shock as well. The pubic areas on all the photographs had been airbrushed, giving the figures a smooth, alien appearance. Still, if the earlier books and articles on nudism had prompted casual interest, *The Nudist* demanded attention. Protests from individuals and organizations who claimed the publication was obscene only brought greater notoriety to the movement and prompted Boone to begin a twenty-five-year crusade with the Post Office Department to permit him to send a magazine with unretouched photos through the mail.[8]

In 1935, the International Nudist Conference became the American Sunbathing Association, continuing to be the premiere nudist group in the country. Boone controlled the group with an iron hand. Although nominally the general secretary of the ASA, he had filled the board with his cronies who gave him sole control over the organization's operations. When the ASA was finally wrested from Boone's control in 1952, it was discovered that he had used ASA funds for the development of a nudist camp in which the organization held no legal interest. He had paid bills for *Sunshine & Health* with ASA funds, yet the magazine belonged principally to him. The grand old man of American nudism turned out to be a grand old con man.[9]

Uncle Danny Boone promoted his cause through his magazines; Bryan Foy succeeded in placing nudism firmly on the American cultural map in the early 1930s with one film, *Elysia, Valley of the Nude,* usually simply known as *Elysia.* "Brynie" Foy was the son of vaudeville great Eddie Foy and had himself performed when he was a child as one of the "Seven Little Foys." Involved in motion pictures from the 1920s, he directed Warner Bros.' first all-talking film, *The Lights of New York,* in 1928 and would eventually become that company's head of B production in 1935. In the interregnum, Foy indulged in producing exploitation films. *Elysia* was both his first and his most notorious, appearing in late 1933. At least one nudist film of German origin had apparently been in circulation in the United States since the 1920s.[10] By July 1933 *This Nude World* was playing Chicago and in San Francisco as *Back to Nature,* marketed to a public curious about the craze and to see nudity on the screen. Also known as *This Naked Age,* the globe-hopping documentary imported by Mike Mindlin contained scenes from camps in France, Germany, and the United States. Unlike most other nudist films, it included a shot of full-frontal female nudity, although this could easily have been clipped out to suit local restrictions.

**52** Art stills such as this one were used by Brian Foy to lure crowds to his film *Elysia* (1933). (Something Weird Video Collection)

In September, Foy and a crew traveled to the newly opened Fraternity Elysia near Elsinore, California, to film his own home-grown nudist epic. By November, another nudist travelogue was competing in the field, Josmin Productions' *The Nudists, or Back to the Sun.* Foy readied his film for release. Press material instructed exhibitors not to confuse *Elysia* with "any other so-called 'nudist picture' ": "Don't get the idea that because another nudist picture played in your town that *Elysia* can't play there. *Elysia* is American . . . it is authentic—it is entertainment—clean, amusing and instructive. *Elysia* is romantic and dramatic. . . . There is a story in *Elysia.* . . . There is youth, beauty. . . . There is fact. *Elysia* is not a hodgepodge of news reel shots shuffled together and rushed onto the market. . . . *Elysia* is real . . . it will satisfy and send an audience away from your theater talking."[11] Some of Foy's exploitation was accurate. Several of the nudist films on the market were little more than a hodgepodge of newsreel shots. But whether *Elysia* was "real" was another matter entirely.

I have already described *Elysia* and the dour reaction that the Hays Office had to the film. On the state and local levels, it was swiftly rejected by censor boards in Maryland and New York. It was also banned, or ran into censorship trouble, in Detroit, Pasadena, St. Paul, Charlotte, and

Birmingham in 1933 and 1934.[12] Six months of court squabbles in Chicago finally resulted in an order that allowed *Elysia* to play in that city in 1934.[13] During that same year, an extended row over the picture with the Los Angeles Police Department made Foy a fixture in the courthouse.[14] But the censorship test case that Foy pressed for never developed. It would have involved a court definition of what was obscene under state and local statutes—something the presiding judge wanted to avoid.[15] The censorship of *Elysia* was guided by the spirit of reformist Anthony Comstock, which had long prevailed in questions of nudity in the United States. Comstock had always reserved his most fervent attacks for nude photographs, even objecting to circus posters that depicted performers in tights.[16] Despite the motion picture's early association with nudity (Muybridge's motion studies, early smokers, etc.) and a considerable amount of nudity in pre-Hays films such as *Hypocrites* (Famous Players–Lasky, 1914), *Purity* (American, 1916), and *Right to Love* (Paramount, 1920), it became taboo once the Presbyterian from Indiana "cleaned up" Hollywood. Nudity was forbidden in both the "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" and the Production Code, and when nudity appeared in a film that was before a state censor board it was invariably cut.

The question of nudity in the movies may not have been open to debate among film censors, but the nature of nudism was hotly contested in public. The press initially took a hard, if leering, line against the practice. A 1934 article noted that "first newspaper comment was unfavorable—most painful to the believer, it was so ribald. Any dull day in the city room was good for a snappy column or so on what the strippers were doing. Crude jokes were made and the reporters liked nothing better than going to a nudist camp and teasing the members for a story, which was usually written up in disrespectful ways."[17] Over time, nudism came to be viewed by the press as a benign, if unconventional, practice. Indeed, a cartoon in Quigley's *Motion Picture Herald,* which was usually apoplectic about exploitation films, showed a couple looking at a marquee advertising the Bing Crosby–Carole Lombard comedy *We're Not Dressing.* The woman comments, "Oh, it's just another one of those nudist pictures!"[18] The blasé attitude of the cartoon did not mean that criticism had been entirely eliminated. At least one organization was formed to denounce nudism. The Society for the Preservation of American Ideals saw nudism as one facet of a larger struggle against "radicals, aliens and subversive elements."[19] Letters to the *Literary Digest* showed that positions on the subject fell into two camps. On one side were those who felt that nudism was

natural and that concealment of the body only served to ignite an unhealthy interest in sex. The other side pointed to clothing as a mark of civilization or claimed that having the two sexes unclothed in the same place could only lead to immorality.[20]

The strategies for bringing nudism to the screen differed greatly. *Elysia, This Nude World,* and *The Nudists* legitimized their subject by constructing what appeared to be an objective, almost anthropological approach. Structurally, the films had a good deal in common with the exotic exploitation films of the period. The anthropological address was given added emphasis in *Elysia* with Dr. King's screening of films showing dress customs among primitive peoples to Mack, the reporter investigating nudism. *Nudist Land* (1937), which played under a raft of alternative titles, opened with a similar anthropological stance by showing scenes from Africa, Bali, Somoa, and other places where limited clothing was customary. The film then made the transition to the United States for the "true-life story" of Betty and Jack Weston. Their marriage and health are threatened by the pressures of life in the city. While Jack is away on business, Betty falls ill. After a stay in the hospital, a friend spirits Betty off to a nudist camp where she recovers her health. When Jack finally tracks down his wayward wife he too is won over to nudism.

Allen Stuart's *The Unashamed* (1938) was the only nudist movie from the period with a complete narrative. Rae, a star-crossed young secretary, attempts to win over her hypochondriac employer, Robert, by having his doctor recommend that he visit a nudist camp. Robert is surprised to find his secretary is a regular at the camp and he happily engages in sporting activities with her. But Robert shifts his affections to Barbara, a wealthy woman-on-the-run who uses the camp as a refuge. A heartbroken Rae jumps off a mountain to her death. The nudity is justified through the narrative, but even though Rae's unrequited love and concern for Robert's health serve as motivation to move the action to the nudist camp, the love story and the ensuing romantic triangle are consistently subsumed under the spectacle of the naked characters playing volleyball, golf, and tennis and engaging in archery. The attempts at re-creating camp life might have been believable to portions of the audience, but to nudists both *Elysia* and *The Unashamed* seemed phony. When a group of social scientists attempted to discover why the films seemed fake to nudists, no clear reason appeared, "until the fact was noted that relatively few children appear in the camp scenes in either picture. The camp action shown is clearly forced, with people who are not professional performers trying their best

to appear natural and missing the mark by a considerable margin."[21] Although the nudist movement always stressed its family orientation and most clubs forbade the membership of single people—especially single men—the movies so emphasized attractive female nudists that families and older members simply became extras in the background.[22]

Other early nudist films attempted to defuse the risqué nature of their subject by taking a comic approach, a relative rarity in exploitation outside of burlesque films. In United Roadshow Attractions' 1933 short *Why Nudism?,* a doctor recommends that an overworked clothing manufacturer, Adam, visit a nudist camp. Adam is shocked at the prospect, but his wife drags him to the camp, where stock shots of nudists are crudely cut in, simulating Adam's very off-kilter point of view. *Exposé of the Nudist Racket* (1938) indicated through its title that it was a traditional exploitation exposé, but in fact this short also employed titles and narration for comic effect. Beginning with a list of "isms" such as Darwinism, antagonism, and journalism, the crawl continues to probe such points as "Forget your skepticism and Puritanism as you judge whether nudism is just barbarism—heathenism—or real modernism." More wordplay leads into a standard treatise on nudists with the expected accompanying shots. By 1940, a short such as *Nude Ranch* could be presented with no justification for its nudity. The film featured shots of scantily clad women in ersatz western wear, intercut with clips of roosters scratching around in cages. Verging on a dadaist sensibility, *Nude Ranch* is most notable as a precursor to the glamour films of the 1950s and the "nudie-cutie" movies that would flood the market in the 1960s without any kind of square-up.

Although nudists claimed that sexual feelings were drained from situations where everyone was naked, a fact borne out by later studies, the nudist exploitation films were designed to create sexual arousal in, or at the very least titillate, viewers. We can assume that some spectators went to see the films to satisfy their curiosity about the nudist movement, but the lure of a sexual thrill dominated the pitch. The square-up at the beginning of *This Nude World* asks, "Who are the nudists we've been hearing about? What kind of people are they and what do they do? Do they meet and hold orgies by the moonlight? Are they exotic and immoral?" The answer to the last two questions was a straight no, but by simply asking the questions the producers imbued the rather unerotic movies with strong expectations of a sexual payoff. When *Elysia* played Seattle's Rex Theater for three weeks "to the biggest business the house [had] known in years," the theater's front was decked out with painted trees and life-size cutouts of nude

figures—mostly women. A large caption in the leafy canopy promised "You'll see what you expect to see and not be disappointed." Photo enlargements and 40 x 60 displays "that will stop 'em!" were available to exhibitors in black-and-white or colored "in Nature's shades." The five styles featured attractive young women, including several of the ubiquitous blond nudist-secretary Miss Kent. No shots of men were offered; male nudity was still far more taboo than female nudity. Clearly, heterosexual males were targeted as the primary, although not the exclusive, audience for nudist films.

Both *Elysia* and the *Unashamed,* which by all accounts were the most widely circulated of the early nudist films, further eroticized the camp setting by featuring unattached leads expressing their sexual desire for available partners. Even though Mack does not strike up a liaison with Miss Kent, his near-obsessive refrain "Where's Miss Kent?" signals his desire. Rae's romantic interest in Robert propels her scheme to have his doctor send him to the nudist camp. At the beginning of the film, two secretaries discuss Rae's appearance. One comments, "Her face wouldn't win no beauty prize, but she's got a figure that would make Venus blush with shame." The other notes that Rae "looks like an Indian or something." Although very attractive by current standards, Rae's mixed-race facial features marked her as an unworthy object for Robert's affections in 1938. The only solution available to Rae is to spark Robert's sexual interest by exposing her body to him at the camp. Once Robert gets a look at her Venus-like figure, his interest is piqued—but only until Barbara appears on the scene with both a face and a body that conform to prevailing standards of caucasian beauty. Thus in both *Elysia* and *The Unashamed,* the nudist camp is not just a setting for fresh air and family fun but an erotically charged space for potential sexual coupling, as long as it is between heterosexual, and obviously white, men and women.

The sexualization of nudism was diametrically opposed to the philosophy and propaganda of the nudist organizations. In a letter to Joe Breen, Hobart Glassey, the president of Elysia, vented his frustration over the nudist films. Glassey had appeared in Foy's film, expounding on the benefits of nudism in a long campfire lecture sequence, but two years later he expressed his frustration over cameras being allowed into the camp: "Members of this organization and I have since had occasion to regret our participation in this film . . . disappointed in that the idea which the picture was designed to convey . . . the message of health and sunshine and release from morbidity . . . was construed by a great portion of its audience

in an entirely different fashion than was intended. Since that time we have definitely opposed the pictures being made of this kind of movement. Pictures of this kind can only do harm, not only to pictures as an industry, but to organizations such as ours, that are founded upon healthy principles."[23] Glassey's letter displays both the high degree of indignation and naïveté that characterized the relationship between filmmakers and nudists. The nudists wanted publicity for their movement, and leaders such as Glassey hoped that the films would serve as a vehicle for proselytizing about nudism's healthful benefits to the American public. This was provided in large measure by the exploiteers. Nudism was presented as a middle-class lifestyle option that could be purchased, not as a neopagan cult of social misfits, as it had been described by its early detractors.

Despite the exploitation films' sexualization of nudism, the nudists' advocacy of sunshine and simplicity of life found an ideal vehicle for expression in the movies, in part because of their overlapping ideology. Like most other exploitation genres, the nudist films had a strong nostalgic bent. *Elysia, This Nude World,* and other early nudist films stressed the modern nature of the movement while also pointing to the precedent of social nudity in ancient Greece, which was "simple" yet highly "civilized" according to modern standards. Nudism was served up as a possible antidote to modern life, which was criticized as fundamentally unhealthy. *Nudist Land* was particularly emphatic about the ill effects that living in the congested space of cities had upon its residents; all of the features acknowledged this to some extent. Even though the films constructed the nudists as Other, their strong nostalgic and utopian impulse presented the nudist lifestyle as an alternative to the degrading and demanding conditions of modern urban living. This critique of modernity, the emphasis on a return to a pastoral lifestyle, and the constant reminders of the wholesome quality of nudism placed the nudist films squarely within the dominant discourse of classical exploitation.

### *Postwar Nudist Films*

The production of new nudist films dropped significantly during the 1940s, although shorts continued to be cobbled together from older material. Several undated shorts, such as *Nudist at Play, Nudist Recruits,* and *Nudists of All Nations,* were constructed of footage from *Nudist Land* probably in the late 1940s or early 1950s. The genre was revived in 1954

when Walter Bibo produced *The Garden of Eden,* the first color feature on the topic. Shot by the noted cinematographer Boris Kaufman at the Lake Como Club in Florida, the fictional film concerned a young widow who escapes to a nudist camp with her daughter to avoid her domineering father-in-law. *The Garden of Eden* pulled in around $19,000 in its first week on a single screen in L.A. with an adults-only policy.[24] It also drew a significant amount of heat from censors. When the picture played for adults only in Tampa, Florida, just a few miles from where it was shot, a young married couple was turned away because the wife was only twenty. Although she appeared in *The Garden of Eden,* the woman was deemed too young to see herself onscreen in that city.[25] Bibo found himself "involved in litigation on many fronts at the same time, which severely drained what should have been his normal profits from the picture." But he followed through on a majority of the cases, winning "a surprising number" of them.[26]

The most important court challenge invoking *The Garden of Eden* took place in New York. A recent court decision had permitted books and magazines with unretouched photographs of nudists to circulate. In the 1955 decision, Federal Judge Sam M. Driver flatly stated that "nudity per se is not obscene."[27] In *Excelsior Pictures Corp. vs. Regents of the University,* the Appellate Division and then the New York Court of Appeals held that *The Garden of Eden* was not obscene, and a license for the exhibition of the picture was ordered issued.[28] *Excelsior Pictures Corp. vs. Regents* was one of the crucial decisions that effectively ended the ban on nudity in motion pictures and also contributed to breaking the New York censor board. *The Garden of Eden*'s court victories also prompted the production of other nudist movies.

The nudist features of the 1950s were, if anything, more demure than their counterparts from the 1930s, providing less nude spectacle. The major set piece in *The Garden of Eden* finds the shy heroine falling asleep in a glade and dreaming of waking, taking off her clothes, wandering through the trees, and frolicking in the lake. Following the release of *The Garden of Eden,* most exploitation features eschewed the ethnographic/documentary approach to nudism and moved toward one of the poles of the exploitation spectrum, some containing more narrative elements, others becoming almost complete spectacle. In *The Unashamed,* the love story narrative was always secondary to the spectacle of the camp. In the narrative nudist films of the 1950s, story elements became increasingly impor-

tant and operated to delay and foster anticipation of the spectacle of the camp scenes.

*The Naked Venus* (1959) had some similarities to *The Garden of Eden.* American artist Bob Dixon and his French wife, Yvonne, prepare to leave Paris to return to the United States. Back in California, Bob's mother makes Yvonne's life a living hell when she discovers that her daughter-in-law is Bob's model and also a nudist. Like the vindictive mother in *Please Don't Touch Me,* Mrs. Dixon immediately sets about destroying the young couple's marriage. When Yvonne is told by the family lawyer that Bob wants a divorce—a ruse created by his mother—she flees to a nudist camp with their daughter, a device lifted from *The Garden of Eden.* In a protracted trial scene, the Dixon lawyers try to discredit Yvonne and nudism, but the plan backfires and Bob and Yvonne are eventually reunited in Paris, realizing that in spite of all that has happened they still love each other.

Much of *Naked Venus* is concerned with comparing the stifling moral climate in the United States with the more progressive attitudes of France. When Yvonne tells her mother-in-law that there is nothing wrong with nudity, the very proper Mrs. Dixon responds, "Well, we here feel a little different about such things." Of course, attitudes in the United States toward nudity had become far more liberal by 1959, but they had not changed completely. A young nudist reported to the authors of *Nudist Society,* "Non-nudists seem convinced that nudists are 'freaks.' They believe that nudists go to nudist camps merely to satisfy their warped sexual, animalistic urges. They believe that the children in nudist camps are greatly 'stained' by being in nudist camps, and that they will grow up without a sense of morality or decency. They usually consider nudists to be acute exhibitionists. Some consider them to be a 'Communist tactic.' "[29] The demands of narrative that dictated a conflict between the French woman and her American persecutors could be justified on the grounds of topicality. Bob's old girlfriend, his lawyer, and the private detective hired by his mother all attempt to show that Yvonne is "that kind of woman" but succeed only in embarrassing themselves. Yvonne and nudism win the day. The bulk of the film's spectacle takes place in the middle, when mother and daughter hide in the camp. This segment looks much like earlier films, with nudists discreetly posed at the beach and on the archery range. The narrative segments were cheaply shot and filled with excruciatingly long passages of dialogue necessary to pad the film out to feature length.

Other late nudist films, such as Sonney Amusement's *Back to Nature* (1954), were color shorts composed primarily of long shots. The film consisted of fewer than twenty shots ranging in length from fifteen to fifty seconds. Almost every shot begins as a tableau, showing the nudists lounging on rocks, sunning in chairs, sitting around the pool, and so forth. Everyone is carefully posed so as not to expose pubic areas. Lacking a narrative, or even informational narration, *Back to Nature* rates as almost pure spectacle, albeit of a tame variety. A heavy reliance on long takes permits the spectator to concentrate on those sights that he or she found most interesting. The discreetly posed nudists, their stiff motions designed to obscure parts of their bodies, and references to the ancient Greeks or art tended to align the nudist film, to some extent, with the discourse of fine art, a point I expand on below vis-à-vis the burlesque movie.

Whether using a narrative format or relying almost exclusively on spectacle, the nudist film remained an important staple in exploitation filmmaking into the early 1960s. From 1959 on, nudist films battled with the emergent nudie-cuties, employing more of the traits of nudie-cuties as they moved into the 1960s. Among those traits was a greater amount of time spent displaying nude women, often in small groups and not in a conventional camp setting, such as in *As Nature Intended* (1961). Another trait was an increase in the use of light humor or parody, as in *Nude on the Moon* (1963). The nudist film moved away from the anthropological and gradually became all but indistinguishable from the nudie-cutie.

## Glamour Films

Allied with nudist and burlesque movies, although not as prevalent in feature-length form, was the glamour film. Glamour films became popular after World War II and can be seen as the more modest counterpart of the burlesque movie. In glamour films, women were displayed in swimsuits, bikinis, lingerie, underwear, or other provocative outfits. Such movies did not feature nudity but were instead the equivalent of moving cheesecake photographs; action tended to take place in a photographer's studio and around swimming pools. Glamour films did not adopt the pedagogic address of nudist movies or have the transgressive potential of burlesque films. Klaytan W. Kirby was a major manufacturer of these adult films, expanding from the mail-order market for racy pictures and movies into the theatrical realm. According to Kirby's literature, his films were "cleverly

**53** Klaytan W. Kirby's 1952 *Side Streets of Hollywood* (aka *A Virgin in Hollywood*) was a glamour film that included several scenes in "full rounded 3rd dimension."

presented and edited to pass all censorship and offend no audience." The shorts Kirby produced for his Cinema Enterprises often had provocative titles such as *Her Hidden Talent, How Girls Get in Pictures,* and *Strange Tale* and often consisted of dancing girls, reflecting Kirby's earlier career as a professional hoofer. Like the shorts, his two features, *A Virgin in Hollywood* and *Love Me Madly,* contained a great deal of spectacle but were never as graphic as nudist or burlesque films. Even though they lacked nudity, they can be seen as the structural precursor to the nudie-cuties, discussed below.

## The Burlesque Film

In 1952, the magazine *Cavalcade of Burlesque* predicted, "While just getting out of its swaddling clothes and bound to improve as time goes on, burlesque movies are fast becoming nearly as popular as 'in the flesh' burlesque. They can't help but succeed. Where there is a demand for a certain

type of entertainment there will be show people around ready to cater to that demand."[30] The burlesque film rose from the ashes of burlesque theater in the late 1940s, a revival that marked yet another reincarnation in the history of the ever changing entertainment form. Yet this revival should not have been totally unanticipated. As Epes W. Sargent wrote in *Variety* in May 1937 as burlesque was being swept off the New York City stages, "Burlesque is elastic; more so, perhaps, than any other form in theatrical entertainment."[31] Robert C. Allen has traced the history of burlesque as it was transformed from a middle-class entertainment that relied on parody and spectacle in the form of transgressive female sexuality to a working-class form that existed primarily as a vehicle for female nudity. According to Allen, burlesque was systematically marginalized beginning in the 1870s, "its performance structure and content separated from that of vaudeville and its venues removed from the realm of bourgeois theater and into urban houses catering almost exclusively to its male audiences."[32] The incorporation of the "cooch" dance (belly dancing) into the burlesque repertoire around the turn of the century helped push parody, song, and an inversive/transgressive female sexuality to the background. Allen concludes that "the cooch dance linked the sexual display of the female performer and the scopic desire of the male patron in a more direct and intimate fashion than any previous feature of burlesque."[33] But this point is open to debate, particularly in burlesque's incarnation on film.

The striptease dance is generally considered the single most distinguishing feature of burlesque theater. Its origins are obscure and the subject of conflicting legends.[34] But as Allen and others have noted, it did not become a standard element in burlesque until the mid-1920s.[35] It is this period, from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, that is paradoxically considered both burlesque's "golden age" and an era of "nudity, smut, and decline."[36] Comics such as Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, Phil Silvers, and Red Skelton purveyed the laughs before being lured to the more respectable and higher-paying media of radio, movies, and television. Strippers such as Gypsy Rose Lee, Ann Corio, Georgia Sothern, and Rose La Rose paraded down the runways and into national prominence while providing burlesque with sexual spectacle that was franker than ever before.

The popularity of burlesque at this time has been ascribed to the relative cheapness of ticket prices during the worst years of the Depression. According to Allen, "With less money to spend on entertainment during times of economic hardship, commercial entertainment patrons look again to cheaper forms. Entrepreneurs of those 'lower' forms find it possi-

ble to attract 'high-class' talent at bargain-basement rates, and, when legitimate theaters fail during economic depressions, to move their operations into larger and more elaborate theaters. So it was with burlesque in the early 1930s."[37] Beyond cheap ticket prices, the popularity of burlesque in the early 1930s can be seen in light of a general shift toward more "adult" entertainment. Hollywood films were increasingly daring, the production and import of exploitation films were at new highs, and, as I have already indicated, newspapers across the country were running photo spreads on the nudist movement. But just as those more explicit films and photos met with resistance, so too did burlesque on Broadway. When the Minsky brothers opened burlesque houses in Manhattan's theater district they were greeted with protests from antivice groups, religious leaders, property owners, and representatives of the legitimate theater, who succeeded in constructing burlesque as a moral and economic disease that threatened to spread. A series of sex crimes was spuriously linked with the burlesque venues in Times Square, further enflaming the moral outrage against the form. Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and his license commissioner, Paul Moss, effectively ended burlesque in New York City in 1937 by revoking or denying renewal of theater licenses.[38]

With the lucrative New York City market shut down, some in Hollywood fretted that strippers would attempt to find new careers in the movies. Joe Breen deferred to Will Hays on whether women with such a dubious employment history could be used in Hollywood films.[39] Many did find their way into mainstream movies, but they did so as actresses, not practicing their original vocation. Gypsy Rose Lee, appearing as Louise Hovick, made the transition from runway to sound stage in Twentieth Century–Fox's *You Can't Have Everything* (1937), and Ann Corio was eventually decked out in a sarong to play the female lead in a number of low-budget jungle epics for Monogram such as *Sarong Girl* (1943) and *Call of the Jungle* (1944). None of the former strippers would ever achieve major stardom in mainstream films.

Although isolated burlesque films appeared on the exploitation circuit during the 1930s, such as *Burlesque Moods* (ca. 1930), the failure of the exploiteers to step into the breach and initiate a cycle of movies is indicative of their caution and the form's outlaw status within the culture. Two major factors determined the exclusion of burlesque as a subject for exploitation films. First, as we have seen, other exploitation films could be legitimated on the grounds of an educational imperative. During the 1930s, the presentation of strippers and bawdy comics would have been

difficult to justify under the guise of pedagogic propriety. Second, because stage burlesque was being blamed for instigating a wave of sex crimes in New York City, the danger that burlesque movies would meet with similar charges may have seemed too great a risk even for the usually brazen producers and distributors of exploitation films.

Strippers did, however, turn up regularly in peep shows. A 1938 article in the *Motion Picture Herald* described some of the fare available in "automatic 'peep-hole' machines" at arcades on Chicago's South State Street: "scantily clad women . . . cavort capriciously on the beach, spicy smoking room stories illustrated with fair actresses, strip tease contests."[40] James M. Skinner writes that during the war the West Coast saw "a revival of Edison's Kinetoscope and servicemen on leave lined up to peer through its tiny window to ogle bathing beauties in various stages of undress."[41] The history of peeps and loops is even more clouded than that of classical exploitation. Like exploitation films, peeps during this period did not show hard-core sex acts, but they did feature women nearly nude or, in the case of so-called art studies, full-frontal nudity. Although some may have been used as square-up reels, the films were not intended to be shown theatrically. A small group of manufacturers, including William H. Door, Joe Bonica, Vanity Films, and Standard Pictures Corporation, operated primarily out of the Los Angeles area supplying arcades and also selling films to collectors in the home market. Such movies were generally shot silent on 16mm and were between one and five minutes long. Some had simple titles. Production credits were not listed, although occasionally the name of the dancer and the production company were indicated.

The "art studies" continued to circulate underground, but following World War II, burlesque films made the transition from peep shows to the big screen in a big way. One of the most prolific and professional of the peep producers was W. Merle Connell's Quality Pictures. By 1947 Connell had created no fewer than twenty-five reels of strip films, each one featuring six numbers that used dancers from Los Angeles burlesque theaters. With music by Billy Rose and his orchestra, the Quality shorts were advertised for "peek or panorama." For instance, one of his 1947 shorts, *Stars of the Follies Burlesque,* featured Rene Andree, Pat O'Connor, and Evelyn West, "the girl with the bosoms insured for $50,000."[42] These early films were exceptionally simple. For instance, the 1:32 "Temple Dance" number featuring Sandra in *Dances That Thrill* (1946) consisted of four shots alternating between long and medium-long shots. Connell's success can be attributed in some measure to the increased display of the female body

during World War II. Whether it was "nose art" that decorated the front end of bombers, pinups of Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth, or Vargas's *Esquire* spreads, cheesecake was ubiquitous. Moreover, it was suddenly acceptable, an important tool for keeping the morale of American fighting men high while serving as a constant reminder of what they were fighting for. The resurgence of burlesque can also be attributed to what William Green has described as its "resiliency [which] is related to the inventiveness of theatrical managers in displaying more and more of the female dancer in very specialized routines with less and less clothing."[43]

By the mid-1950s, some estimates put the number of stripteasers employed in nightclubs and burlesque houses at a thousand.[44] Other estimates were even higher, indicating that managers and the dancers themselves were being particularly inventive. A 1954 *Newsweek* article countered those who had written obituaries for the form: "In a few parts of the country . . . the defunct burlesque theater is a pretty lively corpse, and one mushrooming byproduct of burlesque, at least, seems well-set to stay in the entertainment field. This hardy element is what the 1954 billboards call the exotic dancer—a girl once known as an ecdysiast or even, among the lower orders, a stripteaser. An estimated 2,000 of these bright-plumaged creatures are now shedding their fine feathers."[45] The piece pointed out that although the number of theaters on the national burlesque circuit had declined from sixty to twenty-five houses, "the number of ecdysiasts [had] quadrupled," largely due to the introduction of exotic dancing to nightclubs.[46] Many of those performers found extra work in burlesque films.

By 1949 the move toward feature-length burlesque films was well underway. At least one reason for the move into burlesque films can be traced to the fact that some of the stalwarts of exploitation film, notably Kendis, Kent, and the Sonneys, found themselves unable to compete in the sex hygiene field because of *Mom and Dad* and its imitators. With a traditional income generator in new hands, the older concerns were forced to innovate to remain competitive, and burlesque films supplied the requisite titillation that made the exploitation engine churn. Moreover, ten years and the intervention of the war had established some distance between burlesque's controversial status in the 1930s and the postwar market. This distance allowed the exploiteers to construct burlesque as a bygone form of entertainment despite its resurgence on the nightclub and theater circuits. For instance, the crawl in *Midnight Frolics* (1949) claimed, "As a nostalgic reminder of the 'good old days' we take pleasure in presenting Dan Sonney's modified version of the salty entertainment that amused

**54** Even though burlesque films had made the move to feature-length productions by 1950, burlesque shorts continued to be popular. The "Cinderella's Love Lesson" number in *Striporama* (1953), which featured Lili St. Cyr (far left), was also released as a short subject.

and thrilled our Dads and Grand Dads, and perhaps even some of us." Advertising for *Hurly Burly,* released during the 1950s, described the film as "Old-fashioned burlesque—as you like it!" The nostalgia trope filled in for education to an extent, and it could be argued that experiencing the entertainment that "dad and grandad" enjoyed was an educational/historical experience. Yet unlike other exploitation films, burlesque could eschew education as a discursive strategy with which to justify its production and exhibition. The increasing availability of sexually oriented material—the Kinsey Reports, *Playboy,* pinup art, and racy paperback novels—may have made burlesque films seem fairly tame by comparison.

Dan Sonney and Kent completed *Midnight Frolics* in 1948 and it went into general release in 1949. The film was directed by Merle Connell and, as noted in chapter 2, was little more than a canned burley show consisting of twelve acts, including four striptease or exotic dances. The success of *Midnight Frolics,* which remained in release for at least fourteen years under no fewer than five titles, inspired other exploitation companies to jump on the burlesque bandwagon. In short order, J. D. Kendis made *Hollywood Burlesque* (1948), described by *Variety* as "an actual run-through of a burly show as done in a Los Angeles house (the Hollywood Theater)."[47] By the end of 1950, Richard Kay and Harry Rybnick had concocted a

feature called *International Burlesque,* directed by Kay. *Time* magazine claimed that the film "seemed to be just the answer in towns deprived of the real article."[48] Sam Cummins, who released the film through Jewel, said that he did not expect burley films to replace their stage counterpart: "They can show more than we can [but] it's a new avenue of film production, and what's more, there's no TV competition."[49] Cummins and other exploitation producers may have anticipated changing prospects for the form, reasoning that an audience of disaffected adults might be willing to forgo an evening with the TV set for a couple of risqué hours at the movies. *Variety*'s reviewer described the beating television took from *International Burlesque:* "Nearly all that transpires is supposed to represent a TV show. No program could seem that bad."[50]

In addition to its feature-length form, burlesque short subjects, which reflected their origins in peepshows, continued to be popular. Dozens of shorts were made by Harry Farros for his Broadway Roadshow Productions. Most, such as *Shapely Sirens* (1952) for instance, ran a little over ten minutes and were divided into three segments: individual dances by Marsha Wayne, Zabuda, and Diane Lund in this case. Farros reused the titles for different numbers with the same dancer. Paula D'Arcy appears in "Flamingo Girl" in *Strip, Strip Hurrah!* (1952) and does another number, also with the title "Flamingo Girl," in *Take 'Em Off* (1952). The producer was able to save money on new intertitles by simply reusing the same one for different bits. These shorts, and those made by Connell and others, were often paired with other types of exploitation features to lend additional spice to a bill.

Except for those that featured highly recognizable performers, such as Lili St. Cyr and Tempest Storm, and the occasional specialty number, most burlesque features looked alike. Even though the films were made by several companies, their similarity can be attributed to the fact that a rather small corps of individuals worked in technical capacities on the movies. Lillian Hunt, who operated the Follies Theater in Los Angeles, directed at least ten features. A number of shorts and features were directed by Connell, and he or veteran exploitation cinematographer William C. Thompson often handled the camera chores. Stanford H. Dickenson and Wilfred N. Rose received music credits on many of the films. The incessant recutting, retitling, and repackaging means that we will probably never know how many actual features and shorts were produced during this period. Between 1949 and 1959, at least fifty burlesque features were on the market. Dozens of theatrical shorts were made during

the same period and at least some of the 16mm films that were manufactured and distributed for use in peeps or on home projectors wound up as part of theatrical packages and were used between live sets in burlesque houses.[51] But these numbers alone are deceiving. If we go by the numbers of titles rather than actual films, there may have been close to two hundred feature titles that made the rounds during the decade. Because the practice of retitling and recutting burlesque films was so pervasive, because numbers could be shuffled or removed from features to be used as shorts, and because shorts could be cobbled together to create "new" feature-length presentations, it is more instructive to think of these films not as fixed individual texts but as potential permutations of a burlesque metatext.

The mode of production and style of burlesque films were mobilized to turn the representation of women—strippers—into spectacle. Unraveling the nature of that spectacle becomes the key to understanding how burlesque films addressed their audiences. Writing about stage burlesque, Allen indicates that cooch dancing, and later stripping, "linked the sexual display of the female performer and the scopic desire of the male patron" in an undiffused, unmediated fashion: "Her movements served no function other than to arouse and please him."[52] In discussing the "silencing of the sexually expressive woman in burlesque in the 1890s," he observes, "she still had her body with its power to enthrall, captivate, and, to some extent, dominate her male partner in burlesque's scopic pax de deux [*sic*]. But without a voice it was all the more difficult for that body to reclaim its subjectivity."[53] Allen suggests that in the twentieth century the burlesque performer's transgressive power was circumscribed by her construction as an "exotic other" removed from the world of ordinary women. Her power to reordinate the world was similarly limited by largely depriving her of speech.[54]

Given the source of the spectacle in twentieth-century stage burlesque, it is not surprising to find Allen aligning it with the scopic regime of sexist objectification/fetishization of women most often associated with Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."[55] Indeed, it is difficult to resist the impulse to consider burlesque films from the same paradigm. Obviously, the strippers onscreen were the "objects" of a gaze, but as Margaret Dragu and A. S. A. Harrison have said, "The concept of the sex object is loaded with notions of oppression, but it is important to realize that unless there is something wrong with sex itself, there can be no evil in the creation of objects of sexual desire. The abusive attitudes that sometimes accompany desire are not inherent in desire itself and should

not be allowed to taint our view of human lust."[56] Without denying the importance that Mulvey's construct had as a political intervention when it first appeared, I maintain that the application of it, or any other closed explanatory system, in an unqualified fashion to burlesque films would be reductive. Not only does this system rest on a polarizing essentialism of masculine and feminine, its explanations tend to evade history, the social, and the "messy" aspects of culture. As Liz Kotz has written about power and the striptease, the relationship between the viewer and the viewed is not only profoundly transactional but also profoundly contextual.[57] Considering the social and historical contexts in which postwar burlesque films were made and viewed, I suggest that the genre was open to a broader range of readings than possible under the essentialist foundations of the visual pleasure construct. Indeed, burlesque films of the 1950s had the potential to be socially transgressive in much the same way that Allen describes the first nineteenth-century burlesque shows as inversive/transgressive.

By the time burlesque films started appearing in greater numbers, the terms "male role" and "female role" as well as the overarching term "sex role" had been in circulation for some time. R. W. Connell has written that these concepts became enormously influential in establishing normative (i.e., expected or approved) sex roles and patterns of deviance.[58] In 1963, Betty Friedan identified "the problem that has no name." Friedan pointed to "the feminine mystique" as the postwar ideology that told women that fulfillment could be found only in "sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love."[59] More recently, Elaine Tyler May has described this as a social and philosophical process of "containment" and domestication of female sexuality that broadly paralleled postwar foreign policy objectives. According to May, "the sexual containment ideology was rooted in widely accepted gender roles that defined men as breadwinners and women as mothers. Many believed that a violation of these roles would cause sexual and familial chaos and weaken the country's moral fiber."[60] May states that "knockouts and bombshells" could be tamed into chicks, kittens, and what became the symbol for commodified female sexuality, the Playboy bunny. Once tamed and taken behind the walls of the home, "sexuality could be safely unleashed by both men and women, where it would provide a positive force to enhance family life."[61] Women were encouraged to "catch a husband" or instructed "how to snare a male," but as May points out, "this catching was to be accomplished passively, with bait rather than a net."[62] Hollywood movies had at times focused on

transgressive women such as Mae West and a long roster of femme fatales in the film noir, but they were inevitably contained through ideological/institutional apparatuses such as the Production Code, narrative means, or both.[63] The containment of female sexuality seems to have escalated in the 1950s in films such as *The Tender Trap, The Seven Year Itch,* and *Pillow Talk,* with stars Doris Day, Debbie Reynolds, and Marilyn Monroe displayed as passive, available, and controllable mates or potential mates.[64] Even though they were filled with contradictions, we have seen that most classical exploitation films presented gender roles that hewed to the prevailing normative line. But within the social and industrial context of the period, burlesque films, which were based on the spectacle of the uncontained, undomesticated female body, offered a sharp contradiction. The transgressive potential of the burlesque film was located in its nonnormative representation of sex and gender roles in the performances of the strippers as well as the comics in their routines.

While narrative cinema at this time operated to contain female sexuality, the burlesque film was directly confronting viewers with the sight of women who were uninhibited in their sexual expression. In burlesque films, women strutted, pranced, swung their arms, bumped their hips, poured out of and stripped off their costumes in what appeared to be a flood of uncontained sexual display. The women onscreen met the gaze of the spectator, acknowledged that gaze, and defiantly invited him to look further. I have already described exploitation cinema's connection with the cinema of attractions. Nowhere was this more clearly illustrated than in the burlesque film. Tom Gunning writes, "Attractions pose a very different relation to the spectator. The attraction does not hide behind the pretense of an unacknowledged spectator. . . . The attraction invokes an exhibitionist rather than a voyeuristic regime. The attraction directly addresses the spectator, acknowledging the viewer's presence and seeking to quickly satisfy a curiosity. This encounter can even take on an aggressive aspect, as the attraction confronts audiences and even tries to shock them."[65] Burlesque films were the postwar incarnation of that "shock," and their star system offered a counterpoint to Hollywood's dominant image of passive female sexuality. Billing dancers Mickey Ginger Jones as the "Wham-Wham Girl," Zabouda as the "Terrific Turkish Torso Twister," and Gilda as the "Sexiest Blonde in Show Business" played on their use of their bodies as a sexually, and potentially socially, disruptive force.

The burlesque film undermined prevailing representations of female sexuality in American cinema during the 1950s as well as its very system of

**55** Ads for *Midnite Frolics* (1949), as well as other burlesque films, suggested that the dancers' bodies could be sexually, and possibly socially, disruptive forces.

presentation. Writing about female comic performance, Henry Jenkins has responded to the formulation of "visual pleasure," noting that the idea of woman-as-spectacle which freezes the flow of action for "erotic contemplation" results in a "conception of feminine sexuality [that] denies women any active role within the story, any chance of articulating their own pleasures and desires."[66] Adopting Mary Russo's notion of unruly or grotesque women who "make spectacles out of themselves," Jenkins ascribes power to the female comic performer who is able to disrupt the flow of narrative, "to step out of character and adopt the role of pure performer." He writes, "If Mulvey's notion of spectacle asserts a socially learned desire to be looked at, Russo's notion of spectacle dares men to look while gleefully anticipating male displeasure with what they see. Russo stresses the 'liberatory and transgressive effects' of the disorderly woman and her unfit conduct, yet also recognizes the degree to which this unstable figure can be reread in misogynistic terms."[67] Just as the female comic who becomes a "pure performer" by making a spectacle of herself

**56** Mitzi Doerré hits her mark in Harry Wald's production *Tijuana After Midnite* (1954). (Something Weird Video Collection)

holds transgressive potential in Jenkins's account of early sound comedy, the performative aspects of the stripper do much the same in the burlesque film. More to the point, the spectator's attention is held solely by the performance without the distraction of or restrictions imposed by narrative.

