6 * Let the Sweet Juices Flow: *WR* and Midnight Movie Culture

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The 1960s were an amazing time, an eventful time of protest and rebellion. . . . It was a march out of time, too—out of the constricted and rigid morality of the 1950s. The Beats had already cracked the façade and we, the next generation, broke through it.

SUZE ROTOLO, *A Freewheelin' Time*, 5.

Sexual suppression forms the mass psychological basis for a certain *culture, namely, the* patriarchal authoritarian *one.*

WILHELM REICH, *The Sexual Revolution*, excerpt from Escoffier, *Sexual Revolution*, 578.

At every film festival, Cynthia Gremer writes, "there is that one film that electrifies everyone";[1] the film that catches people by surprise, makes reputations, launches movements, and spotlights previously ignored national cinemas. At the 1971 Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals, "that one film" was Yugoslav director Dusan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*. *WR* won the Luis Buñuel Prize and received a fifteen-minute standing ovation at Cannes. In Berlin, "audiences and critics were floored" by the film's "sexual audacity," and *WR* received the prestigious FIPRESCI International Critics Award.[2] The fact that the film had been banned in its native Yugoslavia only added to its prestige as a subversive and controversial product. By the time it opened at the New York Film Festival, on October 13, 1971, American art house and festival audiences were prepared to be impressed. Advance publicity, along with full-page ads in the *Village Voice*, emphasized the film's potential appeal to counterculture audiences, while simultaneously playing up its international reputation for slightly older art house patrons.[3] Cinema 5's Dan Rugoff staged a $35,000 party at the Plaza Hotel to celebrate the film's opening night. And Cinema II booked the film for a commercial run, scheduled to begin October 14, 1971, the day following what everyone assumed would be its wildly successful New York Film Festival premiere.

Although the film did not exactly bomb, it did not meet critical or popular expectations. It received mixed reviews in the *New York Times* and *Village Voice* and "was disappointing at $8,500" its opening week at Cinema II (*Variety*, October 20, 1971, 8). That same week, Louis Malle's *Murmur of the Heart*, which also began its commercial run immediately following a New York Film Festival debut, made $17,076 in box-office receipts. Despite that *WR* gained revenue during its second and third weeks at Cinema II, it remained at the low end of box-office revenues throughout its initial New York run. Even *Variety* was at a loss to explain *WR*'s performance, as it consistently made less money than the trade journal predicted it would. "A mystery this one," it wrote during week four, when *WR* once again failed to develop "legs" (*Variety*, November 10, 1971, 9). By the fifth week, *WR* had slowed to $5,900 in weekly revenues, and the word was out: if you're planning to see the film in an art house setting, you'd better see it soon. The movie that had been "that one film" at Cannes "that electrifies everyone" closed at Cinema II after only eight weeks.[4]

At the same time that *WR* had its tepid opening at Cinema II, yet another film was making its art house debut. Alexandro Jodorowsky's *El Topo* (1970), the Surreal Mexican film that J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum describe simply as "a trip,"[5] was picked up by Allen Klein's Abkco Films. As *Variety* reported, Abkco took the film that had been "playing for months on midnight-only showings at a New York buff house, and announced that it would engage in bookings aimed solely at the 'counter-culture'" (*Variety*, October 20, 71, 7). The picture had a huge billboard sign in Times Square even before it had any bookings; it made $36,000 during its first week (*Variety*, November 3, 1971, 8).

El Topo eventually returned to the midnight circuit, where it was frequently paired with *WR*. The two films became cult classics, among the first films that "that young people and cinephiles would see over and over again at packed midnight screenings, where the odor of cannabis was stronger than the Lysol."[6] The story of *WR*'s early reception in the United States,[7] then, parallels the story of increasingly divergent trends in art cinema exhibition, divergent trends that pointed out cultural tensions that usually played out around sex, drugs, and politics.

Sex Sells? Part One

In one episode of *Mad Men*, the award-winning AMC serial drama set in an ad agency in the 1960s, a junior copywriter discusses a mildly sugges-

tive airline ad with her boss. "Sex sells," she tells him. "Says who?" he replies. "Just so you know, people who talk that way think that monkeys can do this."[8] Fast-forward the storyline to 1971, and reset the series in a film distribution company; the exact same conversation could take place.

The cinematic marketability and market value of sex fluctuated throughout the early 1970s. I'm not speaking here of sexual themes or suggestive plot elements, but of explicit representations of and references to body parts and sexual acts. New Yorkers seemed jaded and oversated with sex. "Sex, sex, sex," Andrew Sarris wrote in his review of *WR*. "How much can you write about this subject without wearying the most lecherous reader? And how much can you show of sex on the screen before the dirtiest old men begin stifling yawns?"[9] The decline in box office revenues for porn in 1971 seemed to underscore Sarris's point. In October, *Variety* reported that "business for both homo and hetero hardcore has been on the decline in recent months." This was a national trend, and while the majority of New York adult theaters held "to admission prices set during the initial hardcore harvest . . . drastic admission reductions . . . [had] been underway for sometime in both LA and SF." And "where they go," *Variety* ominously predicted, "NY usually follows" (*Variety*, October 20, 1971, 5). The predictions turned out to be accurate. By the end of 1971, New York adult theaters had slashed their admission prices from $5 to $3, and they had eliminated the live strip tease show that had previously accompanied film screenings. In fact, it was the fall in revenues at hardcore theaters that convinced owners to experiment with midnight movies, screenings that would—they hoped—bring in the counterculture crowd.

While adult theaters were slashing admission prices, New York City's First Erotic Film Festival (November 5–December 12, 1971), a festival that coupled hardcore titles with such experimental films as James Broughton's *The Bed* (1968) and *The Golden Positions* (1970; figure 6.1), did extremely well, even with a $10 admission price. Of course, the success of the festival may have had a lot to do with the fact that it had selected downtown art theaters as venues and had highlighted "erotic" rather than "hardcore" as the festival's theme. In addition, the festival's inclusion of erotic avant-garde films, and the presence of competition judges associated with avant-garde culture of the 1960s (Andy Warhol, Gore Vidal, and Betty Dodson), may go a long way toward explaining the festival's success. As J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum note, in the early seventies "the film avant-garde retreated from the populism" that had marked some of the best experimental films of the 1960s, "into a

Fig. 6.1 James Broughton's *The Golden Positions* (1970) was among the films that blurred the lines between experimental films, art house movies, and sexploitation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

rigorous involvement with issues of film form."[10] For fans of the avant-garde of the 1960s, the festival represented something of a return to a populist erotic strain of experimental cinema.

