

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

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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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Note that uncredited illustrations are from my own collection.

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