What was the nature of the performance of striptease in postwar burlesque films? By removing articles of clothing in a highly ritualized and stylized fashion, the stripper not only became a potential object of erotic desire, but in making a spectacle of herself, she simultaneously made a spectacle of gender identity. As performers, strippers were not merely the bearers of meaning in films, but active makers of meaning, calling attention to the performative aspect of gender.[68] Judith Butler writes that "acts, gestures, and desires" are "performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. . . . in other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an

illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality."[69] Striptease as performance was based on a complex relationship among dance, gesture, and costuming.

As Jane Gaines notes, "just as conventional cinematic representation would seem to dissolve without a trace, leaving the distillation 'woman,' costume delivers gender as self-evident and natural and then recedes as 'clothing,' leaving the connotation 'femininity.' "[70] Yet the stripper in film was able to undermine and call attention to "femininity" and the performative nature of gender in two ways. First, costuming drew attention to itself by being what might be best described as hyperfeminine. Outfits were far removed from contemporary fashion and often harked back to the nineteenth century (bustles and corsets) or biblical/"slave girl" costuming (veils, sarongs) as filtered through Hollywood period pictures. Costumes also featured tassels, feathers, sequins, elaborate headdresses, and other "feminine" signifiers and were often designed to emphasize the breasts and pelvis. Hyperfemininity in the costuming, while drawing attention to sex, simultaneously functioned as a virtual "masquerade" taking on parodic overtones.[71] Once the viewer's attention was secured through the means of the costuming, it was held through the progressive removal of the "corporeal signs and other discursive means" that signify femininity. Those signs that most clearly marked the dancer as "feminine"—long gloves, veils, dresses, brassieres—were systematically removed until all that remained was a minimally covered body. That that body usually remained unified in long and medium shots rather than being broken down into a series of close-ups of component body parts is indicative of the central role of the stripper's agency as a coherent and active maker of meaning in these films.[72] The burlesque film's mode of production and style led to a break with the precepts of classical Hollywood cinema, which opened a space for broader interpretation in which conventions of femininity could be both parodied and deconstructed.

The aggressively erotic aspects of the dances further called into question the passive "nature" of female sexuality as it was constructed by the dominant culture during the postwar years. This broadened the transgressive potential of the striptease dance during the period. Butler continues:

> If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which the act or attribute might be measured; there would be

> no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.[73]

The burlesque film was a constant target of MPAA disapprobation and state and municipal censorship action, attempts that can be seen as efforts to maintain the "regulatory fiction" of fixed gender identity of which Butler speaks.

In her study of the female nude, Lynda Nead discusses the transformation of the female body into the female nude as a process of regulation: "It stands as a paradigm of the aesthetic of the beautiful, a testimony to wholeness and integrity of form. The female nude is precisely matter contained, the female body given form and framed by the conventions of art." Nead adds that "art is being defined in terms of the containing of form within limits; obscenity, on the other hand, is defined in terms of excess, as form beyond limit, beyond the frame of representation."[74] Nudist films were made, although not always received, in a way that aligned them with art. References to ancient Greece, to perfection, to spirituality, and to nature forged strong links between nudist values and attributes most commonly associated with classical art. That shots were often composed as tableaux placed nudist movies at the end of a trajectory that moved back through forms like the tableaux vivants of the nineteenth century to painting and sculpture.[75]

On the other hand, burlesque films were defined by the dominant culture as obscene—excess and form without limit. For instance, a toned-down version of *Midnite Frolics* was presented to the PCA for a seal, only to be rejected. A file memo noted, "Although complete strip routines were not included, the picture contained a great amount of material which could not possibly be approved under the Code."[76] The same excesses that caused the MPAA to deny the film a seal caused Maryland censors to require the deletion of dance scenes that would "tend to excite emotional reaction of an audience." Motion did not invite detached contemplation, and the censors expressed particular concern over the movement of Mickey Ginger Jones's "un-brassiered breasts."[77] It is significant that the

concern of the censors was not with Jones's breasts per se, but with the fact that they were "un-brassiered." Jones's actions removed articles of clothing that mark difference, thus throwing the marks of gender distinction out the proverbial window, and with it the notion of fixed gender identity.

Here then is the paradoxical nature of the striptease: the actions that mark it as erotic—the progressive removal of clothing—culminate in the "degendering" of the woman doing the dance when she is stripped naked. The degradation of the stripper often alluded to by critics does not occur on a personal level, but is instead the degradation of a construction, the feminine, which was, and continues to be, valued by dominant society. What remains is flesh that is mere flesh, without social connotation. The stripped body exposes the "regulatory fiction" of fixed gender identity and is "obscene" because it has moved beyond acceptable representation of existing social norms. As such, the stripper was at once an attractive and a repellent figure, both enticing and frightening. Jenkins notes that the "unstable" figure of the pure female performer did not embody only liberatory potential, but could also be read in misogynistic terms.[78] In making a spectacle of herself and exposing the performative nature of gender, she was open to potential charges of "unladylike" behavior and antagonism. Thus the stripper oscillated between being a figure of desire and one of fear because of her instability within the social order. And this instability was directly linked to burlesque's obscenity.

If the obscenity of burlesque was located in its foregrounding of the performative aspects of gender by the stripper, then it reached its logical extreme in two popular movies made by New York pinup king Irving Klaw. *Varietease* (1954) and *Teaserama* (1955) were a leap over the typical pinup photos and black-and-white bondage loops of model Betty Page that Klaw cranked out for the home market.[79] Both features were shot in Eastman Color and starred top ecdysiasts Lili St. Cyr in *Varietease* and Tempest Storm in *Teaserama,* in addition to spotlighting the popular Page. Wedged among the striptease dances, the comics, and the specialty numbers in these films are two performances that crystallized the transgressive potential of the burlesque film. In *Varietease,* a segment opens in an ersatz nightclub setting. A dancer, sitting at a table with a young man in a suit, rises and performs what can best be described as a sensual dance, though not a strip. When she returns to her seat, she asks her male companion, "How did you like my dance?" He replies, "I liked it very much. But you know, if I was a woman I could do a dance that would hold any man." The dancer requests a demonstration. The film cuts away to a song number

**57** A frame enlargement from the conclusion of Vicki Lynn's drag striptease in *Teaserama* (1955) illustrates one of the most conspicuous instances of the way burlesque films undermined postwar gender norms. (Something Weird Video Collection)

and then returns to the club setting, where the man, billed as Vicki Lynn, now wearing a red wig and dress, performs his own provocative dance. Upon completing the three-and-a-half-minute number, he rejoins the woman at the table and, in case anyone has forgotten, whips off his wig and earrings and lights a cigar. Lynn also appears in *Teaserama,* this time emerging from the curtains in full drag, performing a strip, and finally pulling off his wig and the top of his costume to confirm he is male.

The sight of a man in a dress in the burlesque films is not, as one might expect given the period, demeaning, nor is it comic in the same way Milton Berle's cross-dressing was on the *Texaco Star Theater* television program. Butler indicates that

> drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity. . . . *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.* Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and

> necessary. In place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their directness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity.[80]

Lynn's drag numbers in *Varietease* and *Teaserama* are presented with the same degree of sensuality and tease as the strips by women. A man is shown to convincingly "perform" the role of a woman for men. That Lynn could perform for and be perceived as erotic to heterosexual men, particularly in *Teaserama,* prompts questions about the eroticization of bodies without regard to, or confounding, conventional notions of gender. At the same time, such a performance begged questions about the fixity of desire and whether it was based on innate physiological or psychological traits or on constructions resulting from cultural mechanisms.

Vicki Lynn's two performances, albeit in popular examples of the genre, were by no means isolated instances of gender sabotage in the burlesque film metatext. Many comedy routines served to further undermine the notion of fixed gender identity. Most of the sketches employed in the movies had been used on the stage for years and several are reinterpreted by different comedians in different films. Comedy in burlesque films can be broken down into two major categories: standard comedy and body comedy. Standard comedy routines tend to revolve around drunks or simpletons, a wager, a misunderstanding between two parties, and related gags based on counting and multiplication. Body comedy is based on double entendre or "blue" material that centers on sexual desire, prowess, or bodily functions.

The comedy routines in burlesque films could be just as "obscene" as the dances as they parodied gender norms and expectations based on sexuality. Many routines poked fun at ideas of male sexual prowess, such as the travel agent skit with Harry Rose and straight man Bob Carney in *Naughty New Orleans* (1953). Bob says he has arranged for the toothless, potbellied Harry to fight a bull on his trip to Spain. He describes the scene in the arena to Harry, telling him that he must pull out his *machacha* and wave it at the crowd to acknowledge their applause. Incredulous, Harry asks, "In front of all those people?" "Well naturally," Bob responds, "they expect it." Harry replies sheepishly with the punch line–cum–double entendre: "They're in for an awful disappointment." A similar picture of masculinity is provided in the "rendezvous" sketch, performed at least three different times in burlesque features. In this bit, the comic expresses a desire to the straight man to do away with his wife. The straight man

outlines an elaborate plan that involves the comic wining and dining the wife and having a "rendezvous" (sexual intercourse) many times a day. He guarantees the comic that after a specified amount of time the wife will die. The day before the specified period ends, the wife—invariably young and beautiful—turns up. She is radiant and tells the straight man how wonderful her life has been since she has been enjoying so many "rendezvous" with her husband. The comic then appears. He is a wreck, looking sapped and able to move only with the help of crutches. As the wife exits, the comic tells the straight man that he is totally drained. But the joke, he says, is on his wife because—little does she know—tomorrow she'll be dead. In these sketches and many others like them, ideals of masculinity (physical stature, strength, musculature, and, of course, penis size) were subverted. Much like the striptease dance, the comedy routines questioned postwar gender norms. Whereas women were presented as vital and powerful in burlesque films, men, as embodied in the comics, were depleted, flaccid, and weak, the antithesis of the contemporary masculine ideal of the strong, active provider.

Still other routines turned contemporary ideas about gender and sexual preference inside out. Take, for instance, a war skit in *Hollywood Revels* (ca. 1954). In "Dutch" dialect, a general and a captain discuss a captured female spy. The young blond spy is marched onto the stage by a nurse and two soldiers. They are asked to count off by the general. The first soldier is coded as gay in both mannerisms and vocal inflection. The following exchange takes place:

General: Soldier, come here. Are you one?
Soldier 1: Um-hmm. Are you one, too?
General: Heavens yes!
Captain: General!
General: What are you saying?
Captain: Where are the papers?
Soldier 1: Oh Genny dear, I have the papers.
General: Oh, yeah?
Soldier 1: My oh my . . .
General: That's the paper?
Soldier 1: Um-hmm.
General: Looks like it came from the rear. By the way, soldier, have you been in the army long?
Soldier 1: For months and months and months.

General: For goodness sake. Funny, I never saw you before.
Soldier 1: That's strange. I've seen you lots of times.
General: You did?
Soldier 1: Um-hmm.
General: By the way soldier, where are you staying? The bare-acks?
Soldier 1: Um-hmm.
General: How would you like it if I (makes "zinging" noise) moved you into my tent?
Soldier 1: Woo, that would be ducky.
Captain: General! The war is still on.
General: So long, soldier, I'll see you after the war. You little rascal you. (Pats him on the belly.)

As the scene progresses, the general exhibits sexual interest in the female spy, suggesting that instead of shooting her he will take her "into the woods and make love" to her. When the spy says that she has nothing on under her cloak, the general and both soldiers make a move toward her. When the general accidentally shoots soldier 1, the following dialogue ensues:

General: That's a shame!
Captain: He would have been a very nice boy to have around.
General: I had big things in store for him.

In the scene, the general shifts his desire from soldier 1 to the female spy and then back to the soldier. Soldier 1 drops his gay persona when he, soldier 2, and the general make a dash toward the spy as she tells them she has nothing on under her cape. The fact that such a scene appears in a period when homosexuals were considered not just "failed" men but a threat to national security and family stability as well is made all the more surprising given the perceived status of burlesque, whether on stage or film, as a masculine site of homosocial bonding.[81] Similar sentiments appear in *Kiss Me Baby* (1957), in which a sailor, after returning from a long sea voyage, phones a girl for a date, telling her, "A guy has steak for six months, he'd like to have a little chicken." Allusions to polymorphous desire are also at work in routines in *A Night at the Moulin Rouge* (1951), *Strip Tease Girl* (1952), and *Merry Maids of the Gay Way* (1952), among other films. Rather than showing gender as coherent and unified and desire as a fixed product of it, these routines present desire as polymorphous and subject to rapid change.

During the postwar years homosexuality was characterized by some as a

significant expression of the flight from the demands of masculinity.[82] We can see the burlesque film incorporating that position into a larger, if not fully articulated, critique of gender and sexual politics. The stripper who was a sexually active, desiring woman, eroticized males, and comics who deflated masculine norms and expectations of male desire were more than simply constructions for an erotic charge or a laugh. A collusion among producers, strippers, comics, and audiences conspired to permit a flight from the everyday, an escape from the pressures of the feminine mystique and the breadwinner ethic. Meaning within this space was far more slippery than could ever be acknowledged under the "visual pleasure" paradigm. Indeed, the spectacle of the burlesque film was not, as one might presume using Mulvey's construct, one of difference. Instead it was a spectacle of sameness as the marks of gender difference—whether a veil and brassiere or an attitude of passive femininity or masculine power or bravado—were stripped away to reveal only desire.

Allen writes that "within the liminoid setting of commercial popular entertainment sexual transgressions can become the basis for a reordination of power relations," yet he denies the reordinative potential of the striptease.[83] Contra Allen, I would argue that within specific exhibition situations during the historical conjuncture in which they emerged, burlesque films, wherein the striptease was a defining feature, had transgressive potential. The striptease and comedy of the burlesque film transformed the theater in which it played into an especially liminoid space. Whether a grindhouse, which showed films that existed on the border between Hollywood product and the underground world of the pornographic stag reel, or the average movie theater, which interrupted its usual string of mainstream features to bring in a burley film for a few days or a midnight show, it was a place *in between.* This liminoid space was in between the legitimate and the illegitimate, between the ordered and the disordered, between fixed notions of gender and the polymorphous. In this space the audience could, for a time, question gender's supposed "essence" or basis in nature and imagine a world where gender hegemony was not as rigid or confining and where sexual desire was something mutual as well as diverse.

The nature of exploitation production in general, and burlesque film production in particular, served to create a form of visual spectacle that was not tied to or contained by the constraints that attended conventional Hollywood entertainment. Insofar as she was unrestricted by narrative, the stripper-as-spectacle's significance was as a signifier that moved be-

yond the limitations of story and directly into the broader social context. Much of Allen's critique of striptease rests on the stripper's "voicelessness." Yet in the century that had elapsed from the introduction of burlesque to the rise of the burlesque film, popular culture had shifted from a largely verbal system to one heavily based on images. Reordinative power no longer rested on the carefully organized, linear verbal patterns of the symbolic order of language as much as on the apparently chaotic, random, and, at times, contradictory signifiers of images. Indeed, it would seem that the visual display of the woman, stripped of gender and rendered unstable, often left the male audience itself inarticulate, if not "voiceless." The creation of a female figure who was at once sexually desirable and fully capable of sexual desire was stupefying. Writing about the striptease in 1926, Edmund Wilson observed of the audience, "They have come for the gratification that they hope to derive from these dances; but this vision of erotic ecstasy, when they see it unveiled before them—though they watch it with fascination—frightens them and renders them mute."[84] Roland Barthes echoed Wilson when he described how striptease is based on a contradiction: "Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked. We may therefore say that we are dealing in a sense with a spectacle based on fear."[85] By refining Barthes's observation that "woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked" to "the woman is degendered," we can understand the fear that he and Wilson observed. The confounding amalgamation of pleasure and discomfort produced by burlesque movies and the striptease was not so much the result of castration anxiety or other psychological constructs as it was the disturbing awareness that gender identity is not immutable but is socially constructed.

I don't want to give the impression that the burlesque film was a radical form in which women burst out of oppressive sociocultural restraints and where a largely male audience entered into deep reflection about sexual inequalities and sprang from the theater resolved to initiate change. Because most exploitation films were profoundly conservative, many would have approached this genre predisposed to view the films in the same light in which they received other exploitation movies. But I've also indicated that the structure of exploitation films permitted audiences to take from them the information they wanted. Thus, within the boundaries of the burlesque film, the sexually expressive woman could have been regarded by some as not merely an "exotic other" but an entirely new norm. By exposing the performative nature of gender, burlesque films could reveal

that, as Butler states, "there is no preexisting identity by which the act or attribute might be measured," and as such, "there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction." This revelation could strip away "the very notions of an essential sex and a true and abiding masculinity and femininity," thus allowing the possibility for "proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality." Burlesque films might have reinforced misogynistic or homophobic notions for some viewers, but others may have recognized the broader range of human desire and found it affirmative. Lynne Segal suggests that "recognizing the fluidity and variability of sexual and gender attributes within oneself and others can have other outcomes: positive identifications, conscious desires, intimacies, solidarities and support with and for subordinated 'others.' "[86] The awareness of the possibility of new norms held the key to the burlesque film's reordinative potential.

The introduction of the nudie-cutie around 1960 pushed the burlesque film off the exploitation circuit. The spectacle of the female body in burlesque films was thus displaced by more conventional representations of passive female sexuality, at least at the beginning of the sexploitation cycle. But for a time, burlesque films challenged gender norms through excess, parody, and the creation of new norms. Segal writes that "the first point for sex and gender saboteurs is to acknowledge the real constraints of women's limited social power and submissive or compliant cultural legacies, the second point, in contrast, is to acknowledge that the codes linking sexuality to hierarchical polarities of gender, though always present, are never fixed or immutable. On the contrary, they are chronically unstable and actually very easy to subvert and parody—however repeatedly we see them recuperated."[87] Even if gender norms were continually recuperated, burlesque films, with their unique history and mode of production, had the capacity to expose the instability of those norms and deny their hegemony. For the men—and women—who saw them, burlesque films offered alternative models that challenged restrictions on sexual expression and forms of desire that were channeled along rigidly defined lines. Their representations of nonnormative sex and gender roles offered a glimpse of the sexual revolution and second-wave feminism that was to come in the 1960s.

# 9. Conclusion

## *The End of Classical Exploitation*

1960 is not a year I recall fondly, financially. The sex-hygiene shows were waning, book sales dropping alarmingly. If the drooling masses wanted to read about sex, they could buy *Playboy*—in that magazine they didn't even have to puzzle over the printed word.
—David F. Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon*

By the late 1950s, the lines that had once divided exploitation film's subject matter from releases of the majors were far less distinct. Samuel Newman produced *Desperate Women* (1954), a new take on the old abortion racket story. In 1959 Twentieth Century–Fox released *Blue Denim* with unmarried teen Brandon de Wilde trying to find an abortionist for his pregnant girlfriend, Carol Lynley. *Children of Love,* a 1953 French film about a group of unwed mothers, complete with birth scene, made the exploitation rounds under several titles. Several years later, Allied Artists released *Unwed Mother* (1958). Modern Film's movies, led by *Mom and Dad,* continued to play drive-ins. At the same time, Warner Bros.' magnificently soapy *A Summer Place* (1959) covered many of the same will-they-or-won't-they and what-will-be-the-consequences questions concerning teen sexuality that exploitation films had been posing since the 1920s. Dope had become a routine topic in motion pictures released by the majors by the end of the 1950s. And new companies such as American International

Pictures (AIP) and Filmgroup created low-budget movies that were given the exploitation label and designed to appeal to a youthful market with expendable income. Though their budgets may have been closer to those of the classical exploitation films, their stories of juvenile delinquency, hot cars, and rock music were generally even tamer than increasingly controversial movies released by the majors. For audiences, critics, and the film industry itself, it was becoming more difficult to make the distinction between exploitation and mainstream product that had been so clear as little as a decade earlier.

The classical exploitation film was rapidly disappearing at the end of the 1950s. Like the demise of the studio system, which was occurring at the same time, classical exploitation films did not vanish overnight. Some innovations, such as the introduction of color clinical films and footage of the births of twins and triplets, allowed hygiene programs to stagger into the 1960s, although their numbers were on the wane. Variations on burlesque films still popped up but became increasingly rare. As with the collapse of the studio system, the end of classical exploitation film was the result of multiple causes. In this chapter, I consider the factors that brought about the end of the exploitation film as it had existed since the late teens: the deaths and retirement of the original exploiteers; the incorporation of exploitation themes into mainstream films; changes in self-regulation within Hollywood and censorship on the state and municipal levels; the emergence of teenpics and the foreign "art" cinema in the United States. I also touch on the new sexploitation films that developed around 1960, riding the crest of the sexual revolution into the 1970s and becoming one of the most conspicuous manifestations of those changes.

The first factor in the decline of classical exploitation can be traced to the physical deterioration of those who had made a consistent living with exploitation films for up to forty years. Samuel Cummins, in his sixties, began to withdraw from the business. S. S. Millard died in the late 1950s. J. D. Kendis, who remained an active producer into the early 1950s, died in 1957 at seventy-one. Willis Kent, who continued to produce films well into his seventies, called it quits in the late 1950s and died at age eighty-seven in 1966. Dwain Esper had gradually moved away from the business after World War II, finally retiring in 1962. George Weiss coasted through the transition from exploitation to sexploitation with some nudist pictures and initiated the popular "Olga" series about a dominatrix in 1964, but "America's Fearless Young Showman," Kroger Babb, was never able to duplicate the phenomenal success of *Mom and Dad.* His efforts rapidly dete-

riorated into rants against pay television and a whacky market research–cum–pyramid scheme called "The Idea Factory."[1] The first generation of great exploiteers was passing from the scene.

## Censorship on the Wane

Just as the original exploiteers were moving out of production, the grand old men of Hollywood—Zukor, Cohn, the Warners, Ford, and Capra—were retiring, being forced out of the business, or dying. The same was true of those who had held the reins of censorship for decades. That censorship underwent tremendous changes in the postwar period that affected both Hollywood and the exploiteers is a given. Those changes affected, and were in part the result of, the exploitation business, as well as relaxing moral standards and shifts in the industrial conditions that had given rise to and sustained the exploitation film since the late teens. The *Paramount* decision of 1948 and the subsequent consent decrees rocked Hollywood. The court decision, coupled with decreased movie attendance resulting from the effects of suburbanization, the G.I. Bill, the baby boom, and the diffusion of television, led to the release of contract talent and a reduction in the number of films produced by the large studios. In an effort to offer an alternative to the family-oriented programming on television, many of the movies emerging from the studios took on a decidedly more mature quality. The cycle of "adult" westerns including *The Gunfighter* (1950), *High Noon* (1952), and those directed by Anthony Mann were joined by sophisticated contemporary dramas including *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *A Place in the Sun* (1951), *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Baby Doll* (1956), and *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959). When a spate of articles with such titles as "The Big Leer" and "Movies Are Too Dirty" commented on the surge in screen sex in the early 1960s, the objects of attention were generally not nudist films or racy French movies but pictures from the majors such as *The Apartment* (1960), *Butterfield 8* (1960), and *Walk on the Wild Side* (1962) that dealt with prostitution and adultery.[2]

The Production Code had been enforceable because of the lock the five majors had on first-run exhibition. Films lacking a Code seal could not play in affiliated theaters. Barred from the lucrative first-run market, it was economic suicide for the majors to make films that could not be granted Production Code approval. But after divestiture, the equation was altered. Producer/director Otto Preminger's *The Moon Is Blue* (1953) and *The Man*

*with the Golden Arm* (1955) were both released by United Artists without Code approval and achieved critical and financial success. Although denied a Code seal, *The Man with the Golden Arm* was accorded a B rating by the Legion of Decency—the first film not given a seal that was not also condemned by the Legion.[3] Upon his retirement in 1954, Joe Breen was replaced as head of the PCA by Geoffrey Shurlock. Shurlock was not the rigid ideologue Breen had been, nor did he have Breen's close ties to the Catholic Church. The long-standing unanimity among the PCA, the Legion of Decency, and state censors began to fracture. *Baby Doll,* released by Warner Bros. in 1956, was vigorously denounced by the Legion of Decency but given approval by the PCA.[4] The Legion's power was effectively broken by the incident, and the Code underwent substantial revisions in 1956, eliminating the ban on miscegenation and loosening the prohibitions on depiction of narcotics, abortion, prostitution, and kidnapping.[5] As suggested earlier, self-regulation was imposed to some extent as a means of eliminating unacceptable films made outside the mainstream industry. Yet the Code was being eroded from within by movies released by the majors just as much as it was being damaged by outside sources.

Companies outside the mainstream played an equally important role in the decline of censorship. In *United States vs. Paramount Pictures,* Justice William O. Douglas wrote, "We have no doubt that moving pictures, like newspapers and radio, are included in the press whose freedom is guaranteed by the First Amendment," opening the door for a challenge to motion picture censorship. That challenge came in *Burstyn vs. Wilson,* commonly known as *The Miracle* decision.[6] The 1948 Italian film, directed by Roberto Rossellini, concerned a simple-minded peasant woman who is seduced by a wanderer she thinks is Saint Joseph. She believes that her resulting pregnancy is a miracle, and after being driven from her village, she gives birth in a secluded church in the hills. Initially passed by New York censors, the film's license was withdrawn on the grounds that it was "sacrilegious" following complaints and pickets by Catholic organizations. In 1952 the United States Supreme Court reversed lower court decisions that had upheld the censorship board's action. The Court held that movies were constitutionally protected under the First Amendment and that the New York law that allowed the banning of films on the ground that they were "sacrilegious" was too broad. Although the Court's opinion did not decide the question of whether the state had the power to "censor motion pictures under a clearly drawn statute designed and applied to prevent the showing of obscene films," *Burstyn vs. Wilson* seriously compromised the

concept of prior restraint. A series of per curiam opinions followed that rejected "immoral," "tending to corrupt morals," "harmful" or "conducive [to] immorality [or] crime" as criteria for banning films.[7]

Also in 1952, *Latuko,* an exotic shockumentary about an African tribe that played the exploitation circuit, was confiscated by the Newark, New Jersey, director of public safety prior to a showing. The nakedness of the women from the waist up and the full-frontal nudity of the men proved to be the nub of the controversy. The American Museum of Natural History, which held the rights to the film, and the theater owner brought suit against the public safety director, seeking an injunction to prevent his interference in public showings. The injunction was granted by the Superior Court Chancery Division, the judge holding that "there is nothing suggestive, obscene, indecent, malicious or immoral in the showing of the Latuko aborigines in their normal living state."[8] Although the decision did not have immediate fallout, it did signal that the courts were beginning to take a more liberal stand on nudity—long the primary source of spectacle in exploitation films.

Representatives of the six states that maintained censorship boards met and issued a call "for new statutes to prevent the exhibition of 'obscene and immoral' films and to justify their [the boards'] continued existence."[9] Hugh M. Flick, the head of New York's censorship board, was most concerned about exploitation films, claiming in 1954 that "the most offensive movies were made by independent producers," consisting "largely of 'girly shows' and borderline subjects such as sex hygiene, drug addiction, and clinical subjects including operations and childbirth." Echoing the age-old fear of the professional censor, Flick worried that without some form of government censorship, "these films would be able to prey on the more susceptible elements of the community."[10] But a series of court decisions opened the door for an almost unrestricted flow of exploitation films to the nation's screens by the end of the decade.

Following years of wrangling with the New York censor board, *Mom and Dad* was finally licensed in 1956 when the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court overturned the board, deciding that human birth was not "indecent." That same year, in *Excelsior Pictures Corp. vs. Regents of the University of the State of New York,* the New York Court of Appeals upheld a lower court order that had annulled the censorship board's ruling finding *The Garden of Eden* "indecent" and ordered it licensed, in effect stating that nudity without sexual behavior was not obscene. The Maryland Court of Appeals found in 1957 that aboriginal nudity was not

"obscene or pornographic" in and of itself in *Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors vs. Times Film Corporation,* a suit involving *Naked Amazon* (1954). When Hallmark appealed the Pennsylvania censorship board's third refusal to license *She Shoulda Said "No"!* in the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia, the court reversed the board's order and declared the Pennsylvania Motion Picture Censorship Act unconstitutional. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, finally ending censorship in that state. Other state and municipal censor boards began to fall like dominos. By the mid-1960s, the remaining boards had become anachronisms, if not embarrassments. The increasingly ineffectual Production Code and the fall of prior censorship led to the film rating system, introduced by the MPAA in 1968.

## Teenpics and Art Films

If the *Paramount* decision undercut the power of the Production Code and paved the way for *Burstyn vs. Wilson,* it also helped expand the competition for product among theaters. As Thomas Doherty has observed, the blockbuster mentality compelled the majors to direct their resources toward fewer, more elaborate films that could yield higher domestic box office and greater returns from the increasingly important international market.[11] B units were shut down; the studios that had specialized in low-budget westerns and some programmers, such as Republic, sold their movies to television and closed up shop. As theaters were cut loose from production companies, exhibitors vied for product in a more competitive environment. Many sought salvation aboard the technological bandwagon, installing 3-D systems, widescreen, and stereo. A few even succumbed to harebrained schemes like Smell-O-Vision and AromaRama. Large chains quickly sold off their weak houses, and many theaters were closed for good. Still others turned to new, specialized product and the audience that came with it.

Some exhibitors, especially those who ran neighborhood theaters that depended on subsequent runs and double bills, felt abandoned by the majors. According to Doherty, by the mid-1950s, "they were 'wide open and hungry' for indie product that was cheap, regular, and exploitable."[12] The movies that low-budget outfits such as Allied Artists, DCA, Howco, and above all, AIP made were often referred to as exploitation films, but as Doherty has pointed out, they were "all but indistinguishable" from tradi-

tional B pictures.[13] And even though this new breed of film was cheap to produce—often under the $100,000 mark—they ranked as more polished than the classical exploitation pictures being made at the time, which, as a rule, continued to come in under $25,000.[14] What set these new "exploitation" films apart was that they were geared toward the largely untapped teenage market, which by the early 1950s made up the most loyal and regular segment of the moviegoing audience. With increased mobility and millions in disposable income, teenagers became a marketer's dream come true. Teenpics were similar to classical exploitation films insofar as their advertising promised more than the films actually delivered; AIP's *Day the World Ended* and *Phantom from 10,000 Leagues* combo was billed as "The Top Shock Show of All Time!"[15] Hardly. The films themselves were narratives in the strict classical Hollywood cinema mode, eschewing the educational or titillating spectacle that had differentiated classical exploitation from Hollywood product. In fact, Sam Arkoff, who cofounded AIP with James Nicholson, described himself and his partner as "pretty old-fashioned": "We weren't necessarily trying to break new ground in areas like violence and sex." Although AIP had the occasional scrape with the Legion, none of the company's films was ever rejected by the Code.[16] Classical exploitation films continued to be pitched for adults only, a policy that would have prevented a large segment of the audience for AIP movies from attending.

The teenpics succeeded in drawing one specialized portion of the movie audience; the "art film" became another alternative for exhibitors anxious to stay in business but who were either unable or unwilling to compete for the smaller number of movies issued by the majors. In fact, the art cinema had more in common with traditional exploitation than the prepackaged double bills being cranked out by Arkoff and Nicholson. The line between art cinema and exploitation was often a thin one, and this confusion played a greater role in the decline of the classical exploitation film than the advent of the so-called exploitation pictures made by AIP and similar low-end operations.

Following World War II, there was a sharp rise in interest in foreign, or art, cinema. New theaters opened and others converted to an "art house policy," showing films that were made outside the United States. As Douglas Gomery has written, art houses not only showed movies that differed from those offered by run-of-the-mill theaters, they provided a much different environment. Popcorn and candy were replaced by coffee, tea, and pastries. An air of seriousness pervaded the art house and was re-

**58** Foreign films such as *Club de Femmes* (aka *Girls Club*) and *The Art of Love* were shown on the exploitation circuit in the 1930s and 1940s, establishing a connection between foreign movies and risqué entertainment in the minds of American audiences.

flected in higher admission prices.[17] The spread of art houses has been linked to American travel during and after the war, increasingly refined audience tastes, a reduction in isolationist sentiment, the location of the United Nations in New York City, and a general rise in interest in cultures beyond U.S. borders.[18] Patrons of such theaters have usually been described as more "sophisticated" and "educated" than the average moviegoer, and this may have been the case to some degree. However, foreign films had had a history in the United States in the twenty-five years prior to the end of World War II that was closely tied to the exploitation film.

To understand the connections between exploitation and the art film in the postwar era, a brief digression is necessary. When the average American was confronted with a foreign film prior to 1945, it was often wrapped in the lurid garments of exploitation. Film importer Arthur Mayer recalled his experience with a 1936 French film: "We imported . . . *Club de Femmes,* because of its youthful gaiety and charm and were a little surprised when it began to roll up excellent grosses. On investigation we

discovered that it was being sold [by states' righters] as a spicy Lesbian tale with intimations of indelicate relations between the adorable young women. Needless to say, it proved one of our most profitable importations."[19] *Club de Femmes* was not the only French import that got the exploitation treatment; others, including *He* (1932) and *The Art of Love* (ca. 1941), received similar treatment. The most infamous foreign film to be released during the 1930s, and the motion picture that cemented connections between imported films and salaciousness, was *Ecstasy.* The 1933 Czech movie featured a nude swim and romp in the woods by a young Hedy Kiesler (soon to be Lamarr). The discourse surrounding the film united concepts of foreignness, sexuality, immorality, art, and exploitation. Samuel Cummins drew on this confluence of contradictions to arouse interest in the film.

*Ecstasy* was originally brought to the United States in 1934 by Cummins. The Treasury Department demanded cuts before releasing the print to him—cuts he refused to make. The print was burned. Cummins then imported a modified print that made it through Customs. *Ecstasy* played in some parts of the United States, but Cummins was forced to fight censors in New York, Baltimore, and other places in a series of high-profile court battles. Newspaper accounts of the first fight with U.S. Customs and subsequent litigation inevitably pointed to the foreign pedigree of the film as well as its controversial content. The discourse was summed up in a *New York Times* headline on 8 January 1935: "Czech Film Barred Because of Nudity." Stories were often accompanied by glamorous portraits of Lamarr as well as nude shots from the film such as the revealing photo spreads that ran in *The New York Sunday Mirror* and *Look* magazine.[20] When *Ecstasy* played for over seventeen weeks at Loop theaters in Chicago in the spring of 1937, it was sold with such catch lines as "Suppressed Until Now! U.S. Customs has finally released the most amazing motion picture ever produced," and "The picture the world is whispering about." The film's Washington, D.C., run at the Belasco, near the White House, was accompanied by ads featuring nude shots of Lamarr and the tag "*Ecstasy* Obscene, U.S. Jury decides."[21]

Cummins was able to profit from *Ecstasy*'s characterization as something both foreign and obscene, both dangerous and enticing. Others took advantage of this attribution with very different ends in mind. As noted earlier, the Legion of Decency linked exploitation producers with the "new film-devil that comes from foreign studios," both forms considered an infection of the clean, wholesome American screen.[22] American culture,

often seen as a poor cousin to the high culture of Europe, asserted its own identity through films constructed as clean and moral in contrast to foreign product. This not only legitimized the popularity of Hollywood movies within U.S. borders but could also be cited by business interests as a reason for American dominance of foreign screens.

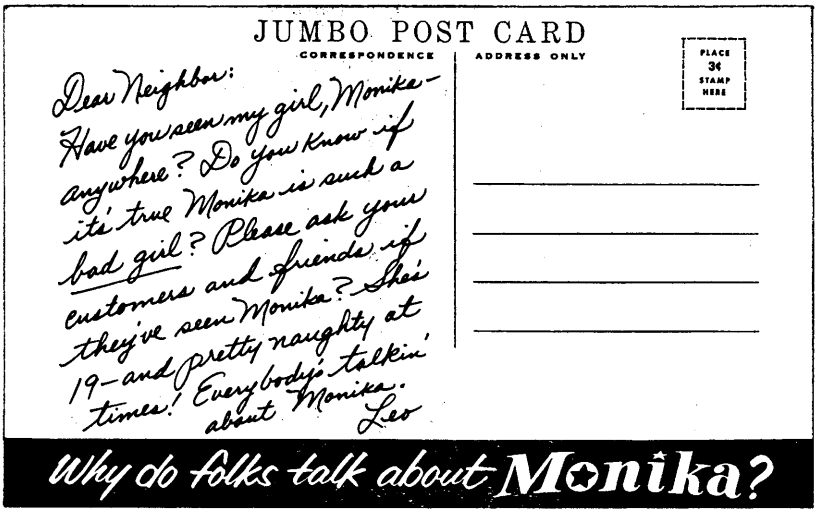
Critics sought to make distinctions between the "entertainment" provided by American films and the "art" of foreign pictures. A review of *Ecstasy* in the *New York Post* claimed, "True, the picture is, like many of its 'arty' cousins, un-Americanly frank, yet typical of those ventures of certain foreign studios to which the cinema is a true art itself."[23] The *Philadelphia Exhibitor* considered the film "a distinct tonic to the art theaters"—the few that existed at the time—and commended its direction, photography, and casting.[24] On the other hand, in condemning the film, the Legion of Decency blasted its "heavy handed symbolism."[25] Foreignness, art, and obscenity were conflated. Because foreign films spilled over categories, because they were narratives, because they contained the spectacle of exploitation films, because they employed symbolism and made use of modernist techniques, because they could play in the few existing art theaters as well as Main Street houses that specialized in exploitation films, they were not contained within traditional boundaries and thus were obscene.

When increased numbers of foreign films were released in the United States after World War II, precedent for selling them to skeptical American audiences had already been set. Arthur Mayer, who with Joseph Burstyn would bring many of the classics of Italian neorealism to U.S. shores, recalled, "The only sensational successes scored by Burstyn and myself in the fifteen years in which we were engaged in business were the pictures whose artistic and ideological merits were aided and abetted at the box-office by their frank sex content. These we were able to exhibit profitably in big theaters as well as small."[26] According to Mayer, *Open City* (1945) was usually advertised with a misquoted line from *Life* magazine that read, "Sexier than Hollywood ever dared to be," coupled with "a still of two young ladies deeply engrossed in a rapt embrace, and another of a man being flogged, designed to tap the sadist trade."[27] Advertising for *Paisan* (1946) featured a young woman undressing while a male visitor lounged on a couch. The most highly lauded neorealist film presented something of a problem for exhibitors: "*The Bicycle Thief* [1948] was completely devoid of any erotic embellishments, but exhibitors sought to atone for this deficiency with a highly imaginative sketch of a young lady riding a

bicycle. This was not good, or bad, enough, and in spite of the critics' rave reviews it did far less business than either of the others."[28]

Mayer also recalled that although better "art" product usually died everywhere outside New York, "films of a highly sexy nature like *Manon* and *Latuko* were, in territories unencumbered by censors, holding them out in long queues at the so-called art theaters. Simultaneously, *Bitter Rice* was breaking records set by *Open City* and *Paisan.* It had no cinematic merit but it had a bountifully proportioned leading lady, Silvana Mangano."[29] *Bitter Rice* (1949) was sold with Mangano's physical assets. Her figure and skintight, skimpy attire caught the eye of audiences, reviewers, and the Legion of Decency, as did story elements about childbirth and abortion. Indecorous costuming, nudity, and reproductive health were the topics of exploitation films; to their audience, the source of a film or its intent meant little. Although not an exploitation film, the similarities between *Bitter Rice* and typical grindhouse fare brought down the wrath of moralists. Legion officials found *Bitter Rice* "a serious threat to Christian morality and decency," and William Mooring, writing in *Tidings,* attempted to tie the film to the International Communist Conspiracy.[30] Illustrating how powerful the sex angle could be, *Variety* indicated that the average foreign film made 60 percent of its revenues in New York, whereas "sexacious pix or those with a good exploitation angle garner 25% from Gotham and the balance from the hinterlands."[31]

Friedman has noted that during the 1950s there were two markets for candid films, "one for the select, sophisticated white-wine-and-canapés crowd, the other, and much larger one, for the less discriminating, cold-beer-and-grease-burger gang. As diverse as the two audiences were, both were intent, oddly enough, on viewing pictures in which human female epidermis was exposed."[32] During this period, exploitation items such as *Latuko* played in the growing number of art houses as well as grindhouses. Foreign films slipped from venue to venue as well. Ingmar Bergman's *Summer with Monika* (1953) was screened by exploitation mogul Kroger Babb, who, according to Friedman, "saw pronounced profit possibilities in [Harriet] Andersson's bare behind by eschewing the artsy orbit and bringing the movie to the hoi polloi."[33] The film's ninety-five-minute running time was chopped to sixty-two minutes (retaining the crucial nude swim sequence), dubbed in what Babb called "American" English, supplied with a new score by the popular Les Baxter, and renamed *Monika, the Story of a Bad Girl.*[34] Advertising art that displayed the title character's bare behind was concocted, along with Friedman's tag line, "A Picture




**59** This postcard was mailed to exhibitors to spark their interest in booking Babb's recut version of Ingmar Bergman's *Summer with Monika.* The reverse featured artwork of Harriet Andersson, behind bared, romping at the seashore.

for Wide Screens and Broad Minds," which played on the 1950s' big-screen phenomenon but had nothing to do with the film's aspect ratio. *Monika* also played the art house circuit in its original form. Other movies such as Roger Vadim's *And God Created Woman* (1957) moved from art house to grindhouse with no alternation.