The Avant-Garde of the 1960s

The avant-garde of the 1960s played a key role in blurring the lines between experimental film, art house film, and sexploitation. And, as a result, it formed much of the impetus for the later emergence of midnight movies. As Michael O'Pray writes, both Andy Warhol and Jack Smith "reached beyond the small but highly influential avant-garde enclave to access a wider audience."[11] In part this was due to the ways in which both Warhol and Smith used popular culture in their work;[12] in part, though, it was due to the venues in which their work was shown. Warhol, Smith, Kenneth Anger, Carolee Schneemann, and James Broughton participated in the movement that has come to be known as "underground" (named for the basement theaters in which the films were often shown). The films themselves had counterculture cachet as they directly engaged

the themes of sex, drugs, and politics associated with the counterculture movement, often using rock and roll for the soundtrack. And the underlying "story" of most of the films had to do with young adults forging their own personal sexual and artistic identity, but this was not the intense and serious meditation that one often sees in earlier youthful avant-garde films. Although films of Stan Brakhage and Maya Deren (also concerned with a kind of coming-of-age in postwar America) emphasized interiority and what Juan Suárez calls "romantic notions of the unique poetic vision," underground films frequently undermined "any access to an inner self while emphasizing style and surface."[13] The tone of the films was often lighthearted; sex especially was most frequently shown in a humorous way.

Space does not permit a full discussion of underground cinema here, but a few examples should help illustrate the complicated relationships between sex, art cinema, avant-garde cinema, and counterculture branding that characterized underground cinema and that helped make the eventual cult status of *WR* possible. Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1964) was a groundbreaking campy avant-garde film. The plot of the film is very simple. A biker, Scorpio, reads a comic book, pets his cat, gets dressed, and goes to a biker party. The structure of the film, however, manages to reference themes of leather-clad bikers, Jesus, the occult, James Dean, Marlon Brando, juvenile delinquency movies, and Nazis. There are flashes of nudity and genitalia, the suggestion of sex and drug use, and no dialogue. The soundtrack is composed solely of popular music from the 1950s and 1960s: Ricky Nelson, the Angels, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, Ray Charles, and Elvis Presley—to name a few. The film was censored for indecency and the case went to the Supreme Court, which ruled in Anger's favor.

Like Anger, Andy Warhol continually worked to blur the distinction between avant-garde culture and trash culture, drawing on advertising, camp aesthetics, Hollywood B movies, and gay pornography for inspiration. In fact, it could be convincingly argued that, more than any other director mentioned in this section, Warhol pushed the envelope on what could be shown—or even suggested—on-screen. *Blow Job* (1964) is a forty-five-minute reaction take, showing the face of a man who is receiving the eponymous act. *Chelsea Girls* (1966) shows the actor Ondine shooting heroin and brutalizing an actress. *Bike Boy* (1967) invokes biker culture and European art cinema, as it shows a biker lathering up. *Vinyl* (1965) is Warhol's version of *Clockwork Orange* and, like Stanley Kubrick's later version of the same novel, shows explicit scenes of torture and sex.

More important for our purposes, however, Warhol's underground films encouraged modes of viewing that foreshadowed (or perhaps enabled) the audience mode that would soon be associated with midnight screenings. Warhol is most noted for his two lengthy films: *Sleep* (1963, over five hours) and *Empire* (1964, eight hours). As I have described elsewhere, audience members rarely sat in rapt attention for nearly six hours, watching a man sleep. Rather they were apt to come and go; to talk to the screen and to their friends; to eat, drink, smoke, and get stoned—all the behaviors later associated with midnight screenings were already present in the early underground exhibitions associated with Warhol.[14]

Like Warhol, Jack Smith is noted for his radical reconception of what might be said to be truly avant-garde. Inspired by the films of Maria Montez, star of exotic B movies such as Robert Siodmak's *Cobra Woman* (1944), Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963) abandons conventional narrative to depict what Constantine Verevis calls "a pantheon of gorgeous and ambiguously gendered 'creatures' in a loosely connected series of tableaux set to an inspired collage of scratchy recordings."[15] After the release of the film, reviewer and filmmaker Jonas Mekas wrote that *Flaming Creatures* had "attained for the first time in motion pictures a high level of art which is absolutely lacking in decorum; a treatment of sex which makes us aware of the restraint of all previous filmmakers."[16] Smith's film caused a national scandal. It was banned in twenty-two states and in four countries. Mekas himself brought the film to various screenings throughout the 1960s and, for his pains, was arrested.[17]

The comedic quality of Smith's film carries over into later underground films. James Broughton's *The Bed* (1970), one of the films shown at the Erotic Film Festival mentioned above, is hilarious. The film shows a bed traveling slowly downhill. Eventually it settles in a meadow and becomes the site of all manner of strange couplings. Characters—mostly nude—appear and, in the words of *WR*, "fuck freely." Broughton himself appears as a nude Pan, sitting in a tree, serenading the revelers. Carolee Schneemann's *Fuses* (1967)—discussed below—shows explicit shots of Schneemann and James Tenney making love, as observed by Schneemann's cat. Karen Johnson's *Orange* (1970) is a lengthy close-up of the peeling, sectioning, licking, and eating of a navel orange. The film is heavily indebted to Andy Warhol's *Eat* (1963), in which Robert Indiana eats a mushroom for twenty-five minutes. *Orange* won a prize at the 1970 International Erotic Film Festival. Finally, Paul Morrissey's films *Flesh for Frankenstein* (1973) and *Blood for Dracula* (1974) not only show hilarious hetero fucking, but employ actors who originally got their start making pornography.[18] Perhaps, more important, these films—designed to appeal clearly

to the counterculture—were rated X and played in art houses, porn theaters, and midnight movie lineups throughout the 1970s.

Sex Sells? Part Two

On the other side of the sexual divide, the media was still conjoined by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations, and at times a strange prudishness crept into even the most alternative outlets. This development also had an impact on cinema. Jonas Mekas devoted one of his October 1971 "Movie Journal" columns to condemning what he referred to as title "censorship." The *Village Voice*, home of Mekas's column, had "refused to print an advertisement with the title of Larry Rivers's 1969 film, 'Tits,'" he reported (*Village Voice*, October 14, 1971, 71). That same week, the *New York Times* did run an ad for the film, playing at the Bleeker Street Cinema. But the paper changed the title of the film to *Breasts*.

In the parlance of the times, then, the late 1960s and early 1970s were "schiz" (from schizophrenic) when it came to showing sex on-screen. As the success of the New York Erotic Film Festival demonstrates, counterculture and experimental film fans still regarded the cinematic depiction of sex as interesting and even somewhat "subversive." Amos Vogel dedicated three chapters to the topic of subversive sexuality in his book *Film as a Subversive Art* (1974), and the section in which these chapters appear is labeled "Weapons of Subversion: Forbidden Subjects of the Cinema."[19] Furthermore, the programming of the Erotic Film Festival itself played up the notion of subversive sexuality. At the same time that Larry Rivers's film *Tits* was being renamed by the mainstream press, *Lenny Bruce without Tears* (1971) was the headliner film of the Erotic Film Festival.[20] It played all four theaters to packed houses. Bruce, who had been arrested repeatedly on obscenity charges for his use of language onstage, was something of a counterculture hero; certainly his defense of words directly engaged a generation that had retooled "fuck" ("the F word") for conversational use.[21]

But at the same time that "erotica" clearly sold and that sex itself could be marketed to the counterculture, porn seemed to be temporarily in financial trouble. Interestingly enough, at the other end of the cultural spectrum, another moneymaker of the early 1960s—art house cinema—faced similarly difficult circumstances. And though porn experienced a strong revival with the release of *Deep Throat* in 1972, art house cinema never regained the financial success it enjoyed in the early 1960s.

Art House Woes

As Douglas Gomery notes, "the peak of the pure art house" came sometime in the mid-1960s.[22] Certainly throughout the seventies, independent art houses struggled to maintain their competitive edge and falling revenues were a fact of life ("houses will see more than $10,000" over the weekend "and that represents a record at the Agee I and II," as *Variety* noted earlier). At the Surf Theatre in San Francisco, where I lived, there were increasing changes in the 1970s. Free coffee was offered in the lobby (it was Farmer's Brothers, but it was brewed European style and strong) and the concessions stand began selling imported French cigarettes, as well as pastries, popcorn with "real butter," and European chocolate. An expensively priced espresso bar and café opened next door to the theater. Initially the café was there to serve the patrons' pre- and post-screening alimentary needs and was accessible only through the Surf Theater lobby. As the seventies progressed, however, the café's street door began opening more and more frequently to foot traffic, to clients who did not plan to see the films at all.

In part, this was an early counterculture form of what Naomi Klein calls "branding," a finely calculated attempt to connect product to an entire lifestyle image.[23] Branding had always been a part of art house culture, as Barbara Wilinsky demonstrates in her excellent history, but the increasing reliance on concessions and the café to generate revenue signaled a definite market change at the Surf.[24] Certainly it was one indicator of falling box office revenue.

As early as 1971, the theater also began changing its schedule in ways that ran slightly counter to the "European experience in America" brand it otherwise cultivated (the Surf always played Édith Piaf and Jacques Brel tapes in the auditorium prior to the screenings). Not only were crowd pleasing foreign titles revived more frequently (François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* [1959], for example), but classic Hollywood titles such as *Casablanca* (1942), *To Have and Have Not* (1944), and *Duck Soup* (1933) increasingly replaced subtitled films in the calendar. In a move clearly designed to draw gay audiences away from revival houses such as the Castro, the theater began scheduling blocks of films oriented around film stars who had specific gay appeal—Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, and Joan Crawford. These minifestivals frequently replaced the auteur and movement series (e.g., *Nouvelle Vague* and Antonioni retrospectives) that had been favored at the Surf throughout the 1960s.

Where San Francisco and Los Angeles go, "NY usually follows" (*Variety*, October 20, 1971, 5). And, as with the porn theater examples cited above,

New York art houses, too, experienced box office woes. In 1972 the Walter Reade chain, "one of the pioneers of the art house," sought a merger with Mayfair Atlantic Corporation. According to *Variety*, "the merger of Mayfair into the Walter Reade Organization . . . [was] 'designed to alleviate in some degree' the financial difficulties experienced of late by WRO [Walter Reade Organization] in generating or obtaining funds to meet immediate commitments" (*Variety*, October 6, 1972, 6). Bluntly put, Walter Reade sought a merger to avoid bankruptcy.

There are many reasons for the fall in art house box office revenues in the early 1970s. The rise of the New Hollywood meant that edgier American films were opening in neighborhood theaters so you no longer had to go downtown to see something provocative, and many of those films (*Easy Rider* [1969]; *Straw Dogs* [1971], to name just two) spoke to an increasingly violent American condition in ways that the foreign films did not.

The 1970s were also a time when, as Douglas Gomery notes, television was radically changing the way American audiences watched film.[25] And this was true of American art house audiences as well as the larger moviegoing public. Public Broadcasting Service stations increasingly showed films from the Janus Film Collection—subtitled and uninterrupted—in their line-ups. Series on PBS such as *An American Family* (1973) brought discussions about documentary ethics—discussions that had been common among cinephiles of the 1960s—into the mainstream press.[26] Commercial television, too, developed programs with "special audience" appeal. As early as 1963, the networks began targeting coffee house habitués with folk music programs such as *Hootenanny* (ABC). In 1965, *The Smothers Brothers Show* made its first appearance on CBS. *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, whose very title announced its intended appeal to a counterculture audience, first aired on NBC in 1968 and ran until 1973. *The Prisoner* (1967–1968), an existential British serial drama, ran on CBS in 1969. Norman Lear radically changed what network television meant to the counterculture, with shows such as *All in the Family* (1971, CBS). And throughout this period, news specials about Vietnam, poverty in America, and civil rights also attracted attention. Finally, in Manhattan, cable television emerged as early as 1965; on November 8, 1972, HBO relayed its first broadcast.[27]

I have discussed television's counterculture market at length for reasons that I hope will become clear later. For our purposes now, however, the most interesting art house competition came neither from the New Hollywood nor from television, but from midnight screenings that targeted the counterculture. To begin, this was a categorically different

kind of competition; midnight audiences did not necessarily patronize late night screenings in lieu of art house films; rather, they went to midnight flicks in addition to art house movies. Given the starting time for midnight flicks, frequently viewers went to both art house and midnight movies on the same night—often at the same venue. Further, since art houses themselves often sponsored midnight screenings,[28] and since films moved easily between midnight and art house runs, patrons were not necessarily choosing a specific venue or even one film over another. What they were choosing was a different mode of viewing, and the relationship that developed between art house and midnight movie screenings was a complex, symbiotic one. I use the term "competition" here simply because box office revenues for midnight films continued to rise throughout the seventies, whereas revenues for regularly scheduled art house bookings fell.