By the early 1960s, the terms art theater and art film had become synonymous with nudity, completing the cycle begun with *Ecstasy.*[35] Exploitation director Barry Mahon could claim, "So-called exploitation pictures originally started with the idea that it's European, therefore it's artistic and consequently it's risqué."[36] In his classic 1968 study of film censorship, Richard S. Randall reasoned that, "though the art film does not inherently press against the limits of acceptability as does the exploitation film, its potential for becoming a source of censorship of one kind or another remains. 'Artistic sovereignty,' taken seriously by many art film proprietors, is an uneasy companion to self-restraint, if in fact the two elements can coexist at all."[37] The early sexploitation distributors and producers were willing to press the limits of acceptability in the name of art if that meant reaching a broader audience. Have a foreign film that wasn't risqué enough? A little doctoring gave audiences what they expected to see on the

screen. New York–based distributor William Mishkin regularly added inserts of nudity and soft-core sex to the films he imported, as did Radley Metzger for his company, Audubon Films. *Variety* later described the process for a Cambist Films release: "Original version of [*The Female*] was directed by Torre Niellson and was Argentina's official entry at Cannes in 1961 and a winner the same year at the San Sebastian fest. [Lee Hessel, president of Cambist Films,] bought the U.S. rights, re-edited to speed up the slow pace and added sex scenes. Result? A dirty art house playoff. This combination of art and sex is particularly effective in smaller situations where people will flock to see the same film at an art house they would not go near in a sex house."[38] Adding sex scenes after a film had been imported was also a way of avoiding problems with U.S. Customs. A number of the theaters that had oscillated between art films and exploitation in the postwar period gradually began to specialize in one form or the other by the end of the 1950s. According to Friedman, Louis K. Sher's Art Theatre Guild, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, was one chain that made the switch from an art cinema policy to adult films when Sher discovered that it was the skin that was bringing the audiences in.[39]

## Sexploitation

The combination of nudity, more daring story lines, and the association with "art" helped films such as *The Twilight Girls* (1961), *The Fourth Sex* (1962), and *Sexus* (1964) push old-line exploitation out of the picture. They were being imported by a new breed of exploiteer, Radley Metzger, for example, looking for fresh terrain. In turn, those films found competition in increasingly daring homegrown productions. Consequently, distributors such as Mishkin and Metzger turned to production by the mid-1960s. Production of what was coming to be known as "sexploitation" began in the United States around 1960 and, in combination with more daring European product and factors mentioned above, put the final nail in the coffin of classical exploitation.

The film most often credited with inaugurating the sexploitation era, and the first of the nudie-cuties, was Russ Meyer's *The Immoral Mr. Teas* (1959). Meyer had been an Army Signal Corps photographer during World War II. During the postwar years, he made industrial films and shot cheesecake photographs and early *Playboy* centerfolds. He also did the cinematography for Pete DeCenzie's burley film, *French Peep Show* (1950),

and the abortion picture *The Desperate Women* (1954), in which his wife, eventual coproducer, and sometime star, Eve Meyer, had a role. In 1958, DeCenzie asked Russ Meyer to make a nudist film. Reluctant to work in the genre, allegedly because of its nonerotic context, Meyer made *The Immoral Mr. Teas* with DeCenzie for $24,000. It has been described as *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday* with naked women. David K. Frasier has observed that "in content and theme *Teas* is a literal translation of what [Meyer] had been doing for *Playboy,* a movie version of the girlie magazine."[40] The loose story follows Bill Teas, one of Meyer's old army buddies, a modern Everyman. Teas delivers false teeth on a bicycle and in his travels comes across a series of women who wear low-cut blouses and dresses. Teas also spends some time peeping on a stripper at a burlesque show. While under sedation to have a tooth removed, he fantasizes that the dentist's attractive female assistant is nude. Teas continues to fantasize about naked women on and off the job. The narration asks, "Has pressure of modern living begun its insidious task of breaking down the moral fiber of our indomitable Mr. Teas?" Teas visits a psychiatrist, but when he imagines her nude as well, he happily resigns himself to his condition.

Its title notwithstanding, *The Immoral Mr. Teas* was not particularly immoral, and despite Meyer's objections to the lack of eroticism in the nudist genre, *Mr. Teas* was no more arousing than the run-of-the-mill volleyball games and sunbathing in those films. Still, the movie proved to be significant for two reasons: first as a decisive break from classical exploitation and second as a compass that pointed to the trajectory of sexploitation. On the surface, *Mr. Teas*'s questions about modern life and its sexually frustrated protagonist appear to tie it to the critique of modernity found in the classical exploitation films of Esper and others. Yet *Mr. Teas* is played for ironic laughs throughout, setting it apart in tone and ideological stance from classical exploitation. Moreover, *Mr. Teas* and the sexploitation films that followed seldom made use of a prefatory square-up. The lack of a square-up was perhaps the greatest point of divergence between classical exploitation and sexploitation and a clear indicator of the changed moral climate. Sexploitation films can best be described as exploitation movies that focused on nudity, sexual situations, and simulated (i.e., nonexplicit) sex acts, designed for titillation and entertainment. Such films no longer required explicit educational justification for presenting sexual spectacle on the screen—although they often made claims of social or artistic merit as a strategy for legal protection.

The postwar economic boom, driven by uninhibited consumption, fur-

thered the transition from a production-based economy to one fueled by consumer activity. By the early 1960s, sexual desire, especially male sexual desire, was economically legitimate. *Playboy* and its imitators, *The Immoral Mr. Teas* and the dozens of nudie-cuties that followed provided, at one and the same time, an escape from the rigors of the 9-to-5 grind and the breadwinner ethic and a headlong plunge into the consumption that was the end result of the job. As Barbara Ehrenreich has written, "For all its potential disruptiveness, *Playboy* was immune to the standard charges leveled against male deviants. You couldn't call it anti-capitalist or un-American, because it was all about making money and spending it."[41] If the new sexploitation films did not wax philosophical about consumption in the same overt way that *Playboy* did, they were still a manifestation of the economic changes that had increasingly expanded the acceptable sphere of desire.

The expansion of that acceptable sphere of desire would escalate in the 1960s. Sexploitation films would diversify, with subgenres including "roughies" and "kinkies" by the middle of the decade as well as a number of cycles: the suburban exposé, the costume picture, the campus film, the hillbilly movie, and so on. Of particular significance was the growing recognition of the desire of women, younger people, and those deemed to be in some way "deviant." In acknowledging the legitimate sexualization of the Other, sexploitation films contributed to an increasing "democratization." Lawrence Birken notes that "sexualization appears apocalyptic because it is symbolic of the extension of the democratic model of society to its furthest limit."[42] This active period of democratization, generally referred to as the sexual revolution, was marked by a moral panic unmatched since the early part of the century. Sexploitation reigned from about 1960 to a point in the late 1970s when its content, like classical exploitation before it, was absorbed into mainstream movies—*Summer School Teachers* (1975), *Porky's* (1981), and others—and hard-core features gained a firm foothold in the theatrical market. With the advent of theatrical hard-core, the spectacle that classical exploitation could only hint at through nudity and the aftereffects of sex was finally on the public screen.[43]

## Conclusions

The end of the typical classical exploitation movie: The corrupter has been riddled with bullets or is headed for a dank jail cell; the innocent is dying

or facing the prospect of a life of shame; the parents are wringing their hands and muttering, "If only we had known . . ." A lesson has been learned and the audience has been treated to a dose of titillation. But what lessons can we take away from a group of movies that always existed on the periphery of the American film industry? What can we learn from films that have been all but forgotten for decades? Certainly, as we have seen, they were more than just "bad" movies to be laughed at for their cinematic sloppiness and provincial attitudes about sex and drugs.

From an industrial standpoint, exploitation movies, as they came to be established in the 1920s, were a link to the motion picture's formative years. Distribution relied on such methods as the states' rights system and the roadshow, which had either been abandoned by the major companies or were used only in special circumstances. The economies of scale that allowed the mainstream to grow and dominate the film business were blocked for the exploitation producer for a variety of industrial and social reasons. Advertising and promotional practices relied heavily on ballyhoo at the point of exhibition, a strategy that was increasingly displaced by national campaigns and product tie-ins among the major companies. From a formal standpoint, the exploitation film was closely aligned with the "cinema of attractions," the early tendency to show or display something in an exhibitionistic fashion, which, in exploitation, often overrode the impulse to tell a story or document a phenomenon in an ordered and coherent way. We can link the cinema of attractions to the earliest venues for motion pictures such as the dime museum and the vaudeville house, as well as other forms of spectacle such as the carnival and the sideshow. The exploitation film's chief competition, the classical Hollywood cinema, often employed elements of spectacle, but such moments were inevitably subordinated to the demands of narrative intelligibility. In Hollywood films, sex was denatured into lines of chorus girls in musicals, or displaced into Technicolor, CinemaScope, scale, and special effects. In exploitation films, where it was the primary form of spectacle, sex was far more overt. Even if actual sexual acts were evaded, the anticipation of them or their aftermath was on display in a "raw" and "unvarnished" fashion.

Exploitation films were criticized for their "disorder," their incoherence, their delirious quality. They were constructed as "renegade" movies by the mainstream picture industry and, to some extent, by the exploiteers themselves. The exploiteers claimed that their educational tales were "bold" and "daring" so that viewers might avoid the moral career of the stigmatized Other. Kroger Babb and other exploiteers touted their "fearless-

ness" in the face of Hollywood's timidity and concern over causing offense. Indeed, the exploitation films were bold in their constant push at the boundaries of respectability and taste. Their legacy lives on in trash talk shows, disease-of-the-week movies, and tabloid TV.

Yet classical exploitation's apparent liberal stance on issues of content was mitigated by its ties to the ideology of the progressive movement of the late nineteenth century. Good intentions aside, the progressive impulse to exert bourgeois control over the poor and working classes, over women, children, and the social Other was exercised through exploitation films' reaction to the broadening sphere of desire that emerged in postindustrial America. Their nostalgic appeal for an idealized past, mistrust of the Other, and deep suspicion of the role of pleasure in daily life was an elegy for the passing regime. As Birken notes, "In the classical [economic] system, the active agents of the society appeared to be the owners of commodities exchanged within the sphere of production. In contrast, the neoclassical system implied that desire was the only criterion for social agency. By portraying society as a collection of sovereign, desiring, perfectly competitive idiosyncratic 'ids,' neoclassical theory extended the ideology of democracy further than it had been extended previously."[44]

Classical exploitation films were a paradox. Though championing hard work and delayed gratification, they were implicated in a system of immediate gratification as part of the commercial cinema. The pictures may have railed against the dangers of pursuing pleasure, but they supplied it in the form of titillating spectacle. Even the pedagogic elements and the most unpleasurable scenes could fulfill individual desires: for information, for validation, for the exquisite nausea provided by "gross" imagery. Whereas Hollywood cinema catered to desire through discourses of entertainment, leisure, habitual moviegoing, the content of the films, and a web of financial interests that included blatant product tie-ins to more subtle endorsements of certain lifestyles, exploitation films addressed the guilt fostered by that desire. And if Hollywood was far more willing, indeed often eager, to affirm the positive consequences of the pursuit of pleasure, it did so by displacing desire onto material goods such as lipsticks, clothes, automobiles, and single-family homes. Exploitation films at least recognized that desire was fundamentally sexual.

Exploitation films' paean to a stable social and moral order was expressed in a form that lacked stability and order. The films reveled in the exotic but were exceptionally provincial. They professed a concern about education but went about it in a slapdash fashion. They claimed to expose

truth but did it in a leering and suggestive way. They took a moral high ground but engaged in morally questionable practices. They professed democratic ideals but would have seen power restricted to those who already possessed it. They were a mass of contradictions, anxieties, and fears, wrapped in a brash display of pageantry and excess, ribboned with high-minded ideals. In other words, they were much like the culture that produced them. As both a form and a practice, exploitation was, in the final analysis, a profoundly *American* phenomenon.

# Appendix 1

*Major Exploitation Producers/Distributors and Their Company Names*

**Kroger Babb**
*Hygienic Productions*
*Hallmark Productions*

**Walter Bibo**
*Excelsior Pictures*

**W. Merle Connell**
*Candl*
*Quality Pictures*

**Samuel Cummins**
*Circle Film Company*
*Eureka Productions*
*Jewel Productions*
*Pix Distributing*
*Public Welfare Pictures*

**Dwain Esper**
*Dwain Esper Productions*
*Hollywood Producers and Distributors*
*Mapel Attractions*
*Road Show Attractions*

**Harry Farros**
*Broadway Roadshow Productions*

**Bryan Foy**
*Foy Productions*

**J. D. Kendis**
*Continental*
*Jay Dee Kay*

**Willis Kent**
*Billiken*
*Real Life Dramas*
*True Life Photoplays*
*Willis Kent Productions*

**Klaytan W. Kirby**
*Cinema Enterprises*

**Irving Klaw**
*Beautiful Productions*

**S. S. Millard**
*S. S. Millard*

**Louis Sonney/Dan Sonney**
*Sonney Amusement Enterprises*
*Social Service Pictures*

**George Weiss**
*G. W.*
*Screen Classics*

**Other Active Companies**
*Friedgen (Raymond and Lloyd)*
*Futurity (Chauncy Olman and Arthur Jarwood)*
*K. Gordon Murray*
*Pacific Cine Films (Robert I. Lee)*
*The Ormond Group*
*Rebel*
*Screen Art Sales (Nathan Cy Braunstein)*
*Harry Wald*

# Appendix 2

## *Filmography*

This filmography is divided into three sections. Part 1 includes movies made and released between 1919 and 1959; part 2 contains motion pictures made prior to 1919 but still in release after that year, and part 3 includes films made by Poverty Row and other companies that were rereleased with exploitation campaigns. The vast majority of features released during the four-decade run of classical exploitation are listed in part 1, although some obscure or regional releases may have eluded me. The short subjects listed are among the most widely circulated, though the list is by no means comprehensive, as some shorts made for peep machines or home use also made the transition to theatrical release. Due to space restrictions, the information listed is limited. In some cases, comprehensive data on a film are available, but in others very little may be known about a movie except for a title. I have erred on the side of inclusion in the hope that it may dislodge information about particularly obscure films (e.g., *The Hickman Case, Hometown Girl, Red Headed Baby*).

Films are catalogued by the title by which they are most commonly known and then a date (as precise as possible) that refers to the year of manufacture. In some cases, dates are only approximate; in cases where the date of manufacture is unknown, I attempted to roughly situate it in the decade in which the film was made. Those films for which I have been unable to determine even a decade of issue are designated as no date (n.d.). Listed with the date is the country of origin if other than the United States. When known, the production company is listed followed by the primary distribution company, although virtually all of these movies were distributed on a states' rights basis. Alternative titles and the original foreign title, if applicable, are included. The

film's length is indicated by "feature," "featurette," or "short"; however, these categories are not exact because these films often had material added to or deleted from them. The next entry is exploitation category. Many of the movies contain at least some overlap so they are classified by their most prominent theme:

| | |
|---|---|
| atrocity | glamour |
| burlesque | nudism or nudity |
| drugs | sex hygiene |
| exotic | vice |

A few films are designated as "unclassified." A brief list of credits and performers follows (when known), using the following abbreviations: P (producer); D (director); PDWr (producer, director, writer); SP (screenplay or scenario writer); w/(with—onscreen actors or performers). The spelling in the credits of exploitation films is often inconsistent, and I have made no attempt to alter the spelling of names. Where possible, spellings come from the film's credits, then ad art and copyright records, and finally from secondary sources. Entries conclude with a section of "notes," which provides brief but relevant information.

This filmography is constantly being revised and updated. Individuals with information on obscure or missing titles are encouraged to contact the author.

## **PART 1** *Films made and released between 1919 and 1959*

*ABC's of Love* (1954) Billiken (aka *Strip Strip Hooray!*); feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Gilda, May Blondell, Helen Lewis, Jill Adams, Bebe Hughs, Blaza Glory.

*Adam and Eve* (1956, Mexico) Producer unknown; feature; nudity; D/Albert Gout. w/Carlos Baene, Christiane Martel. *Notes:* This Mexican import based on the tale of Adam and Eve was given an exploitation treatment due to the nudity.

*Adventures in the Jungle* (1940s) Continental; short; exotic. P/J. D. Kendis.

*African Holiday* (1937) Harry C. Pearson; exotic; P/Harry C. Pearson; narration by Pearson.

*Agar-Agar* (1950s?) Producer unknown; short; exotic.

*Amok* (1937, France) Carlyle Productions/Distinguished Films release USA, 1945; feature; sex hygiene; D/Fedor Ozep; adapted from a novel by Stefan Zweig; w/Marcelle Chantal, Jean Yonnel, V. Inkijinoff, Jean Servais. *Notes:* The strong abortion and infidelity themes of *Amok* apparently gave it a short life on the exploitation circuit.

*Amok* (1944, Mexico) Clasa Films; feature; sex hygiene; P/Gonzolo Elvira.

D/Antonio Momplet; adapted from a novel by Stefan Zweig by Momplet; w/Maria Felix, Julian Soler, Stella Inda, Miguel Angel Ferriz, Jose Baviera, and Paco Fuentes. *Notes:* Like the French version of *Amok,* this film may have received some American dates as an exploitation item because of the abortion theme.

*And the Children Pay* (1919) Tryad Pictures; feature; sex hygiene; D/Jacques Tyrol; SP/Winnifred Dunn; w/Bliss Milford, Gareth Hughes, J. P. Campbell, Ellen Mortemer.

*Angkor* (1937) Warner/Purdon (aka *Forbidden Adventure in Angkor, Forbidden Adventure, The Gorilla Woman;* see also *Love Life of a Gorilla*) feature; exotic; P/Harry Warner and Roy Purdon; D/George M. Merrick; Narrator, Wilfred Lucas; w/Wilfred Lucas and J. S. Horne. *Notes:* Some footage eventually found its way into *Love Life of a Gorilla.*

*Angry God* (1948) Carlyle/Peskay Productions; exotic; color; D/Van Campen Heilner.

*Animated Diagrams of the Human Body* (ca. 1919) Social Hygienic Films of America; short; sex hygiene.

*Around the World with Nothing On* (1958) No further information.

*The Art of Love; or Your Sex Problems Solved* (1941, France) Producer unknown, importer possibly Dwain Esper (orig. title *L'Or Dans La Rue*); feature; unclassified. *Notes:* Little is known about this film, although it appears to have been a continental drama with some suggestive elements.

*The Art of Strip Tease* (1954) Mack-Sonney Amusement Enterprises (aka *Strip Tease Burly Q*) feature; burlesque; w/Tempest Storm, Sheree North, Helen Renee.

*Assassin of Youth* (1937) BCM; feature; drugs; P/Leo J. McCarthy; D/Elmer Clifton; SP/Clifton and Charles A. Browne; w/Luana Walters, Arthur Gardner, Dorothy Short, Earl Dwire.

*Assault* (1956, Finland) Fennada-Filmi Oy, Helsinki/George Friedland and Dan Sonney (aka *Crime With Passion*); feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This Finnish film was held for four months by U.S. Customs before being released to the distributor. It seems to have had much in common with other exploitation films of the late 1950s that dealt with sexual pathology, such as *The Lonely Sex* and *Please Don't Touch Me.*

*Atrocities of the Orient* (1959) Film Import Company/Social Service Pictures; feature; atrocity; w/Linda Estrella, Fernando Royo, Mona Lisa, and Bimbo Danao. *Notes:* This is a compilation made up of *Beasts of the East* and *Outrages of the Orient.*

*Attack of the Jungle Women* (1959) Sampson Productions. No further information.

*B Girl Rhapsody* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions (aka *B Girl Burlesque, Gay Burlesk, Girls of Pleasure, Hollywood Peep Show, Peep Show*);

feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Lili, Leon Devoe, Benny (Wop) Moore, Frenchy La Von.

*Babes and Hoodlums* (n.d.) No further information.

*A Baby is Born* (n.d.) *Notes:* This was either another knockoff of *Birth of a Baby* or a retitled version of that film or a similar one.

*Back to Nature* (1954) Sonney Amusement Enterprises (aka *Nudism Today*); short; nudism; color.

*Bad Girls Do Cry* (1954) Jacqueline Kay Corp.; feature; vice; P/Howard Freeman; D/Sid Melton; w/Bill Page, June Gauer, Misty Ayers, Bill Marks.

*Bagdad After Midnite* (1954) Screen Classics; feature; burlesque; P/George Weiss; D/Phil Tucker; w/Dick Kimball, Wally Blair, Arlene Hunter, Genii Young. *Notes:* Outtakes from this feature were used for the short *Cairo After Midnight.*

*Balinese Love* (1931) J. W. Jackson; feature; exotic; Narration, Tom Terriss.

*Bare Facts* (1952) Mack-Sonney Enterprises (aka *Unclad Cuties*); short; burlesque; w/Gwen Caldwell, Sheree, Dorothy Eddy.

*Battle of Burlesque Queens* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; burlesque; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*Beasts of the East* (ca. 1949, Philippines) Lebran/Classic Pictures; feature; atrocity; D/Fermin Barva; w/Robert Neil, Erlinda Cortes, Fernando Royo, Rosa Aguirre.

*Beasts of the Jungle* (1946) Continental; short; exotic; P/J. D. Kendis.

*Beautiful Dawn* (1946) Klaytan W. Kirby; short; burlesque; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Hillary Dawn.

*Beauty and the Beast* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Bartlett and King.

*Because of Eve* (1948) Crusade Productions (aka *The Story of Life*); feature; sex hygiene; P/William Daniels (William D. Bacon); D/Howard Bretherton; SP/Larry Allen (Walter A. Lawrence); Narration, Sam Balter and Hy Averback; w/Joseph Creehan, Wanda McKay, John Parker, Robert Leaver.

*The Bedroom Diplomat* (n.d.) *Notes:* This was probably a risqué European film that was given a new title when it was paired with *The Art of Love.*

*A Bedroom Fantasy* (1953) Willis Kent–Broadway Roadshows (aka *Birthday Suit*); short; burlesque; color; w/Lili St. Cyr.

*Big Time Burlesque Stars* (1945) Hoffberg; short; burlesque; w/Billie Mayshell, Rouhia Bey, Bebe Fox.

*Birth* (ca. 1931, Switzerland) Praesens (aka *Miracle of Life, Miracle of Birth, Sins of Love*); feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* Initially released in the United States by Culture Films, Inc., *Birth* was acquired by Samuel Cummins's Public Welfare Pictures and released under its original title as well as the alternative titles listed above. Cummins may have used some of the disease, birth, and cesarean footage in later productions.

*The Birth of a Baby* (1937) American Committee for Maternal Welfare; feature; sex hygiene; P/Jack H. Skirball; D/A. E. Christie; SP/Burke Symon and Arthur Jarrett; w/Eleanor King, Richard Gordon, Ruth Matteson.

*The Birth of a Baby—Now* (1956) American Committee for Maternal Welfare; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This was a modernized version of *The Birth of a Baby.*

*Birth of a Child* (1938) Jewel (aka *Birth or the Duties of Motherhood, Motherhood*); feature?; sex hygiene.

*Birth of Life* (n.d.) *Notes:* This film, evidently a short, was probably a birth reel.

*Birthright* (1951) A Columbia University/Southern Educational Film Production Service/Classic Pictures; Produced under the auspices of the Georgia Department of Health with the cooperation of the Hall County Health Department; featurette; sex hygiene; D/Bill Clifford; SP/George C. Stoney; w/Boyce Brown, Marjorie Morris, Paula Haygood.

*The Blonde Captive* (1932) Northwestern Australian Neanderthal Expedition Syndicate/Released by William M. Pizor, Columbia; feature; exotic; D/Dr. Paul Withington and Clinton Childs; w/Withington, Childs, and Lowell Thomas.

*Bo-Ru* (1946) Classic Pictures; feature; exotic. *Notes:* Ads for *Bo-Ru* indicated that the title was the name of the main character, "the Unbelievable Ape Boy," who was "taken from the jungle beast's forest lair!"

*Body of Beautiful* (1927) S.M. Productions; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This hygiene feature was revised and rereleased in 1937 when it was controlled by S.M. Productions of Gary, Indiana. It purportedly played to 35 percent of Fort Wayne's population in the spring of 1937.

*The Body Beautiful* (1950s?) Roadshow Attractions, Inc.; short; glamour; color; DWr/Merle Connell.

*Bootleg Babies* (n.d.) No further information.

*The Boss's Daughter* (n.d.) Producer unknown; short. *Notes:* This black-cast short was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of the 1950s.

*Bourbon Street Strippers* (1950s) Producer unknown; burlesque. *Notes:* This Astor release may have been a retitled version of *Naughty New Orleans.*

*Bowery Burlesk Striptease* (1950s) Producer unknown; burlesque.

*Bowery Scandals* (1953) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque.

*Bride of Buddha* (1941) Futter Productions; feature; exotic; P/Walter Futter.

*Bring on the Girls* (n.d.) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was handled by Astor Pictures in the 1950s and listed among other exploitation releases.

*Buffo Burlesk* (1954) Billiken Pictures–Sonney (aka *4 Star Burlesk*); feature; burlesque; w/Tempest Storm, Gilda, Mae Blondel, Bebe Hughes.

*Burlesk for Wolves* (1948–52) Continental and Quality; feature; burlesque; w/Hillary Dawn, Jenne, Eddie Ware. *Notes:* This was most likely a compilation feature put together by New York distributor William Mishkin.

*Burlesque in Harlem* (1950) T.N.T. (aka *Brevities of 1955*); burlesque; feature; P/Joseph Tuller; D/William Alexander; w/Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham, Dick Barrows, Jo Jo Adams, Mabel Hunter. *Notes:* This was a black-cast burlesque feature.

*Burlesque Moods* (ca. 1930) Harriet Huntington; No further information.

*Bust-O-Rama* (1954) Screen Classics (aka *Exotic Strippers*); short; burlesque; P/George Weiss; w/Deena Prince, Lee Barry, Rita Ravel.

*Buxom Beautease* (1955) Beautiful Productions (aka *Side Street Follies*); feature; burlesque; PD/Irving Klaw; w/Dorian Dennis, Blaze Starr, Tempest Storm, Lili St. Cyr.

*Cairo After Midnight* (1954) G. W. (George Weiss); short; burlesque. *Notes:* This short was made up of material that was shot at the same time as *Bagdad After Midnite.* It is unclear if this was simply unused material or if it was shot specifically for the creation of a short.

*Call Girls* (1959) A Rialto Film–A President Films Release; feature; vice; D/Arthur Maria Rabenalt. No further information.

*Can-Can Follies* (1953) Sonney Roadshow Attractions (aka *Art of Stripping, Burlesque Beauties, Can-Can Burlesque, Strip Exotics*); feature; burlesque; w/Syra (the Swiss Doll), Cleo, Carmelita, Stacy Farrell.

*Captive Bride of Shangri La* (n.d.) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This film was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" (exploitation films) during the 1950s.

*The Carleton Howard Lecture* (1959) K. Gordon Murray Productions, Inc. (see also *Wasted Lives*); short; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This short film was used to pitch two booklets published by Murray when it was paired with *Wasted Lives.*

*Carmenesque* (ca. 1954) Sol Lesser–Sonney; short; burlesque; 3-D; w/Lili St. Cyr. *Notes:* This burlesque short was released in a standard version that featured St. Cyr's number and an altered comic version. According to St. Cyr, the second version intercut shots of a parrot with her number. The parrot provided snappy gag lines.

*Casino Burlesque* (1940s) Producer unknown; short; burlesque; w/Margie Lamont, Deena Prince, Rita Zane, Scarlett Knight.

*Cavalcade of Fun* (n.d.) Producer unknown; short; No further information.

*Chained for Life* (1950) Spera; feature; unclassified; D/Harry S. Fraser; SP/Nat Tanchuck; w/Daisy and Violet Hilton, Allen Jenkins, Mario de Laval. *Notes:* This film starred the "Siamese twin" Hilton sisters and was given an exploitation release.

*Child Bride* (1941) Raymond Friedgen; feature; exotic; D/Harry J. Revier; w/Shirley Miles, Bob Bollinger, Warner Richmond, Diana Durrell.

*Child Bride* (1938) Samuel Cummins; short (?). *Notes:* This film, released on the heels of *The Birth of a Baby,* was made up of footage from *Birth.*

*Childbirth* (1940) Louis Weiss/The Motherhood Society (aka *The Creation of Motherhood; Married Love*); short; sex hygiene; P/Louis Weiss; D/Herbert Meyer; w/Richard Tucker, Charlotte Henry, Claire Rochelle, Grace Field.

*Childbirth—Modern Technique* (ca. 1946) Sherwood Films; short; sex hygiene.

*Childbirth from Life* (ca. 1938) Watt L. Parker, Atlantic Films, Life's Dramas; feature?; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This film was released in 1938 to capitalize on the success of *The Birth of a Baby.* It is unclear which of the three individuals or companies above was the actual producer.

*Children of Loneliness* (1935) Jewel (aka *Bewildered Youth, Strange Lovers, The Third Sex*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Richard G. Kahn; w/Wallace Morgan, Luana Walters, Jean Carmen, Sheila Loren.

*Children of Love* (1953, France) Gray Film, released in the United States by K. Gordon Murray Productions, 1957 (orig. title: *Les Enfants D'Amour;* see also *Wasted Lives*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Leonide Moguy; SP/Marise Querlin, Moguy, and Jean-Charles Tachella from a novel by Querlin; w/Etchika Choreau, Jean-Claude Pascal, Lise Bourdin, Dominique Page.

*Children of the Sun* (1933) Radio Cinema (France)–Educational Pictures (USA), imported by Jewel (orig. title: *Deux Chez Les Nudistes;* aka *Forbidden Since Adam and Eve, French Nudists, Ten Days in a Nudist Camp*); feature; nudism; w/Roland Toutain, Paulette Boggio. *Notes:* Although initially released as a feature, this film was apparently cut for use as a short in the 1950s.

*China Slaver* (1929) Trinity Pictures; feature; vice and drugs; D/Frank S. Mattison; SP/L. V. Jefferson and Cecil Burtis Hill, from a story by Rupert Hughes and Calvin Holivey; w/Sojin, Albert Valentino, Iris Yomoaka. *Notes:* This film may qualify more as a thriller than an exploitation movie.

*Cinderella's Love Lesson* (1953) Venus Productions (see also *Striporama*); short; burlesque; w/Lili St. Cyr. *Notes:* This specialty number was excised from the feature *Striporama* and released as a short subject.

*Cleopatra Follies* (1953) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; 3-D.

*Cocktail at Sloopy Joe's* (1953) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short; burlesque; 3-D; w/Jack Mann. *Notes:* This short was extracted from *Can-Can Follies.*

*The Confession* (1927) Fisher Film Exchange; No further information.

*Confessions of a Vice Baron* (1942) Real Life Drama (aka *Skid Row*); feature; sex hygiene, vice; P/Willis Kent; w/Willy Castello. *Notes:* This film was compiled from footage from a number of earlier Kent productions.

*Crusade of the Innocent* (1922) Producer unknown, distributed by Popular Film Co.; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This film was apparently a drama about syphilis.

*Curse of the Ubangi* (1946?) Dwain Esper (aka *Curse of the Ubangi Virgin, Nine*

*Girls in Hell*). *Notes:* It is unclear if this film was a revamped version of *Ubangi.*

*Curvaceous Beauties of Burlesque* (1944) Excelsior; short; burlesque; w/Vanya, Dorothy Darling, Sandra, Tracy La Marr.

*Damaged Goods* (1937) Criterion Pictures (aka *Forbidden Desire, Marriage Forbidden, Sins of Love*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Phil Goldstone; D/Phil Stone; Adaptation, Upton Sinclair, from the play by Eugene Brieux; SP/Joseph Hoffman; w/Pedro De Cordoba, Phyllis Barry, Douglas Walton.

*Damaged Lives* (1933) Weldon Pictures (aka *The Shocking Truth*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Edgar G. Ulmer; w/Diane Sinclair, Lyman Williams, Cecilia Parker, George Irving. *Notes:* A twenty-nine-minute lecture film featuring Dr. Gordon Bates initially accompanied *Damaged Lives.*

*Damaged Souls* (1929) Public Welfare Pictures; feature; No further information.

*Dance Hall Racket* (1955) Screen Classics (aka *Shame Shanty*); feature; vice; P/George Weiss; D/Phil Tucker; SP/Lenny Bruce; w/Lenny Bruce, Honey Harlowe, Timothy Farrell, Sally Marr.

*Dance of the Virgins* (n.d.) Producer unknown, released by Astor; short; burlesque. *Notes:* This may be the same as the short *Death Dance of the Virgins.*

*Dances That Thrill* (1946) Quality; short; burlesque; w/Merlena Joy, Pege Gari and the Harem Girls, Rita Zane, Almita.

*Dancing Dolls of Burlesque* (1946) Quality; short; burlesque; w/Sunny Ray, Terry King, Jill La Rae, Latty Long.

*Dancing Girls Around the World* (1945) Quality; short; burlesque.

*Dancing Girls of All Nations* (1947) Excelsior (aka *Hips and Strips, Torrid Teasers*); short; burlesque; w/Kyra, Tani, Lucille, Maria Anna.

*Dangers of Love* (1931, Germany) Nowick and Roell (orig. title: *Gefahren der Liebe;* aka *A Woman Branded*) feature; sex hygiene; D/Eugene Thiele; English version/W. K. Hedwig and F. A. Huber; w/Toni Van Eyck, Hans Struewe, Albert Basserman, Adalbert v. Schlettow.

*Daring Dolls* (1952) Candl; short; burlesque.

*Daughters of Eve!* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Cheyenne, Mary Blair, Tandalaye, Helen Rene.

*Daughters of Today* (1930s?) Producer unknown; feature; sex hygiene(?). *Notes:* Promoted as the "story of a high school girl led into a life of shame," this adults-only feature may have been a retitled version of another film (such as *The Road to Ruin* or *High School Girl,* to name only two possibilities), but evidently has no relation to the 1924 Sturgeon-Hubbard production of the same name.

*A Day in a Nudist Camp* (ca. 1952) Broadway Roadshow; short; nudism.

*Death Dance of the Virgins* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; burlesque; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*Desperate Women* (1954) Samuel Newman Productions; feature; sex hygiene; P/Samuel Newman and Louis B. Appleton Jr.; D/Appleton; SP/Newman; w/Anne Appleton, Douglas Howard, Paul Hahn, Eve Meyer.

*Devil's Harvest* (1942) Continental; feature; drugs; P/Ralph Cushman; D/Ray Test; w/June Doyle, Leo Anthony, George Graham, Ben Barlow.

*The Devil's Sleep* (1949) Screen Classics (aka *Hopped Up*); feature; drugs; P/George Weiss; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Lita Grey Chaplin, William Thomason, Timothy Farrell, and George Eiferman, "Mr. America of 1948."

*Dilly Dally* (1950s) Producer unknown, distributed by Astor; short; burlesque (?).

*Ding Dong* (1951) Road Show Attractions; feature; burlesque; P/Harry A. Farros; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Ilona the Bavarian Orchid, Lorraine, Jeanie, Delores.

*Dream Follies* (1954) Producer unknown; feature; burlesque; D/Phil Tucker; Wr/Lenny Bruce; w/Deenah Prince, Stacey Farrell, Rusty Amber.

*Dreamland Capers* (1958) Wald/Kent; feature; burlesque; presented by Harry Wald; P/Willis Kent; w/Justa Dream, Valetta, Jacqueline Hurley, Lady Midnight.

*The Drug Monster* (1923) Warning Films; feature; drugs.

*The Drug Traffic* (1923) Irving Cummings; feature; drugs; D/Irving Cummings; w/Bob Walker, Gladys Brockwell, Barbara Tennant.

*Dust to Dust* (ca. 1940) Cox-Underwood; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This roadshow presentation was a version of *High School Girl* with a birth reel attached. Roadshows featured Howard Russell Cox lecturing on "The Evils of Sex Intolerance."

*Ecstasy* (1933, Czechoslovakia) ElektaFilm/U.S. release, Eureka, 1936 (orig. title: *Extase;* aka *My Ecstasy, My Life, Rhapsody of Love*); feature; unclassified; D/Gustav Machaty; Additional story, Samuel Cummins; w/Hedy Kiesler (Hedy Lamarr), Jaromin Rogoz, Leopold Kramer, Albert Mog.

*Elysia* (1933) Bryan Foy (aka *Valley of the Nudes, Garden of the Nudes, Naked and Unashamed Nudists*); feature; nudism; Produced under the supervision of Hobart Glassey, Ph.D., Director of Elysian Fields). *Notes: Naked and Unashamed Nudists* appears to have been a slightly abbreviated cut of the film, released in the 1950s.

*The End of the Road* (1919) War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities/Public Health Films; feature; sex hygiene; D/Edward H. Griffith; SP/Katherine Bement Davis and Griffith; w/Richard Bennett, Mary Lee, Claire Adams.

*Enlighten Thy Daughter* (1933) Robert Mintz; feature; sex hygiene; Supervisor, Louis Weiss; D/John Varley; SP/Arthur Hoerl, from a story by Ivan Abramson; w/Herbert Rawlinson, Beth Barton, Charles Eaton, Claire Whitney. *Notes:* This film was a remake of Ivan Abramson's 1917 film of the same title.

*Escort Girl* (1941) Continental (aka *Scarlet Virgin*); feature; vice; P/J. D. Kendis; D/Eddie Kay; w/Betty Compson, Margaret Marquis, Bob Kellard, Wheeler Oakman.

*The Eternal Question* (1956) The Ormond Group; feature; atrocity.

*Everybody's Girl* (1950) Roadshow Attractions (aka *Hollywood Peep Show*); feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Gay Dawn, Mary Andes, Sylvia, Levalon.

*Exposé of the Nudist Racket* (1938) Hollywood Producers and Distributors; short; nudism.

*The Facts of Life* (1944) Dwain Esper; short; sex hygiene.

*False Shame* (1926, Germany) Ufa (orig. title: *Falsche Scham;* aka *Fools of Passion*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Rudolph Bierbrach.

*Famous Dancers of the Burlesque Stage* (n.d.) Sonney; short; burlesque.

*Fancy Femmes* (1952) Candl; short; burlesque.

*Father Was a Cheat* (1930s?) Producer unknown; short; unclassified. *Notes:* This saucy little pantomime comedy, evidently French, was part of an Astor three-unit show that included *French Bedside Stories* and the burlesque feature *French Follies.*

*Fear of Childbirth* (ca. 1935) Medical Science; length unknown; sex hygiene.

*Feeling All Right* (1948) Southern Educational Film Production Service, Inc.; short; sex hygiene; P/William T. Clifford. *Notes:* This film dealt with syphilis among African Americans living in the rural South. The NAACP protested its wide release, fearing that it would stereotype blacks as carriers of syphilis.

*Field Trip* (ca. 1950) Producer unknown; short; No further information.

*A Fig Leaf for Eve* (1945) Belmont Pictures–Carry Western Productions (aka *Flaming Girls*); feature; unclassified; P/J. Richard Westen; D/Donald Brodie; SP/Elizabeth Hayter; w/Jan Wiley, Phil Warren, Eddie Dunn, Janet Scott. *Notes:* This comedy contained a few suggestive dances and was circulated in hot and cold versions.

*The Figure Gorgeous* (1950s) Producer unknown; short; No further information.

*5-D Girls—Seeing Is Believing* (1953) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque. *Notes:* Burlesque comedy routines.

*Fit to Fight* (1919) War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities/Public Health Films (see also *Fit to Win*); feature; sex hygiene; DWr/Edward H. Griffith; w/Ray McKee, Paul Kelly.

*Fit to Win* (1919) War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities/Public Health Films (see also *Fit to Fight*); feature; sex hygiene DWr/Edward H. Griffith; w/Ray McKee, Paul Kelly. *Notes:* This is essentially the same film as *Fit to Fight* with an added epilogue.

*Flaming Teenage* (1956) A Truman Enterprises; feature; drugs; PD/Ervin S.

Yeaworth and Charles Edwards; SP/Yeaworth and Ethel Barrett; w/Noel Reyburn, Ethel Barrett, Jerry Frank, Shirley Holmes.

*The Flesh Merchant* (1955) Sonney Amusement Enterprises (aka *Sex Club, Wild and Wicked*); feature; vice; PD/W. Merle Connell; SP/Peter Perry Jr. and J. M. Kude; w/Joy Reynolds, Geri Moffatt, Marko Perri, Guy Manford.

*Forbidden Oats* (n.d.) No further information.

*Forbidden Paradise* (1958, Germany) Allgemeine Film Union (orig. title: *Das Verbotene Paradies*); feature; nudism; P/Artur Brauner; D/Max Meier; w/Maly Delschaft, Jan Hendricks.

*Forbidden Women* (1948) Lloyd Friedgen; feature; exotic; D/Eduardo DeCastro; Reedited and additional shooting for the USA by Lloyd Friedgen; w/Fernando Poe, Berting La Bra, Mona Lisa, Fernando Royo.

*French Bedside Stories* (1950s?) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This Astor release, probably a short, was part of a three-unit show that included *Father Was a Cheat* and the burlesque feature *French Follies.*

*French Casino Burlesque* (1930s) Filmarte Productions; short; burlesque. *Notes:* This burlesque short appears to have been shot in the 1930s, making it something of an anomaly, appearing before the wave of burlesque films made after World War II.

*The French Follies* (1951) Broadway Roadshow (aka *Burlesk Jazz, French Follies Burlesque, French Follies Burlesque of 1955, Glamazons of Burlesk*); feature; burlesque; D/Willis Kent w/Val DeVal, Dorothy Burke, Mary Blair, Jennie Lee.

*French-Peek-A-Boo* (1959, France) Producer unknown; feature; burlesque.

*French Peep Show* (1952) PAD Productions; feature; burlesque; P/Pete DeCenzie; D/Russ Meyer; w/Tempest Storm. *Notes:* This burlesque feature was produced by DeCenzie, who owned the El Rey burlesque theater in Oakland, California. DeCenzie and Meyer teamed up again in 1959 for *The Immoral Mr. Teas,* the first nudie-cutie.

*A French Peep Show* (1950) T.N.T. (aka *Brevities of 1955*); feature; burlesque; w/Dewy "Pigmeat" Markham, Vivian Harris. *Notes:* This may have been a retitled version of *Burlesque in Harlem.*

*French Quarter's Party Girls* (1950s?) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film, probably a burlesque short, appeared with *Bourbon Street Strippers* and *Naughty Cuties* as part of a three-unit show in the 1950s.

*G-String Gaieties* (1953) Sonney Amusement Enterprises (aka *G-String Burlesque*); feature; burlesque; w/Yvonne, Sandra, Little John Little, Louis & Burke.

*Gambling with Souls* (1936) Jay Dee Kay (aka *Vice Racket*); feature; vice; P/J. D. Kendis; D/Elmer Clifton; w/Martha Chapin, Wheeler Oakman, Jay Sheridan, Vera Stedman.

*Garden of Eden* (1954) Excelsior; feature; nudism; color; P/Walter Bibo;

D/Max Nosseck; SP/Nat Tanchuck and Nosseck; w/Mickey Knox, Jamie O'Hara, Karen Sue Trent, R. G. Armstrong.

*Gay Girlies* (ca. 1950) Bernie Lust; feature; burlesque; P/Bernie Lust. *Notes:* Lust, son of the head of the Washington, D.C.–based Lust burlesque circuit, assembled this feature made up of twenty-three specialties.

*Gay Nities* (1953) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Charlie Crafts. *Notes:* Several burlesque comedy routines, evidently cut from features.

*The Gift of Life* (1920) American Social Hygiene Association; sex hygiene; feature.

*Girl Behind the Curtain* (1952) Broadway Roadshow; short; burlesque (?).

*Girl Gang* (1950) Screen Classics; feature; drugs/vice; P/George Weiss; D/Robert C. Derteno; w/Joanne Arnold, Timothy Farrell, Harry Keatan, Lou Monson.

*The Girl in the Case* (1934) Du World Pictures/Screenart Productions; feature; unclassified; D/Eugene Frenke; w/Jimmy Savo, Eddie Lambert, Dorothy Darling. *Notes:* This comedy had sufficient risqué elements to be rejected by the New York censors. It may have received an exploitation release.

*Girlesk Show* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions (aka *Girlesk*); short; burlesque; w/Nona Carver, Beverly Reynard, Paula D'Arcy, Tandalaye.

*Girls and the Law* (n.d.) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" (exploitation films) during the 1950s.

*Girls Club* (1936, France) Societe d'Edition et de Location de Films/U.S. release, Arthur Mayer & Joseph Burstyn, 1937 (orig. title: *Club De Femmes*); D/Jacques Deval; w/Danielle Darrieux, Josette Day, Valentine Tessler, Eve Francis.

*Girls for Sale* (ca. 1930) Bud Pollard Productions; feature; vice; Wr/"Bud" Pollard; w/Vivian Gibson, Albert Stienruk, Ernst Deutsch, Suzi Vernon.

*Girls of Loma Loma* (ca. 1930) Producer unknown (aka *Forbidden Daughters*); short; nudity. *Notes:* This short, which features full-frontal female nudity, was used as a square-up reel for years. It is silent and uses intertitles.

*Girls of the Underworld* (1932) No further information.

*Glamour Girls* (1941) Producer unknown; short. *Notes:* This short was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of exploitation films released in the 1950s.

*Glen or Glenda* (1953) Weiss/Screen Classics (aka *Glen or Glenda, Which Is It?, He or She, I Changed My Sex, I Led Two Lives, The Transvestite*); feature; sex hygiene; P/George Weiss; DWr/Edward D. Wood Jr.; w/Bela Lugosi, Lyle Talbot, Timothy Farrell, Daniel Davis (Edward D. Wood Jr.), Dolores Fuller.

*Glorified Burlesque* (1946) Producer unknown; feature; burlesque.

*Goldielocks Goes Glamourous* (1950s) Seaside Studios; short; glamour. *Notes:*

Seaside Studios' short films appear to have been made primarily for the home or nontheatrical market but appeared in theaters from time to time.

*Goona Goona* (1932) André Roosevelt & Armand Denis/First Division (aka *The Kriss*); P/Roosevelt and Denis; w/Wayan, Dasnee, Seronee, Nonga. *Notes:* Bali pictures were sometimes referred to as "goona-goonas," the name of a potion that acts as a hypnotic and a stimulant.

*Gorilla and the Maiden* (1953) Screen Classics; short; burlesque.

*Gow* (1934) Capt. E. A. Salisbury (aka *Cannibal Island*); feature; exotic; P/Salisbury; Narrator, William Peck.

*The Greatest Menace* (1923) Al Rogell; feature; drugs; PDWr/Al Rogell; w/Robert Gordon, Ann Little.

*Guilty Parents* (1933) Jay Dee Kay (*aka Highway to Hell*); feature; vice/sex hygiene; DWr/Jack Townley; w/John St. Polis, Robert Frazer, Jean Lacy, Gertrude Astor.

*Gun Girls* (1956) Eros Productions; feature; vice; P/Edward Frank; D/Robert Dertano; w/Jean Anne Lewis, Timothy Farrell, Jeanne Furguson, Jacqueline Park.

*Gypsy Frolic* (1949) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short; burlesque; w/Deenah and the Belasco Beauties.

*H—The Story of a Teenage Drug Addict* (1951) Young America Films, Inc.; short; drugs; PDWr/Larry Frisch; w/Gene Fredericks, Edward Simms, Norman Desser.

*Half-Way to Hell* (1954) Hallmark; feature; atrocity; D/Robert Snyder; Coordinator, Al Rogell; Wr/Narration, Quentin Reynolds.

*Harem After Midnight* (n.d.) No further information.

*Harlem Follies* (1950) Classic Pictures; feature; burlesque; w/Princess R'Wanda, Monique, Ruth Mason, and "Chicago" Carl Davis. *Notes:* This was a black-cast burlesque feature.

*Harlem Follies* (1955) Futurity Film Corp. *Notes:* It is not known if this was Classic Picture's *Harlem Follies* (1950) or a different feature.

*Harlem Queens* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Alope, Betty Simpson, and Marsha Wayne.

*He* (1932, France) Ormudz Productions (orig. title: *Le Rosiere Du Madam Husson;* aka *The Virtuous Zizi, King of Virtue*); feature; unclassified; D/Bernard Deschamps; w/Fernandel, Françoise Rosay, Marguerite Pierry, Colette Darfeuil. *Notes:* This risqué French comedy played on the exploitation circuit for years. It was initially controlled by First Division, but by the early 1940s it was handled by Samuel Cummins.

*Health and Beauty* (1955) Producer unknown (aka *Shapes and Drapes*); short. No further information.

*Hell-A-Vision* (1936) Sonney; feature. *Notes:* This compilation film incorpo-

rated footage from *Dante's Inferno* (1911, Italy) and some nudity. Surviving stills indicate that Louis Sonney appeared in the film.

*Hell Hole Named Panama* (n.d.) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This film was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of exploitation films in the 1950s.

*Her Hidden Talent* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Thelma Gabor, Cathy Munroe.

*Her Unborn Child* (1929) Windsor Picture Plays (aka *Her Child, Do Men Forget?*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Albert Ray; SP/Frederic and Fanny Hatton; w/Adele Ronson, Elisha Cooke Jr., Pauline Drake, Paul Clare.

*Her Wedding Night* (1954) Willis Kent (aka *Lili's Wedding Night*); feature; burlesque; P/Willis Kent; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Lili St. Cyr, Contessa Vera Richkova, Leon DeVoe, Patti Waggin.

*The Hickman Case* (ca. 1928) Producer unknown; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This hygiene film about the "abnormal phase of life" played in the South and Southwest in the late 1920s and appears to have been based on the 1927 kidnapping, torture, and murder of young Marion Parker by Edward Hickman in Los Angeles.

*High School Girl* (1934) Foy Productions (aka *Lady Beware;* see also *Dust to Dust*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Bryan Foy; D/Crane Wilbur; w/Helen MacKeller, Mahlon Hamilton, Cecilia Parker, Carlyle Moore Jr. *Notes: High School Girl* served as the inspiration for Kroger Babb's *Mom and Dad.*

*Highway Hell* (1938) Preview Pictures (aka *Going My Way, Mister?, Honky Tonk Girl Once a Sinner*); feature; vice; Executive P/William L. O'Hearn; D/Patrick Carlyle; w/Charles Maurice, Don Hirst, Diane Winthrop, Julian Harris.

*Hiroshima* (1955) East-West/Continental (aka *Inside Hell*); feature; atrocity.

*His Darkest Hour* (n.d.) Lebran; feature; No further information.

*The Hitch-Hiker* (1950s) Seaside Studios; short; glamour.

*Hitler's Captive Women* (1950s?) Producer unknown; feature; atrocity. *Notes:* Evidence from the trailer indicates that this film was probably a dubbed import. Another film that would seem to fall into the atrocity category, *Slaves of the Soviet,* was its cofeature.

*Hitler's Reign of Terror* (1934) Jewel (aka *Hitler's Reign*); feature; atrocity; D/Michael Mindlin; SP/Joseph Seiden; Narrator, Edwin C. Hill; w/Hill, Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr., Helen Keller, Samuel Dickstein.

*Hold Everything!* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; P/Harry A. Farros; w/Nikki, Francine, and the DuPonts.

*Hollywood Bound* (n.d.) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of exploitation films released during the 1950s.

*Hollywood Burlesque* (1948) Continental (aka *Famous Hollywood Burlesque*); feature; burlesque; D/Duke Goldstone; w/Lee Tory, Hilary Dawn.

*Hollywood Revels* (ca. 1954) Roadshow Attractions; feature; burlesque; D/Duke Goldstone; w/Mickey Kedwell, Lotus Wing, Hillary Dawn, Peggy Bond. *Notes: Hollywood Revels* concludes by inviting fans to address mail to the Follies Theater in Los Angeles.

*Hollywood Script Girl* (1938) Pacific Cine Films; short; nudity. *Notes:* Because of its copious nudity, this short was reportedly used for years as a square-up reel by exploiteers. The primary outlet for Pacific Cine's product was the home 16mm market.

*Hometown Girl* (1949) Shield Hollywood Production (aka *Secret Scandal, Girl in Trouble*); feature; sex hygiene; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Devvy Davenport, Morgan Jones, Don Mathers, Pat Carroll.

*Honky-Tonk Burlesque* (1953) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; feature; burlesque; D/Frederic A. Brune; w/Yvonee Riviere, June Stevens, Little John Little, Louis & Burke.

*Hooked* (1958) Screen Guild (aka *Curfew Breakers*); feature; drugs; P/Charles E. King; DSP/Alexander J. Wells; w/Paul Kelly, Alex Wells, Cathy Downs, Regis Toomey.

*Horrors of War* (1940) Mapel Attractions; feature; atrocity. *Notes:* Using newsreel material from World War I and clips from narrative films, this Esper feature took an isolationist stance and evidently contained some atrocity footage.

*Hot Spot Strips* (1953) Sonney Amusement–Screen Art; feature; burlesque; w/Yvonne, Sandra, Little John Little, Louis & Burke.

*Hot Striptease* (ca. 1940) No further information.

*The House without Children* (1919) Argus Enterprises, Inc.; feature; sex hygiene; D/Samuel Brodsky; w/Richard Travers, Gretchen Hartman, George Fox, Helen Weer.

*How Girls Get in Pictures* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*How to Take a Bath* (ca. 1938) Producer unknown; short; nudity; w/Trixie Friganza. *Notes:* Two wives, one happily married and one not, take baths and prepare for bed in their apartments. Friganza also appeared in *How to Undress in Front of Your Husband,* indicating that *How to Take a Bath* may have been an Esper effort.

*How to Undress (in Front of Your Husband)* (1937) Hollywood Producers and Distributors; short; unclassified; D/Dwain Esper; SP/Hildegarde Stadie (Esper); w/Elaine Barrie Barrymore, Trixie Friganza, Hal Richardson; Narrator, Albert van Antwerp. *Notes:* This film was a widely seen prototype of the burlesque movie that would become popular after World War II.

*Hula Girls* (n.d.) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of exploitation pictures released in the 1950s.

*Human Wreckage* (1923) Thomas H. Ince Corporation; feature; drugs; D/John Griffith; w/Mrs. Wallace Reid, James Kirkwood, Bessie Love, George Hackathorne.

*Human Wreckage* (1938) Cinema Service Corp. (aka *They Must Be Told, Sex Madness*); feature; sex hygiene; SP/Joseph Seiden and Vincent Valentini; w/Vivian McGill, Rose Tapley, Al Rigali, Stanley Barton.

*Hurly Burly* (1950s) Cinetech; feature; burlesque; P/Harold H. Seiden; D/Harold Goldman; w/Georgia Sothern, Joey Faye, Crystal Ames, Bert Carr.

*I Couldn't Marry* (1955) Futurity Film Corp.; feature; unclassified; P/Arthur Jarwood; DWr/Hugh Prince. *Notes: I Couldn't Marry* was apparently an exploitation film. Futurity had also produced or released *I Married a Savage* and *The Striptease Murder Case* several years earlier.

*I Love to Strip* (1957) Billiken Pictures (aka *Burlesk Heat Wave, What the Boys Want*), feature; burlesque; w/Gina, Debbie Ray, Eddie Ware, Herbie Barris.

*I Married a Savage* (1949) Futurity Films (aka *The Naked and the Savage*); feature; exotic; SP/George Cramby and John E. Gordon; w/Zorita, Ralph Wordley, Dick King, Al Levin. *Notes:* This exotic drama featured Zorita, a burlesque star.

*I Want a Baby!* (1950s?) Producer unknown; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This may be a retitled version of *We Want a Child.*

*I'll Sell My Shirt* (1953) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short; burlesque; 3-D; w/Corky Marshall, Beetlepuss Lewis, Charlie Crafts, Dorothy Burke. *Notes:* Short from routines taken out of *Can-Can Follies.*

*In Your Hat* (1953) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short; burlesque; 3-D; w/Jack Mann. *Notes:* Burlesque comedy routines.

*Ingagi* (1930) Congo Pictures Ltd. (see also *Love Life of a Gorilla*); feature; exotic; Presented by Nathan M. Spitzer; P/William Alexander; D/William Campbell; Narrator, Louis Nizor.

*Innocent* (1932) S. S. Millard; feature; sex hygiene.

*International Burlesque* (1950) Jewel/Richard Kay–Harry Rybnick Productions; feature; burlesque; P/Richard Kay and Harry Rybnick; D/Kay; w/Betty Rowland, Inez Claire, Vince Barnett, George Lewis.

*Is Your Daughter Safe?* (1927) S. S. Millard (aka *The Octopus, The Girl in the Glass Case*); feature; vice/sex hygiene; P/S. S. Millard; D/Lou King and Leon Lee; w/Vivian Winston, Jerome Young, Henry Roquemore, Georgia O'Dell.

*Isle of Levant* (1952) Miracle Films (orig. title: *L'Isle aux Femmes Nues*); feature; nudism; D/Henry Lepage; SP/Jacques de Bénac; w/Armand Bernard, Berval, Félix Oudart, Jeanne Sourza. *Notes: Isle of Levant* wound up on American shores in the late 1950s, distributed by Barclay Productions of New York.

*Isle of Paradise* (1932) Adolph Pollack Productions; feature; exotic; D/Charles P. Trego. *Notes:* This was one of several exploitation exotics about Bali released during the early 1930s.

*It's All in Your Mind* (1937) Bernard B. Ray (aka *Fools of Desire*); feature; unclassified; PDWr/Bernard B. Ray; w/Byron Foulger, Constance Bergen, Betty Roadman, Lynton Brent.

*Japanese Pipe-Dream* (1943) U.S. Documentary Motion Picture Co.; short; drugs.

*Jaws of the Jungle* (1936) Jay Dee Kay (aka *Jungle Virgin,* other versions known as *Beasts of the Jungle, Adventures in the Jungle,* and *Minta, Jungle Bride*); feature; exotic; P/J. D. Kendis; SP/Eddy Graneman; w/Teeto, Minta, and Gukar, and featuring Walla "the ape" and Agena "the honey bear."

*Juke-Box Follies* (1945) Quality; short; burlesque.

*Just the Bare Facts* (1954) Screen Classics (aka *Runway Queens of Burlesk, This is Burlesk!*); short; burlesque; P/George Weiss; w/Valda, Mitzi Doerre.

*Karamoja* (1954) Matt Freed Production–Hallmark; feature; exotic; P/Matt Freed; Narration, T. F. Woods. *Notes:* Filmed by Dr. William B. Treutle.

*Key-Hole Varieties* (1954) Screen Classics (aka *Strip Burlesk*); short; burlesque; P/George Weiss; w/Libby Jones, Valda, Mitzi Doerre.

*Kidnapping Gorillas* (1934) Kinematrade (aka *Life in the Congo;* see also *Love Life of a Gorilla*); feature; exotic; P/Ben Burbridge; Narration, Richard E. Splaine. *Notes:* In 1941 Samuel Cummins's Jewel released a film called *Kidnapping Gorillas.* It is not clear if Cummins's film included scenes from the Kinematrade picture or not.

*Kiss Me Baby* (1957) Billiken; feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Taffy O'Niel, Midnight, Gina, Pat Flannery.

*Ladies of the Evening* (1950) Quality; short; burlesque; w/Ginger Francis, Betty Ware, Maria Cortez.

*Lady Godiva* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque.

*Lash of the Penitentes* (1936) Telepictures; The Stewart Productions, Inc.; Kinotrade (aka *The Lash, The Penitentes Murder Case, The Naked Truth, Written in Blood;* Spanish title: *El Asesinato de los Penitentes*); feature; exotic; D/Harry J. Revier; SP/Zelma Carroll; Photography and story by Roland C. Price, "the Vagabond Cameraman"; w/Joseph Swickard, Marie de Forest, William Marcos, Jose Rubio.

*Latuko* (1952) Jarville Studios/Edgar Queeny; feature; exotic; color; P/Edgar M. Queeny; SP/Charles L. Tedford; Narration, Paul E. Prentiss.

*Legong* (1935) Bennet Pictures Corp./A Henri de la Falaise Production (aka *Dance of the Virgins*); feature; exotic; d/Henri de la Falaise; w/Goesti Poetoe, Goesti Bagus Mara, Njoman Saplak, Njoman Njong Njong.

*The Leopard Men of Africa* (1940) Paul L. Hoefler/Zeidman International; feature; exotic; PD/Dr. Paul Hoefler.

*Liane, Jungle Goddess* (1956, West Germany) ARCA (orig. title: *Liane, das Mädchen aus dem Urwald*); feature; exotic; P/Helmuth Vomer; D/Edward Von Borsody; SP/Ernest Von Salomon; w/Marion Michael, Hardy Krueger, Irene Galter, Peter Mossbacher. *Notes:* This German film, dubbed into English, was given an exploitation run because of the bare breasts of the title character.

*Life* (1938) Maurice Copeland; short; sex hygiene.

*Life (on the Hortobagy)* (1936, Hungary) Jewel (aka *Hortobagy*); feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* Although only marginally a sex hygiene film, the birth of the colt was its major selling point. It also prevented the film from being licensed in some censorship states, notably New York, in the 1940s.

*The Lonely Sex* (1959) Joseph Brenner; feature; vice/sex hygiene; PDWr/Richard Hilliard; w/Leon Benevici, Mary Gonzalez, Karl Light, Jean Evans.

*Love For Sale* (ca. 1953) Sonney; short; burlesque (?); 3-D.

*Love Life of a Gorilla* (1940) Jewel (aka and see also, *Kidnapping Gorillas, Life in the Congo, Life of a Gorilla, Private Life of a Gorilla;* see also *Angkor, Ingagi*); feature; exotic; P/Samuel Cummins and Raymond Lewis. *Notes:* This compilation picture was constructed out of material from *Ingagi* (1930), *Angkor* (1934), perhaps *Kidnapping Gorilla,* and other movies as well. The film seemed to circulate under several titles, perhaps containing different material at different times.

*Love Life of Adolph Hitler* (1948) American Film Producers/Esper (aka *Conform or Die, Hitler's Strange Love Life*); feature; atrocity; Narrators, George Bryan and Philip Stahl.

*Love Me Madly* (1954) Cinema, Inc. (aka *Love My Way, The Wild Sex*); feature; glamour; Eastman Color; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Marilyn Waltz, Georgine Darcy, Lynn Craig, Al Molinaro.

*Love Moods* (1952) Kent-Sonney Roadshow Attractions; short; burlesque; P/Willis Kent; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Lili St. Cyr.

*Love Wanga* (1935) George Terwilliger (aka *Ouanga, Crime of Voodoo*); feature; exotic; PDWr/George Terwilliger; w/Fredi Washington, Philip Brandon, Marie Paxton, Sheldon Leonard. *Notes:* The miscegenation themes, a hot "cooch" dance, and "sex bally" used to promote *Love Wanga* remove it from simply being a voodoo thriller and place it in the realm of exploitation.

*Lullaby of Bareland* (1950s) No further information.

*Lure for Love* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Cheyenne, Mary Blair, Francine.

*Mad Youth* (1939) Real Life Dramas (aka *Girls of the Underworld, Modern Mothers*); feature; vice; P/Willis Kent; D/Melville Shyer; w/Mary Ainslee, Betty Compson, Willy Castello, Betty Atkinson.

*Madame Louise's Establishment* (1932) Producer unknown; feature; vice. *Notes:* According to an article in *Variety* ("Strong on Sex," 27 September

1932, 27), a Los Angeles "Main Street" theater, the California, ran *Madame Louise's Establishment,* purportedly a film about prostitution. No further information is available.

*Maiden and the Monster* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Bartlett and King.

*Malamu* (n.d.) Producer unknown; exotic. *Notes:* This film was apparently a compilation of old exotic footage including half-clad women and wild animals.

*Mambo Burlesk* (1954) Harry Wald (aka *Oo La La Burlesk, StripTease*); feature; burlesque; w/Rita Ravell and Misty Ayers.

*Maniac* (1934) Hollywood Producers and Distributors (aka *Sex Maniac*); feature; unclassified; PD/Dwain Esper; SP/Hildagarde Stadie (Esper); w/Bill Woods, Horace Carpenter, Ted Edwards, Phyllis Diller. *Notes:* The Phyllis Diller who played Mrs. Buckley is not the frazzle-haired comedienne of many face-lifts.

*Man's Paradise* (n.d.) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film, probably a short, featured "hidden, forbidden, unretouched beauties." It played as part of a Film Classics package with *Slash of the Knife God.*

*Man's Way with Women* (1934, Sweden) Esper (orig. title: *Sangen om den Eldröda Blomman*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Per-Axle Bragner; English dialogue, Hildagarde Stadie (Esper) and Hal Ainslie Richardson; Supervisor of English version, Dwain Esper; w/Edvin Adolphson, Inga Tidblad, Birgit Tengroth, Gertrud Wettergren. *Notes:* Esper picked up this Swedish import in 1937. Portions were used in his compilation film *No Greater Sin* (1939).

*Many Ways to Say Sin* (1950s) No further information.

*The March of Crime* (1936) Roadshow Attractions, Inc.; shorts; atrocity; Narration written and spoken by Wedgwood Nowell. *Notes:* There were at least three separate installments in this series following the inaugural short *You Can't Beat the Rap.* It was evidently produced by Esper, possibly with financial backing from Louis Sonney, and may have been issued as a feature.

*Marihuana* (1936) Esper–Roadshow Attractions (aka *Marihuana, The Devil's Weed; Pitfalls of Youth; Sinister Weed;* see also *The Pusher,* 1955); feature; drugs; D/Dwain Esper; SP/Hildagarde Stadie (Esper) and Rex Elgin, from a story by Stadie; w/Hugh McArthur, Harley Wood, Pat Carlyle, Paul Ellis.

*Marihuana* (1936, Mexico) Produciones Duquesa Olga (orig. title: *El Montruo Verde;* aka *Marihuana (the Green Monster)*); feature; drugs; w/Jose Bohr and Lupita Tovar.

*The Marihuana Story* (1950, Argentina) Argentina Sono Film–Kronenberg–Sonney (orig. title: *Marihuana, El Tobaco Negro Del Diablo;* aka *Slaves of the Underworld*); feature; drugs; D/Leon Klimovsky; w/Pedro Lopez Lagar, Fanny Navarro, Alberto de Mendoza, Cecilia Ingenieros. *Notes:* This film included a 3-D segment.

*Mated* (1952) Federated Films, Inc. (aka *Mis-mated*); feature; sex hygiene; Written, supervised, photographed, and edited by Gordon Schindler. *Notes: Mated* was peddled as part of a hygiene program known as *Man and Wife* in the 1960s.

*The Mating Urge* (1959) Howard C. Brown; feature; exotic; color; P/Howard C. Brown and Richard F. Morean; Narrator, Art Gilmore.

*Mau Mau* (1955) Rock-Price; feature; atrocity; color; P/Joe Rock; D/Elwood G. Price; SP/Dave Sheppard; Narrator, Chet Huntley.

*Merry Maids of the Gay Way* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions (aka *Keyhole Burlesque, Merry Maid of the Runway, A Nite at the Follies, School for Strippers*); feature; burlesque; P/Harry A. Farros; D/James R. Connell; w/Zabouda, Cherri Lee, Sherry Winters, Doreen Cannon.

*Mexican Holiday* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*Midnight Follies* (n.d.) Producer unknown; short. *Notes:* This film, probably a burlesque short, was one of Astor's "Glamour Group" of 1950s' exploitation releases.

*Midnight Frolics* (1949) Willis Kent–Sonney Roadshows (aka *Burlesk Follies, French Burlesque, Hot Cha Burlesk, Stags and Strips*); feature; burlesque; P/Willis Kent; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Sunny Knight, Mickey (Ginger) Jones, Aleene, Boo LaVon.

*Million Dollar Legs* (ca. 1950) Producer unknown; short. *Notes:* This short was probably a burlesque film.

*Minta, Jungle Bride* (ca. 1946) Continental; short; exotic; P/J. D. Kendis. *Notes:* This was a shorter version of Kendis's *Jaws of the Jungle* (1936).

*The Miracle of Life* (1926) S. E. V. Taylor; feature; sex hygiene; D/S. E. V. Taylor. SP/Elizabeth Musgrave; w/Percy Marmont, Mae Busch, Nita Naldi.

*Miracle of Life* (1949) Jewel (aka *Miracle of Birth, Mysteries of Birth, Sins of Love*); feature; sex hygiene; Edited and censored by Dr. S. Dana Hubbard and Prof. Hans Friedenthal. *Notes: The Miracle of Life* was a popular title for sex hygiene exploitation films and is the source of much confusion. In the late 1930s, Samuel Cummins acquired the film *Birth,* which dealt primarily with abortion, from Culture Films, Inc. and released it under the title *The Miracle of Life.* Evidence indicates that the film was later retitled *The Miracle of Birth.* The film titled *The Miracle of Life* released in 1949 was, according to *Variety,* a compilation picture made up of European footage. At the time the film was reviewed in *Variety* it was paired with *The Miracle of Birth* (aka *Birth* and *The Miracle of Life*). When *The Miracle of Life* was submitted for license in New York State in March 1951, it was paired with *The Sins of Love,* which was a short version of *Birth* (aka *The Miracle of Life* and *The Miracle of Birth*). Cummins attempted to release the pair as a

single film under the title *The Miracle of Life and Sins of Love. The Mysteries of Birth,* a 1954 Cummins film, was probably a compilation of footage from both *Birth* and *The Miracle of Life,* among other movies.

*Miss Body Beautiful* (1953) A Sam Kubetz Production/Savoy Roadshow Pictures (aka *Body Beautiful*); feature; nudism; PD/Max Nosseck. Executive P/Raymond Friedgen; SP/Nat Tanchuck and Arnold Phillips; w/Susan Morrow, Robert Clarke, Noreen Nash, Paul Guilfoyle.

*Mr. Adam's Bomb* (1949) Sepia Film Productions; short; PWr/Eddie Green; w/Eddie Green and Gene Ware. *Notes:* This all-black-cast short was packaged with other burlesque shorts by Astor Pictures. It may have contained burlesque numbers or other provocative dance routines.

*Model School* (1940) Continental/Cine Classic Productions; short; glamour/nudity; PD/J. Rey Palmer; Narration by Don Forbes; w/Maril Manning and Modern Models of the Village School.

*Modern Motherhood* (1934) Roadshow Attractions Co.; feature; sex hygiene; PD/Dwain Esper.

*Mom and Dad* (1944) Hygienic Productions/Hallmark (aka *Side Road*); feature; sex hygiene; P/J. S. Jossey and Kroger Babb; D/William Beaudine; SP/Mildred Horn; w/Hardie Albright, Lois Austin, George Eldridge, June Carlson. *Notes: Mom and Dad* was an uncredited remake of Foy's *High School Girl.* It was also released in a cold version known as *Side Road,* minus its birth and disease reels.

*The Most Wonderful Moment* (1957, Italy) Illiria Film (orig. title: *Il Momento più Bello;* aka *Woman;* see also *Wasted Lives*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Giorgio G. Agliani; D/Luciano Emmer; SP/Sergio Amidei, Glauco Pellegrini and Ugo Pirro; w/Marcello Mastroianni, Giovanna Ralli, Marisa Merlini. *Notes:* After a release on the art house circuit, *The Most Wonderful Moment* was acquired by K. Gordon Murray. It was released as *Wasted Lives* and reissued under the title *Woman* in 1962 with the birth sequence with *The Carleton Howard Lecture* added. For more information see the entry on *Wasted Lives.*

*Motherhood: Life's Greatest Miracle* (1925) Blue Ray Productions (Jack Mowat) (aka *Motherhood*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Chadwick Graham; SP/Lita Lawrence; w/George E. Patton, Adelaide M. Chase, J. J. Hopkins, Nance Newman.

*Mysteries of Birth* (1954) Jewel (aka *How Life Begins*); feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This sex hygiene feature was constructed from older footage including the birth of a colt from *Life (on the Hortobagy).*

*Mysteries of Sex* (ca. 1935, Austria) released in the United States by Jewel (orig. title: *Mysterien des Geschlechts;* aka *Science of Mankind*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Wilhelm Luschinsky; w/Renee Lansky, Otto Hartmann, Traute

Braun, George Moser. *Notes:* This Austrian film dealt with rejuvenation and sex-change operations and was imported by Samuel Cummins in 1935 under the title *Science of Mankind.*

*Mystery of Motherhood* (1938) Life Dramas Inc. (aka *Mystery of Womanhood*); short; sex hygiene; Technical narration by Dr. M. Greenwald. *Notes:* This birth reel was used with roadshows for many years. Dr. Greenwald appears onscreen to explain the process of normal birth and cesarean operations. See also *The Story of Birth.*

*Nacida Para Pecar* (1949, Mexico) Maya Films (orig. title: *"Opio" La Droga Maldita*); feature; drugs; w/Rosita Quintana, Tito Junco.

*Naked Amazon* (1954) Times Film Corp.–Zygmunt Sulistrowski (aka *The Amazon Speaks*); feature; exotic; color; P/Zygmunt Sulistrowski, Vincent Bejtman, Charlotte P. Rose; D/Sulistrowski; Wr/Herb Meadow, Jan Lechon, E. Egon.

*Naked in the Wind* (ca. 1957) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short. *Notes:* No information on this short is available, but it was most likely a nudist film.

*The Naked Truth* (1924) Public Welfare Pictures Corp. (aka *T.N.T.*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Samuel Cummins; D/Fred Sullivan; w/Jack Mulhall, Helene Chadwick, Anne Schaefer, Edward Cecil. *Notes:* The six-reel core of *The Naked Truth* was a film originally titled *The Solitary Sin,* acquired by Cummins. To this central fictional narrative, Cummins added three one-reel documentary subjects that were known by a number of titles, the most common being *The Naked Truth—Female Reel, The Naked Truth—Male Reel,* and *The Naked Truth—Clinical Reel.*

*Naked Venus* (1958) Gaston Hakim Productions; feature; nudism; P/Gaston Hakim; D/Ove H. Sehested; w/Patricia Connelly, Don Roberts, Ariane Arden, Wynn Gregory.

*Narcotic* (1933) Esper (aka *Narcotics Racket, The Pusher, They*); feature; drugs; PD/Dwain Esper; SP/Hildegarde Stadie (Esper); w/Harry Cording, Patricia Farley.

*Narcotic Dens of the Orient* (1953) Telenews Productions; short; drugs.

*Narcotic Racket* (1950s) Producer unknown; drugs. *Notes:* The trailer for this film was made up of scenes from *Narcotic, Marihuana,* and *The Pace That Kills,* indicating that the film itself may have been a compilation of material from those three movies.

*The Narcotics Story* (1958) Police Science Productions; feature; drugs; Eastman Color; PD/Robert W. Larsen; SP/Roger E. Garris; w/Sharon Strand, Darlene Hendricks, Herbert Crisp, Fred Marratto. *Notes:* This film was made for use as a training film for police but was released on the exploitation market.

*Native Bride* (ca. 1947) Wheeler; feature; exotic.

*Nature Girl* (ca. 1950) Sonney; short. *Notes:* This short was probably a nudist film.

*Nature Girls* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; glamour.

*Naughty But Nice!* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Alope, Zabuda, Lotus Wing.

*Naughty Cuties* (1950s?) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was part of an Astor program that included *Bourbon Street Strippers* and *French Quarter's Party Girls.*

*Naughty New Orleans* (1953) Rebel Productions (aka *Keyhole Peeks of Naughty New Orleans, A Night in New Orleans*); feature; burlesque; Eastman Color; D/Sidney Baldwin; SP/Paul L. Peil; w/Stormy, Sheila Lane, Monmartre Kitty, and Julianne, "The Baby Doll of Bourbon Street." *Notes:* This burlesque film has a thin narrative.

*Naughty New York* (1959) K. Gordon Murray Productions/Amazon Productions, Inc.; feature; burlesque; PD/Jerald Intrator; w/Zorita, Vivian Morgan, Lonnie Young, Marie Bradley, Dixie Lee, Torry Scott.

*New Year's Eve Frolic* (n.d.) Screen Art Sales; short; burlesque.

*A Night at the Follies* (1956) Excelsior; feature; burlesque; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Evelyn West, Rene Andre, Amalia Aguilar, Pat O'Shea. *Notes:* This feature may have been produced by Bernie Lust, son of the head of the Lust burlesque circuit in Washington, D.C. It is not clear if Lust had an interest in Excelsior or if they simply handled the film for him.

*Night at the Zomba Club in Hollywood* (ca. 1951) Sonney (aka *Nite at the Zombie Club*); short; burlesque; w/Marie Bryant, Ilona.

*Night Club Girls* (1946) Quality; short; burlesque; w/Isabel Brown, Samba Reggie, Lolita, Martha Erickson.

*Night in Hollywood* (1952) Broadway Roadshows; feature; burlesque; w/Tempest Storm, Wilma Wescott, Dorothy Ates, Leon DeVoe.

*Night in Hollywood* (1950s) Willis Kent. *Notes:* It is not clear if this film was the same as or was related to Broadway Roadshow's *Night in Hollywood.*

*A Night in the Moulin Rouge* (1950s) Roadshow Attractions; feature; burlesque; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Mimi, Pat Flannery, Little Audrey, Joe Ann.

*Nightmare in Red China* (1953, India) Rajkamal Kalamandir Studios/Lloyd Freidgen; feature; atrocity. *Notes:* Freidgen apparently acquired this Hindi film and added the atrocity footage.

*1957's Best of Burlesque* (1954–56) Weiss/Broadway Screen Art (aka *The Best of Burlesk, Girls Gone Wild*); feature; burlesque; w/Zabouda, Margie Lamont. *Notes:* This was most likely a compilation of burlesque footage from other sources.

*No Greater Sin* (1939) Hollywood Producers; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This

Esper compilation film included footage from *Man's Way with Women,* laboratory scenes from the early 1920s, shots of Al Capone (who suffered from syphilis), and a hodgepodge of animated diagrams and titles.

*No Greater Sin* (1941) University Film Productions, Inc./Edward Golden (aka *The Lonesome Road; Modern Marriage*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Jeffrey Bernerd; D/William Nigh; SP/Michael Jacoby; w/Leon Ames, Luana Walters, Adele Pearce, George Taggart.

*No More Children* (1929) Albert Kelly; feature; sex hygiene; P/Albert Kelly.

*Notch Number One* (1924) Ben Wilson Productions (aka *High on the Range*); feature; drugs; Wr/Daniel F. Whitcomb; w/Ben Wilson, Marjorie Daw, Merrill McCormick, Reed Howes. *Notes:* This western was evidently the first film with an antimarijuana theme; like those that would follow in the 1930s, it showed the drug producing violent behavior in its users.

*Nothing but Women* (1950s?) Lebran Productions; feature; exotic; w/Carmen Rosales, Robert Neil, Rolf Bayer. *Notes:* No information about this feature has been found to date. This film appears to have been given a modest exploitation push when handled by the Astor exchange in Dallas.

*Nude Ditties* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Nona Carver, Francine, Valentina.

*Nude Ranch* (1940) Hollywood Producers; short; nudism.

*The Nudist* (ca. 1957) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short; nudism; w/Joanne Arnold.

*Nudist at Play* (n.d.) Producer unknown (see *Nudist Land* and *Nude Recruits;* see also *Nudist Colony*); short; nudism. *Notes:* This short was made up of footage of beach scenes and the Oregon camp Hesperia from *Nudist Land.* It is similar to *Nudist Recruits,* another short made up of material from the same source.

*Nudist Colony* (ca. 1957) Sonney Amusement Enterprises (aka *Nudes at Play*); short; nudism. No other information is available on this film. It is possible that it was actually *Nudist at Play.*

*Nudist Land* (1937) Horter/Rice (aka *Back to Nature; Nudes, Nudists, and Nudism Around the World; A Trip Through Heaven;* see also *Nudist at Play; Nudist Recruits; Nudists of All Nations; They Wear No Clothes; Why Nudism*); feature; nudism; P/A. Royal Horter and Harry Rice; D/Horter; Narrator, Jerry Mannes. *Notes:* The background of this film is somewhat confusing. It was one of several nudist documentaries released in the United States in the mid-1930s. The *AFI Catalogue* lists the film as *Nudist Land,* and it was given a rather favorable review under that title in the *Hollywood Reporter* (7 July 1937). The film may have been shot in 1935, evidenced by a telegram in the movie dated 1935, and a 1961 application for a New York license listed the year of production as 1935. It is unclear if the original title of the movie was *Nudist Land, Back to Nature, Nudes, Nudists, and Nudism*

*Around the World,* or *A Trip Through Heaven.* The *Hollywood Reporter* review also noted that *Nudist Land* was shot in both English- and Spanish-language versions. The film provided source material for many shorts and compilation films.

*Nudist Life* (1950s?) George Weiss; feature; nudism; D/Maury H. Zovary. *Notes:* This appears to have been a compilation film, mixing footage from the 1950s with older nudist material from the 1930s.

*Nudist Paradise* (1959, British) Nat Miller–Geoffrey Bernard (Frank Bevis) Productions; feature; nudism; D/Charles Saunders; SP/Leslie Bell and Denise Kaye; w/Anita Love, Carl Conway, Katy Cashfield, Dennis Carnell.

*Nudist Recruits* (n.d.) Producer unknown (see *Nudist Land* and *Nudist at Play*); short; nudism. *Notes:* This short film, probably constructed in the 1950s, used footage from *Nudist Land* of men and women cavorting on a beach.

*The Nudists; or Back to the Sun* (1933) Josmin Productions; feature; nudism; Wr/Vincent Valentini. *Notes: The Nudists,* like most of the nudist films from the early 1930s, was a compilation of footage from various countries. The film ended with a visit to a nudist camp.

*Nudists All* (ca. 1957) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; featurette; nudism. *Notes:* No further information on this film has been found to date. It was evidently a featurette, about forty minutes in length, with dialogue and narration.

*Nudists Unadorned* (ca. 1940) M. M. Cronick; short; nudism; P/M. M. Cronick. *Notes:* This short features shots of nude women posed in pastoral settings and sliding down sand dunes on their bellies.

*Nudists of All Nations* (n.d.) Producer unknown; short; nudism/exotic. *Notes:* This short was made up of footage from *Nudist Land* that showed "nudism" in Africa, on the South Sea Islands, and in a Moorish harem.

*Nuditease* (ca. 1955) George Weiss–Sonney Amusement (aka *Peep Show*); feature; burlesque; w/Dimples Morgan, Rita Ravel, Mae Blondel.

*Omigosh!* (1955) Billiken; short; burlesque; w/Debbie Ray and Patti Waggin.

*One Too Many* (1950) Hallmark (aka *The Best Is Yet to Come, Mixed Up Women*); feature; vice; P/Kroger Babb; D/Erle C. Kenton; SP/Malcolm Stuart Boylan; w/Ruth Warrick, Richard Travis, Ginger Prince, Rhys Williams. *Notes:* This Babb follow-up to *Mom and Dad* about alcoholism was generally considered a failure, despite his application of the same exploitation techniques used with the hygiene blockbuster.