Midnight Screenings and Cult Films

The term "midnight movie" derives from several established media practices. Throughout the 1950s local television stations around the United States aired low-budget genre films as a staple feature of their late night programming. And TV played a major role in training an audience of boomers to enjoy watching what Jeffrey Sconce calls "paracinema" late at night.[29] But as Eric Schaefer points out, there was a cinematic tradition of midnight exhibitions for exploitation films long before local TV stations brought us *Creature Features*.[30] In segregated areas of the country, theaters regularly programmed "midnight rambles," midnight screenings of films—including, but not limited to, African American films—specifically targeted to a segregated black audience. However far back one traces their roots, however, theatrical midnight screenings turned up with increasing frequency during the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1975, every American urban area that I know of had regularly established Friday and Saturday night midnight theatrical shows.

As a film category (not just a time for screening, but a label describing the kinds of films shown), midnight movies mix high art and low culture in ways similar to the paracinema catalogues that I have described elsewhere.[31] Screenings ran the gamut, including such disparate titles as Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932), George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), Stephen Sayadian's (Sayadian was AKA Rinse Dream) *Café Flesh* (1982), John Waters's *Pink Flamingoes* (1972), Ken Russell's *The Music Lovers* (1970), David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977), and, of course, the film that finally

edged out all competitors, Jim Sharman's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). In terms of cultural practice and philosophy, midnight screenings partake of an aesthetic tradition that Hoberman and Rosenbaum link to surrealism, to McMahonism, to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* (Notebooks on Cinema) and *Nouvelle Vague*, and to the film underground of the 1960s. Here, art films mingle with trash titles to "encourage a reading strategy much like the one that Fredric Jameson proposes in *Signatures of the Visible*," as I put it elsewhere. "That is, they invite us to 'read high and mass culture as objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena, as twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under capitalism.'"[32]

What happened to *WR* in the New York marketplace mirrors what happened to a number of films that showed disappointing box office receipts in their initial art house runs but that became cult hits in their subsequent midnight bookings. These were not always demanding collage films that especially reward multiple viewings, as *WR* is. Rather, they were often quirky "little" films. Philippe de Broca's charming *King of Hearts* (1966, *Le roi de coeur*), did not do well at the box office in its initial commercial art house run, but it became a midnight movie favorite in San Francisco. So, too, did Hal Ashby's quirky *Harold and Maude* (1971), a film that also suffered at the box office in its initial run. Other films—Alejandro Jodorowsky's *El Topo* (1970) and Emile de Antonio's *Millhouse* (1971), for example—premiered on the midnight circuit and then moved into art house distribution *after* attracting a following (*Variety*, October 20, 1971, 7). These films frequently returned to the midnight circuit after their art house run ended.

What distinguished midnight screenings from traditional art house exhibitions? And why would a film do well in one situation and not the other? To begin, midnight films were shown in a variety of locations. Art houses did schedule midnight films, but in many cities this was a late development, occurring only after porn theaters, bump and grind houses, revival houses, and some local neighborhood first-run theaters had begun booking midnight shows. Second, the target audience for the films was different. During normal business hours, art houses catered to an eclectic group of patrons. Émigrés in suits and dress coats rubbed elbows with counterculture college students dressed in ripped jeans. This often created a nice atmosphere, as the audience bonded around its mutual love for a frequently obscure film. The fact that outside the theater the audience had little shared common culture was beside the point.

Midnight screenings, however, took place in a countercultural setting. Most of the patrons were young. All of them seemed to come from what

Raymond Williams might call the same "cultural formation," that is, they tended to share a common politics and a common system of social values.[33] Although I rarely smelled marijuana during a regularly scheduled screening at the Surf Theatre, I frequently smelled it at midnight shows. In fact, drugs were part of the midnight movie experience and some of the most popular films—*El Topo*, for example—were "stoner" or "head" flicks," movies that seemed to reward a slightly altered mental state on the part of the audience.[34]

Midnight shows and their relatively low ticket prices encouraged multiple viewings of the same films. Films frequently had long runs, or were brought back for subsequent bookings, and there was less competition during that time slot. Before the advent of VCRs, interested cinephiles pretty much had to see movies in the theater, when they were booked. And in New York, during the 1960s and 1970s, there were a lot of films that we felt we had to see to maintain our cultural capital. Hollywood films would show up on television a year or two after the conclusion of their theatrical run, but they were usually cut to accommodate commercials. Small independent films or foreign flicks rarely showed up on commercial television, and if they did they were dubbed into English, edited for content, and interrupted by ads. As a result, most of us simply didn't have the money and time to re-view first run films or classic art house offerings as often as we wanted. It was in fact our inability to "own" our favorite films that led Grove Press to launch its published film script series in the 1960s.

Midnight screenings, on the other hand, allowed us to develop complex relationships with films over time. In the case of especially difficult films, such as *WR*, midnight screenings were invaluable; the multiple viewings allowed us to get over our initial discomfort with the movie or just to analyze it in greater detail. In some cases, midnight screenings enabled a kind of obsessive or "cult" viewing (over and over and over again) that traditionally scheduled films simply couldn't support; even if you went every night, traditionally scheduled films always reached the end of their runs. When midnight films left a venue, you always knew they'd be back (especially if they had a following).

Throughout this section I've compared art house and midnight screenings, as though they were diametrically opposed. What I want to stress, however, is the kind of symbiotic relationship that grew up between regularly scheduled art house programming and midnight fare. The fact that films opened in one arena and passed so easily into the other, the fact that midnight screenings "saved" many films that are now out on the Criterion label as "classics"—these things suggest a complex

financial and cultural relationship between these two modes of exhibition, a relationship that definitely merits further study.

"Comrades, Fuck Freely!"