*One Way Ticket to Hell* (1954) B. Lawrence Price Productions (aka *Teenage Devil Dolls*); feature; drugs; DWr/B. Lawrence Price Jr.; Narrator, Kurt Martell; w/Barbara Marks, Robert A. Sherry, Robert Norman, Elaine Lindenbaum.

*Open Your Eyes* (1919) Warner Bros.; feature; sex hygiene; D/Gilbert P. Hamil-

ton (Sam and Jack Warner, uncredited); w/Faire Binney, Mrs. Joupert, Jack Hopkins, Halbert Brown. *Notes:* This very early Warner Bros. film was manufactured in 1917.

*Oriental Vanities* (1953) Broadway Road Productions (aka *Burlesque in Hawaii, Oriental Varieties*); feature; burlesque; Ansco Color; P/William C. Ferreira; D/Harry Vine; w/Vine, Hermie Rose, Grace Hathaway, Jeanne Starr.

*Outcast Souls* (1928) Joe Rock; feature; vice; D/Louis Chaudet; w/Priscilla Bonner. *Notes:* This was apparently sold as an exploitation number with a vice angle.

*Outrages of the Orient* (ca. 1949, Philippines) Lloyd Friedgen; feature; atrocity; P/Don Jesus Cacho, DW/Carlos Vander Tolosa; Reedited and rewritten by Lloyd Friedgen; w/Linda Estrella, Fernando Royo, Mona Lisa, Teddy Benavides.

*Overnight Girl* (ca. 1948) Hoffberg (orig. title unknown); feature. *Notes:* No further information is available on this film. It is assumed that it was an import, possibly about prostitution.

*The Pace That Kills* (1928) Willis Kent/True Life Photoplays; feature; drugs; D/Norton S. Parker and William A. O'Connor; w/Owen Gorin, Thelma Daniels, Florence Dudley, Virginia Royce. *Notes:* Kent remade this film in 1935 with O'Connor taking the sole credit for direction.

*The Pace That Kills* (1935) Willis Kent (aka *Cocaine Fiends, Cocaine Madness, Girls of the Street, What Price Ignorance?*); feature; drugs; P/Willis Kent; D/William A. O'Connor; w/Lois January, Noel Madison, Sheila Manners, Dean Benton. *Notes:* This remake of the 1928 *The Pace That Kills* was roughly the same, but included some additional material and other plot complications. The film remained in release for years under a number of titles.

*Painless Childbirth under Hypnosis* (1958) Producer unknown (aka *Painless Childbirth*); short; sex hygiene.

*Paris After Midnight* (1950) Screen Classics; feature; burlesque; P/George Weiss; D/Robert C. Derteno; w/Tempest Storm, Flo Ash, Timothy Farrell.

*Parisian Nights* (ca. 1955) Sonney; short. *Notes:* This was likely a burlesque short.

*Paroled from the Big House* (1938) Jay Dee Kay (aka *Main Street Girl*); feature; vice; P/J. D. Kendis; D/Elmer Clifton; SP/George Plympton; w/Jean Carmen, Richard Adams, Gwen Lee, Milbourne Stone.

*Peek-A-Boo* (1953) Billiken (aka *Peek-A-Boo Burlesque, Take It Off*); feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Venus, Patti, the DuPonts, Sherry Winters.

*Persian Slave Market* (1953) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; 3-D.

*Pitfalls of Passion* (1927) S. S. Millard; feature; sex hygiene; P/S. S. Millard.

D/Leonard Livingstone; w/Prudence Sutton, Larry O'Dell. *Notes:* The unexpurgated version of the film was reputedly very raw and was accompanied by a trailer titled "Mysteries of Sex." Ted Tetzlaff, Millard's cameraman on *Pitfalls of Passion,* went on to a career as one of Hollywood's top cinematographers.

*Pitfalls of Youth* (ca. 1934) Producer unknown. *Notes:* No information has come to light on this film. It is assumed to have been an exploitation feature and may have been produced, or at least distributed, by Al Dezel, a Chicago states' righter. *Pitfalls of Youth* was also an alternative title for *Marihuana* (1936).

*A Planned Parenthood Story* (1950) Planned Parenthood Federation; short; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This sex hygiene short was released to theaters.

*Play Girl Models* (ca. 1957) National Film-Arts Society; short; glamour/nudity; D/Manuel S. Conde; Narrated by Gordon Howard; w/Delores Carlos, Bunny Deere, Colleen Rae, Beth Collins.

*Playthings of Hollywood* (1931) Hollywood Pictures (aka *Sisters of Hollywood*); feature; unclassified; P/Willis Kent; D/William O'Connor; SP/Ida May Park; w/Phyllis Barrington, Rita LaRoy, Sheila Mannors, Edmund Breese. *Notes:* This story of three sisters in Hollywood may have had some suggestive elements to qualify it as an exploitation picture.

*Please Don't Touch Me* (1959) Ron Ormond; feature; sex hygiene/exotic; color; PD/Vittorio Di Naro; SP/Ron Ormond and Ormond McGill; w/Al La Rue, Ruth Blair, Viki Caron, Ormond McGill. *Notes:* This film features documentary scenes that fall into the exotic category. There are also gory shots of surgery and drawings of conditions said to have been alleviated while patients were under hypnosis. *Please Don't Touch Me* is one of the few pre-1960 films to deal with the subject of frigidity.

*Polygamy* (1936) Unusual Pictures Corp. (aka *Illegal Wives, Child Marriage, Child Marriage in Polygamy*); feature; exotic/vice; D/Patrick Carlyle; w/Charles Maurice, Ann Marien, Bruce Wyndham, Frank Pharr Simms. *Notes:* This film was based on contemporary news items. After some struggle, it was eventually passed by the PCA. *Polygamy* was bought from Unusual Pictures by J. D. Kendis for release as *Illegal Wives* under his Continental banner around 1938.

*Port of Missing Girls* (1928) Brenda Pictures (aka *Girls in Danger*); feature; vice; P/Walter E. Greene; D/Irving Cummings; SP/Howard Estabrook; w/Barbara Bedford, Malcom McGregor, Natalie Kingston, Hedda Hopper. *Notes: Port of Missing Girls* can be considered a marginal exploitation film. *Variety*'s review (1 August 1928) described it as "not far away from a sex educational toned down." It was handled by Columbia in some areas and on a states' rights basis in others. The film was unusually opulent for an exploitation item, featuring lush sets, excellent production values, and

interesting optical tricks. It may have been one of the last states' rights productions of such high caliber.

*Prehistoric Women* (1950) Alliance Productions; feature; unclassified; P/Albert J. Cohen; D/Greg Tallas; SP/Sam X. Abarbanel and Tallas; w/Allan Nixon, Laurette Luez, Mara Lynn. *Notes:* This was another postwar adults-only feature that concentrated on women in scanty costumes.

*Primitive Passion* (1950s?) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was handled by the Astor Pictures exchange in Texas as part of their exploitation lineup, sold with the tag line, "In Her Innocence She Drove Men Wild!" It may have been a retitle.

*Primrose Path* (1930) Willis Kent Productions; feature; vice; D/William O'Connor; w/Helen Foster, Lane Chandler, DeWitt Jennings, Mary Carr. *Notes:* This story about an innocent high school girl who falls for a football hero contained a prostitution angle. Foster also appeared in the lead in both versions of *The Road to Ruin.*

*Prince of Peace* (1949) Hallmark (aka *The Lawton Story*); feature; unclassified; color; P/Kroger Babb, J. S. Jossey, Neil E. Bugan; D/William Beaudine, Harold Daniels; w/Ginger Prince, Forrest Taylor, Millard Coody, Ferris Taylor. *Notes:* This Babb release of a filmed passion play with a framing story was given an exploitation-style campaign. Although not classical exploitation in the strictest sense, it is listed here because of the Babb association.

*Prison Girls* (1950s) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This was another film that was included in Astor Pictures' exploitation catalogue. It was probably a retitled version of another film.

*The Professor Misbehaves* (1953) Allen F. Stewart and Lawrence Raimond Productions (aka *Striptease College, Striptease College Girls, The Art of Burlesque, The Gay Exotics*); feature; burlesque; DWr/Lawrence Raimond; Narrator, Carl Princi; w/Charlie Crafts, Cheyenne, Mona Raye, Mary Blair. *Notes:* This burlesque film was a fake documentary about Professor Stringheimer's Strip Tease College.

*Prologue to Forbidden Desire* (1944) Sonney Roadshows; short; sex hygiene; w/Pedro De Cordoba. *Notes:* This short featured De Cordoba, the star of *Forbidden Desire* (an alternative title to *Damaged Goods,* 1937) sitting at a desk making pronouncements about health and morality that he reads from a script. Scenes from *The Wages of Sin, High School Girl,* and other exploitation films are used to illustrate points.

*The Pusher* (1955) Social Service Pictures; short; drugs. *Notes:* This short was made up of titles from old trailers, scenes from *Marijuana,* and new scenes of a man sitting behind a desk addressing the audience about the dangers of marijuana.

*Ra-Mu* (1934) Capt. E. A. Salisbury; feature; exotic; Narration, William Peck. *Notes:* Salisbury was also responsible for *Gow.* Like that film, *Ra-Mu* prob-

ably featured some native nudity and other "primitive" spectacle, although this has not been confirmed.

*Race Suicide* (1937) Real Life Drama/Willis Kent (aka *Victims of Passion, What Price Passion*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Willis Kent; DSP/Roy Luby; w/Willy Castello, Lona Andre, Erma Deen, Carlton Young.

*Racket Girls* (1951) Screen Classics (aka *Blonde Pickup, Pin-Down Girl, Take Down Girl, Wrestling Racket Girls*); feature; vice; P/George Weiss; D/Robert C. Derteno; w/Peaches Page, Clara Mortensen, Rita Martinez, Timothy Farrell.

*The Rage of Burlesque* (1950) Jack Schlaifer Organization; feature; burlesque; D/Albert Vox; w/Lillian White, Gung Hai, Loretta Montez, Linda Lombard.

*Rama* (1930, France) Compagnie Universelle Cinématographique (orig. title: *Cain, Aventures Des Mers Exotiques;* aka *Cain, Rama, the Cannibal Girl, Savage Bride*); feature; exotic; DWr/León Poirier; w/Thomy Bourdelle and Rama-Tahé.

*Rasputin and the Princess* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Bartlett and King.

*Ravaged* (1950s?) Producer unknown. *Notes:* Trailers indicate this Nazi atrocity picture was a combination of documentary and recreated footage that advertised "See! The rape of an innocent girl!"

*Ready for a Take-Off* (1954) Screen Classics (aka *Pips and Strips*); short; burlesque; P/George Weiss; w/Brandy Jones and Genii Young.

*Reckless Decision* (ca. 1933) High Art Pictures (aka *Protect Your Daughters, Suspicious Mothers*); feature; sex hygiene; P/John Noble; w/Doris Eaton, Marion Quigley, Adele Riggs, Donald Thompson. *Notes:* This was a marginally suggestive sex educational that incorporated a large segment of an earlier, unidentified, feature.

*Red Headed Baby* (ca. 1933) Producer unknown; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* A compilation film shown "for men only" in Los Angeles in 1933. The movie featured footage of nudist camps, strip poker games, artist's models, and childbirth.

*The Red Kimono* (1925) Mrs. Wallace Reid Productions; feature; vice; P/Mrs. Wallace Reid (Dorothy Davenport); D/Walter Lang; SP/Dorothy Arzner; w/Priscilla Bonner, Theordore von Eltz, Virginia Pearson, Reid.

*Red Lights of Tokyo* (1940s?) Producer unknown (orig. title unknown). *Notes:* This film was evidently about prostitution in Japan and may have been used as anti-Japanese propaganda during World War II.

*Reefer Madness* (1936) G&H (aka *The Burning Question, Tell Your Children, Dope Addict, Doped Youth, Love Madness*); feature; drugs; P/George A. Hirliman; D/Louis Gasnier; Wr/Arthur Hoerl and Paul Franklin; w/Dorothy Short, Kenneth Craig, Lillian Miles, Dave O'Brien.

*The Road to Ruin* (1928) Cliff Broughton Photoplays; feature; sex hygiene/

vice; Presented by Willis Kent; D/Norton S. Parker; w/Helen Foster, Virginia Roye, Grant Withers, Tom Carr. *Notes: The Road to Ruin* was remade in 1933 as a sound motion picture with only minor changes.

*The Road to Ruin* (1933) Willis Kent Enterprises (aka *Call Me Co-ed*); feature; sex hygiene/vice; D/Mrs. Wallace Reid and Melville Shyer; w/Helen Foster, Nell O'Day, Glen Boles, Paul Page. *Notes: The Road to Ruin* was a virtual frame-for-frame remake of the 1928 film of the same title with the addition of sound. Foster reprised the lead.

*Rock 'N Roll Burlesk* (ca. 1955) Billiken–Willis Kent; feature; burlesque; w/Patti Waggin, Dixie Evans, Leon Devoe, Jean Carter.

*Rock 'N Roll Follies* (1950s) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This may have been a retitled version of *Rock 'N Roll Burlesk.*

*Roman Holiday* (1937) Pacific Cine Productions; short; nudity.

*Runway Queens of Burlesque* (1947) Quality (aka *Burlesque a la Mode*); short; burlesque; w/Raquel Torres and Varvette Armain.

*Samurai* (1944) Cavalcade; feature; unclassified; P/Ben Mindenberg; D/Raymond Cannon; w/Paul Fung, Luke Chan, David Chow, Barbara Wooddell. *Notes:* This drama about a Japanese boy who betrays the United States was given an exploitation ad campaign.

*Satan and the Virgin* (ca. 1940) No further information.

*Saucy Sirens* (1952) Candl; short; burlesque.

*Savage Love* (*of the Jungle*) (1930s?) Producer unknown; feature; exotic. *Notes:* This was evidently a jungle picture with exploitation elements. It may have been a retitled version of another film, possibly *Leopard Men of Africa.* No further information is available.

*The Scarlet Trail* (1919) G&L Features; feature; sex hygiene; D/John S. Lawrence. w/Beth Ivins, Vincent Coleman, Margaret Blanc, John Costello.

*The Scarlet Week* (1956, Finland) Fennada-Filmi Oy, Helsinki (orig. title unknown); U.S. release, George Friedland and Dan Sonney; feature; unclassified; D/Matti Kassila; American adaptation, Robert Wade Chatterton and Raymond Rohauer; w/Mat Oravis, Gwen Sandkist, Tod Makel. *Notes:* This film from Finland was one of two Finnish movies released by Friedland and Sonney. Evidently it was given a push in art houses, which often alternated between exploitation and art movies.

*Scarlet Youth* (1928) Circle Pictures; feature; sex hygiene; D/William Hughes Curran; w/Corliss Palmer, David Findlay, Alphonse Martell, Connie La Mont.

*Scintillating Sirens* (1947) Quality; short; burlesque; w/Billie Mayshell, Princess Rouhia Bey, Be Be Fox, Fina & Roman.

*Secrets of a Co-ed* (1930s?) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This adults-only film has been identified through advertisements. Tag lines included "Youth gone wild in a torrid tale of campus woo!" It may have been a retitle.

*Secrets of a Model* (1939) Continental (aka *Model School*); feature; glamour; P/J. D. Kendis; D/Sam Newfield; SP/Sherman Lowe and Arthur St. Claire; w/Sharon Lee, Harold Daniels, Julien Madison, Phyllis Barry.

*Secrets of the Beauty Queens* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Pat Hall.

*Senorita Maracas from Caracas* (1949) Sonney; short; burlesque. *Notes:* This short was likely made up of material excised from *Midnight Frolics* (1949).

*Sensational Specialties from the Night Clubs* (1946) Quality; short. *Notes:* This was most likely a burlesque short.

*Sepia Sirens* (1946) Excelsior; short; burlesque; w/Carita, Artie Young, Frances Grey, Doris Ake. *Notes:* This black-cast short features provocative dances.

*The Seventh Commandment* (1932) Hollywood Producers and Distributors (aka *Sins of Love*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Dwain Esper; D/James P. Hogan; w/Stuart James, Victoria Vinton.

*Sex Madness* (1928) Imperial Productions/Circle (aka *Trial Marriage, About Trial Marriage*); feature; sex hygiene/vice; D/William Curran; w/Jack Richardson, Corliss Palmer, Paul Power, Ruth Robinson. *Notes:* This Imperial Production was made in 1928 and released briefly under the titles *Trial Marriage* and *About Trial Marriage.* Sam Cummins picked it up in 1929 and released it under the title *Sex Madness.*

*Sex View of Life* (1929) Public Welfare Pictures. *Notes:* This film is listed as a Public Welfare Pictures release in the 1930 edition of *The Film Daily Yearbook.* No further information on the film has been located.

*Sexcapades* (1955) Beautiful Productions (aka *Sexcapades Burlesk*); feature; burlesque; P/Irving Klaw; w/Betty Page, Tempest Storm, Lili St. Cyr, Cass Franklin. *Notes:* This burlesque feature was likely a combination of footage from other Klaw features.

*Sexploiteers* (1946) Esquire; short. *Notes:* The exact nature of this film has not been determined, although it may have been a burlesque short.

*Sexy Lady* (1950–55) Klaytan W. Kirby (aka *Made for Love*); feature; glamour/burlesque; w/Zabouda, Mr. America, Mitzi Doerre, Valda. *Notes:* This short feature was evidently a compilation of earlier Kirby shorts. It may have been prepared by New York distributor William Mishkin.

*Shame* (ca. 1938) No further information.

*Shapely Sirens* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Marsha Wayne, Zabuda, Diane Lund.

*Shapes and Drapes* (1950s) Sonney Amusement Enterprises; short; glamour.

*She-Devil Island* (1936, Mexico) Cinematografica (orig. title: *Maria Elena*); released in the United States by Grand National; feature; exotic; D/Raphael Sevilla; w/Carmen Guerrero, J. J. Martinez Casado, Adolfo Giron, Beatriz Ramon.

*She Shoulda Said "No"!* (1949) Richard Kay (aka *The Devil's Weed; Wild*

*Weed*); feature; drugs; P/Richard Kay; D/Sherman Scott (Sam Newfield); SP/Richard H. Landau; Narration, Knox Manning; w/Lila Leeds, Alan Baxter, Lyle Talbot, Michael Whelen.

*She Went Wild Out West* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*Shim-Sham Follies* (ca. 1950) Bernie Lust; feature; burlesque; P/Bernie Lust; w/Yvonne, Renee, Cleo, Frances.

*Shocking* (ca. 1953) F. A. Brune; short; burlesque; D/F. A. Brune; w/Vera Lee.

*Shock-O-Rama* (1955) PAD and Elah (Pete De Cenzie and Walter Hale); feature; burlesque; D/Ruben Ibenthinkin; w/Tempest Storm, Candy Renee, Roberta, Miss Lana, Taffy St. Clair.

*Side Walk Cafe* (ca. 1949) Roadshow Attractions; short. *Notes:* The nature of this film is unknown, but it probably was a burlesque or glamour short.

*Since Adam and Eve* (1950s?) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was distributed in the New York area by William Mishkin evidently in the 1950s.

*Sinful* (ca. 1937) Producer unknown; short; venereal disease.

*Singapore Girls* (n.d.) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of exploitation films released during the 1950s.

*The Sinister Menace* (ca. 1930) Roadshow Attractions Company; short; drugs.

*Sinner-ama Cuties* (1954) Screen Classics; short. *Notes:* This was probably a burlesque short.

*Sins of Love* (1934) Reichlin; feature; vice. *Notes:* This film, evidently of Mexican origin, was purportedly about prostitution.

*Sins of Passion* (1937) Maurice Copeland; short; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This short film presented information on venereal diseases.

*Sins of the Fathers* (1947) Canadian Motion Picture Production, Ltd.; feature; sex hygiene; P/Larry Cromien; D/Phil Rosen and Richard J. Jarvis; SP/Gordon Burwash; w/Austin Willis, Joy LeFleur, John Pratt, Phyllis Carter. *Notes:* This Canadian feature was inspired by the success of *Mom and Dad.* Although it played in the United States, it did not achieve the popularity of *Mom and Dad* and its American imitators.

*Slash of the Knife God* (1950s) Producer unknown; feature; exotic/atrocity. *Notes:* David F. Friedman has recalled that this film was handled by St. Louis distributor Andy Deitz and included scenes of ritual circumcision. Film Classics of Los Angeles also distributed it. Ad lines included "The Civilized World is shocked by its unmentionable . . . barbaric . . . bloody . . . violent . . . Rituals!"

*Slaves in Bondage* (1937) Jay Dee Kay (aka *Crusade Against the Rackets*); feature; vice; P/J. D. Kendis; D/Elmer Clifton; SP/Robert A. Dillon; w/Lona Andre, Donald Reed, Wheeler Oakman, Florence Dudley.

*Slaves of the Soviet* (1950s) Producer unknown; feature; atrocity. *Notes:* This

film, billed with *Hitler's Captive Women,* was apparently a postwar atrocity movie.

*Slick Chicks* (1952) Candl; short; burlesque.

*Smashing the Vice Trust* (1937) Willis Kent; feature; vice; P/Willis Kent (uncredited); D/John Melville; w/Willy Castello, Vyola Vonn, Augusta Anderson, John Belmont.

*The Solitary Sin* (1919) The Solitary Sin Corp.; feature; sex hygiene; D/Fred Sullivan; w/Jack Mulhall, Helene Chadwick, Anne Schaefer, Edward Cecil. *Notes: The Solitary Sin* was acquired by Samuel Cummins of Public Welfare Pictures and released as *The Naked Truth* in the mid-1920s with the addition of several clinical reels. See also *The Naked Truth.*

*The Song of Life* (1931, Germany) Film Kunst A.G. (orig. title: *Das Lied vom Leben*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Alexis Granowsky; SP/Victor Trivas, H. Lechner, and Walter Mehring; w/Albert Mog, Margot Ferra. *Notes: The Song of Life* featured shots of a fetus in the mother's womb and an extended scene of cesarean section, although it may not have been overly graphic. The film was acquired by Dwain Esper, evidently in the late 1940s or early 1950s, for reissue.

*Soul and Body* (1921) Peacock Productions; feature; vice; D/Frank Beal; w/Ann Luther, William Garland, Frank Brownlee. *Notes:* According to the AFI *Catalog,* this firm concerned white slavery.

*Souls for Sale* (1935) Globe Film Corp. (aka *Frail Women*); feature; vice. *Notes:* This story about illegitimacy in British society was given a full-scale exploitation treatment. It was rejected for a seal by the MPPDA and by New York censors. Ohio censors required a raft of cuts.

*Souls in Pawn* (1940) Real Life Dramas; feature; burlesque/sex hygiene; P/Willis Kent (uncredited); D/John Melville; w/Ginger Britton, Beatrice Curtis, Richard Beach, Kenneth Duncan. *Notes: Souls in Pawn* claimed to be based on current news stories. It is one of the first features to exploit a burlesque setting, combining it with a modified vice plot, in this case the baby-selling operation. Britton (a real burlesque star) and other dancers are shown at their trade.

*Spectacle Underwater* (1940s) Klaytan W. Kirby; short; unclassified; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Kirby. *Notes:* This short features Kirby, billed as a "famous underwater danseur," doing a sensual underwater dance in the pool of Los Angeles' Town House with two women in bathing suits. The segment was used in the feature *Vegas Nights.*

*Spoilers of the South Seas* (n.d.) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This film was one of Astor's exploitation films distributed during the 1950s. It was paired with *Hell Hole Named Panama.*

*Stars of Burlesque* (1952) Screen Art Sales; short; burlesque; w/Terry Temple, Jerry Gilbert, Sally Stuart.

*Stars of the Burlesque* (1947) Quality (aka *Stars of the Follies Theatre*); short; burlesque; w/Dorothy Miller, Rene Andree, Billie Ware, Evelyn West.

*The Story of Birth* (ca. 1940) Nathan Cy Braunstein; short; sex hygiene; Narrated by Dr. M. Greenwald. *Notes:* This film was a birth reel. It was owned and distributed by Braunstein in the late 1950s and may have been made by him around 1940. It is not clear whether it is the same film as *Mystery of Motherhood.*

*The Story of Bob and Sally* (1948) Social Guidance Enterprises (aka *Bob and Sally, The House Next Door, Tell Our Parents*); feature; sex hygiene; P/J. G. Sanford; D/Erle Kenton; SP/Mary C. Palmer; w/Ralph Hodges, Gloria Marlen, Rick Vallin, Mildred Coles. *Notes: The Story of Bob and Sally* was reportedly produced by Universal to emulate *Mom and Dad*'s financial success. When it became clear that the film would not get an MPAA seal, it was sold to Gidney Talley, a Texas exhibitor, for release through his Social Guidance Enterprises.

*Strange People* (1940s?) Producer unknown; feature; exotic. *Notes:* Ads for this film, which played on a triple bill with *Bo-Ru* and *Rama,* indicate that it dealt with "unashamed nudists, savages, cannibals . . . women."

*Strange Tale* (1954) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*Street Acquaintance* (1948, Germany) DEFA (orig. title: *Strassenbekanntschaft*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Robert Leistenschneider; D/Peter Pewas; SP/Artur Pohl; w/Gisela Trowe, Alice Treff, Ursula Voss, Sigmar Schnieder. *Notes: Street Acquaintance* was a German film of neorealist influence and was distributed in the United States to capitalize on the postwar wave of sex hygiene films.

*Street Corner* (1948) Wilshire Pictures Corporation; feature; sex hygiene; A James M. Doane presentation; P/George McCall; D/Albert Kelley; SP/Jack Jungmeyer; w/Joseph Crehan, Marcia Mae Jones, John Treul, Jan Sutton.

*The Street of Forgotten Women* (1927) Kayanay Productions; feature; vice. *Notes: Street of Forgotten Women* has a cloudy production and exhibition history. It may have played under other titles and was quite typical of other hygiene and vice films of the period.

*Strip Acts* (1952) Mack–Sonney Enterprises; feature; burlesque; w/Tempest Storm, Leon De Voe, Charmetee, Helen Rene.

*Strip Around the World* (1951) Screen Art Sales; short; burlesque.

*Strip for Action* (1951) Screen Art Sales; short; burlesque.

*Strip Parade Follies* (1953) Willis Kent (aka *Burlesque Tidbits, Strip Tease Sex Pot*); feature; burlesque.

*Strip Show* (1956) Amazon Productions, Inc.; feature; burlesque; w/Zorita.

*Strip, Strip, Ahoy!* (1956) Screen Art Sales; short; burlesque; w/Lolota, Fayette LeMar.

*Strip Strip Hooray* (1950) Producer unknown; feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Tempest Storm, Leon DeVoe, Eddie Ware, George (Beetlepuss) Lewis.

*Strip Strip Hooray!* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Robin Jewell, Paula D'Arcy, Beverly Reynard, Marsha Wayne.

*Strip Tease Girl* (1952) Mack-Sonney (aka *Striptease Girl*); feature; burlesque; w/Tempest Storm, Amber Dawn, Helen Rene, Pat Flannery.

*Strip-Tease of 1952* (1952) Producer unknown; feature; burlesque.

*Strip to Please* (1954) Rebel Productions, Inc.; feature; burlesque.

*Striporama* (1953) Venus Productions; feature; burlesque; color; P/Martin J. Lewis; D/Jerald Intrator; w/Georgia Sothern, Rosita Royce, Betty Page, Lili St. Cyr. *Notes: Striporama* was a burlesque feature that included St. Cyr's specialty number "Cinderella's Love Lesson," which was also distributed as a separate short subject.

*Stripper's Parade* (1950s?) Irving Klaw; feature; burlesque; w/Tempest Storm, Lili St. Cyr, Betty Page, Sally Lane. *Notes:* This film was evidently a recut version of some of Klaw's earlier Beautiful Productions.

*Striptease Goes Hollywood* (1937) Pacific Cine Films. *Notes:* This film was made for the 16mm home market but used as a theatrical square-up reel, like Pacific Cine Film's *Hollywood Script Girl* (1938).

*Striptease Murder Case* (1950) Futurity; feature; burlesque; P/Arthur Jarwood and Chauncey Olman; DWr/Hugh Prince; Narrator, Jack Gleason; w/Dennis Harrison, Janie Ford, Al Sanford, Monroe Seton.

*Striptease Revealed* (ca. 1958) Klaw-Sonney; short; burlesque; w/Lili St. Cyr, Blaze Starr, Tempest Storm. *Notes:* This burlesque short appears to have been constructed of older footage of the three popular performers.

*Surprise Peeks at Hollywood* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*Swiss Fan Dance* (1953) Sonney; short; burlesque; 3-D; w/Corky Marshall, Syra. *Notes:* This short was extracted from the feature *Can-Can Follies.*

*Take 'Em Off!* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Paula D'Arcy, Diane Lund, Valentina, Robin Jewell.

*Take Your Clothes Off and Live* (n.d.) No further information.

*Tease Cake Burlesk* (1954) Harry Wald & Sonney Enterprises; feature; burlesque; w/Lili St. Cyr, Rita Ravel, Misty Ayres, Mitzi Doerre.

*Teaserama* (1955) Beautiful Productions; feature; burlesque; color; PD/Irving Klaw; w/Tempest Storm, Betty Page, Trudy Wayne, Vicki Lynn.

*Teenage* (1943) Jay Dee Kay; feature; unclassified; P/J. D. Kendis; D/Dick L'Estrange; w/Herbert Heyes, Wheeler Oakman, Johnny Duncan, Fred Towns.

*Teenage Jungle* (n.d.) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This was probably a retitled version of an existing film.

*Teen-Age Menace* (1951) Broadway Angels, Inc.; short; drugs; P/Bill Free; w/Mark Rydell, Martin Newman, Jill Kraft.

*Tell Me Why!* (1922) Producer unknown. *Notes: Tell Me Why!* was evidently a sex hygiene exploitation film; however, it is possible that the motion picture was a retitled version of an earlier film. The attraction played for several weeks in Chicago and was billed as "A Vision of Life Before Birth" and included a lecture by Dr. Lee Alexander Stone.

*Ten Days in a Nudist Camp* (1930s) Samuel Cummins (aka *Forbidden Since Adam and Eve*); feature; nudism; P/Cummins; Narrated by Edward Galliner. *Notes:* This feature was compiled of material from *This Nude World* and other nudist films.

*Ten Days in a Nudist Camp* (1950s) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This short was almost certainly produced by George Weiss. It uses footage from *The Devil's Sleep* and incorporates newly shot material from a dusty nudist camp. It was probably also known as *Modern Venus.* The title *Ten Days in a Nudist Camp* was also used for a Weiss nudist feature made in the early 1960s.

*Test of a Gypsy Maiden* (1940s) Klaytan W. Kirby; short; burlesque; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby. *Notes:* This short was used in the compilation feature *Vegas Nights.*

*Test Tube Babies* (1948) Screen Classics (aka *Sins of Love*); feature; sex hygiene; P/George Weiss; DWr/Merle Connell; w/Dorothy, William Thomason, Timothy Farrell, John Michael. *Notes:* Footage from *Test Tube Babies* ended up in *The Pill,* a late Weiss production from 1967.

*These Girls are Fools* (1940s) Jas. F. Smith; short; glamour; w/Sheila Anderson.

*They Wear No Clothes!* (1956) Social Service Pictures; short; nudity.

*The Third Sex* (1958, Germany) ARCA (orig. title: *Das Dritte Geschlecht;* aka *Bewildered Youth*); feature; sex hygiene; Chief of production, Helmut Volmer; D/Frank Winterstein; SP/Dr. Felix Lutzkendorf; w/Paula Wessely, Paul Dahlke, Hans Nielson, Ingrid Stenn.

*This Nude World* (1932, German) Michael Mindlin (aka *Back to Nature, This Naked Age, This Naked World*); feature; nudism; PD/Michael Mindlin; The Voice: Leo Donnelly.

*Three Forbidden Stories* (ca. 1952, Italy) Electra (orig. title: *Tre Storie Proibite*); feature; vice; P/Renato Bassoli; D/Augusto Geninia; SP/Vitaliano Brancati, Ercole Patti, Ivo Parilli, Augusto Genine; w/Lia Amando, Antonella Lualdi, Eleonore Rossi Drago, Gabriele Ferzetti. *Notes:* The sex and drug angles in this Italian film were apparently enough to rate an exploitation run in the United States.

*The Thrill That Kills* (1940s?, Italy) Distinguished Films (aka *Cocaine*); feature; drugs. *Notes:* The existence of this film has long been based on old posters, and it has generally been assumed to have been a retitle of *The Pace That*

*Kills* (1935). James M. Skinner identifies the film as an Italian import that was condemned by the Legion of Decency.

*Tictaban* (1950s, Philippines?) Unicorn Pictures Corp.; feature; exotic; D/Eduardo de Castro; w/Minda Moro, Danao Tanggo, Ali Galangi, Apo Bayinay. *Notes:* This was evidently an exotic about topless women who are kidnapped by neighboring islanders.

*Tid Bits of Beauty* (1953) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque.

*Tijuana After Midnight* (1954) Harry Wald; feature; burlesque; P/Harry Wald; D/Phil Tucker; w/Misty Ayers, Mitzi Doerré, Deena Prince, Rhea Walker.

*Times Square Follies* (1950s?) Producer unknown; feature; burlesque.

*Tomb It May Concern* (1950) Quality; short; burlesque; PD/W. Merle Connell; w/Inez Claire, Little Jack Little, Don Mathers, Sally Starr.

*Tombolo Girls* (1947, Italy) Grandi Films (orig. title: *Tombolo, Paradiso Nero;* aka *Tombolo*); feature; vice; P/Mario Borghi; D/Giorgio Ferroni; SP/Indro Montanelli, Glauco Pellegrini, Rodolfo Sonego, Giorgio Ferroni; w/Aldo Fabrizi, Adriana Renetti, Nada Fiorelli, John Kitzmiller. *Notes:* Evidently the prostitution angle in *Tombolo Girls* was played up for the exploitation market in the United States.

*Tomorrow's Children* (1934) Bryan Foy Productions (aka *Sterilization*); feature; sex hygiene; P/Bryan Foy; D/Crane Wilbur; SP/Crane Wilbur and Wallace Thurman; w/Don Douglas, John Preston, W. Messenger Bellis, Diane Sinclair, Carlyle Moore Jr.

*Too Hot to Handle* (1950) Billiken (aka *Fig Leaf Frolics, Hits and Misses of Burlesk*); feature; burlesque; D/Lillian Hunt; w/Patti Waggin, Dixie Evans, Novita, Melodee Lane. *Notes:* This feature may have had material added to it when it was released as *Fig Leaf Frolics* and/or *Hits and Misses of Burlesk.*

*Tops in Burlesque* (1948) Quality (aka *Bad Girls of Burlesk, New Stars of Burlesk*); short; burlesque; w/Dixie Barton, Beverly Dawn, Chloe, Lorraine Lee. *Notes:* This short was padded with additional footage from Continental burley films and called *New Stars of Burlesque* when released by William Mishkin in New York in 1958.

*Traveling Light* (1959, Great Britain) E. C. Walker/Victoria Films; feature; nudism; PD/Michael Keatering.

*Tricks of the Trade* (n.d.) Producer unknown; short. No further information.

*Truth About Sex* (1928) Abraham T. Danziger; short; sex hygiene.

*Ubangi* (1931) Davenport Quigley Productions/William Pizor; feature; exotic; D/Dr. Louis Neuman and Jacques Maus. See also *Curse of the Ubangi.*

*Ulama, White Sirens of Africa* (ca. 1950) Action Film (aka *Bowanga-Bowanga, Unashamed Women, Wild Women*); feature; exotic; P/Morris M. Landres; D/Norman Dawn; w/Lewis Wilson, Dana Wilson, Mort Thompson, Don Orlando. *Notes:* Stock jungle footage and new material are combined for this tale of a lost tribe of "white sirens." At least some of the material was

from *Gow* (1934). *Ulama* qualifies as an exploitation film because of the revealing costumes and dances of the Ulama as well as the bare-breasted dances of the "Africans."

*The Unashamed* (1938) Cine-Grand Productions (aka *The Unashamed: a Romance in the Nude*); feature; nudism; D/Allen Stuart; SP/William Lively; w/Rae Kidd, Robert Stanley, Lucille Shearer, Emily Todd.

*Unborn Souls* (1939) Del Frazier (aka *Sinful Souls*); feature; sex hygiene; DWr/Del Frazier; w/Jack Ingram, Ann Ross, Olin Francis, Carl Mathews.

*Uncivilized* (1937) Expeditionary Film/Box Office Attractions; feature; exotic; DWr/Charles Chauvel; w/Dennis Hoey, Margot Rhys, Marcelle Marnay, Ashton Jarry. *Notes:* This film featured the heroine in a nude swimming scene, a plot line involving drug smuggling, and various gruesome scenes.

*Unclad Cuties* (1954) Screen Classics (aka *Beauties and Cuties, Gin and Tonic Burlesk;* see also *Bare Facts*); short; burlesque; P/George Weiss; w/Valda, Mae Blondel.

*Uncle Si and the Sirens* (1920s) Cine Art Productions; short; nudity. *Note:* This silent short about a yokel who picks up transmissions of naked women on his primitive television set was probably made in the late 1920s and used as a square-up reel.

*Uncover Girl* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Lotus Wing, Valentina, Margie La Mont, Nikki.

*Uncover Girls* (1954) Billiken; feature; burlesque; w/Gilda, Blaza Glory, Leon DeVoe, Ed Ware.

*Undress Parade* (1952) Broadway Roadshow Productions; short; burlesque; w/Cheyenne, Paula D'Arcy, Helen Rene, Margie La Mont.

*Unguarded Girls* (1929) Circle Films, Inc.; feature; vice; D/William Curran; w/Paddy O'Flynn, Jack Hopkins, Tom Gerely, Alphonse Martell. *Notes:* Little detail about this Samuel Cummins film is known except for the fact that the story involved white slavery and may have contained some sex hygiene elements.

*Unmarried Mothers* (1952, Sweden) Producer unknown (orig. title: *Ogift Fader Sökes*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Bengt Logardt and Hans Dahlin; w/Eva Stiberg, Bengt Loghardt, Ollegard Wellton, Lissi Alandh. *Notes:* This film was released in the United States by President Films, Inc. in 1955.

*Untamed Mistress* (1957) The Ormond Group; feature; exotic; color; PDWr/Ron Ormond; w/Allan Nixon and Jacqueline Fontaine.

*Untamed Women* (1952) Jewell Enterprises; feature; exotic; P/Richard Kay; D/Merle Connell; SP/George W. Sayre; w/Mikel Conrad, Doris Merrick, Richard Monahan, Mark Lowell. *Notes:* This film, usually played for adults only, was notable for the skimpy costumes worn by the "Druid women."

*Unwelcome Children* (1929) M.G.R. Productions; feature; sex hygiene.

*The Use of Marijuana Weed* (ca. 1938) Producer unknown. *Notes:* This film was

probably a condensed version of *Assassin of Youth, Marihuana,* or *Reefer Madness.*

*The Vanishing Gangster* (1936) The Texas Roadshow Company; feature; atrocity. *Notes:* This compilation film evidently included footage of dead gangsters as well as footage of their handiwork.

*Vanities* (1946) Alexander Productions; short; unclassified; PD/William Alexander; short; w/Charles Keith, Joesfred Portee, Audrey Armstrong. *Notes:* A black-cast short featuring "Little Audrey" Armstrong doing suggestive dance in a brief costume.

*Varietease* (1954) Beautiful Productions (aka *Musical Varietease, Parisian Frolics*); feature; burlesque; color; PD/Irving Klaw; w/Lili St. Cyr, Cass Franklin, Monica Lane, Betty Page.

*Variety Girls* (1950s?) Quality; short. *Notes:* Most likely a burlesque short.

*Vegas Nights* (ca. 1953) Continental (aka *Las Vegas Burlesk, Las Vegas Strip*); feature; burlesque; PD/J. D. Kay (Kendis); Narration, Ed Colmans; w/Elvira Pagan, Hazel, Enchanting Dawn, Honey Hays. *Notes:* This film was made up of new footage and material drawn from several Klaytan W. Kirby shorts.

*Vice Dolls* (1954, French) Vascos-Film (orig. title: *Les Clandestines*); feature; vice/drugs; D/Raoul Andre; w/Nicole Courcel, Phillippe Lemaire, Dominique Wilms, Maria Mauban, Alex D'Arcy.

*Violated!* (1953) Panther Productions (aka *Sex Maniac*); feature; sex hygiene/burlesque; P/Wim Holland; D/Walter Strate; SP/William Paul Mishkin; w/Wim Holland, Lili Dawn, Mitchell Kowal, Vicki Carlson.

*The Violent Years* (1956) Del-Headliner; feature. *Notes:* This film about female juvenile delinquents, written by Ed Wood, was given a marginal exploitation push.

*Virgin in Hollywood* (1952) Sonney-Kirby (aka *Hollywood Confidential, Side Streets of Hollywood*); feature; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Dorothy Abbott, Thad Swift, Phil Rhodes, Donna Hunt. *Notes:* The film included a segment in 3-D.

*The Virgin of Sarawak* (1934) Ace Productions (aka *Forbidden Adventure, Inyaah the Jungle Goddess, Jungle Virgin, Strange Adventures*); feature; exotic; D/J. C. "Doc" Cook. *Notes:* This tale of a "white goddess" who rescues two explorers from the "savage" tribe she leads is often confused with *Angkor,* as both films were released under the title *Forbidden Adventure.*

*Virgins of Bali* (1932) Imperial Pictures (aka *Jungle Virgins*); feature; exotic; P/Deane H. Dickason; Narrator, Dickason; w/Ni Wayan Tagel, Ni Wayan Ugembon, T. Kaler, I. Maria. *Notes:* Some sources list Dickason as the director of *Virgins of Bali* as well as producer and narrator.

*The Wages of Sin* (1938) Real Life Dramas; feature; vice; P/Willis Kent (uncredited); D/Herman E. Webber; w/Constance Worth, Willy Castello, Blanche Mehaffey, Clara Kimbell Young.

*Wajan* (1937) Tomfilms, Inc. (Harry Thomas) (aka *Son of a Witch, Demon's Island, Sins of Bali*); feature; exotic; D/Walter Spies; w/Nodonk, Wajan, Sari, Lombos. *Notes: Wajan* was built around footage of the Dalsheim–Victor Baron Von Plessan expedition. It contained more plot than most other "goona goonas," but still featured the primary draw of the Bali films, topless Balinese women.

*Wasted Lives* (1943) Louis Machat; short; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This birth reel was shot in Chicago in 1943 and probably accompanied various hygiene features. It contained an analysis of the Russian experience of legalized abortion.

*Wasted Lives* (1959) K. Gordon Murray Productions (orig. titles *Children of Love,* and *The Most Wonderful Moment;* see also *The Carleton Howard Lecture*). *Notes:* K. Gordon Murray used both the French film *Children of Love* and the Italian movie *The Most Wonderful Moment* as the core of a presentation called *Wasted Lives.* The feature was augmented with a color sequence showing the cesarean birth of twins and a normal birth.

*We Want a Child* (1949, Denmark) Constantin Films (orig. title *Vi Vil ha' et Barn*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Alice O'Fredericks and Lau Lauritzen; SP/Leck Fischer; w/Ib Schonberg, Ruth Breinholm, Jorgen Efenberg, Grethe Thordahl. *Notes: We Want a Child* was released in the United States in 1954.

*What Happened to Tom in the Ladies' Gym* (1950s) Producer unknown; short; glamour.

*What Happens in a Paris Dive* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*What Price Decency?* (1933) Equitable Pictures; feature; unclassified. DWr/Arthur Gregor; w/Dorothy Burgess, Alan Hale, Walter Byron, V. Durant. *Notes: What Price Decency?* was given an exploitation pitch with advertising imagery of a woman in a slit skirt beating a man with a whip.

*What Price Innocence?* (1933) Columbia (aka *Shall We Tell Our Children?*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Willard Mack; w/Mack, Minna Gombell, Jean Parker, Betty Grable.

*What the Blonde Taught the Native* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; burlesque/glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*What the Frenchman Saw* (ca. 1955) Triumph; short; glamour.

*When Girls Need a Man* (1950s) Cinema Enterprises; short; glamour; PD/Klaytan W. Kirby.

*When Men Are Beasts* (1940s) Producer unknown; feature; vice. *Notes:* Ad art for this film promised "Women enslaved . . . victims of lust!" and "See the terrifying fate of women forced to entertain!" This may have been a piece of anti-Japanese propaganda produced during, or immediately after, World War II.

*Where's Annabelle?* (1949) Quality; short; glamour; PD/W. Merle Connell; SP/Lester Capen; w/George (Beetlepuss) Lewis, Hilda Brand, Jerri Page, Sheila Lind. *Notes:* This short comedy about a wife trying to get the goods on her husband featured popular burley comedian Lewis.

*Whim Wham Girls* (1952) Candl; short; burlesque.

*The White Demon* (1932, German) Ufa (orig. title *Der Weisse Daemon;* aka *Dope, Rauschgift*); American release: Protex Trading Corporation, 1934; feature; drugs; P/Bruno Duday; D/Kurt Gerron; SP/Philipp Lothar Mayring and Friedrich Zeckendorf; w/Hans Albers, Lucie Hoeflich, Gerda Maurus, Peter Lorre. *Notes:* This expensive Ufa production was brought to the United States in 1934.

*The White Slave* (1929) Wolfe Productions; feature; vice; w/Charles Vanel and Lucile Barns. *Notes:* No further information exists on this film, although it is assumed to have been about white slavery.

*White Slave Traffic* (1928) Liberty Film Co.; No further information.

*White Slavery* (1958) Barry Mahon; feature; vice. *Notes:* This film was made on location in Tangiers and dealt with white slavery and smuggling. It was produced for about $25,000 and supposedly grossed about $5 million.

*Why Girls Go Wrong* (1929) Roadshow Pictures; feature; No further information.

*Why Nudism?* (ca. 1933) United Roadshow Attractions; short; nudism. *Notes:* This film evidently comprised an Educational comedy short called *Mr. Adam,* with material from *Nudist Land* intercut.

*Why Men Leave Home* (1951) Hallmark (aka *Secrets of Beauty*); feature; unclassified; P/Kroger Babb, D/Erle C. Kenton; w/Julie Bishop, Richard Denning, Ginger Prince, Ern Westmore. *Notes:* This was another Babb film on a nonexploitation topic (Hollywood makeup man helps save a marriage) that was given an exploitation release.

*Wild Oats* (1919) Social Hygiene Films of America (aka *Some Wild Oats, Know Thy Husband*); feature; sex hygiene; Supervisor, Samuel Cummins; D/C. J. Williams; SP/Jay Holly; w/William Jefferson, Leslie Hunt, H. Laffey, Emily Marceau.

*Wild Oats* (1950s) S. S. Millard; feature; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This was probably the last of Millard's hygiene features, cobbled together during the 1950s. See David F. Friedman's *A Youth in Babylon* (230–34) for his recollections of the film.

*Wild Rapture* (1950) Trinity; feature; exotic; D/Jacques Du Pont.

*Wild Women in Wild New Guinea* (1950s?) Producer unknown; short. *Notes:* This film was most likely an exotic short.

*Wild Women of Borneo* (1932, British) Television Productions, Ltd. First Division; feature; exotic. *Notes: Variety*'s review (26 August 1932) makes *Wild Women of Borneo* sound a good deal like *Ingagi,* finally concluding with the promised seminude wild women in the film's last five minutes.

*Wild Women of Wongo* (1958) Wolcott; feature; unclassified; P/George R. Black; D/James Wolcott; SP/Cedric Rutherford; w/Ed Fury and Adrienne Bourbeau. *Notes:* This is another postwar entry that was often given an adults-only release because of the skimpy costuming of the women.

*Wild Youth* (n.d.) Producer unknown; feature. *Notes:* This was part of Astor's "Glamour Group" of exploitation films released during the 1950s.

*Wolf Bait* (1953) PAD Productions; short; burlesque; P/P. A. De Cenzie; Narrator, Walter Hale; w/Lana Wong and Tempest Storm. *Notes:* Although not a burlesque film in the strictest sense, *Wolf Bait* does feature two burlesque dancers displaying the attributes that made them stars.

*Wreckage of Sin* (n.d.) Producer unknown; short; sex hygiene. *Notes:* This short was evidently a disease reel.

*The Wrong Road* (1933, Greece) Iris Film (orig. title *O Kakos Dromos*); feature; sex hygiene; w/Kyveli and Marian Kotopouli. *Notes:* This hygiene film was the first Greek talking picture released in the United States. New York censors cut around nine hundred feet, or about ten minutes, from the film.

*You Can't Beat the Rap* (ca. 1936) Sonney; short; unclassified; P/Louis Sonney; w/Sonney and Roy Gardner. *Notes:* This short was the first of a series that evolved into "The March of Crime." The film featured Roy Gardner, whom "Officer" Sonney had arrested in Centralia, Washington, in 1921 when Gardner was the most wanted man in America. They discuss how crime does not pay.

*Young Sinners* (1959, Norway) Carl-Mar Mason (orig. title *Ung Flukt*); D/Edith Carlmar. No further information.

*Your Pin Up Girl* (1946) Klaytan W. Kirby (aka *Pin Up Girl*); short; burlesque PD/Klaytan W. Kirby; w/Hazel.

*Youth Aflame* (1945) Jay Dee Kay (aka *Hoodlum Girls*); feature; unclassified; P/J. D. Kendis; DWr/Elmer Clifton; w/Joy Reese, Warren Burr, Kay Morley, Michael Owen.

*Youth Astray* (1927, Germany) Matador Films (orig. title *Was Kinder den Eltern verschweigen*); U.S. release, Artlee Pictures, Corp., 1928; feature; sex hygiene; P/Peter Ostermayr; D/Franz Osten; w/Nina Vanna, Mary Johnson, Andre Mattoni.

## **PART 2** *Films made prior to 1919 but in release in 1919 or later*

*Are You Fit to Marry?* (1916) Wharton Brothers (aka *The Black Stork*); feature; sex hygiene; D/Leopold and Theodore Wharton; w/Jane Farley, Allan Murnane, Dr. Harry J. Haiselden, Hamilton Revelle. *Notes:* This film was originally released as *The Black Stork*, but the title was soon changed to *Are You Fit to Marry?*, under which it had a long life on the exploitation circuit.

The wide release of a revised version in 1927 was singled out as being part of a "sex picture wave." In June 1927 the film was coupled with "a daring revue" when it played in Denver, Colorado.

*Damaged Goods* (1914) American Film Company, Inc.; feature; sex hygiene; D/Thomas Ricketts; SP/Harry Pollard from the play *Les Avariés* (*The Damaged*) by Eugène Brieux; w/Richard Bennet, Adrienne Morrison, Maud Milton, Olive Templeton.

*Natural Law* (1917) France Films, Inc.; feature; sex hygiene; D/Charles H. France; w/Marguerite Courtot, Howard Hall, George Larkin, France.

*The Spreading Evil* (1918) James Keane; feature; sex hygiene; PDWr/James Keane; w/Leo Pierson, Carlyn Wagner, Howard Davies, Joseph Clancy.

**PART 3** *Films made and released primarily in the pre-Code era, usually by Poverty Row companies, which were given exploitation or adults-only release in the 1950s.*

*Aloha* (1931) Tiffany.

*Freaks* (1932) MGM; distributed by Dwain Esper as *Forbidden Love, The Monster Show,* and *Nature's Mistakes* in the 1940s.

*Hong Kong Nights* (1935) First Division.

*I Have Lived* (1933) Chesterfield.

*Island Captives* (1937) Principle Prod.

*Jungle Siren* (1942) PRC.

*Notorious but Nice* (1933) Chesterfield.

*One Third of a Nation* (1939) Paramount; distributed by Dwain Esper as *House of Shame.*

*Outcast Girls* (1934) Chesterfield (orig. title *City Park*).

*Paradise Isle* (1937) Monogram.

*Parisian Romance* (1932) Allied Pictures Corp.

*Probation* (1932) Chesterfield.

*Secrets of the Female Sex* (1932) Chesterfield (orig. title *Midnight Lady*).

*The Sin of Nora Moran* (1933) Majestic.

*Sin Street* (1930) United Artists (orig. title *The Bad One*).

*She-Devil Island* (1936) Grand National.

*Thrill of Youth* (1932) George R. Batchellor/Chesterfield.

*Wife of General Ling* (1937) British Gaumont.

# Appendix 3

*Video Sources*

The following companies distribute selected films listed in the filmography or mentioned in the book.

**Something Weird Video**
P.O. Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133
Phone: (206) 361-3759 FAX: (206) 364-7526

Something Weird carries what is by far the largest selection of pre-1960 exploitation videos available. Many titles come from the Sonney Collection at the UCLA Film and Television Archive, and new movies are constantly being added to the SWV catalogue. Something Weird also distributes an extensive collection of post-1960 exploitation and sexploitation features.

**Sinister Cinema**
P.O. Box 4369, Medford, OR 97501
Phone: (541) 773-6860 FAX: (541) 779-8650

Sinister Cinema is primarily a distributor of horror and science-fiction films. They do, however, carry a large number of exotic films and several key exploitation titles.

**Video Dimensions**
208 West 30th Street, New York, NY 10001
(212) 216-9628

Video Dimensions distributes *Mom and Dad.*

**Video Vault**
323 S. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 549-8848

Video Vault offers a rent-by-mail service for exploitation and cult video.

**One Way Ticket Distributing**
P.O. Box 923
Lodi, CA 95241-0923
Phone: (209) 365-6337 Fax: (209) 365-1663

Brian Price, son of filmmaker B. Lawrence Price, distributes his late father's film *One Way Ticket to Hell* (1954), one of the key drug movies of the 1950s.

# Notes

**Introduction** "As Long as It Was in Bad Taste!"

1. Martin's comments on *Smashing the Vice Trust* originally appeared in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal.* They were quoted in "Sex in Memphis," *Motion Picture Herald,* 7 August 1937, n.p.
2. Patrick Anderson, *High in America* (New York: Viking, 1981), 101.
3. In activating the terms "Hollywood" and "mainstream industry" I am referring not only to the eight major production companies, but also to the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), MPPDA members, and fringe companies that abided by Hays Office dictates. Also included in this formation are the trade press and other institutions that operated in support of the mainstream industry.
4. For an analysis of this position and a consideration of the fan community that supports it, see Jeffrey Sconce, " 'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36, no. 4 (winter 1995): 371–93. The "bad film" cult became highly visible with the publication of two books, *The Fifty Worst Films of All Time* (1978) and *The Golden Turkey Awards* (1981), but its roots can be traced back as far as 1962. In that year, thirteen-year-old monster movie fan and director-to-be Joe Dante's article listing "the fifty worst horror movies ever made" was published in *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine. See Joe Dante Jr., "Dante's Inferno," *Famous Monsters of Filmland* 18 (July 1962): 14–23.
5. David Chute, "Wages of Sin: An Interview with David F. Friedman," *Film Comment* (July–August 1986): 35.
6. The origin of the term Main Street theaters remains something of a mystery, perhaps a reference to the low-end theaters on Los Angeles'

Main Street. It is always clear from the context that such houses were not top-notch establishments. The implication was that Main Street theaters were in skid row areas where one might expect to find cheap transient hotels, saloons, pool halls, arcades, and possibly burlesque theaters.

7. George E. Turner and Michael H. Price, *Forgotten Horrors: Early Talkie Chillers from Poverty Row,* rev., 2d ed. (Guerneville, CA: Eclipse Books, 1986), 78.
8. Review of *She Devil Island, Film Daily,* 29 August 1936, n.p.
9. Review of *Wajan, Motion Picture Daily,* 21 April 1938, n.p.
10. Review of *It's All in Your Mind, Boxoffice,* 2 April 1938, 71; Review of *Unashamed, Boxoffice,* 14 May 1938, 25.
11. Jack Alicoate, ed., *The 1938 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures* (New York: The Film Daily, 1938), 1138. The Modern Film Corporation referred to here should not be confused with Modern Film of the 1950s, which distributed *Mom and Dad* and several of the other major postwar sex hygiene films.
12. Review of *Unashamed, Boxoffice,* 14 May 1938, 25.
13. See Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 3–10. See also Jane Gaines, "From Elephants to Lux Soap: The Programming and 'Flow' of Early Motion Picture Exploitation," *The Velvet Light Trap* 25 (spring 1990): 29–43.
14. See Doherty's discussion in *Teenagers and Teenpics* of the use of the term in the postwar years, especially as it came to be applied to the teenpics made by AIP, Howco, and similar companies.
15. The mainstream industry made some effort to co-opt the term exploitation film as its own. An ad in the 28 May 1938 *Motion Picture Herald* for MGM's *Yellow Jack,* which starred Robert Montgomery, trumpeted the release as "the greatest exploitation picture of the year." The term never caught on for Hollywood's A product.
16. I am operating from a definition of pornography as the explicit portrayal of sexual acts on film, primarily designed to arouse or satisfy sexual feelings.
17. Chute, "Wages of Sin," 35.
18. Joseph W. Slade, "Violence in the Hard-Core Pornographic Film: A Historical Survey," *Journal of Communication* 34, no. 3 (summer 1984): 149.
19. Al Di Lauro and Gerald Rabkin, *Dirty Movies: An Illustrated History of the Stag Film 1915–1970* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 43–44.
20. Ibid., 41.
21. Little work exists prior to 1985, with the exception of chapters in Don Miller's book *B Movies,* a short chapter on "kinky flicks" in Andrew Dowdy's *The Films of the Fifties,* and a section in Kenneth Turan and

Stephen Zito's 1974 book, *Sinema: American Pornographic Films and the People Who Make Them.* Two important works emerged around 1986, about the time I began my research into this subject. *RE/Search #10: Incredibly Strange Films* contained a number of interviews and several essays on the exploitation phenomenon in addition to other types of fringe movies. For many, this issue of *RE/Search* marked an introduction to classical exploitation beyond midnight showings of a few titles, and it remains a significant landmark in the area of exploitation research. A two-part interview with David F. Friedman appeared in *Film Comment* at about the same time, followed by Friedman's memoir, *A Youth in Babylon: Confessions of a Trash-Film King* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990). His freewheeling autobiography recounts his participation in the roadshowing of *Mom and Dad* and his encounters with some of classical exploitation's key figures in their later years. It contains a wealth of information and series of picaresque stories from the perspective of someone who lived the life of an exploiteer. *A Youth in Babylon* should be read in conjunction with this book. Friedman's memoir and my research provided much of the information in the first half of Eddie Muller and Daniel Faris's *Grindhouse: The Forbidden World of Adults Only Cinema.* This "pictorial history" of exploitation and sexploitation contains some conspicuous errors, although its value and primary purpose is to be found in the reproduction of posters and advertising matter. The less said about some other books the better. Very informative research has often appeared in fanzines, although it has not been systematic and sources are rarely cited. Finally, a few articles have appeared in academic journals, although they tend to situate exploitation films strictly within the context of medical education pictures.

22. George Lipsitz, " 'This Ain't No Sideshow': Historians and Media Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5 (1988): 148.
23. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 5.
24. Ibid., 53.
25. Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), xx.
26. The literature on "bad films" in the fanzines tends to glamorize and laud exploitation movies for their challenge to Hollywood's hegemony during the studio years, although the most conspicuous valorization of marginal film is still Amos Vogel's *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1974). For an example of an unproblematized critique of exploitation, see Felicia Feaster, "The Woman on the Table: Moral and Medical Discourse in the Exploitation Cinema," *Film History* 6, no. 3 (1994): 340–54. Linking exploitation with the "clinical voyeurism attributable to the

conventions of both the Classical Hollywood Cinema and science," Feaster argues that exploitation films engaged in "the traditional, reactionary defilement of women's bodies" (340–41). This position emerges from a theoretical orthodoxy that fails to account for the complex historical context in which the films were originally produced and received.

## **Chapter 1** "An Attempt to 'Commercialize Vice' " *Origins of the Exploitation Film*

1. Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1983), 9.
2. Ibid., 21–24.
3. Ibid., 3.
4. For more information on the white slave scare, see Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), and Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). Because of their subject matter and the fact that they were among the first features films to be made in the United States, white slave films have exerted a particular fascination for film scholars. See, for instance, Robert C. Allen, "*Traffic in Souls,*" *Sight and Sound* 44, no. 1 (1975): 50–52; Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 70–93; Shelly Stamp Lindsey, "Wages and Sin: *Traffic in Souls* and the White Slavery Scare," *Persistence of Vision* 9 (1991): 90–102, and "Is Any Girl Safe? Female Spectators at the White Slave Films," *Screen* 37, no. 1 (spring 1996): 1–15; Kay Sloan, *The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 78–85; Janet Staiger, *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 116–46. Staiger's book includes an overview of attempts to regulate sexuality in motion pictures prior to 1916.
5. The productive capacity of censorship has been touched on by a number of scholars, with Annette Kuhn's *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, 1909–1925* (New York: Routledge, 1988) and Lea Jacobs's *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) being two of the best examples. The sex hygiene films were the obvious target of the 1919 crackdown, but other types of films were swept out of Hollywood's stable of potential topics: birth control movies, white slave films, and those motion pictures that advocated sex education. Narcotics films, which had been prominent in the mid-teens, also disappeared as a mainstream topic by 1919 (see chapter 6).

6. The reader will note strong similarities between progressive-era discourse on VD and contemporary discourses on AIDS, most notably in the location of the origins of the disease in groups that lack economic and political clout—groups that can be pegged as Other.
7. Alan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880,* rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 10.
8. Ibid., 12.
9. President Theodore Roosevelt had popularized the term "race suicide" in 1905, condemning birth control and the trend toward smaller families as a symbol of a decadent moral disease. For a full treatment of the subject, see Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Penguin, 1974). These subjects are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.
10. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 16.
11. Ibid., 22–23.
12. J. Bayard Clark, *The Control of Sex Infections* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 17.
13. Ibid., 18.
14. Edgar Sydenstricker, "Economic Pressure as a Factor in Venereal Disease," in *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, at the Forty-Sixth Annual Session Held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, June 1–8 1919* (Chicago: N.p., 1920), 210.
15. Thomas M. Shapiro, *Population Control Politics: Women, Sterilization, and Reproductive Choice* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 38.
16. For the connection between sex hygiene films and eugenics movies, with a heavily detailed account of one film, *The Black Stork* (1916, aka *Are You Fit to Marry?*), see Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures Since 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
17. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 24.
18. Quoted in ibid., 23.
19. Clark, *The Control of Sex Infections,* 3.
20. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 24.
21. Richard Louis Levin, *Tragedy: Plays, Theory, and Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), 1.
22. "Eugenics Play Indorsed," *New York Times,* 27 February 1913, 8.
23. This technique was borrowed later in the year when Universal linked the white slave film *Traffic in Souls* with the so-called Rockefeller Report on that issue. In his autobiography, *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), publicist Edward L. Bernays recounts how the play came to be produced. After

reading of stage star Richard Bennett's interest in producing the work, Bernays, as one of the editors of the *Medical Review of Reviews,* wrote a letter of support to Bennett. The two met and agreed that the *Review*'s Committee of the Sociological Fund would back the play and form a group of high-status individuals to thwart Comstock. Bernays bitterly recalls how, following the play's success, Bennett told him, "I don't need you or your damned sociological fund anymore. I'll start my own fund. I own all the rights to *Damaged Goods.* Ta, ta" (61). Bennett started the Sociological Fund of America and began commercial production of the play (49–62). In later years, exploitation producers would often create their own official-sounding organizations to "sponsor" or "support" their movies. They owe a debt of gratitude to Richard Bennett. My thanks to Matthew Bernstein for bringing the Bernays material to my attention.

24. Ibid.; "Brieux Play Acted," *New York Times,* 15 March 1913, 13.
25. "Use Stage as a Pulpit to Preach Strong Medical Sermon," *New York Times,* 6 April 1913, V-9.
26. Review of *Damaged Goods, The Dial,* 1 April 1913, 288; Review of *Damaged Goods, The Outlook,* 31 May 1913, 226.
27. Review of *Damaged Goods, Hearst's Magazine,* May 1913, 805–6.
28. "That Moral Play," *New York Times,* 2 March 1913, sec. 3, 6.
29. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 47.
30. Terry Ramsaye, letter, *New York Times,* 2 March 1952, sec. 2, 5.
31. Review of *Damaged Goods, Variety,* 26 September 1914, 22.
32. Review of *Damaged Goods, The Moving Picture World,* 2 October 1915, 90–91.
33. Review of *Damaged Goods, The Moving Picture World;* Review of *Damaged Goods, Variety,* 1 October 1915, 18; Review of *Damaged Goods, Variety,* 1914.
34. Kuhn, *Cinema Censorship and Sexuality,* 63.
35. Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 20.
36. Ibid., 21.
37. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 59, 72; Clark, *The Control of Sex Infections,* 39–43. The temperance movement linked the use of alcohol to unwashed immigrants and laborers.
38. In *The Black Stork,* Martin Pernick suggests that modern critics who read *Damaged Goods* as reinforcing conservative class ideologies "don't realize that this reading is precisely the opposite of what [the film's] socialist-backers intended" (146). Chances are that few who saw that film in the teens, or any film at any time, know the "intent" of the makers or backers of a film. In any event, the recollections of Edward Bernays above (n. 23)

would seem to undermine the altruistic motives of at least one of the film's backers.

39. "*Damaged Goods* Suit," *The Moving Picture World,* 30 October 1915, 1002.
40. U.S. Copyright Records, *A Victim of Sin,* 1913 (LU 1053).
41. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 59, 62.
42. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution,* 72.
43. U.S. Copyright Records, *The Spreading Evil,* 1918 (LU 13209).
44. Robert C. McElravy, review of *The Spreading Evil, The Moving Picture World,* 30 November 1918, 987.
45. Review of *The Spreading Evil, Variety,* 22 November 1918, 46.
46. U.S. Copyright Records, *The Scarlet Trail,* 1919 (LU 13451).
47. Review of *The Scarlet Trail, Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 4 January 1919, 421; Edward Weitzel, review of *The Scarlet Trail, The Moving Picture World,* 11 January 1919, 246; Review of *The Scarlet Trail, New York Times,* 30 December 1918, 17; Review of *The Scarlet Trail, Variety,* 3 January 1919, 36.
48. Ad for *The Scarlet Trail, The Moving Picture World,* 11 January 1919, 166.
49. U.S. Copyright Records, *Fit to Win,* 1919 (LU 14210).
50. U.S. Copyright Records, *The End of the Road,* 1919 (LU 13332).
51. For information on the internal, and often conflicting, politics of ASHA, as well as a more detailed analysis of *The End of the Road,* see Stacie Colwell, "*The End of the Road:* Gender, the Dissemination of Knowledge, and the American Campaign Against Venereal Disease During World War I," *Camera Obscura* 29 (May 1992): 91–129.
52. Ad for *Fit to Win, The Moving Picture World,* 12 April 1919, 164.
53. Ibid.
54. Screenings segregated by age and sex were not uncommon in the years leading up to 1919. For example, Chicago's censorship board instituted its "pink permit" in 1914 which forbade children from entering and effectively created a class of adults-only motion pictures. See Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned Films: Movies, Censors and the First Amendment* (New York: Bowker, 1982), 9. In 1915 *The Twilight Sleep,* a short film about a "painless childbirth" drug, was limited to "women only" (Review of *The Twilight Sleep, Variety,* 27 August 1915, 20). After 1920 virtually all theatrical motion pictures segregated by gender were exploitation films. With the exception of some foreign films, I am unaware of any theatrical adults-only movies from 1920 through the 1950s that do not fall under the heading of exploitation.
55. Edward Weitzel, review of *Fit to Win, The Moving Picture World,* 12 April 1919, 276.
56. Review of *Fit to Win, Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 2 April 1919, 1437.

57. "*Fit to Fight* Will Be Heavily Sheared in Dallas," *The Moving Picture World,* 28 June 1919, 1954.
58. "*Fit to Win* Allowed to Run," *Variety,* 2 May 1919, 66.
59. "Disapproved War Dept. Film," *Variety,* 21 February 1919, 71; "*End of the Road* Barred," *Variety,* 18 July 1919, 46.
60. "*Fit to Fight* Will Be Heavily Sheared in Dallas."
61. "United States Circuit Court of Appeals Bars *Fit to Win* Showing in New York City," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 26 July 1919, 610.
62. "Court Ruling Upholding Showing of *Fit to Win* Is Foreshadowed as Trial Ends in U.S. Court," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 14 June 1919, 104.
63. "United States Circuit Court of Appeals Bars *Fit to Win.*"
64. "*End of the Road* Barred"; "*The End of the Road* to Be Stopped Showing Here," *The Moving Picture World,* 24 May 1919, 1167; "Providence Police Officials Place Ban on Four Films," *Variety,* 30 May 1919, 82.
65. In early 1917, the National Board of Review (NBR) decided it would not pass any films solely concerned with white slavery or films that displayed the female nude ("Banning the Nude in the Movies," *The Survey,* 10 February 1917, 555). The NBR still supported "sex problem" films in 1917, but in 1919 agreed to pass only those films that were endorsed by a public health agency. See Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 18. On the censorship of eugenic and medical pictures, see Pernick, *The Black Stork,* 121–28.
66. Colwell, "*The End of the Road,*" 126, n. 82.
67. Walsh, *Sin and Censorship,* 16. Reinserting footage after having made promises to cut it became a standard ploy of the exploiteers. See chapter 4.
68. Films that promoted ideas or education of sex hygiene, eugenics, birth control, and other subjects were generally referred to in the industry as "propaganda" in the years leading up to and immediately after World War I. That term fell out of wide use during the 1920s.
69. Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 102, 105.
70. Ibid., 108.
71. Karl S. Lashley and John B. Watson, "A Psychological Study of Motion Pictures in Relation to Venereal Disease Campaigns," *Social Hygiene* 7 (1921): 202.
72. Walsh, *Sin and Censorship,* 15–22.
73. Lashley and Watson, "A Psychological Study," 202.
74. Chemical prophylaxis, as Brandt points out, was a relatively simple but rather unpleasant procedure. See Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 110–11.
75. Ibid., 124.
76. Lashley and Watson, "A Psychological Study," 205.

77. Ibid., 210.
78. "American Screens for American Ideas," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 16 August 1919, 874.
79. U.S. Copyright Records, *Open Your Eyes,* 1919 (LU 13765).
80. U.S. Copyright Records, *Wild Oats,* 1919 (LU 13957), and U.S. Copyright Records, *Some Wild Oats,* 1919 (LU 15239).
81. See review of *Open Your Eyes, New York Times,* 30 June 1919, 16; Review of *Open Your Eyes, Variety,* 4 July 1919, 42; Edward Weitzel, review of *Open Your Eyes, The Moving Picture World,* 2 August 1919, 713–14.
82. Robert C. McElravy, review of *The Solitary Sin, The Moving Picture World,* 5 July 1919, 112.
83. Edward Weitzel, review of *Wild Oats, The Moving Picture World,* 9 August 1919, 882.
84. "Providence Police."
85. Ibid. It is not known if anyone was ever prosecuted under the Connecticut law.
86. "The Decision in the *Fit to Win* Case," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 26 July 1919, 607.
87. Ibid.
88. Janet Priest, "Better Film Fight Won!" *Photoplay,* November 1919, 92.
89. "The Death Knell of Legalized Censorship and the 'Educational' Sex Film," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 16 August 1919, 874.
90. Letter from Rupert Blue, *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 6 September 1919, 1193; Ad for *Some Wild Oats, Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 2 August 1919, 682; Letter To Whom It May Concern, *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 6 September 1919, 1193.
91. "Public Health Bureau Withdraws Indorsement," *The Moving Picture World,* 20 September 1919, 1832.
92. For a full review of the status of the medical profession at this time, see George Rosen, *The Structure of American Medical Practice 1875–1941,* ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983), esp. 44–107.
93. "Misleading Motion Picture Exploitation," *Journal of Social Hygiene* 13, no. 7 (October 1927): 414.
94. For the complete list, see Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Focal Press, 1976), 465.
95. Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality,* 14.
96. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (1986): 63–70.
97. Lawrence Birken, *Consuming Desire: Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 40.

98. Ibid., 14.
99. Ibid., 127–28.
100. Ibid., 109.

## Chapter 2 "A Hodge-Podge of Cuttings and Splicings"
*The Mode of Production and the Style of Classical Exploitation Films*

1. Much of my analysis of exploitation film develops as an alternative to the classical Hollywood cinema because, as we have seen, exploitation would not have existed as a separate entity had it not been for the classical Hollywood cinema. Though most of the differences between exploitation film and classical Hollywood cinema should be very clear, the reader unfamiliar with these books is encouraged to refer to them, especially Thomas Schatz's *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), and David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's monumental *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
2. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 89.
3. *The 1938 Film Daily Year Book* (New York: *The Film Daily,* 1938), 718–25.
4. This number is based on figures derived from Leo C. Rosten's *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1941); see Table 2 of appendix B, 374.
5. *The 1938 Film Daily Year Book,* 408.
6. Dan Sonney, interview with the author, 2 August 1990.
7. Hildegarde Esper, interview with the author, 3 November 1988.
8. Gene Fernett, *American Film Studios: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988), 176.
9. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 313.
10. Robert S. Birchard, "Edward D. Wood, Jr.—Some Notes on a Subject for Further Research," *Film History* 7, no. 4 (1995): 450–55, alleges that Esper and Sonney "carved out financially successful careers in the movie business by offering investors a hundred thousand dollar picture on a fifty thousand dollar investment. The pictures were produced for eight to ten thousand. Esper and Sonney pocketed the difference, leaving the investors holding the bag when the films failed to perform at the box-office" (450). Birchard mistakes Dan Sonney for his father, Louis. Dan did not become a principal in the family business until after his father's death in 1949, by which time Esper had moved out of production, concentrating on distributing pickups. When I interviewed Dan Sonney, he expressed his antipathy toward Esper, documented elsewhere, making it difficult to

imagine them working together, much less conspiring to put one over on investors. See David F. Friedman's discussion of Esper and the Sonneys in *A Youth in Babylon* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), 169–78. Although Esper's ethical lapses are well known, I have never seen any evidence that indicates the Sonneys engaged in the blatant fraud Birchard describes in his curious essay—nor does he offer any.

11. Sonney interview.
12. Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 61.
13. Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, 168.
14. Ibid., 248–50.
15. Ibid., 167, 250.
16. Ibid., 216.
17. Ibid., 244.
18. Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*, 181.
19. Ibid., 186.
20. Charles Flynn and Todd McCarthy, "The Economic Imperative: Why Was the B Movie Necessary?", in *Kings of the Bs: Working Within the Hollywood System*, ed. Flynn and McCarthy (New York: Dutton, 1975), 25, 31.
21. Monogram and Republic are often numbered among Poverty Row outfits. The fact that they owned studios and had a network of distribution exchanges lifts them out of this category, a distinction emphasized by more recent scholarship such as Brian Taves's taxonomy of low-budget production. Exploitation films would fall into Taves's fourth and most impoverished category, the "Poverty Row quickie" (323–28). Though some exploiteers moved between such quickie films and more daring exploitation product (Willis Kent, for example), others produced exploitation films exclusively. See Brian Taves, "The B Film: Hollywood's Other Half," in *The Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939*, Tino Balio (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 313–50.
22. *Mom and Dad* pressbook, 1956; "Baby Howling Brit. Boxoffice Success," *Hollywood Reporter*, 18 July, 1949, n.p.; *Child Bride*, PCA files.
23. Florence Kirby, letter to the author, 24 January 1992.
24. Rudolph Grey, "'Umberto Scalli Lives!!!': The Timothy Farrell Interview," *Psychotronic* 14 (winter 1992–93): 22.
25. Sonney interview; Charles Teitel, "From Snakes to Road 'Biggies,'" unidentified clipping, 13 April 1986, Dwain Esper file, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
26. Something Weird Video Collection.
27. Sonney interview.

28. *A Virgin in Hollywood* (1952) and the 1953 U.S. release of the Argentinian film *The Marihuana Story* (1950) included 3-D inserts. Broadway Roadshow Attractions and Sonney Amusement Enterprises issued several burlesque short subjects in 3-D.
29. *Mom and Dad* pressbook, 1956.
30. Grey, " 'Umberto Scalli Lives!!!' ", 22.
31. Sonney interview.
32. Ibid.
33. Florence Kirby, letter to the author, 13 February 1992.
34. Sonney interview.
35. Lili St. Cyr, interview with the author, 26 March 1993.
36. Review of *Teaserama, Variety,* 19 January 1955, 6.
37. Flynn and McCarthy, "The Economic Imperative," 23.
38. Ibid.
39. T. R. Steede, letter to O. K. Bourgeois, 11 August 1953, private collection.
40. "Red Flag on Sex Movies," *Variety,* 24 August 1927, 5.
41. From *Sex and Buttered Popcorn,* prod. Kit Parker and Sam Harrison, dir. Sam Harrison, 70 min., Mainstreet Movies, 1989, videocassette.
42. O. K. Bourgeois, *Secret Scandal* file, private collection.
43. "Fixing of Goona-Goona Sexers, Giving 'Em Aura of Newness, Proves Big B.O.," *Variety,* 27 March 1946, 9.
44. Review of *Midnight Lady, Variety,* 12 July 1932, 17.
45. Review of *City Park, Motion Picture Herald,* 25 August 1934, 38.
46. O. K. Bourgeois files, private collection.
47. In his article on the movies of sexploitation director Doris Wishman, Michael Bowen asserts that the term "composite film" is more suggestive of the process because it indicates that the materials are composed. However, every film, even those made of only a single shot, is composed on some level. I would argue that compilation film is the more appropriate term because "compilation" indicates that the film is composed of materials derived from preexisting movies or documents, a nuance that "composite film" fails to provide. See Michael J. Bowen, "Embodiment and Realization: The Many Film-Bodies of Doris Wishman," *Wide Angle* 19, no. 3 (July 1997): 64–90. The discussion of terminology occurs on 72 and 88–89 n. 11.
48. Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 44.
49. "Birth Film in L.A. Yanked by City Att'y," *Variety,* 19 September 1933, 27; "Sexer Draws a Sixer and $1,000 Fine in L.A.," *Variety,* 17 October 1933, 25.
50. Review of *Is Your Daughter Safe?, Variety,* 15 June 1927, 24.
51. Review of *Miracle of Life, Variety,* 1 June 1949, 20.
52. Ibid.

53. George E. Turner and Michael H. Price, *Forgotten Horrors: Early Talkie Chillers from Poverty Row,* rev., 2d ed. (Guerneville, CA: Eclipse Books, 1986), 27.
54. Chuck Teitel, "Film-Flam Man," *Los Angeles Magazine,* May 1989, n.p.
55. Review of *The Love Life of a Gorilla, Motion Picture Herald,* 6 November 1937, 39.
56. Charles R. Metzger, report, *Lash of the Penitentes,* PCA files.
57. Turner and Price, *Forgotten Horrors,* 204–5. This figure may have been inflated. Only a severely abridged version is in circulation today; however, the extant trailer does include shots of the topless DeForest being flogged.
58. St. Cyr interview.
59. The "Mama's Review" episode of *WKRP in Cincinnati,* the two-part "Retrospective" on *One Day at a Time,* and "The Menagerie" from the original *Star Trek* series, which made use of footage from the unaired pilot, are just several examples.
60. Don Miller, *B Movies* (New York: Ballantine, 1988), 87.
61. Review of *Mad Youth, Variety,* 22 May 1940, 33.
62. Sonney interview.
63. Kathleen Karr, "The Long Square-Up: Exploitation Trends in the Silent Film," *Journal of Popular Film* 3, no. 2 (spring 1974): 108–9.
64. David Chute, "Wages of Sin: An Interview with David F. Friedman," *Film Comment* (July–August 1986): 38.
65. Review of *Hollywood Burlesque, Variety,* 17 August 1949, 22.
66. "Canned Burlesque," *Time,* 16 April 1951, 105.
67. Paul Seale, " 'A Host of Others': Toward a Nonlinear History of Poverty Row and the Coming of Sound," *Wide Angle* 13, no. 1 (January 1991): 93.
68. Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early film and the (In)credulous Spectator," *Art & Text* 34 (spring 1989): 36.
69. Ibid.
70. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (1986): 66. In *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1974), one of the key texts on avant-garde film, Amos Vogel lists the "weapons of subversion." Five of Vogel's seven "forbidden subjects of the cinema" (nudity, eroticism, homosexuality, birth, and death) were, in varying degrees, also topics of exploitation films. All five were the subject of exploitation movies before becoming part of the geography of avant-garde film.
71. *Modern Motherhood* (screenplay), U.S. Copyright Records (LP 6701), 11. *The Modern Motherhood* screenplay is also available in a slightly altered form, along with those for *Maniac* and *Marihuana,* in Bret Wood, ed.,

*Marihuana, Motherhood and Madness: Three Screenplays from the Exploitation Cinema of Dwain Esper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1998). Wood's book also includes several pages of background material on Esper.

72. Review of *Goona-Goona, Variety,* 20 September 1932, 15. The recutting of footage from a single source distinguishes this film and others like it from compilation films, which are constructed of film from two or more sources.
73. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction," 64.
74. Ibid.
75. For an overview on medical imaging, see Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
76. Review of *Wajan, Variety,* 20 April 1938, 15. The bathing scene was probably "only a flash" because the film was reviewed in New York, a state with a strong censorship board.
77. *Karamoja* was teamed with *Half-Way to Hell,* a compilation documentary made up of newsreel material and footage of Nazi death camps.
78. "*Mau Mau* Film Factual Tale of African Unrest," *Hollywood Citizen-News,* 11 February 1955, n.p.
79. "*Mau Mau* Dull Feature; *Intruder* Well Acted," *Los Angeles Examiner,* 10 March 1955, n.p.
80. This sequence is very reminiscent of Warner Bros.' *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933), which may have served as another source of inspiration for Esper.
81. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 54.

## **Chapter 3** "You Gotta Tell 'Em to Sell 'Em"
## *Distribution, Advertising, and Exhibition of Exploitation Films*

1. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of the Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's, 1990), 112–15.
2. Suzanne Mary Donahue, *American Film Distribution: The Changing Marketplace* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 10–11.
3. Charles Flynn and Todd McCarthy, "The Economic Imperative: Why Was the B Movie Necessary?" in *Kings of the Bs: Working Within the Hollywood System,* ed. Flynn and McCarthy (New York: Dutton, 1975), 18.
4. Ruth A. Inglis, *Freedom of the Movies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 44.
5. "Samuel Cummins Discusses State Right Productions," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 7 December 1918, 58.