Despite the symbiotic relationship that grew up between midnight movies and art house fare, though, there was a tension within the intellectual elite during this time period, a fear that the counterculture was simply taking over the cultural landscape. Although it comes later in the 1970s, Sidney Lumet's *Network* (1976), written by live anthology television auteur Paddy Chayefsky, illustrates this tension nicely. Usually read as an indictment of the increasing substitution of infotainment for hard news, the film also satirizes the degree to which commercial television was willing to court the youth market during this time period (see the above-listed television programs, which were designed to have specific counterculture appeal) and to abandon previously established norms for intelligent drama. In the film, young executive Diana Christensen (Faye Dunaway) ruins the career of her older lover, Max (William Holden), when she changes programming to reflect a predominantly youth taste culture. "I want counter-culture; I want anti-establishment," she tells her programming staff. Among the shows she introduces, *The Mao Tse Tung Hour* gets the most play in the film. The *Mao* hour revolves around the Ecumenical Liberation Army (ELA), a group that stages bank robberies and abductions and films its members doing so. Christensen's idea is to use the raw ELA footage under the guise of news (so that her sources are protected and she won't be obliged to turn the film over to the FBI), write weekly backstory for the crimes, and produce a resulting drama that will tap into the nation's hunger for angry programming.

Throughout *Network*, a sharp distinction is made between people who grew up with television (the Baby Boom Generation) and those who didn't. The latter—the Maxes of the world—are presumed to have real emotions and real cultural values. The boomers, represented by Diana, are shallow, able to think only in sound bites and scripted plot lines. The fact that they are also attractive enough to turn the head of a respectable figure such as Max is part of their very danger. Certainly, the havoc they wreak on the Culture Industry in the film is palpable. Beyond its profound pessimism about television itself, *Network* neatly taps into a post-Watergate anxiety about the lasting legacy of the counterculture on the body politic and on culture.

Within the art house market, too, cultural tensions were apparent. As Raymond Durgnat notes in his book on *WR*, "Until the mid-60s, most

tastes rather inclined to the traditional high culture-ish, humanist, seriousness satisfied by auteurs like Renoir, Bergman, Resnais, early Fellini, and Antonioni. By the mid-60s this older audience was vastly amplified by a younger, wider audience, or films which combined a certain 'educational IQ' with exuberant scandal, such as Ken Russell's *The Devils* and Nic Roeg's *Performance* (both 1970), and Woody Allen's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex but Were Afraid to Ask* (1972)."[35] It was this wider audience to which, Durgnat predicted, *WR* would appeal.

I don't intend to argue here that *WR* did poorly at the box office simply because it established itself as a counterculture film at a time when the counterculture was both courted and somewhat feared. As poststructuralism has taught us, binary oppositions are always problematic and certainly, in the rich cultural stew of the sexual revolution, neat cultural divisions are impossible to sustain. What I do want to argue, however, is that *WR* made its appearance in America when the nation was anxious about the direction that culture and cultural production would take. The fact that *WR* was so easily seen—and perhaps dismissed—as a counterculture film (one made for the Dianas of the world) is, however, one possible reason that it was earmarked for the midnight movie circuit early in its New York run.

WR: Mysteries of the Organism is a radical collage film and, as such, it's a deuced hard movie to summarize adequately. To begin, the "WR" of the title stands both for "Wilhelm Reich" and for "World Revolution," and it is precisely the marriage between Reich's ideas and a reinvigorated Marxism that forms the main theoretical thrust of the film. "This film is, in part, a personal response to the life and teaching of Dr. Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957)," the opening titles tell us. "All his life Reich fought against pornography in sex and politics. He believed in work-democracy, in an organic society based on liberated work and love." These titles are followed by raw 16 mm footage, showing leashed dogs outside a diner; a close-up of a "No dogs allowed" sign, prominently displayed in the diner window, completes the segment. On the soundtrack, Tuli Kupferberg—who reappears throughout the film—chants verse including the lines "Who will police our judges? And who will will our will?"

Cut to another shot, another street. A trio that Raymond Durgnat describes as "beatnik-cum-hippie" strolls by: two women, one of whom is pregnant, and a man played by Kupferberg (Durgnat, 13). They stop to unpack a box carried by one of the women. As Durgnat notes, the items they bring out and put on all "have critical intent." "US flag+steel helmet+surplus quasi uniform+machine carbine+dolls are all typical props of Street Theater protests and demos against the Vietnam War.

(Protestors burned dolls as symbols of napalmed children.) Background graffiti complement this humanitarian angle. 'Only Revolution Ends War,' 'Pill,' a row of hammer-and-sickles" (Durgnat, 14). Following this scene, we have the final segment of the film's "Overture," showing the "egg game." Here, another counterculture trio passes a whole egg yolk, hand to hand. This group, which will return throughout the Yugoslavia sequence, end by rubbing the yolk on themselves and each other, while Eastern European folkdance music comes up on the soundtrack. Over this sequence the title credits roll (Durgnat, 14–15).

After the "Overture," there is a long segment about Wilhelm Reich. Reich studied with Freud and eventually came to believe that all physical and mental illness came from repressed sexual energy. In one of his best-known works, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Reich argued that sexual repression fosters an authoritarian personality, one that might infect an entire society. Partly as a result of this work, Reich had to flee Germany; he came to the United States.

In the United States, Reich continued his work on what he came to call "orgone," the orgasmic energy which needs release and accumulation. He used touch alongside the talking cure in treating patients; taking an active role in repositioning patients' bodies, feeling their chests, and sometimes asking them to loosen or remove clothing. These methods caused a split between Reich and the rest of the psychoanalytic community. Reich did continue to practice, but he did so without affiliation to Anna Freud. Then, in 1947, a series of critical articles about orgone and Reich's political views appeared in the *New Republic*.[36] As a result of these articles (which claimed that Reich was treating cancer with orgone accumulator boxes), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began an investigation; the FDA won an injunction against the interstate sale of orgone accumulators. Reich was charged with contempt of court for violating the injunction. He was sentenced to two years and died in prison. In August 1956 and again in March 1960, several tons of his publications were burned by the FDA.