6. An example of this can be found in the art for 30x40 posters for *The Wages of Sin,* which had space for the insertion of alternative titles. Something Weird Video Collection.
7. A distributor could wield a great deal of influence. Both in the past and continuing to this day, the owners of states' rights were, in some cases, assumed to be the producers of the films, causing much confusion.
8. Dan Sonney, interview with the author, 2 August 1990.
9. Claude Alexander, "The 'No Greater Sins' of Claude Alexander," interview by Mike Vraney, edited by Lisa Petrucci, *Cult Movies* 14 (1995): 34.
10. Sonney interview.
11. O. K. Bourgeois files, private collection.
12. For a detailed case history of one traveling showman in the early days of cinema, see Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). Howe and the exhibitors in this early period showed what would be considered mainstream product but established many of the business practices followed by exploitation roadshows: "Traveling exhibitors usually provided a complete entertainment—not only films, projector and projectionist, but people to create sound accompaniment, the advance man, and promotional materials. Their income was usually based on gross receipts. In some cases they rented a space such as a theater, hall, or storefront, or pitched a tent and kept all income after expenses" (59). With the exception of providing a projection setup, exploitation roadshowmen in both the silent and sound eras operated in much the same fashion.
13. Russell Merritt, "Roadshows Put on the Ritz," *Variety,* 20 January 1988, 93, 95.
14. "Film Roadshows Drop; 30 in Last Five Years," *Motion Picture Herald,* 20 August 1938, 15.
15. Letter from Dwain Esper to Erwin Esmond, 28 March 1933, File 25434, *The Seventh Commandment,* Box 2565, NYSA/MPD.
16. David F. Friedman, letter to the author, 10 August 1992.
17. Sonney interview.
18. Ibid.
19. David F. Friedman with Don De Nevi, *A Youth in Babylon: Confessions of a Trash-Film King* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1990), 311–19.
20. "Charges Golden With Lash Infringement," *Boxoffice,* 8 October 1938, 25.
21. Review of *Unguarded Girls, Variety,* 4 September 1929, 13.
22. Jane Gaines, "From Elephants to Lux Soap: The Programming and 'Flow' of Early Motion Picture Exploitation," *The Velvet Light Trap* 25 (spring 1990): 33.

23. Ibid., 31.
24. Ibid. Gaines discusses campaigns for Lux Soap and makes allusions to several other early tie-ins between Hollywood and Madison Avenue.
25. Janet Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking About the History and Theory of Film Advertising," *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 3 (spring 1990): 14–15.
26. Sonney interview.
27. Mary Beth Haralovich, "Advertising Heterosexuality," *Screen* 23, no. 2 (July–August 1982): 52–53.
28. Unlike Haralovich, I have not had the luxury of an archive of posters from which to select a random sampling for this analysis. My assessments are based on posters or ads from over one hundred films ranging from about 1927 to 1959. Most of those included in this group are from a collection I have built up as part of my research on exploitation movies. Other ads and photographs have been supplied by Mike Vraney and Lisa Petrucci of Something Weird Video, as well as other collectors.
29. Although the ads and posters may have had an appeal to lesbians, it is highly doubtful that producers considered this possibility.
30. Quoted in *Sex and Buttered Popcorn,* prod. Kit Parker and Sam Harrison, dir. Sam Harrison, 70 min., Mainstreet Movies, 1989, videocassette.
31. The advertising and exhibition of sideshows and circuses and that of exploitation films converge at many points. See Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988): 89–93, 98–104.
32. "Selling Angles: *It's All in Your Mind,*" *Boxoffice,* 2 April 1938, 72.
33. Quoted in Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon,* 49–50.
34. Untitled scrapbook, 1930s, Something Weird Video Collection.
35. *Five Graves to Cairo,* pressbook, Paramount, 1943, collection of the author.
36. *Body and Soul,* pressbook, United Artists, 1947, collection of the author.
37. Inglis, *Freedom of the Movies,* 42–43.
38. "*Naked Truth* for Women Only to $37,000 in 3 Weeks in Loop," *Variety,* 29 June 1927, 6.
39. *Film Daily Yearbook 1929,* 874.
40. "*Elysia* and *Tarzan* is Lincoln's Raw Meat," *Variety,* 1 May 1934, 9.
41. "Philly Dull; Slave Ship Fair 13G," *Variety,* 30 June 1937, 9.
42. "*Dawn* in K.C. Just Fair 6G," *Variety,* 4 August 1937, 21.
43. "*Hurricane* Whirlwind 22G in Chi.," *Variety,* 19 January 1938, 7; "*Buccaneer*–Spitalny Snaring Big Chi Coin $40,000," *Variety,* 26 January 1938, 10; "Click Films Stud Chi," *Variety,* 2 February 1938, 9.
44. "*Birth of Baby* Pulling Smash $11,000 in Mpls., but *B'dcast* Weak $6,500," *Variety,* 2 March 1938, 3.
45. "*Birth of a Baby* Record $19,000 in Det.; *Josette*–Olsen and Johnson

$20,000," *Variety,* 8 June 1938, 9; "*Holiday* $15,000, *Diggers* $10 G Detroit," *Variety,* 22 June 1938, 8.

46. On 29 October 1997, we presented the 1948 hygiene film *Street Corner* at Emerson College. David Friedman attended, delivering the lecture portion of the program as "Curtis Hayes." The audience, primarily made up of media-savvy students, grew deathly quiet when the birth reel appeared on the screen. As it unspooled and was replaced by the cesarean operation, the narration on the soundtrack was drowned out by the gasps and groans. The fifty-year-old film still had the power to jolt an audience.
47. Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 2.
48. Ibid., 110–11. Stam concentrates on the carnivalesque aspects of the film text. An interesting application of Bakhtin that has yet to be done may entail looking at the carnivalesque in film exhibition, particularly with regard to drive-ins, grindhouses, and other nonstandard venues.
49. A letter dated 20 June 1945 from Schliesser Studios, a Los Angeles manufacturer of anatomical displays, to roadshowman Roy Reid quoted an estimate of $2,870 for twenty-six exhibit cases. The display included six full-size cases of the birth of a baby, twelve cases of female venereal diseases, two "venereal heads" in cases, plus assorted other babies and picture sets. Something Weird Video Collection.
50. Hildegarde Esper, interview with the author, 3 November 1988.
51. "Birth Control Film Banned at Elizabeth," *New York Times,* 22 March 1930, 40.
52. Producers and distributors of sexploitation and early theatrical pornography discovered the advantages of a self-imposed X rating in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
53. *Vice Racket* herald, Something Weird Video Collection.
54. Sonney interview.
55. *She Shoulda Said "No"!* pressbook, collection of the author.
56. Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon,* 52.
57. Review of *Twilight Sleep, Variety,* 5 November 1915, 23.
58. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 57.
59. Ibid., 233–34.
60. Review of *The Twilight Sleep, Variety,* 27 August 1915, 20; Review of *Twilight Sleep, Variety,* 5 November 1915, 23.
61. On physician Harry Haiselden's lectures with *The Black Stork* (aka *Are You Fit to Marry?*), see Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures Since 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 157–58. For an early, firsthand account of the lectures, see Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *The*

*Morals of the Movie* (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing, 1922), 32–33. Oberholtzer, a Pennsylvania state censor, characterized the lecturers as "most stupid, most vulgar and most ungrammatical."

62. Report from Mr. Metzger to Joseph Breen, 4 March 1941, *Childbirth,* PCA files.
63. Hildegarde Esper interview.
64. Bogdan, *Freak Show,* 103–4.
65. "Nat'l Board Passes Sex Film; 1st Time; German Made Picture," *Variety,* 18 January 1928, 4.
66. Hildegarde Esper interview.
67. One of the few exceptions was *The Desperate Women* (1954), which offered exhibitors a "streamlined selling book trailer, free" and promised that there was "nothing for you to do except collect the profits." From *The Desperate Women* pressbook, collection of the author.
68. Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon,* 139. Lecturers for *Mom and Dad* received ten cents for every book sold and expenses (119). Because Babb used other long-standing exploitation business practices for *Mom and Dad,* we can assume that the 10 percent–plus–expenses formula had probably been an industry standard for some time.
69. Ibid., 121.
70. Ibid.
71. According to ibid., "nurses" for the 1957 Baltimore run of *Mom and Dad* worked a ten-hour day at two dollars an hour. The actual sales of books after the lecture took about ten minutes and then the movie resumed; additional copies were available in the lobby after the show for last-minute buyers (119).
72. Suzanne White, "*Mom and Dad* (1944): Venereal Disease 'Exploitation,' " *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988): 252–70.
73. Homer Blodgett, *The Art of Love: Your Sex Problems Solved* (Los Angeles: Road Show Attractions, 1955), 50.
74. Ibid., 58–60.
75. M. A. Horn, ed., *Father and Son,* rev. ed. (N.p.: Hallmark Productions, 1957–58), 45–49.
76. Ibid., 78.
77. Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon,* 37.
78. "Sex Shows Dual Bill," *Variety,* 9 August 1932, 6; "Yanking of Sex Film Results in Two Riots," *Variety,* 20 September 1932, 23.
79. "Yanking of Sex Film."
80. "Sex Film Spieler and Model Pinched in Mpls.," *Variety,* 17 March 1937, 7; "Sex Film Spieler and Model in His Pitch on Trial in Mpls.," *Variety,* 31 March 1937, 29; "Mpls. Sex Spiel Duo Found Guilty; Fined," *Variety,* 7 April 1937, 23.

81. This contractual mandate was perhaps the most important aspect of Babb's pitch. In recent years, he has been characterized as an exploitation genius and a showman's showman, but like everything surrounding the man, this assessment seems to be overblown. The success of *Mom and Dad* had as much to do with good timing—finding an audience in the men and women who would be responsible for the baby boom—as it did with clever exploitation. This is borne out by the fact that his most successful films outside of *Mom and Dad* were pickups from established exploitation genres such as *She Shoulda Said "No"!* and *Karamoja.* Most of the other films Babb personally produced (*One Too Many, Why Men Leave Home*) tanked at the box office.
82. *Mom and Dad* pressbook, copyright files, Library of Congress.
83. Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon,* 35.
84. *Mom and Dad* pressbook.
85. In the early years of *Mom and Dad*'s release, Babb regularly awarded cash and prizes for the most successful bookings of his film.
86. This account comes from "Special Advertising at the Drive-In" by Pearce Parkhurst in the *1949–1950 Theater Catalog,* 303–309. It is excerpted in Terence Jennings Wharton, *Xeromorphic* #2 (N.p.: author, 1992).
87. Stam, *Subversive Pleasures,* 95.

## **Chapter 4** "Thoroughly Vile and Disgusting"
## *The Exploitation Film and Censorship*

1. Joseph Breen, file memo, 9 April 1935, *The Seventh Commandment,* PCA files.
2. Ruth A. Inglis, *Freedom of the Movies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 93–94.
3. For detailed accounts of motion picture censorship, see Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned Films: Movies, Censors and the First Amendment* (New York: Bowker, 1982); Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Focal Press, 1976); Richard S. Randall, *Censorship of the Movies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968). In spite of its vintage, Ruth Inglis's *Freedom of the Movies* provides an excellent account of censorship and self-regulation up to 1947.
4. De Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 7.
5. See Lea Jacobs, "Reformers and Spectators: The Film Education Movement in the Thirties," *Camera Obscura* 22 (January 1990): 29–49, for an excellent discussion of the model of spectatorship particularly of children that was constructed by the film education movement in the 1930s.
6. See, for instance, "The Moving Picture and the National Character" (1910);

Chicago Vice Commission, "Cheap Theaters" (1911); and Charles V. Tevis, "Censoring the Five-Cent Drama" (1910), in *The Movies in Our Midst,* ed. Gerald Mast (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). See also de Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 3–15.

7. De Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 10.
8. Ibid., 8–9.
9. Jowett, *Film,* 114. See 113–18, as well as Janet Staiger, *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 86–115, for discussions of early municipal censorship.
10. Jowett, *Film,* 133–34.
11. De Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 13–14.
12. See Randall, *Censorship,* 81–90.
13. Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *The Morals of the Movie* (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing, 1922), 146.
14. The term "sex picture" was used loosely at the time and could have been applied to almost any film with sexual content, ranging from themes of adultery to the raw presentation of venereal diseases. However, from Oberholtzer's descriptions it is clear he was referring to what would become known as exploitation movies. He relates a standard white slavery film plot and typical exploitation exhibition tactics such as adults-only performances, shows segregated by sex, and accompanying lectures (ibid., 31–33).
15. Ibid., 33, 39.
16. Ibid., 42.
17. *The Daily Record, Baltimore,* filed 19 January 1931, *Culture Films, Inc. vs. Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors.*
18. Edward M. Barrows, "Success Through Self-Regulation," *Review of Reviews,* March 1932, 61.
19. *Tomorrow's Children,* PCA files.
20. David Chute, "Wages of Sin: An Interview with David F. Friedman," *Film Comment* (July–August 1986): 42.
21. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 5.
22. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* Volume 1: *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 100.
23. Review of *Is Your Daughter Safe?, Variety,* 15 June 1927, 24.
24. Memo from Jason S. Joy to Gov. Carl E. Milliken, 24 June 1927, *Is Your Daughter Safe?,* PCA files.
25. This point was driven home a decade later by an article in *Variety,* "Flood of Salacious Ad Complaints Causes Haysites to Double-Check," *Variety,* 17 August 1938. Like Joy, *Variety*'s writer—and, by implication, others—believed that in the public mind all motion pictures were made under the

watchful eye of the MPPDA. The article detailed complaints about exploitation films and their advertising and noted, "The average individual blames the Hays office for [the films] being shown and the advertising on same. Despite the fact that the Hays office has no direct supervision or control over films not passed by the PCA or showing in affiliated member houses, it gets blamed for the rumpus stirred up by these few screen subjects. This is partly due to the fact that reference to the Hays office is taken by the public to mean the entire film business" (4).

26. See Paul Seale, "'A Host of Others': Toward a Nonlinear History of Poverty Row and the Coming of Sound," *Wide Angle* 13, no. 1 (January 1991): 78. Seale describes complaints by independents and Poverty Row outfits directed at restrictive trade practices of the majors and details action taken by the Federal Trade Commission in the summer and fall of 1927. Although Millard's operation was so small as to make almost any Poverty Row company look like a Paramount in comparison, the FTC investigation was certainly the single largest reason the MPPDA's maneuvers against *Is Your Daughter Safe?* were undertaken quietly and through other groups.
27. Jason Joy, file memo, 2 September 1927; Letter from Anna B. Hail to Jason Joy, 9 March 1928, *Is Your Daughter Safe?*, PCA files.
28. Letter from the National Better Business Bureau issued to Bureau Managers and Chambers of Commerce, 1 August 1927, *Is Your Daughter Safe?* PCA files.
29. Letter from Mrs. R. B. Lynch, executive secretary of the Northwest Film Board of Trade, to Jason Joy, 1 September 1927, *Is Your Daughter Safe?*, PCA files.
30. "Red Flag on Sex Movies," *Variety*, 24 August 1927, 5.
31. In *Banned Films*, de Grazia and Newman point out that the list of "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" is "perhaps most instructive for its evidence of the kinds of subjects with which 'renegade' producers were dealing during the 1920s" (31).
32. I have not located any films from 1927 or earlier that dealt with miscegenation. It did, however, become an occasional topic of exotic exploitation films starting in the early 1930s with movies such as *Blonde Captive* (1932) and *Rama* (1932), which dealt with Caucasian castaways falling for dark-skinned mates.
33. See Francis G. Couvares, "Hollywood, Main Street and the Church: Trying to Censor the Movies Before the Production Code," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (December 1992): 584–616. Couvares discusses Irish American and Catholic agitation that met the release of MGM's *The Callahans and the Murphys* (1927) within the broader context of cooperation between the Church and the MPPDA.

34. "New Drive on Sex Films," *Variety,* 21 November 1928, 3, 59.
35. "Jersey and Sex Films," *Variety,* 21 November 1928, 59.
36. "Indie Exhibs Sore," *Variety,* 21 November 1928, 59.
37. Jason Joy, file memo, 6 September 1927, *Is Your Daughter Safe?,* PCA files.
38. Letter from Jason Joy to Carl Milliken, 15 September 1927, *Is Your Daughter Safe?,* PCA files.
39. *The Community and the Motion Picture: Report of National Conference on Motion Pictures held at the Hotel Montclair, New York City, September 24–27, 1929* (N.p.: The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., 1929), 51, 53, 68–69.
40. Mary Beth Haralovich, "Mandates of Good Taste: Self-Regulation of Film Advertising in the Thirties," *Wide Angle* 6, no. 2 (1984): 50.
41. Leonard J. Leff and Jerold Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 9–14.
42. "Nudies Ogle Stage Coin," *Variety,* 24 October 1933, 1, 63.
43. "Nude Cult Newspaper Breaks Pep Up H'wood Picture Still Photogs," *Variety,* 28 November 1933, 3; "Hays' Leg-Art Ban Jitter Coast, Edict Covers All Ad Accessories," *Variety,* 5 December 1933, 3.
44. "Boring but Banned," *Variety,* 21 November 1933, 31; "Ban Nudie Pic," *Variety,* 26 December 1934, 14; "Chi Censors Pink 2 Pix; Others Nix *Elysia,* Nudie," *Variety,* 9 January 1934, 4.
45. "Bryan Foy Would Enjoin L.A. Cops over Nudist Pic," *Variety,* 13 February 1934, 7.
46. "Only 3 Nudie Pix on the Market but Beaucoup Censor Worries," *Variety,* 23 January 1934, 3. Congressman Wright Patman of Texas introduced the federal bill in late 1933. See Haralovich, "Mandates of Good Taste," 54.
47. See J. Douglas Gomery, "Hollywood, The National Recovery Administration and the Question of Monopoly Power," *The Journal of the University Film Association* 31, no. 2 (spring 1979): 47–52; Haralovich, "Mandates of Good Taste," 53–54; Jowett, *Film,* 244–46; and Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 160.
48. Haralovich, "Mandates of Good Taste," 54.
49. "Only 3 Nudie Pix."
50. "A Self-Regulated Clean Screen Will Eliminate All Censorship, It is Hoped, by June; Clean Adv. Too," *Variety,* 9 January 1934, 3.
51. Memo from McKenzie to Breen 18 April 1934, *High School Girl,* PCA files.
52. Quoted in Lea Jacobs, *Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 20.
53. In *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Kevin Brownlow states that the remake of *The Pace That Kills* (1935) "was banned by Hays" (119). This is not true in a technical sense. The Hays organization could not ban any film, legally or otherwise, in

the same way that the state boards could. The Production Code succeeded through economic intimidation, much the same way the Code and Rating Administration continues to function today.

54. Stephen Vaughn, "Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June 1990): 54. Vaughn quotes from a memo, possibly drafted by Irving Thalberg, that attempted to de-emphasize the movies' influence over moral matters. The stance was echoed in Martin Quigley's book *Decency in Motion Pictures* (New York: Macmillan, 1937): "The entertainment motion picture is not to be considered a deliberate agency of propaganda and reform in any province, including that of moralities" (14). Quigley held that the movies automatically had a moral responsibility and thus did not have to reform, only not to deform ideas and ideals. Jacobs has shown that the one faction of the film education movement of the 1930s that had the direct backing of the MPPDA did not seek to use the theater as a venue for education. Instead, the Teaching Film Custodians employed edited segments of Hollywood films to stimulate discussion in the classroom. For more information, see Jacobs, "Reformers and Spectators," especially 36–37.
55. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 479.
56. Lea Jacobs, "The B Film and the Problem of Cultural Distinction," *Screen* 33, no. 1 (spring 1992): 1–13. Although Hollywood would not willingly have labeled any of its movies as "unwholesome," the hierarchies created by distribution that Jacobs describes, combined with other factors, allowed critics to mark the films as such.
57. Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 56.
58. Jacobs, "Reformers and Spectators," 36–37, 44. Jacobs specifically refers to the film education group led by Edgar Dale at Ohio State University, which prepared study guides and course materials for motion pictures. Dale's group emphasized film as art. The same arguments that privilege coherence, plausibility, and realism are still made today. See, for instance, Neil Postman's critique of television, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking, 1985).
59. Quigley, *Decency in Motion Pictures,* 10.
60. Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 28.
61. Letter from Francis Harmon to Joseph Breen, 1 March 1938, *Forbidden Adventure,* PCA files.
62. Letter from Joseph Breen to Dwain Esper, 11 March 1938, *Forbidden Adventure,* PCA files.

63. Letter from Francis Harmon to Joseph Breen, 2 May 1938, *The Scarlet Flower,* PCA files.
64. Letter from Joseph Breen to Francis Harmon, 7 May 1938, *The Scarlet Flower,* PCA files.
65. *African Holiday,* PCA files.
66. Letter from Samuel Cummins, Jewel Productions, to Board of Directors, MPPDA, 15 December 1937, *Ecstasy,* PCA files.
67. Letter from Francis Harmon to Joseph Breen, 22 December 1937, *Ecstasy,* PCA files. Sidney Kent was president of Twentieth Century–Fox and an MPPDA board member.
68. "Censoring a Sweet Racket," *Variety,* 24 March 1937, 11.
69. William F. Crouch, "Chicago Goes Sex as New Threat of Censorship Rises," *Motion Picture Herald,* 24 April 1937, 27–28.
70. David F. Barrett, "Sex Not Returning to Studios, Hays Tells St. Louis MPTO," *Motion Picture Herald,* 24 April 1934, 14, 28.
71. "Judge Sees No 'Moral Lesson' in 'Sex' Films," *Motion Picture Herald,* 25 September 1937, 34.
72. "Protests Made on Sex Films," *Motion Picture Herald,* 20 November 1937, 68; "Foreign and 'Sex Hygiene' Films Invite New Decency Offensive," *Boxoffice,* 11 December 1938, 12; "U.S. Is Probing 'Lewd' Pictures," *Motion Picture Herald,* 5 February 1938, 13; "Censorship Activities Increase," *Motion Picture Herald,* 5 February 1938, 14; "New Arguments over Sex Films," *Motion Picture Herald,* 26 March 1938, 26.
73. At times, the articles seem to have been consciously misleading. The piece titled "U.S. Is Probing 'Lewd' Pictures" begins: " 'Sex' films, 'clinical' pictures and other types of so-called 'adult only' exhibitions . . . which for years have been plaguing the motion picture industry, have finally become the target of organized, militant opposition." It goes on to claim that "fighting for their life for years" in the face of public protest, " 'sex' films now are confronted with the opposition of the United States Government." *Ecstasy, The Birth of a Baby,* and two foreign films were mentioned as "the type of films generally complained of." In four short paragraphs, the reader is given the impression that the federal government was mobilizing to suppress exploitation product. However, later in the article, it becomes evident that the targets of the government crackdown were the stag movies, hard-core reels that were sold through the mail for private use, and not exploitation features. This critical distinction would have been lost on the reader who merely scanned the article or read only the first few paragraphs.
74. "American Screens for American Ideas," *Exhibitor's Trade Review,* 16 August 1919, 874.

75. A. L. Finestone, "Foreign and 'Sex Hygiene' Films Invite New Decency Offensive," *Boxoffice,* 11 December 1938, 12.
76. Alan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880,* rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 138–42.
77. Letter from Joe Breen to Phil Goldstone, 12 June 1937, *Damaged Goods,* PCA files.
78. Finestone, "Foreign and 'Sex Hygiene' Films."
79. Review of *Damaged Goods, Motion Picture Daily,* 22 June 1937, n.p.
80. Hygiene and other exploitation films were not the only movies Quigley attacked from a position of growing isolation. Garth Jowett notes that the campaign waged against Walter Wanger's pro-Loyalist Spanish Civil War movie *Blockade* (1938) was spearheaded by Quigley at a point when resistance against U.S. involvement in European conflicts was diminishing. At least one critic at the time claimed the object of Quigley's attack was not the film's pro-Loyalist position but the very notion of making films on serious social or political topics. See Jowett, *Film,* 298–99.
81. "Warns Against Codeless Films," *Boxoffice,* 16 April 1938, 4.
82. "Paramount Joins Fox in Barring Product from 'Sex' Double Bills," *Motion Picture Herald,* 30 April 1938, 14. The figure was a conservative one. I estimate that by the end of 1938 at least fifty exploitation movies were in release.
83. See, for example, "Immoral or Educational?" *New York Times,* 17 March 1938, 20.
84. Quigley and the *Motion Picture Herald* treated *The Birth of a Baby* as if it were a threat not only to public morals, but to the very foundation of democratic government. In a snide editorial, Terry Ramsaye suggested, "Asking the public amusement theater screen to devote its playing time to such product, behind a box office which exists on amusement patronage, is the social equivalent of an invitation to a family dinner: 'Do come over and we'll have a lovely time talking of childbirth, syphilis and gonorrhea'" (Terry Ramsaye, "Rock-A-Bye Baby," *Motion Picture Herald,* 26 March 1938, 7). Several weeks later in an unsigned editorial, probably written by Quigley, the *Herald* made the following assertion: "Freedom of the screen, and freedom of the press, are rights only so long as they are used within the limits of the mores of society. The arts, like people, are permitted free expression until they get too free with the rights of others. Then they are locked up. For the arts that is censorship. For the nation that would be Fascism—society in a straightjacket" ("Asking for Fascism," *Motion Picture Herald,* 16 April 1938, n.p.). Quigley was not only publisher of *Motion Picture Herald,* but also its editor in chief. He did

not limit his unsigned writing to editorials and the Production Code. Quigley is thought to have played a major role in writing the first papal pronouncement on motion pictures, the *Vigilanti Cura* ("With Vigilant Care") encyclical in 1936. Among other things, Pope Pius XI's encyclical commented on the "lamentable state of the motion picture art and industry in the portrayal of sin and vice." See de Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 45–47.

85. "Paramount Joins Fox."
86. It is not clear if the offending film was the 1929 *Sex Madness* or the retitled version of *Human Wreckage* (1938).
87. "Seek to Avoid Coupling Major Product with 'Salacious' Film Via Contracts," *Boxoffice,* 16 April 1938, 4.
88. Michael Conant, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry: Economic and Legal Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 94.
89. "U.S. Government's Bill of Complaint," *Variety,* 27 July 1938, 15+.
90. Letter from Gordon S. White to Joseph Breen, 15 November 1949, *I Married a Savage,* PCA files.
91. Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 29. We can easily substitute the dominant Hollywood paradigm for Bourdieu's "art" in this instance.
92. James B. Twitchell, *Carnival Culture: The Trashing of Taste in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 55. Twitchell reformulates Stallybrass and White's contention that the top attempts to eliminate the bottom: and in the process he finds that the top depends on the bottom, stating that "Mr. Nice and Mr. Nasty travel together." This colorful description would, no doubt, have appealed to the exploiteers.

## **Chapter 5** "No False Modesty, No Old-Fashioned Taboos"
## *The Sex Hygiene Film*

1. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 234.
2. Ibid., 278.
3. Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 220.
4. D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters,* 234.
5. May, *Screening Out the Past,* 211–12.
6. Ibid., 232–33.
7. These figures are all reasonable approximations; films that received only a brief or a regional release have not been accounted for.
8. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage, 1955), 289.
9. For a thorough account of the period, see Alan M. Brandt, *No Magic*

*Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880,* rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 122–33.

10. Elizabeth Fee, "Venereal Disease: The Wages of Sin?", in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History,* ed. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 179.
11. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 129.
12. Ibid., 126.
13. Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1929), 137.
14. Quoted in ibid., 114.
15. Ibid., 140.
16. Quoted in Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 128.
17. In *The Black Stork* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Martin Pernick mistakenly characterizes Cummins's efforts to get *The Naked Truth* into commercial theaters as "unsuccessful" (137). Although it was kept out of Newark, New Jersey, and some other towns, it was approved for play, sometimes with cuts or age restrictions, in Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Memphis, and Detroit. Initially rejected in Chicago, the film finally played with an "adults only permit—21 years old and over" ("Replies to Questionnaire on *The Naked Truth,*" File 3221 *The Naked Truth,* Box 2565, NYSA/MPD). At Chicago's 650-seat Randolph, the film more than doubled the theater's usual weekly gross in June 1927, pulling in $37,000 in the first three weeks of a women-only run ("*Naked Truth* for Women Only to $37,000 in 3 Weeks in Loop," *Variety,* 29 June 1927, 6). *TNT* also played in theaters of established circuits such as Publix, Universal, Fox, and Blank ("Red Flag on Sex Movies," *Variety,* 24 August 1927, 30).
18. Undated questionnaire, File 3221 *The Naked Truth,* Box 2565, NYSA/MPD.
19. Letter from Raymond S. Patterson, New Jersey Department of Health, to Thomas Parran Jr., Division of Venereal Diseases, U.S. Public Health Service, 27 October 1926, File 3221 *The Naked Truth,* Box 2565, NYSA/MPD.
20. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 124.
21. Quoted in a letter of 9 July 1927 from George S. Hall to James Wingate, director of the Motion Picture Division, New York State Education Department, File 3221, *The Naked Truth,* Box 2565, NYSA/MPD.
22. Ray H. Everett, Division of Public Information of the American Social Hygiene Association, quoted on p. 4 in the Matter of the Appeal of Public Welfare Pictures Corporation on the denial of a license by the New York State Board of Censors, 27 September 1927, File 3221, *The Naked Truth,* Box 2565, NYSA/MPD. Although ASHA may not have "cooperated" with Cummins in the preparation of *The Naked Truth,* all evidence indicates that the clinical reels were made by ASHA and either sold or given to Cummins.

23. Cynthia Goldstein, "Early Film Censorship: Margaret Sanger, Birth Control and the Law," in *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics and Law,* ed. Bruce A. Austin (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988), 4: 189.
24. For more in-depth discussion of the Weber and Sanger films, see Kay Sloan, *The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), especially 86–94; Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 47–55; and Goldstein, "Early Film Censorship," 188–200. Another short film on birth control was made during the period, *The Law of Population; or Birth Control* (1917). Although a copy of the film is held by the Library of Congress it does not include credits and no information on the film has come to light.
25. James Reed, "Doctors, Birth Control and Social Values: 1830–1970," in *The Therapeutic Revolution: Essays in the Social History of American Medicine,* ed. Morris J. Vogel and Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 117–18.
26. Ibid., 109–15.
27. Quoted in David M. Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 128.
28. Margaret Sanger, "The War Against Birth Control," *American Mercury,* June 1924, 235.
29. Angus McLaren, *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 221.
30. Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown,* 123.
31. McLaren, *A History of Contraception,* 230.
32. Louis I. Dublin, "The Fallacious Propaganda for Birth Control," *Atlantic Monthly,* February 1926, 191.
33. Review of *Pitfalls of Passion, Variety,* 16 November 1927, 25.
34. Synopsis of *Scarlet Youth,* File 12944 *Scarlet Youth,* Box 2766, NYSA/MPD.
35. "Companionate marriage" was a term coined in the early 1920s to refer to greater gender equality in marriage. A central component of the philosophy was mutual sexual satisfaction, the use of birth control, and "the healthiness of sexual expression apart from procreative intentions" (D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters,* 266). The term was frequently confused with "trial marriage," a period in which a couple lived together before wedding vows were exchanged. The idea was popularized by Havelock Ellis in the late nineteenth century, and both companionate marriage and trial marriage were the subjects of several Hollywood films.
36. Review of *Unguarded Girls, Variety,* 4 September 1929, 13.
37. I have been informed by Robert Eberwein that *Sex Madness* is available at the Library of Congress. Unfortunately, I was unable to view it before this book went to press.

38. This plot device was allegedly cribbed from the stage play *To-Day,* in which a wife-turned-prostitute encounters her husband in a brothel.
39. "Two Obnoxious Films," *Variety,* 21 November 1928, 3.
40. Letter from Willis Kent to James Wingate, 14 September 1928, File 11411 *The Road to Ruin,* Box 2744, NYSA/MPD.
41. D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters,* 256–58.
42. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 128.
43. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 32.
44. This linear treatment of one of Goffman's schemes in *Stigma* (81) finds a very apt application in many exploitation films.
45. Review of *The Song of Life, Variety,* 20 October 1931, 21.
46. When nudist, narcotic, exotic, and other exploitation films are factored in, almost thirty new motion pictures appeared in the 1933–1934 period, making it one of the most prolific spans for nonburlesque exploitation movies.
47. The production history of *Damaged Lives* is somewhat muddled. According to the *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films, 1931–1940,* the movie was conceived in Canada by J. J. Allen, a distributor and exhibitor, and the Canadian Health Council to replace *The End of the Road* (1919). The new project represented a joint effort of Allen, the Council, and Columbia Pictures, whom Allen represented in Canada. As the notes in the *AFI Catalog* explain, "Sources are unclear concerning the film's production company, and the extent of Columbia's involvement in the production is unclear." The movie was apparently budgeted at $18,000, far less than the $60,000–$100,000 first proposed by Allen (2529–2530). *Damaged Lives* played on the exploitation circuit into the 1950s.
48. "A New Social Hygiene Motion Picture," *Journal of Social Hygiene* 19, no. 7 (October 1933): 408.
49. See Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 135–36.
50. This figure is quoted in Fee, "Venereal Disease," 182.
51. Review of *What Price Innocence, Variety,* 27 June 1933, 15; Review of *What Price Innocence, New York Times,* 26 June 1933, 16.
52. By 1938 Joseph Breen was warning Harry Cohn of Columbia that *What Price Innocence?* was not the kind of picture that the PCA could approve and suggested that the company withdraw applications for a reissue.
53. Review of *Enlighten Thy Daughter, Variety,* 20 February 1934, 25.
54. Review of *High School Girl, New York Times,* 16 March 1935, 19.
55. "Mass Sterilization for Human Betterment," *The Literary Digest,* 6 August 1932, 16.
56. "Nazi Decree Revives Sterilization Debate," *The Literary Digest,* 13 January 1934, 17.

57. "Oklahoma Puts Sterilization Law into Effect," *The Literary Digest,* 12 May 1934, 17. Speaking about a female patient, Dr. D. W. Griffin, superintendent of the Central State Hospital, claimed that without the operation the young woman would "be easy prey to underworld forces." Whether at home with middle-class parents or as wards of the state in institutions, young women were often characterized as incompetent and requiring outside forces to protect them from sexual adventurers.
58. See Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned Films: Movies, Censors and the First Amendment* (New York: Bowker, 1982), 215–17.
59. Esper's *The Seventh Commandment* (1932) was also known as *Sins of Love,* and footage from that film may have served as the basis for the film in *Modern Motherhood.* Both films are lost.
60. Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, "Birth Control and the Depression," *Harper's Monthly Magazine,* October 1934, 573.
61. "Birth Control Advocates Champion Their Cause," *The Literary Digest,* 10 February 1934, 15.
62. Debate on the economic impact of birth control often revolved around the "Townsend Plan." In 1933 a retired physician, Dr. Francis E. Townsend, devised a scheme that he claimed would put an end to the Depression. He proposed that every citizen over sixty receive a pension of $200 per month. According to Townsend, the young and old would no longer compete for jobs and the pension would be funded by a sales tax. The idea was extremely popular with older, middle-class Americans. For a more thorough discussion of the Townsend Plan, see Robert S. McElvane, *The Great Depression: America, 1929–1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 241–43. Two examples of the way the Townsend Plan influenced the birth control debate can be found in "Pro and Con: Is Birth Control a National Menace?", *The Reader's Digest,* July 1938, 90–94, and Robert C. Cook, "Bootleg Birth Control," *Colliers,* 15 July 1939, 12+.
63. " 'Worse Than a Crime; It's a Blunder,' " *The Literary Digest,* 10 December 1932, 18.
64. Bromley, "Birth Control and the Depression," 572.
65. See Reed, "Doctors, Birth Control and Social Values," especially 119–23.
66. Ibid., 86.
67. "The Accident of Birth," *Fortune,* February 1938, 108.
68. Quoted in ibid.
69. Again, see Reed, "Doctors, Birth Control and Social Values," especially 119–25, for a detailed account of the struggle.
70. D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters,* 247.
71. Henry F. Pringle, "What Do the Women of America Think About Birth Control?" *The Ladies' Home Journal,* March 1938, 14–15.

72. Skirball went on to produce two of Alfred Hitchcock's films, *Saboteur* (1942) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), in addition to a number of other mainstream pictures. *The Birth of a Baby* was said to have been the film in which he took greatest pride. See his obituary, "Jack H. Skirball," *Variety,* 18 December 1985, 99.
73. Quoted in "Baby—Whose *Birth of a Baby?,*" *Tide,* n.d., 12.
74. See Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750 to 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially chap. 7.
75. Quoted in Robbie E. Davis-Floyd, *Birth as an American Rite of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 54.
76. In *Brought to Bed,* Leavitt convincingly argues that women were complicit in putting themselves into the hands of obstetricians due to the increased mystification of medicine and the breakdown of the traditional social network that had supported woman-centered birth in the home (see 171–79, 189–95).
77. Davis-Floyd, *Birth as an American Rite of Passage,* 71–72.
78. See Douglas Gomery's discussion of how the "consumption" of children affected the business of film exhibition following World War II in *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 82–102.
79. Review of *The Birth of a Baby, Time,* 4 April 1938, 29; Jesse Zunser, review of *The Birth of a Baby, Cue,* 26 March 1938, 39.
80. Review of *The Birth of a Baby, Variety,* 9 March 1938, 14.
81. "Immoral or Educational?", *New York Times,* 17 March 1938, 20; Editorial, *The Nation,* 19 March 1938, n.p.; "And Forbid Them Not," *The New Republic,* 23 March 1938, 94.
82. See, for instance, Terry Ramsaye, "Rock-a-bye Baby," *Motion Picture Herald,* 26 March, 1938, 7–8; "New York Regents Ban 'Birth of Baby' Film," *Motion Picture Herald,* 23 April 1938, 38; "Women's Clubs at Sharp Odds over 'Birth of a Baby,' " *Motion Picture Herald,* 25 June 1938, 28.
83. "Controversies," *Life,* 25 November 1946, 101.
84. " 'Life' Banned for 'Birth of a Baby' Pictures," *Motion Picture Herald,* 16 April 1938, 18.
85. "*Birth of Baby* Pulling Smash $11,000 in Mpls., but *B'dcast* Weak $6,500," *Variety,* 2 March 1938, 8.
86. "*Baby* Injunction Decision Reserved," *Boxoffice,* 28 May 1938, 12.
87. "*Birth* Distributor Sued for $350,000," *Motion Picture Herald,* 3 September 1938, 54.
88. Though the film was not about birth control, the Legion of Decency feared that *The Birth of a Baby* and similar films would "traumatize young women, leading them to postpone marriage, thus playing into the

hands of the 'birth controlists.' " See Frank Walsh, *Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 155–56.

89. McLaren, *A History of Contraception,* 227–28.
90. Ibid., 229.
91. A. J. Rongy, "Abortion: The $100,000,000 Racket," *American Mercury,* February 1927, 145.
92. Marvin Olasky, *The Press and Abortion, 1838–1988* (Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988), 71–75.
93. Sander L. Gilman, *Picturing Health and Illness: Images of Identity and Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 68.
94. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 138.
95. "Great Pox," *Time,* 15 February 1937, 69.
96. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 139–40.
97. See "Are We a Nation of Prudes," *Collier's,* 6 February 1937, 66.
98. Review of *Damaged Goods, Film Daily,* 24 June 1937, n.p.
99. Review of *Damaged Goods, Motion Picture Herald,* 10 July 1937, 54; "Syphilis," *Motion Picture Herald,* 28 August 1937, n.p.
100. Fee, "Venereal Disease," 185.
101. Hollywood's half-hearted entry in the war on syphilis was the Warner Bros. biopic *Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet* (1940) with Edward G. Robinson.
102. Review of *No Greater Sin, Variety,* 17 June 1941, n.p.
103. Ibid.
104. Undated photographs, File 40659 *No Greater Sin,* Box 22566, NYSA/MPD.
105. "Something for the Soul," *Time,* 18 April 1949, 102.
106. Gidney Talley Jr., interview with the author, 27 June 1987.
107. Terrance Jennings Wharton's self-published *Xeromorphic #2* chronicles the run of *Dust to Dust* in Lancaster through newspaper clippings and ads from the local daily. Biographical information on Babb is drawn from David F. Friedman, *A Youth in Babylon* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990); Kenneth Turan, " 'You've Got To Tell 'em To Sell 'em,' Said Kroger Babb, and Did He Sell 'em," *The Washington Post,* 1 August 1977, sec. B, 1, 3; and Babb's obituary in *Variety,* 6 February 1980, 142–43. The Cleveland grosses are to be found in "The K. B. Story" from around 1970 in Babb's self-published *Hallmark of Hollywood Pipeline* 4 (Hollywood, CA: Hallmark, n.d.): 21.
108. "Something for the Soul."
109. Cited in D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters,* 286.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Janet Evans, "Love and the Single Woman," *Coronet,* April 1949, 171–78.

113. James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 40.
114. Ibid., 22.
115. This is all the more understandable when one realizes that *Mom and Dad* was an uncredited remake of *High School Girl* (1934), which Babb had toured under the title *Dust to Dust.* Even though hygiene films tended to be very similar, there was no mistaking it as the source for *Mom and Dad.*
116. Ira L. Reiss, *Premarital Sexual Standards in America* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960), 83–84.
117. Ibid., 195–202.
118. Alfred C. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1948), 245, 249.
119. Reiss, *Premarital Sexual Standards,* 146.
120. Ibid., 146–77.
121. Ibid., 178–94.
122. *Test Tube Babies,* pressbook, collection of the author.
123. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures,* 86–87.
124. "Doctors on Contraception," *Newsweek,* 24 February 1947, 58.
125. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet,* 171.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid., 172–74. Brandt points out that once venereal disease rates hit a low in the 1950s, government spending to control sexually transmitted diseases fell precipitously (174–98). By the 1960s, VD rates were on the rise again. Several theatrical features on venereal diseases appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, including *Damaged Goods* (Donna Productions, 1961, aka *V.D.*), a film unrelated to the Brieux play, *Devil in the Flesh* (REPA Film, 1967), and *Stigma* (Cinerama, 1972).
128. *Human Growth* generated a good deal of positive press coverage when it was previewed in Oregon schools in 1948. See for example, "Sex in the Schoolroom," *Time,* 22 March 1948, 71–72; "Where Babies Come From," *Newsweek,* 22 March 1948, 90; and "Sex Education," *Life,* 24 May 1948, 55+.
129. William R. Weaver, review of *Children of Loneliness, Motion Picture Herald,* 20 November 1937, 35.
130. Estelle B. Freedman, " 'Uncontrolled Desires': The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920–1960," in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History,* ed. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 203.
131. D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters,* 289.
132. Ibid., 292–93.

133. Freedman, " 'Uncontrolled Desires,' " 211.
134. Ibid.
135. See Rudolph Grey, *Nightmare of Ecstasy: The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood, Jr.* (Los Angeles: Feral House Press, 1992). Pages 39–48 cover recollections of those involved with the film, including some comments from Wood and Weiss.
136. Ibid., 20. This story has become a Wood standard.
137. Such scenarios were not limited to exploitation films. The case history of fifteen-year-old Jim presented in *Time* magazine ("Psychiatry at Work," 27 June 1955, 42–47) told of the boy's overbearing, masculine mother, who had wanted Jim to be a girl, and his effeminate father. Jim grew up doing housework and wearing girls' clothes. Psychiatry intervenes after Jim's arrest for indecent exposure and transvestism. Following months of treatment, "he got a crew cut, and he acquired a girlfriend and took her home to show Mama."
138. In her essay "Uncontrolled Desires," Estelle Freedman has observed that the terms "sex criminal," "pervert," "psychopath," and "homosexual" frequently overlapped in the contemporary literature and that the question exists as to whether "psychopath served in part as a code for homosexual at a time of heightened public consciousness of homosexuality" (213).
139. Ibid., 201.

## **Chapter 6** "The Monster That Caters to Thrill-Hungry Youth" *The Drug Film*

1. John Helmer, *Drugs and Minority Oppression* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 30–33.
2. David F. Musto, *The American Disease,* expanded ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 29. Musto's book remains the best historical overview of illegal drug use in the United States. For a more recent, journalistic take that succeeds in replicating the hysterical tone of earlier books and movies, see Jill Jonnes, *Hep-Cats, Narcs, and Pipe Dreams: A History of America's Romance with Illegal Drugs* (New York: Scribner, 1996). Another recent account that offers a more balanced view can be found in Mike Gray, *Drug Crazy: How We Got into This Mess and How We Can Get Out* (New York: Random House), 1998.
3. Helmer, *Drugs and Minority Oppression,* 33.
4. Musto, *The American Disease,* 43–44; Helmer, *Drugs and Minority Oppression,* 37.
5. See David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: Opiate Addiction in America before 1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 28–30.

Courtwright convincingly argues that Wright often bent facts and resorted to scare tactics to meet his legislative ends. Courtwright and others have speculated that stories about blacks raping white women while under the influence of cocaine were used to ensure the votes of racist Southern congressmen. See also George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), especially 275–82. Fredrickson discusses white efforts to justify lynching by constructing blacks as hypersexual beasts. It is useful to see the cocaine canard within the broader context of racism.

6. Musto, *The American Disease,* 7.
7. Richard J. Bonnie and Charles H. Whitebread II, *The Marihuana Conviction: A History of Marihuana Prohibition in the United States* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 12.
8. Ibid., 11.
9. Helmer, *Drugs and Minority Oppression,* 34.
10. For a detailed history of events leading to the passage of the Harrison Act, see Musto, *The American Disease,* 1–68.
11. Ibid., 16.
12. Ibid., 36.
13. See Courtwright, *Dark Paradise,* 88–91, for details on the profile of heroine addicts around the time of the Harrison Act's passage.
14. Bonnie and Whitebread, *The Marihuana Conviction,* 17.
15. See Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 96–106, for descriptions of these films.
16. *Ten Nights in a Barroom* (Chicago: Union School Furnishing Co., 1854) by Timothy Shay Arthur can be seen as the archetype for most drug films. The protagonist, Joe Morgan, is a mill owner who turns to drink to escape his problems. Morgan's sin leads to his degeneration and the loss of his mill. Stage versions of *Ten Nights* became a staple in traveling shows and at least three motion picture versions were made prior to 1914, including ones by Biograph (1903), Lubin (1903), and Selig (1911). By the time the Harrison Act was passed in 1914, the trajectory of *Ten Nights* had taken on classical dimensions that were easily adaptable to drug movies. Versions of *Ten Nights in a Barroom* after 1914 included one from Keystone/Triangle in 1917, a 1922 Arrow production, and one made by exploiteer Willis Kent in 1930.
17. "The Drug Menace in America," *Review of Reviews,* September 1919, 332.
18. Musto, *The American Disease,* 138.
19. Ibid., 133–34.
20. Fred F. Sully, "The Hidden Trail," *The Saturday Evening Post,* 31 May 1924, 50.

21. Musto, *The American Disease,* 190–93.
22. Constance Drexel, "Are We Our Brothers' Keepers?", *Harper's Monthly Magazine,* November 1924, 738.
23. Quoted in "Fighting the Dope Menace," *Literary Digest,* 28 August 1926, 25.
24. Robert A. Schless, "The Drug Addict," *The American Mercury,* February 1925, 196.
25. Ibid., 197.
26. Ibid., 199.
27. See Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence,* 106–16, for a detailed description of *Human Wreckage,* taken from the script. The film itself is lost.
28. Review of *Human Wreckage, Variety,* 4 July 1923, 22.
29. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence,* 117–18.
30. The description of *The Pace That Kills* in the *American Film Institute Catalog* differs greatly from existing prints of the film. The catalogue has Grace jailed for prostitution and Eddie entering a hospital for a cure. After months of agony he returns to his sweetheart and mother in the country.
31. Musto, *The American Disease,* 206.
32. Quoted in Courtwright, *Dark Paradise,* 143.
33. Michael Starks, *Cocaine Fiends and Reefer Madness* (New York: Cornwall, 1982), 31–32, 51. The Calloway tune was written by J. Russell Robinson with lyrics by Andy Razaf. The music and lyrics of "Sweet Marijuana," which the AFI *Catalog of Feature Films, 1931–1940* lists simply as "Marihuana," were written by Arthur Johnson and Sam Coslow.
34. Musto, *The American Disease,* 219.
35. Jerome L. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 22.
36. Bonnie and Whitebread, *The Marihuana Conviction,* 67.
37. John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930–1962* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 25–33, 42–44.
38. For a review of the various hypotheses and their supporters, see Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* especially 20–30.
39. Musto, *The American Disease,* 222.
40. McWilliams, *The Protectors,* 47.
41. Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 140–42.
42. Ibid., 142.
43. See Lester Grinspoon, *Marihuana Reconsidered,* 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 291–302, and Edward R. Bloomquist,

*Marijuana, The Second Trip,* rev. ed. (Beverly Hills, CA: Glencoe Press, 1971), 21–23.

44. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* 69. Larry Sloman debunks this tale in *Reefer Madness: The History of Marijuana in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1979), 60–63. According to Sloman's account, several days after the arrest of the young man, Victor Licata, he was revealed to suffer from "acute and chronic" criminal insanity. A year earlier, Tampa police had filed a petition to have Licata committed, but it was withdrawn when his parents promised they would take better care of him at home. Licata eventually hanged himself in the Florida State Mental Hospital in 1950.
45. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* 69.
46. H. J. Anslinger with Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," *The American Magazine,* July 1937, 151.
47. Wayne Gard, "Youth Gone Loco," *The Christian Century,* 29 June 1938, 812.
48. Albert Parry, "The Menace of Marihuana," *American Mercury,* November 1935, 489; "Facts and Fancies about Marihuana," *Literary Digest,* 24 October 1936, 8.
49. Sloman, *Reefer Madness,* 58–59.
50. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* 22.
51. Hildegarde Esper, interview with the author, 3 November 1988.
52. Ibid.
53. The doctor's name is spelled both Davis and Davies in the film; it is pronounced "day-vis."
54. *Narcotic* starred Harry Cording, who went on to become a minor Hollywood character actor, and Patricia Farley, whose career apparently went nowhere.
55. When asked why she and her husband decided to make exploitation pictures, Hildegarde Esper replied, "Newspapers! It was the Burma White trial going on at that time." Although Mrs. Esper could not recall the details of the case, nor have I been able to locate any information, *Marihuana* may have been loosely based on a trial that took place in the Los Angeles area in the mid-1930s.
56. In conversations, David Friedman has indicated to me that Dwain Esper put up the production funds for *Reefer Madness,* although I have not located independent confirmation of this.
57. "Local Grid Pix with *Glory* Only 8G in MPLS.; *Godfrey, Ziggy* Big 2ds," *Variety,* 30 September 1936, 11; "*Ramona* Fair $8,000 in Mpls.," *Variety,* 7 October 1936, 25; "Boles in Person ($23,000) Doing Better Than *Craig* on Screen ($7,000) in Mpls.," *Variety,* 14 October 1936, 8.
58. "*Hurricane* Whirlwind 22G in Chi; 'Wise Girl–Ken Murray Nifty $20,000,

*Holly Hotel* 28 G, *Fargo* 20G 3d Wk.," *Variety,* 19 January 1938, 7; "*Buccaneer*–Spitalny Snaring Big Chi Coin $40,000; Auer Personal Ups *Everything,* 18G; *Time* No Wow," *Variety,* 26 January 1938, 10; "Click Films Stud Chi; *Old Chicago* Starts Fast, Henie Good $15,000, *Buccaneer, Hurricane* H.O.'s Forte," *Variety,* 2 February 1938, 9.

59. Anslinger and Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," 18–19, 150–53; H. J. Anslinger with Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," *The Reader's Digest,* February 1938, 3–6.
60. Anslinger and Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," *The American Magazine,* July 1937, 18.
61. Memo from V. G. Hart to Francis Harmon, 21 December 1937, *Assassin of Youth,* PCA files.
62. Letter from Joseph Breen to Leo J. McCarthy, 28 September 1937, *Assassin of Youth,* PCA files.
63. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* 122–34.
64. Grinspoon, *Marihuana Reconsidered,* 236.
65. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, *Taxation on Marihuana,* Hearings, 27–30 April and 4 May 1937, 75th Congress, 1st Session, 24.
66. Grinspoon, *Marihuana Reconsidered,* 237.
67. Bonnie and Whitebread, *The Marihuana Conviction,* 267–69; Grinspoon, *Marihuana Reconsidered,* 382–83; William Novak, *High Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 205–7. Both the stepping-stone hypothesis and the antimotivational syndrome have made a comeback in the discourse on marijuana in recent years.
68. Musto, *The American Disease,* 228.
69. Hildegarde Esper interview.
70. Starks, *Cocaine Fiends,* 128.
71. Sloman, *Reefer Madness,* 142–43.
72. Quoted in David Thomson, *Showman: The Life of David O. Selznick* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 537. Selznick's comments now have an ironic ring given his taste for Benzedrine, as Thomson reports (231–32).
73. "Public Response So Sympathetic, RKO Rushing Out Mitchum's Next," *Variety,* 8 September 1948, 1–2; "Reefer Rap No B.O. Deterrent to Mitchum's Latest Picture," *Variety,* 22 September 1948, 1, 55.
74. Selznick soon sold his half of Mitchum's contract to Howard Hughes at RKO. Mitchum became one of the studio's few bankable stars during the Hughes regime.
75. "Crisis in Hollywood," *Time,* 13 September 1948, 100. The industry was far more concerned with its image as a harborer of communists than with an isolated instance of an actor smoking marijuana.
76. Starks, *Cocaine Fiends,* 128–29.

77. Lila Leeds with Bill Fay, "Narcotics Ruined Me," *Collier's,* 26 July 1952, 23.
78. Letter from Walter R. Creighton, chief, Division of Narcotic Enforcement, Dept. of Justice, State of California, to MPAA, 9 May 1949, *Wild Weed,* PCA files. Exactly what "past experience" Creighton was referring to is unknown.
79. Leeds and Fay, "Narcotics Ruined Me," 23.
80. Letter from George H. White, district supervisor of the Los Angeles Bureau, to Harry Anslinger, 29 June 1949, *Wild Weed,* PCA files.
81. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* 88.
82. Grinspoon, *Marihuana Reconsidered,* 239.
83. Jerry Mandel, "Who Says Marijuana Use Leads to Heroin Addiction?" *Journal of Secondary Education* 43, no. 5 (May 1968): 213.
84. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana,* 84–87. Wilson's article ("The Crazy Dreamers," *Collier's,* 4 June 1949) still managed to trot out all of the old marijuana stories, including the origins of the word "assassin" and yet another recounting of the Licata ax murders. The article also contained its share of internal contradictions. In one paragraph, Wilson correctly noted that marijuana "addicts" (an error in itself, as the weed is not physically addictive) did not suffer withdrawal symptoms when off the drug. Yet in another paragraph he recounts the story of a marijuana addict, "Geneva," whose whole body felt "dull and prickly" when she did not smoke, those sensations giving way to sneezing, watery eyes, and vomiting.
85. Leeds and Fay, "Narcotics Ruined Me," 23.
86. "Teen-Age Dope Addicts: New Problem?" *U.S. News & World Report,* 29 June 1951, 18–19.
87. James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 25–36.
88. Ibid., 37.
89. See Gilbert's interesting account of the Continuing Committee's work and its influence on the juvenile delinquency debate in ibid., 42–62.
90. Ibid., 18.
91. Ibid., 75.
92. One study, conducted by Isidor Chein, showed that areas with high drug use did not reflect a rise in delinquency and, conversely, that areas with low drug use were marked by a jump in delinquency. High-drug-use areas showed a higher incidence of income-producing crimes such as robbery and burglary and low-drug-use areas showed higher rates of violent crime such as assault, disorderly conduct, and nonrape sex offenses. This suggested to researchers that there were separate patterns of drug and nondrug delinquency. See Helmer, *Drugs and Minority Oppression,* 94.

93. Ibid., 100.
94. Ibid., 101.
95. The relaxation of restrictions that had permitted production of *To the Ends of the Earth* and other films had been reinstated.
96. "Narcotics and Youth," *Newsweek,* 20 November 1950, 57–58.
97. "An Ever-Growing Problem," *Newsweek,* 11 June 1951, 26–27.
98. John Gerrity, "The Truth about the 'Drug Menace,' " *Harper's Magazine,* February 1952, 28.
99. "New York Wakes up to Find 15,000 Teen-Age Dope Addicts," *Newsweek,* 29 January 1951, 23–24; "High and Light," *Time,* 26 February 1951, 24–25.
100. "Degradation in New York," *Newsweek,* 25 June 1951, 19–20; "Junkies," *Time,* 25 June 1951, 23; "Heroin and 'Hot Shots,' " *Newsweek,* 9 July 1951, 23. One of the more colorful stories ("Teacher's Nightmare," *Time,* 3 December 1951, 23) was about the arrival of a *pachuco* in a Wichita Falls, Texas, high school. On his first day at school, the new kid tried to date a pretty teacher, put his feet up on the desk and lit a cigar, called the principal "Skinny," and picked and won a fight with the toughest kid in school. He carried a gun and a wad of cash and was soon making connections with the dope ring operating in the school. The upshot of the article was that the boy was actually an undercover narcotics agent, Alexander Garza. The incident undoubtedly served as the basis for MGM's *High School Confidential* (1958), in which many of the scenes were duplicated by Russ Tamblyn as an undercover cop in a high school.
101. See, for instance, "Children in Peril," *Life,* 11 June 1951, 116–26. Almost all of the pushers pictured were either African American or Latin American. A particularly telling shot appears on 117, in which a white youth points out the black peddler who allegedly sold him heroin. The only thing missing is the caption, "J'accuse!"
102. Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage,* 70.
103. "The Junk War," *Newsweek,* 17 September 1951, 60.
104. Musto, *The American Disease,* 213; Sloman, *Reefer Madness,* 168. The fact that powerful pharmaceutical companies were doing a land-office business with tranquilizers in the 1950s may have played a role in Anslinger's decision to keep the drugs on the federal list.
105. Musto, *The American Disease,* 212.
106. Helmer, *Drugs and Minority Oppression,* 96.
107. Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Focal Press, 1976), 416–17.
108. *The Pusher* released by United Artists in 1959 should not be confused with *The Pusher* (1955) released by Social Service Pictures. The earlier film was squarely within the exploitation tradition, with a compilation

of old titles from trailers, footage from Esper's *Marihuana,* and new material delivered by a lecturer.

109. Starks, *Cocaine Fiends,* 192–93.

## **Chapter 7** "Timely as Today's Front Page"
## *Vice, Exotic, and Atrocity Films*

1. *Trapped by the Mormons* and *Married to a Mormon* (both 1922) were British films apparently never released in the United States. These films had certain generic similarities to the white slave films that had appeared prior to World War I, with Mormons enticing women to Utah and a life of polygamy. Some reports (unconfirmed) indicate that the Church paid producers to keep the movies out of the United States. Several anti-Mormon movies had been made before the war, such as the Danish *A Victim of the Mormons* (1911). See Richard Alan Nelson, "Mormons as Silent Cinema Villains: Propaganda and Entertainment," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 4, no. 1 (1984): 3–14.
2. Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 90.
3. Review of *The Red Kimono, Variety,* 3 February 1926, 42.
4. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence,* 91. Brownlow notes that the real Gabrielle Darley, whose story Mrs. Reid had plucked from court records and newspaper accounts, happened to see the film with her husband one day. She sued Mrs. Reid and won, taking "everything," according to Priscilla Bonner, who played Gabrielle in the film (93).
5. Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 187.
6. See Robert C. Allen's discussion of the religious roots of American antitheatricalism in *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), especially 46–51. Allen describes how the Puritans and their spiritual descendants believed that the two primary components of theater, mimicry and spectacle, mocked nature and God. He notes that as late as 1895 one commentator "estimated that fully 70 percent of the American population in the nineteenth century regarded theatergoing as sinful" (51).
7. Forrest Davis, "The Biggest Racketeer Falls," *Saturday Evening Post,* 30 October 1937, 12; "Bawdy Business," *Time,* 25 May 1936, 15; James Benet, "New York's Vice Ring," *The New Republic,* 10 June 1936, 124.
8. For a recent account of the Luciano prosecution, see Mary M. Stolberg, *Fighting Organized Crime: Politics, Justice, and the Legacy of Thomas E. Dewey* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), chaps. 6 and 7.

9. "Sex Spieler in Balto with German 'White Slave' Pic; Ads Banned," *Variety,* 25 November 1936, 25. It's unclear whether Pollard's picture was a German import or the *Variety* writer simply mistook it for a German film. According to the *AFI Catalog* the film had been floating around at least since 1930.
10. See, for example, Benet's "New York Vice Ring," and Forrest Davis's "The Biggest Racketeer Falls," as well as Robert I. Center, "The Halt of Racketeering," *Atlantic Monthly,* July 1940, 447–57.
11. Warner Bros.' *Marked Woman* (1937) with Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, and Eduardo Ciannelli was also "suggested by recent newspaper reports of the exposure of a New York Vice ring" (Review of *Marked Woman, Motion Picture Herald,* 6 March 1937, 39). The Warner Bros. movie had some similarities to Kendis's *Gambling with Souls.* In both films, the younger sister of the female lead becomes ensnared in the web of the vice lord. Although the *Motion Picture Herald* suggested that the Warners film concentrated on "unsavory drama," it was still more oblique in its depiction of the prostitution theme than any of the Kendis or Kent exploitation films.
12. This situation is quite similar to Gabrielle's in *The Red Kimono,* and Kent may have pilfered this plot element from the earlier film. He had, of course, been associated with Mrs. Reid on other projects.
13. Martha Chapin, who played Mae Miller in *Gambling with Souls,* appears as Tony's would-be victim in *The Wages of Sin.*
14. It is not known if winners were ever selected or prize money awarded. Chances are, the promises made by the producer to the audience were about as good as those made by Tony Kilonis to Marjorie.
15. " 'G Men' Center upon White Slavers," *The Literary Digest,* 29 August 1936, 26.
16. Ibid.
17. Stolberg, *Fighting Organized Crime,* 137.
18. Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue,* 189.
19. Benet, "New York Vice Ring," 126.
20. "Mrs. Warren's Profession," *The Nation,* 4 July 1936, 6.
21. "Vice in New York," *Fortune,* July 1939, 51.
22. Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 110.
23. Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film,* 2d rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 50–51.
24. Karl G. Heider, *Ethnographic Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 8.
25. Ibid., 6–7.
26. For a response to Heider, see Marcus Banks, "Which Films Are Ethno-

graphic Films?" in *Film As Ethnography,* ed. Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992), 116–29.

27. Heider, *Ethnographic Film,* 18.
28. The horror classification apparently stems from the fact that gorillas were included in several "old dark house" films of the late 1920s, the precursors to Universal's classic horror cycle, as well as movies like *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) and *King Kong* (1933). The film is given a thorough treatment in George E. Turner and Michael H. Price, *Forgotten Horrors: Early Talkie Chillers from Poverty Row* (Guerneville, CA: Eclipse Books, 1986), a volume that covers horror films and other movies with marginally fantastic elements.
29. Turner and Price, *Forgotten Horrors,* 27.
30. Those with a knowledge of natural history would have been tipped off far earlier. Several species native to North and South America are shown in Africa. A number of parallels exist between the controversy surrounding *Ingagi* in the early 1930s and the uproar over another exploitation film, *Snuff,* in the mid-1970s. See Eithne Johnson and Eric Schaefer, "Soft Core/Hard Gore: *Snuff* as a Crisis in Meaning," *Journal of Film and Video* 45, nos. 2–3 (summer–fall 1993): 40–59.
31. Turner and Price, *Forgotten Horrors,* 28.
32. Quoted in Francis L. Burt, "Officially 'Fake' Now," *Motion Picture Herald,* 13 May 1933, 14. In "White Heroines and Hearts of Darkness: Race, Gender, and Disguise in 1930s Jungle Films," *Film History* 6, no. 3 (autumn 1994): 314–39, Rhona J. Berenstein indicates that an investigation conducted by the Hays Office said that the "gorilla women" were played by white actresses in blackface. A print of *Ingagi* screened at the Library of Congress as well as the photos in the *Ingagi* pressbook clearly reveal that this was not the case.
33. Turner and Price, *Forgotten Horrors,* 28.
34. See David MacDougall, "Complicities of Style," in *Film As Ethnography,* ed. Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1992), 90.
35. Review of *Virgins of Bali, Variety,* 13 December 1932, 15.
36. Robert S. McElvane, *The Great Depression: America, 1929–1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 90.
37. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 35.
38. Ibid.
39. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 49.
40. *Angkor* was also known as *Forbidden Adventure in Angkor,* often simply

shortened to *Forbidden Adventure.* It should not be confused with another exploitation exotic from circa 1934 called *Forbidden Adventure,* in which two explorers in Borneo find a white woman living with a native tribe. This film was often known as *The Virgin of Sarawak* on the exploitation circuit.

41. According to distributor Roy Reid, Marshall Gordon, a nonunion director, was able to shoot the scenes after he "made a deal with the madam of a whorehouse on Selma Avenue (in Los Angeles), where 12 soon-to-be-wed native beauties were recruited. Each was to be paid $10 (in advance) for the one-day shooting schedule." See Chuck Teitel, "Film-Flam Man," *Los Angeles,* May 1989, n.p.
42. *Love Life of a Gorilla* (1937) was "assembled and edited by Samuel Cummins and Raymond Lewis," according to the titles. It contained at least some footage from *Ingagi.* Comparison of reviews, PCA files, and so on leads inevitably to this conclusion. Moreover, Charles Gemora, who played the ape in *Ingagi,* asserted that material in *Love Life of a Gorilla* had been lifted from *Ingagi* in a 31 January 1938 article, "Film Gorilla Tells Story of Love Life," by Frederick C. Othman in *Citizen.* (The location of *Citizen* is unclear from the clipping in the PCA files, but it may have been *Hollywood Citizen News.*) The Hays Office objected to the title when Cummins was negotiating for a Code seal. Among the alternatives Cummins suggested were *Private Life of Ingagi, Jungle Gorillas,* and *Gorilla Kidnappers. Love Life of a Gorilla* was also known as *Kidnapping Gorillas,* the title of a 1934 Kinematrade, Inc. film. *Love Life* may have incorporated some footage of this film as well.
43. See Pietrese, *White on Black,* 38–44, especially the British plate from 1795 on 38.
44. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology,* 83.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 99.
47. See George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), especially 275–82. Of particular interest is *The Negro a Beast,* published in 1900 by a religious press. Fredrickson mentions that the book's author claimed that blacks were literally apes and that it was "an apelike Negro" who was the actual "tempter of Eve" (276).
48. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 14.
49. Ibid., 151.
50. Ibid., 96.
51. McElvaine, *The Great Depression,* 187.

52. Not only was the "primitive" of blacks rejected by middle Americans, but the wild and primitive attributes embraced by the avant-garde were also antithetical to the beliefs of working- and middle-class America. See Pieterse, *White on Black,* 39.
53. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology,* 107. See also Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness,* 154–56, for the origins of the term.
54. David J. Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868–1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 139.
55. Ibid., 141–43.
56. May, *Homeward Bound,* 39.
57. Ibid., 59.
58. Gidney Talley Jr., interview with the author, 27 June 1987.
59. *The Hickman Case* (ca. 1928) may actually be the first atrocity film, but information about the movie is sketchy at best. It apparently revolved around the 1927 kidnapping, torture, and murder of young Marion Parker by Edward Hickman in Los Angeles and was evidently given limited release in the Southwest (see "2 Obnoxious Films," *Variety,* 21 November 1928, 3). Footage about the case turned up in the *March of Crime* series, although the origin of that footage is also unclear.
60. Review of *Love Life of Adolph Hitler, Variety,* 3 March 1948, 8.
61. For a general discussion of the power "Mau Mau" had as a signifier in the 1950s, see Joel Foreman, "Mau Mau's American Career, 1952–1957," in *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons,* ed. Foreman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 78–100.
62. See "Mondo Beyondo," *ecco* 19 (fall–winter 1993): 12–13.
63. Paul Boyer, *By Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 212.
64. May, *Homeward Bound,* 25–26.
65. Charles Kilgore and Michael Weldon, "Mondo Movies," *Psychotronic Video* 3 (summer 1989): 34.

## **Chapter 8** "They Wear No Clothes!" *Nudist and Burlesque Films*

1. Cited in William E. Hartman, Marilyn Fithian, and Donald Johnson, *Nudist Society: An Authoritative, Complete Study of Nudism in America* (New York: Crown, 1970), 15.
2. Adam Clapham and Robin Constable, *As Nature Intended* (Los Angeles: Elysium Growth Press, 1986), 12.
3. Clapham and Constable, in ibid., go into detail about the nudist movement in France and England, a history that does not concern us here.

4. Quoted in "Nudism as an Educational and Social Force," *Literary Degree,* 14 October 1933, 16.
5. Clapham and Constable, *As Nature Intended,* 70; Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 22.
6. See, for instance, Edmond Jaloux, "On Going Naked," *Living Age,* January 1931, 522–25, and H. R. Knickerboker, "The Russian Nudists," *Outlook,* April 1932, 221+.
7. Sources are not entirely clear on this point. Clapham and Constable, *As Nature Intended,* 72–73; Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 25–26.
8. Boone finally succeeded in 1958 when a Supreme Court decision found in his favor. But his victory was also his downfall, for the decision spawned dozens of other nudist magazines, not to mention "girly" magazines that siphoned off a large percentage of nudist magazine subscribers whose major interest was not in articles about the most recent sunbathers' convention.
9. Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 37–38.
10. Ibid., 202. The authors date the film 1926 but unfortunately do not give a title or any production credits.
11. *Elysia* press material, collection of the author.
12. "Boring but Banned," *Variety,* 21 November 1933, 31; "Nudie Pic's Publicity Squawks Didn't Help," *Variety,* 28 November 1933, 37; "Ban Nudie Pic," *Variety,* 26 December 1933, 14; "Chi Censors Pink 2 Pix; Others Nix *Elysia,* Nudie," *Variety,* 9 January 1934, 4.
13. "*Elysia* OK'd in Chi By Court Ruling," *Variety,* 27 March 1934, 7.
14. "Foy Plans Test Case over Nudie Pic," *Variety,* 20 February 1934, 2.
15. Ibid.
16. Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 20.
17. "Our Unfeathered Friends," *New Outlook,* June 1934, 61–63.
18. The cartoon appears on page 26 of the 30 June 1934 edition of *Motion Picture Herald.*
19. "Our Unfeathered Friends," 64.
20. "The Debate over Nudism," *The Literary Digest,* 3 February 1934, 47; "A Defense of Nudism," *The Literary Digest,* 17 March 1934, 47.
21. Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 202.
22. Although the nudist movement presented an egalitarian face, the general exclusion of single men from its ranks illustrates how the movement's leaders still subscribed to essentialist notions of male and female sexuality.
23. Letter from Hobart Glassey to Joseph Breen, 15 June 1936, *Elysia,* PCA Files.
24. "Best L.A. Labor Day Biz in 5 Yrs.; *Dragnet* Hooking Sock $56,400, 3 Sites; *Egyptian* Big 40G, *Eden* 19G," *Variety,* 8 September 1954, 8.

25. Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 203.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 214–15.
28. Ibid., 203; Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned Films: Movies, Censors and the First Amendment* (New York: Bowker, 1982), 247–48.
29. Quoted in Hartman, Fithian, and Johnson, *Nudist Society,* 113–14.
30. "Burlesque Movies," *Cavalcade of Burlesque* 1, no. 3 (May 1952): 18.
31. Epes W. Sargent, "Burlesk's Ban Viewed as Windfall for the Biz; Yesteryear's Standards," *Variety,* 5 May 1937, 48.
32. Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 197.
33. Ibid., 231.
34. See Ann Corio with Joseph DiMona, *This Was Burlesque* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1968), 71–77, and Morton Minsky and Milt Machlin, *Minsky's Burlesque* (New York: Arbor House, 1986), 33–34.
35. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness,* 243.
36. William Green, "Strippers and Coochers—The Quintessence of American Burlesque," in *Western Popular Theatre,* ed. David Mayer and Kenneth Richards (London: Methuen, 1977), 157.
37. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness,* 250.
38. For a concise version of the New York crackdown, see ibid., 249–58. For a thorough account of the Gotham ban, see Andrea Friedman, " 'The Habits of Sex-Crazed Perverts': Campaigns Against Burlesque in Depression-Era New York City," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 2 (1996): 203–38. A sex hygiene exploitation film from the period, *Human Wreckage* (1938, aka *Sex Madness*) played up the connection between burlesque and sex crimes as a shabby middle-aged man is prompted to murder a child after attending a burlesque show. A more recent mobilization of the contagion metaphor against adult entertainment is analyzed in Eric Schaefer and Eithne Johnson, "Quarantined! (A Case Study of Boston's Combat Zone)," in *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture,* ed. Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, and Jane Shattuc (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).
39. James P. Cunningham, "Issue Not for Code Administration but Hays, Breen Holds," *Motion Picture Herald,* 24 April 1937, 14–15.
40. "Strip Tease Films Showing in Chicago under City License," *Motion Picture Herald,* 24 September 1938, 56.
41. James M. Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema: The Legion of Decency and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, 1933–1970* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 68.
42. Quality Pictures Company flier, 1947, collection of the author.

43. Green, "Strippers and Coochers," 157.
44. Bernard Sobel, *A Pictorial History of Burlesque* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1956), 135.
45. "Minsky's Hideaway," *Newsweek,* 8 November 1954, 96.
46. Ibid., 97.
47. Review of *Hollywood Burlesque, Variety,* August 17, 1949, 22. Existing prints of *Hollywood Burlesque* include material from other burlesque films including several large segments from *Peek-A-Boo* (1953).
48. "Canned Burlesque," *Time,* 16 April 1951, 105.
49. Ibid.
50. Review of *International Burlesque, Variety,* 6 December 1950, n.p.
51. Although my primary concern here is the use of burlesque films in motion picture theaters, it must also be noted that the shorts, or segments of the features, were often used in live burlesque theaters between acts.
52. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness,* 231.
53. Ibid., 240.
54. Ibid., 237–38. Most dancers did not speak during their routines, but some of the most popular strippers carried on a running banter with their audiences. Gypsy Rose Lee and Evelyn West are notable examples. West replicates this technique in one film, *A Night at the Follies* (1956). Moreover, strippers in many burlesque films also fill in as "talking women" in comedy sketches.
55. Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" first appeared in *Screen* 16, no. 3 (autumn 1975): 6–18. For critiques or reformulations see, for instance, the introduction and essays in Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment, eds., *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture* (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1989); Noël Carroll's deconstruction of the theory in "The Image of Women in Film: A Defense of a Paradigm," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 4 (fall 1990): 349–60; and Steven Cohan's analysis of male to-be-looked-at-ness in *Picnic* in "Masquerading As the American Male in the Fifties: *Picnic,* William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film," *Camera Obscura* 25–26 (January–May 1991): 42–72.
56. Margaret Dragu and A. S. A. Harrison, *Revelations: Essays on Striptease and Sexuality* (London, Ontario: Nightwood, 1988), 82–83.
57. Liz Kotz, "Striptease East & West: Sexual Representation in Documentary Film," *Framework* 38–39 (1992): 47–63.
58. R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 30–31.
59. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 39–40. In her reassessment of *The Feminine Mystique,* Joanne Meyerowitz states that historians have unquestioningly accepted Friedan's account of

postwar ideology, which she argues was more varied and complex than Friedan's version. Meyerowitz demonstrates that popular ideology was varied and complex, but one is still left with the impression that the "ideal" woman constructed by the dominant ideology was passive and domestic. See Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946–1958," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960,* ed. Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 229–62.

60. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 116.
61. Ibid., 112.
62. Ibid., 119. For an elaboration of the way containment has been applied to popular culture, see Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
63. See Ramona Curry, "Mae West as Censored Commodity: The Case of Klondike Annie," *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 1 (fall 1991): 57–84.
64. For every rule there are obvious exceptions. Jane Russell and many of the roles she played during the period come immediately to mind.
65. Tom Gunning, " 'Now You See It, Now You Don't': The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," *The Velvet Light Trap* 32 (fall 1993): 5. Also see Gunning's "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film: Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 2 (1986): 63–70.
66. Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 264. See Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies,* ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 213–29.
67. Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?,* 264–65.
68. Dancers had tremendous autonomy in choreographing their numbers and creating their costumes. St. Cyr takes great pride in the dance routines and costumes she developed and claims a major role in shooting her first film short, *Love Moods* (1952): "I sort of directed it myself. I told the people where to put the props and the lights. . . . So I was capable of handling that part of it. I just told the camera [*sic*] where to be placed, how to focus on me, and we got along very well" (Lili St. Cyr, interview with the author, 26 March 1993).
69. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 136.
70. Jane Gaines, "Introduction: Fabricating the Female Body," in *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1.

71. See Joan Riviere's influential 1929 essay "Womanliness as Masquerade" in *Formations of Fantasy,* ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), 35–44; See also Jenkins's discussion of masquerade and female comic performance in *What Made Pistachio Nuts,* 265–69.
72. It is worth pointing out that dancers in burlesque films displayed a wide array of body types; no single "ideal" was ever offered by the films. To the contrary, it appears that a broad range of figures and faces was included in the movies in an effort to have something for everyone. For instance, Jennie Lee, who appeared in *Ding Dong* (1951) and *Peek-A-Boo* (1953), among other films, was a plump blond. Headliners like Tempest Storm would be considered rather heavy by current standards. On the other hand, some dancers, such as Lili St. Cyr and Lotus Wing, were very slender. Wing and other Asian dancers made appearances in burlesque films. Several burlesque features as well as shorts had black casts. According to an article in *Cavalcade of Burlesque* 1, no. 3 (May 1952), the black-cast films were "well received by burlesque hungry patrons, both colored and white" (18).
73. Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 141.
74. Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 29, 20.
75. See Allen, *Horrible Prettiness,* 92–94, on tableaux vivants, or "living pictures."
76. *Midnite Frolics,* File Memo, 22 February 1949, PCA files. A cold version would have been submitted to the PCA for approval.
77. Ibid.
78. Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?,* 265.
79. I am spelling Page's first name the way she was originally billed in her films, rather than "real" spelling (Bettie) her fans now use.
80. Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 137–38; emphasis in original.
81. See Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984), 21–28, and John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 291–95.
82. Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men,* 21–28.
83. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness,* 286.
84. This quote comes from Edmund Wilson's "Burlesque Shows" in *Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Random House, 1952), 281. My thanks to Janet Staiger for this reference, which opens up a number of questions about the audience for burlesque and burlesque films. Wilson's account seems to undermine the conventional wisdom that the audience at burlesque shows was rowdy and

boisterous, providing a vocal accompaniment to the strip performance with calls of "Take it off" and so on. When those shouts did occur they may have been, in some part, a reaction to the vocalizations of strip-teasers such as Lee and West, evoking a kind of mutual call-and-response pattern. During a conversation, David Friedman indicated to me that the audiences for burlesque films were generally more taciturn than those at live burley shows. Audience reactions to burlesque may have differed by period, region, type of theater, type of routine, and a variety of other factors.

85. Roland Barthes, "Striptease," in *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 84.
86. Lynne Segal, *Straight Sex: Rethinking the Politics of Pleasure* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 284.
87. Ibid., 242.

## **Conclusion** The End of Classical Exploitation

1. Kroger Babb, "We've Got the Ball!" *Hallmark of Hollywood Pipeline,* extra ed. (Hollywood: Hallmark, 1971).
2. See, for example, "The Big Leer," *Time,* 9 June 1961, 55–56; John Crosby, "Speaking Out: Movies Are Too Dirty," *Saturday Evening Post,* 10 November 1962, 8–10; Don Wharton, "How to Stop the Movies' Sickening Exploitation of Sex," *The Reader's Digest,* March 1961, 37–40; Bosley Crowther, "Sex in the Movies," *Coronet,* June 1961, 44–48; "Sex and Celluloid," *Newsweek,* 11 December 1961, 57. Among the other major films evoked in the articles were *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1960), *Elmer Gantry* (1960), *Psycho* (1960), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), and *Go Naked in the World* (1961).
3. Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned Films: Movies, Censors, and the First Amendment* (New York: Bowker, 1982), 91.
4. Ibid., 93–94.
5. Ibid., 92.
6. For those unfamiliar with all the details of this important case, see de Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 77–83, and Ellen Draper, " 'Controversy has probably destroyed forever the context': *The Miracle* and Movie Censorship in America in the Fifties," *The Velvet Light Trap* 25 (spring 1990): 69–79.
7. See de Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films,* 83–84.
8. Ibid., 234–35.
9. Ibid., 84.
10. Quoted in ibid., 85.

11. Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 29–30.
12. Ibid., 34.
13. Ibid., 36.
14. Take, for example, Klaytan W. Kirby's *A Virgin in Hollywood* (1952), which cost $17,000 even though it featured a "name" in Dorothy Abbott, a regular on TV's *Dragnet.*
15. Sam Arkoff with Richard Trubo, *Flying Through Hollywood by the Seat of My Pants* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1992), 46.
16. Ibid., 66–67.
17. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 186.
18. See Bruce A. Austin, *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1989), 82. See also Gomery, *Shared Pleasures,* 180–95.
19. Arthur Mayer, *Merely Colossal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953), 226.
20. "When the Gunpowder King Blew Up over Mussolini's Show," *New York Sunday Mirror,* 7 October 1934, 9; "*Ecstasy:* The Movie That Caused a 'War,'" *Look,* March 1937, 28–31.
21. "*Ecstasy* in 17th Week in Chicago," *Motion Picture Herald,* 24 April 1937, 27.
22. A. L. Finestone, "Foreign and 'Sex Hygiene' Films Invite New Decency Offensive," *Boxoffice,* 11 December 1938, 12.
23. Review of *Ecstasy, The New York Post,* 25 April 1936, n.p.
24. Review of *Ecstasy, Philadelphia Exhibitor,* 15 May 1936, 49.
25. Review of *Ecstasy, National Legion of Decency,* 21 May 1936, n.p.
26. Mayer, *Merely Colossal,* 233.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 233–34.
29. Ibid., 234.
30. James M. Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema: The Legion of Decency and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, 1933–1970* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 94.
31. "Sexacious Sellin Best B.O. Slant for Foreign Language Films in U.S.," *Variety,* 9 June 1948, 18.
32. David F. Friedman with Don De Nevi, *A Youth in Babylon: Confessions of a Trash-Film King* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), 100.
33. Ibid., 101.
34. Ibid.
35. See, for instance, "The Nudeniks," *Time,* 23 June 1961, 51.
36. Gordon Hitchens, "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth about Exploitation Films with Barry Mahon," *Film Comment* 2, no. 2 (1964): 10.

37. Richard S. Randall, *Censorship of the Movies: The Social and Political Control of a Mass Medium* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 219.
38. "N.Y. Over-Seated for Sex," *Variety,* 3 July 1969, 70.
39. David F. Friedman, personal interview, 14 April 1994.
40. David K. Frasier, *Russ Meyer—The Life and Films* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1990), 5.
41. Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984), 50.
42. Lawrence Birken, *Consumer Desire: Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 12.
43. I am currently researching and writing a history of the sexploitation film that will cover the period from 1960 to the late 1970s. My comments on sexploitation should, therefore, be considered provisional.
44. Birken, *Consuming Desire,* 35.

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