During the Reich segment of *WR*, images from what Raymond Durgnat identifies as an old Sexpol film, circa 1930, represent a copulating couple. "A prism effect, like a mosaic, shows multiple views of the lovers, from seven different angles, at different moments. . . . The array softens, *distances*, the sexuality, which becomes, not 'fleshless,' 'abstract,' but emblematic . . . philosophical" (Durgnat, 17–18). This opening gambit is followed by a long documentary section featuring interviews with Reich's daughter and son, his barber, and with some of the townspeople from Rangeley, Maine, where he settled. There are photographs of Reich

Fig. 6.2 Milena (Milena Dravic) and friends in *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971).

in handcuffs and shots of the public incinerator on Gansevoort Street in New York City, where his books and papers were burned. A voiceover details Reich's professional life. Finally, we are introduced to Drs. Sharaf and Lowen, both practicing Reichian therapists. Part of a therapy session with Lowen is shown, and Sharaf explains the accumulator.[37]

The second major thread of the film is the fictional, Yugoslavian story. The heroine of this story is Milena (figure 6.2): a Communist, feminist, and practicing Reichian (she has a picture of Reich and an orgone accumulator in her apartment). Milena falls in love with a Russian ice skater visiting Yugoslavia with the Soviet Ice Capades. However, he has a hard time reciprocating her passion. When he finally does let himself go, he finishes by decapitating her with his ice skates. At the end of the film, Milena's head, retrieved by the police, is placed in a dish of water, from which it begins to speak. Intercut throughout Milena's story are a variety of fictional and documentary texts. There's footage of Jackie Curtis, transvestite "Superstar" of Andy Warhol's Factory. Like Milena, Jackie is looking for a man, and like Milena she continually meets with heartbreak. Another sequence shows a meeting of *Screw* magazine's editorial board, and publisher Al Goldstein explains *Screw*'s political credo. *Screw*'s editor-in-chief, Jim Buckley, visits sculptress Nancy Godfrey, who wishes to make a plaster cast of his erect penis. Finally, artist and sex-educator Betty Dodson also makes an appearance.

On the more political side of things, there are clips from *The Vow*, a dramatic Soviet-era propaganda film that lionizes Stalin; there's a shot

of Red Square in a segment showing a hundred thousand Chinese waving their Red Books at Mao; there is what appears to be documentary footage of a man receiving electroshock therapy; and there are scenes of Tuli Kupferberg marching in his marine uniform in various locales.

Some of these segments are juxtaposed in ways that facilitate analysis. When the ice skater (whose name, interestingly enough, is Vladimir Ilyich—just like Lenin's) strikes Milena, for example, the film cuts to a close-up of Stalin from *The Vow*. One authoritarian tyrant is linked here, it would seem, with another. And, at the end of the film, when Milena's head tells us "Cosmic rays streamed through our coupled bodies," the film segues to Milena's poster of Reich, the man who believed in the healing benefits of orgone energy. For the most part, however, the film defies easy exegesis. Even Raymond Durgnat, whose book on the film probably provides the best analysis, is uncharacteristically speculative in his reading. At one point, he lists eleven different possible explanations for Vladimir's murder of Milena, each one framed as a question. "Possibility 5. Is V.I.'s brutality typical of 'Men' whose phallonarcissistic pride savages Women? Possibility 6. Is the film itself sado-sexist, as yet another lovely woman is 'punished' by Men . . . ?" (Durgnat, 49).

In a way, this resistance to exegesis makes perfect sense in a film where documentary "evidence" inevitably segues into propaganda or staged melodrama, that is, where "truth claims" and "history" are continually shown to be constructs and narratives. But it also facilitates the film's status as something of a "head flick." Precisely because there is very little linear plot development, it's fairly easy (in terms of enjoyment, anyway) to enter *WR* at any point and more or less make of it what you will.

It was precisely this elliptical quality of the film that nettled some reviewers. Writing for *The New York Times*, Vincent Canby called *WR* "an occasionally comic and brilliant collage movie that leaves me cold" (*New York Times*, October 14, 1971, 52). David Bienstock invoked his full title, Curator of Film, Whitney Museum of Art, when he wrote a scathing review for the Sunday *New York Times*. "I have never, in all my years of moviegoing, booed a film, no matter how bad, boring or insipid. . . . It is because I have a deep rooted respect and love for filmmakers that booing has never been a part of my film vocabulary, that is, until I saw Dusan Makavejev's film *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*." Bienstock was especially incensed at the way the film treated Reich's work. And booing, then became "the proper response for a film that in the name of freedom, joy and the 'avant-garde,' exploited, misinterpreted and maligned the very man's work that it professed to hold dear. Unfortunately, the deception

of the film is masked so slyly and subtly that its insidiousness is not easily apparent. And it was this that outraged me." He went on to target the film's editing specifically, claiming that it obscures and often misrepresents "what is really going on" (*New York Times*, November 7, 1971, sec. 2, 9). Even the *Village Voice* gave the film mixed reviews. Amos Vogel liked *WR*; Andrew Sarris condemned it for "affect[ing] profundity" (*Village Voice*, November 11, 1971, 67).

Not every publication gave *WR* such a negative review. *Newsweek*, for example, called it a "brilliantly original swipe at all prevailing political systems" and gave it a uniformly positive write-up (*Newsweek*, November 1, 1971, 90). Still, with negative notices appearing in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Village Voice*, and with so many other films to see in New York, it's understandable that art house patrons might stay away.

Sex Sells, Part Three

It's interesting that *WR*'s overt sexual content was rarely cited in reviews as the reason that critics did not like the film. For the record, there is a lot of sex in the movie. Not only does the Sexpol footage show couples copulating, but we see Milena's roommate and her soldier-boyfriend disporting rather freely throughout several early segments of the Yugoslavia story. In one scene, reminiscent of a similar sequence in *Deep Throat*, Milena comes home to find her roommate Jagoda in the middle of making love to her boyfriend (this is a small East European apartment—so she literally walks in on them). "Oh, I see we have company," she says, as she takes off her skirt, lights a cigar, and puts her feet up to read an article about Karl Marx falling in love. "He didn't even finish his tea," Jagoda giggles. "Ever ready, our military." The camera closes in on a photo of Wilhelm Reich—which is hanging over the daybed. As it pulls back out, Jagoda and Ljuba are still fucking. "The military hasn't been laid in six months," Jagoda giggles and holds up fingers to indicate the number of times they've climaxed.

Throughout the film, couples have intercourse and there are shots of full frontal nudity. The documentary footage is no less explicit. When Jim Buckley visits sculptress Nancy Godfrey to have his penis cast, the entire process is shown in detail. Godfrey strokes Buckley's penis until it's erect, covers it with plastic—stroking all the while, and then molds the plaster over the plastic sheet. Later in the sequence, we see her lovingly handle the final cast product (which is pink and somewhat translucent and a remarkably good likeness to the real thing), feeling it for

rough edges, and smoothing one side of it. In another art-doc sequence, Betty Dodson discusses orgasm while sitting in front of a striking nude charcoal sketch; in the shot the nude dominates the frame. The art work at the offices of *Screw* likewise dominate the shot, and in one remarkable sequence, publisher Al Goldstein holds up a molded fake vagina, complete with pubic hairs donated, he tells us, by the female members of the magazine's staff.

There is so much sex in the film that Dan Rugoff, the film's distributor, posted warning signs in front of Cinema II. The posters read: "Some people will be offended by this film's strong language and its sexual freedom." As *Variety* noted, Rugoff followed a similar policy when he distributed Paul Morrissey's *Trash* (1970) (*Variety*, October 20, 1971, 7). In that instance, such signs had seemed to lure audiences in; in the case of *WR*—the film *Variety* called the New York Film Festival's "first more-or-less porno feature"—the signs may have scared people away (*Variety*, October 20, 1971, 6).

Certainly outside New York, the film's explicit sexual content was a problem. In December 1971, Rugoff's company, Cinema 5, took out a large ad in the *New York Times* to "berate Boston's three daily newspapers for refusing to accept ads" for *WR*, when the film opened there (*Variety*, December 29, 1971). To a certain extent, the *New York Times* ad was misleading, since it seemed to credit sophisticated New Yorkers for giving the film a warmer reception than it, in fact, received in Gotham. But the ad worked to renew a certain curiosity about the film and, to a certain extent, helped to establish a basis for the film's revival on the midnight circuit.

There are many reasons that *WR* finally achieved cult status during its revival midnight run. And the film's sexual content was certainly one of them. As any casual glance at the underground comic books of the era shows, the counterculture was heavily invested in sex, and explicit sex-coupled-with-politics was guaranteed to attract substantial midnight movie crowds. Reich, himself, was an important counterculture icon. At Cody's Books in Berkeley, there was an entire bookshelf unit (floor to ceiling) devoted to Reich's works that had been reprinted by Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux. This stood immediately next to a similar unit devoted to the works of Hegelian philosopher Herbert Marcuse. Both Reich and Marcuse were considered important theorists for the New Left. Although Reich's work wasn't quoted as frequently as Marcuse's, his influence can be felt in the dominant political slogan of the time: "Make love, not war" reads—at this remove anyway—as virtually a Reichian aphorism.

Furthermore, unlike David Bienstock and the Reich Museum, who were offended by the film's depiction of Dr. Reich, counterculture audiences liked the overall comic tone of the movie, which they read as a celebration of free love, and of Reich's spirit.[38] One of Milena's lines, "let the sweet juices flow," received an exuberant cheer from every midnight audience I experienced during this time period. The movie was *fun*. Despite a few "downer" moments—Reich's arrest and the burning of his books, the electroshock footage, and some random clips—*WR* was basically a comedy. Even Milena's decapitation was funny. The scene in which her head is removed from a bag, placed in a saucer of water, and begins to speak was reminiscent of scenes from *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* (1962), another film popular on the midnight circuit, and it always elicited a laugh. *WR* ends with the photo of Reich that recurs throughout the movie, the picture of a smiling, happy man. It was that image of Reich, the laughing sexual outlaw, that we took away from the film.

In addition, the counterculture political themes of the film were attractive to an audience still engaged in fighting the Vietnam War. The segments in which Tuli Kupferberg, dressed in military drag, parades with his faux carbine and growls, were the most obvious in this regard. But the way in which the film critiqued both Western and Eastern political systems—while still holding out the hope of a transformative and liberating, sexy Marxism—fit nicely with the political zeitgeist of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It's indicative here that Amos Vogel did not include *WR* in the sex chapters of *Film as a Subversive Art*, but rather in the section called "Left and Revolutionary Cinema." Calling it "unquestionably the most important subversive masterpiece of the 1970s," he helped cement the film's reputation as one of *the* counterculture films of the era.[39] In fact, the 1974 edition of *Film as a Subversive Art* features a famous still from *WR* on its cover (figure 6.3).

Finally, the appearance in the film of people such as Jackie Curtis and Betty Dodson, made famous by the avant-garde underground of the 1960s, also gave *WR* a certain counterculture cachet. Certainly, the film seems to have more in common with the underground and with Godard's collage movies than with anything else. While working on this chapter, I happened to resee Carolee Schneemann's *Fuses* (1964–1967), an erotic celebration of Schneemann's relationship with a man, as seen through the eyes of a cat. It's a remarkable film, not the least for being such a direct expression of female erotic pleasure and sexual desire. And the images are beautiful. After watching the film, I opened Schneemann's book *Imaging Her Erotics* and in one of those remarkably serendipitous moments, found the notes she'd written after first viewing *WR*. "What

Fig. 6.3 The iconic photo from *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) was used to illustrate the cover of Amos Vogel's 1974 book *Film as a Subversive Art*.

can it mean of range to home," she writes, "that I know everyone in the film except the Yugoslav actors." Later, she notes, "In '59 Jim and I 'discovered' the writings of Reich. Was *Function of the Orgasm* one of the arcane books I used to find in the mammoth alleys of University of Illinois Library. In mystic hunter grace for somber dusty hours wandering the aisles slowly until I felt an energy pull from the shelves." She concludes

the section with notes about casting for another, previous film, *Meat Joy*. The section is worth quoting at length.

> "Casting" for *Meat Joy* (1964), by watching people in the streets, in restaurants—anywhere and went up to strangers whose physical presence was unselfconsciously sensuous, sensitive, integral when I approached these strangers to explain we would come into unpredictable exemplary celebration of flesh and physicality in motion, light sound, many or certainly several had been in Reichian therapies. And I said, Reich inspired my work, his writings had been the kick in the pants for my courage, audacity—to make vision concrete.[40]

To Conclude

What I have tried to do in this essay is, in a way, my own version of trying "to make vision concrete" by using the case study of one film to trace the intertwined cultural discourses and market histories of a specific time and cultural space. The release of *WR* in the United States engaged discourses about pornography, the function of art cinema, Wilhelm Reich, and sexual politics. It also highlighted certain market trends within the intellectual community and engaged the growing cultural tensions that existed between different generations and social formations within that market. The choice of one film to highlight a certain historical moment is always controversial. It is not the case that *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* is the only film that might be used here to get at the points I have tried to make. But I would argue that it's the best exemplary film use for such a reason in this volume. A number of art films in the 1970s engaged with Reich's theories, particularly those regarding the relationship between sexual repression and fascism: Luchino Visconti's *The Damned* (1969), Elio Petri's *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* (1970), Costas-Gavras's *Z* (1969), and Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1971). However, as James Roy MacBean forcefully argues, "of all the films just mentioned, Makavejev's is the only one explicitly inspired by the filmmaker's desire to come to grips with the life and work of Wilhelm Reich."[41] What makes this fact especially relevant to the volume at hand is the relevance of Reich himself. Among the many books that were burned at the public incinerator on Gansevoort Street was the volume from which the "sexual revolution" took its name, Wilhelm Reich's *The Sexual Revolution*, translated from *Die Sexualität im Kulturkampf*, by Theodore P. Wolfe, 1936.

Notes

1. Cynthia Gremer, "Yugolsav Entry Hailed at Cannes," *New York Times*, May 24, 1971, 26. Most subsequent citations to newspapers will appear in text.
2. "Essential Cinema; *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*," March 10, 2006, accessed July 28, 2012. www.fest21com/blog/newyorkfilmfestival/essential_cinema_wr_mysteries_of_the_organism.
3. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, art theaters attracted an age-diverse crowd. For more, see Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).
4. "Yugoslav Entry Hailed at Cannes," *New York Times*, May 24, 1971, 26. *Carnal Knowledge*, by contrast, was the "long-run winner with $24,000 or close in its 17th week at Cinema I," *Variety*, October, 20, 1971, 8.
5. J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies* (New York: Da Capo, 1983), 80.
6. "Essential Cinema; *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*."
7. Once the film garnered a reputation as a "cult classic," it enjoyed a second life, playing film festivals, art houses, and college campuses throughout the 1970s. With its DVD release by the Criterion Collection, its reputation as a "canonical" film seems to have solidified.
8. "For Those Who Think Young," *Mad Men* (Matthew Weiner, creator; AMC) first aired July 27, 2008.
9. Andrew Sarris, "Films in Focus," *Village Voice*, November 11, 1971, 67.
10. Hoberman and Rosenbaum, *Midnight Movies*, 79.
11. Michael O'Pray, *Avant-garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003), 84. See also Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); and Reva Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry and Gossip in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
12. For more on this, see Juan Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens and Superstars: Avant-garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
13. Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens and Superstars*, 98.
14. See Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
15. Constantine Verevis, "Flaming Creatures," *Senses of Cinema*, accessed October 31, 2008, www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/02/21/flmaing.html.
16. Jonas Mekas, "Fifth Independent Film Award," *Film Culture* 29 (1963): 1.
17. Lest we think this is quaint and old-fashioned—in 1997 the National Endowment for the Arts gave Canyon Cinema, a renowned West Coast Distribution House that specializes in underground film from the period discussed in this essay, $15,000 to publish an updated catalog. A member of the House of Representatives contested the award, and attacked Canyon Cinema on the floor of the Congress. Pointing to pictures in the existing catalog and read-

ing descriptions of some of the films, the Representative from Michigan accused Canyon of distributing pornography. Under pressure, the NEA removed Canyon's grant and also denied funding to Women Make Movies and Frameline. I am indebted to Dominic Angerame, director of Canyon Cinema, for this information.

18. See Hawkins, *Cutting Edge*.
19. Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (New York: Random House, 1974), 191–258.
20. The Internet Movie Database gives a date of 1972 for this film; this was the commercial release date, but it played in festivals before that. See www.imdb.com/title/tt0151327/, accessed July 10, 2008.
21. See "Bruce Boomlet," *Time*, May 31, 1971, 73; Douglas Auchinsloss, "The Theater: The Broken Taboo Breaker," *Time*, June 7, 1971, 62; Jack Kroll, "Lenny Lives," *Newsweek*, June 7, 1971, 75+; Albert Goldman, "What Lenny Bruce Was All About," *New York Times Magazine*, June 27, 1971, 12–13.
22. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 193.
23. Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 2000).
24. Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); see chap. 5.
25. See Douglas Gomery, "Motion Picture Exhibition in 1970s America," in Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam 1970–1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 397–416.
26. See Craig Gilbert, "Reflections on an American Family I" and "Reflections on an American Family II," In *New Challenges for Documentary*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 191–209 and 288–307.
27. It took HBO a while to firmly establish itself. But it is notable for our purposes that the early free weekend promotional subscription packages always included art house fare in the line-up. When the local cable station in Santa Cruz, CA, picked up HBO in 1975, for example, the free weekend of HBO included Truffaut's *La peau douce* (1964) in the line-up.
28. Sometimes theaters leased to another business concern that ran the midnight movies; sometimes the theaters themselves booked and managed the midnight flicks.
29. "Paracinema" is an elastic term that comprises old horror films, exploitation, sword and sandal epics, JD films, sex hygiene films, and art cinema. See Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36, no. 4 (winter 1995): 371–393.
30. Eric Schaefer, *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!": A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 124–125.
31. Hawkins, *Cutting Edge*.
32. Hawkins, *Cutting Edge*, 8. The Fredric Jameson quote is taken from his *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14.
33. Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 68.

34. This changed, of course, after 1973, when the Drug Enforcement Administration was created and laws against cannabis possession became much tougher.
35. Raymond Durgnat, *Mysteries of the Organism* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 1999), 12. Hereafter, cited in the text as Durgnat.
36. See Mildred Brady, "The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich," *New Republic* (May 26, 1947); and Mildred Brady, "The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy," *New Republic* (April 1947).
37. The accumulator is a box, large enough to accommodate a seated adult. Wood on the outside and metal on the inside, it needs to be housed in a place where the air is relatively fresh. The idea is that orgone will accumulate between the layers of the box.
38. Two Reichian therapists, Drs. Alexander Lowen and John C. Pierrakos, sought an injunction against the film, in an attempt to prevent its opening in New York. They believed they had been misled by the filmmaker and feared that their professional reputations would be harmed. *Variety*, October 20, 1971, 6.
39. Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art*. 153.
40. Carolee Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 102, 102–3.
41. James Roy MacBean, "Sex and Politics: Wilhelm Reich, World Politics, and Makavejev's *WR*," *Film Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (spring 1972): 2.