8 * "I'll Take Sweden": The Shifting Discourse of the "Sexy Nation" in Sexploitation Films

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What is considered attractive or "sexy" changes in different times and places and between different cultures and social strata. In the United States ideals of female beauty moved from the healthy "Gibson Girl" in the early twentieth century to the waif-thin flapper in the 1920s, then to the buxom bleached blonde in the 1950s and the slender, miniskirted "hippy chick" of the 1960s. Men traded in muttonchop whiskers for a close shave and pomaded hair, only to see muttonchops return in the 1970s. An oft-recounted anecdote from the 1930s relays that sales of men's undershirts fell precipitously after Clark Gable appeared bare-chested in *It Happened One Night* (1934). From the earliest origins of the star system in the American film industry, the movies helped determine standards of beauty and sexual appeal. During the sexual revolution, the influence of the media extended beyond physical appearance to encompass a philosophy and approach to sexuality and what was "sexy"—an appeal to sexual desire or interest from a physiological, aesthetic, or intellectual standpoint. In no small measure, those ideas and attitudes were emblematized by cultures and countries outside the United States.

The strict moral code of the America's Puritan settlers later compounded by Victorian propriety had long led Americans to look beyond their borders to define what was sexy. Long before "sexy" came into widespread usage, American sexual decorum—some would say repression—was measured against what was perceived as the amorality of other peoples and nations. For many generations France to help define what was sexy in terms of behavior and style for Americans. To some, France was viewed as a threat to American morality; to others it was seen as an antidote to the puritanical attitudes citizens in the United States had toward sex. But during the period of the sexual revolution, Americans increasingly looked to northern Europe, specifically to Denmark and Sweden, to help define what was liberated and sexually appealing. The shift was even evident in the titles of movies made by Bob Hope (the master of suggestive, middlebrow yucks) as *Paris Holiday* (1958)

gave way to *I'll Take Sweden* (1965). In this chapter I will consider some of the factors that converged to redefine what constituted the sexy in terms of a national point of reference, and how, in the eyes of Americans, France ceded its long-standing position as the nation-of-the-naughty to its Scandinavian neighbors. The press was filled with stories of shifting social trends and transformative policies in Denmark and Sweden; moreover, a steady stream of sexploitation movies provided a constant reminder of the seemingly progressive sexual attitudes in Scandinavia compared to the exhausted debates that pitted individual liberty against the repressive morality of the United States.

French Dressing

In 1968 the historian Crane Brinton wrote, "the firmest, most real and earthy France of legend" is the France "symbolized by, though not confined to, those two great skills and pleasures, those of the table and those of the bed." He concluded that there was no certainty that the French talked more about *amour*, nor that they practiced it more than Americans, but that the concern with love and lovemaking was a "note" of the national character that Frenchmen "often feel a kind of compulsion to display."[1] France had long been associated with louche behavior in the eyes of many Americans, whether that came in the form of palaces filled with courtesans or a culture that seemed to dwell on sexually suggestive aspects of life: Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Édouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, the can-can, or the writings of the infamous Marquis de Sade.

France's status as a sexy nation was cemented in the minds of Americans during World War I. As Allan Brandt notes, "The arrival of American troops at French seaports heralded a clash of sexual cultures." Tolerance of prostitution on the part of the French and their dismal record of combating venereal disease "confirmed the image of continental debauchery" for the American Expeditionary Forces and those they left behind.[2] One American officer who interviewed French prostitutes found that "Americans preferred a certain sex act above all others," which he deplored as "the twisted impulse known as 'the French way' (a euphemism from oral sex)."[3] Sexual practices picked up in France helped erode American puritanism during the Jazz Age, and doughboys returning to the states brought with them songs from the trenches such as "Mademoiselle from Armentieres" with its vaguely suggestive lyrics and a host of variations that left little to the imagination. Postwar ditties such as "Fifty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong" and "How 'Ya Gonna Keep

'Em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Paree)?" reinforced the notion of France as a naughty nation. This sentiment was manifested in language with popularization of expressions such as "French kiss" and other words prefaced with "French" (French postcards, French lessons, the French measles [a euphemism for venereal disease], and so on).

In 1950 Geoffrey Gorer observed that untraveled Englishmen and Americans "have pictured Paris in particular, and generally France as a whole as though it were a sort of erotic Elysium, with all the women as lascivious as civet cats, ready to commit fornication or adultery at the drop of a handkerchief, and where all the literature was pornographic, all the humor sexual, and all the art erotic."[4] Some years later Vance Packard speculated, "Much of France's reputation for free love, I suspect, derives from the fact that millions of young, homesick American and British males encountered some of France's less inhibited girls while on leave to Gay Paree during World War I and World War II—and embroidered their encounters when they got home."[5] Whether this reputation was promulgated by nostalgic GIs, or those who viewed France as an erotic playground from afar, the association between France and all things racy only expanded after World War II.[6] The risqué reviews of the Follies Bergère continued to be a popular tourist attraction as were the nearly nude dancers of the Crazy Horse Saloon, which opened in Paris in 1951. Maurice Girodias's Paris-based Olympia Press, the notorious publisher of "dirty books," was launched in 1953. And French films were increasingly associated with sex in the minds of Americans who frequented "art houses," notably titles such as *La Ronde* (1950) and *The Lovers* (1958). The film . . . *And God Created Woman* (1956) featured a young Brigitte Bardot, whom director Roger Vadim proclaimed to be a symbol for the "amoralist young French generation."[7] In 1958 *Newsweek* concluded that the French sex kitten "might well be taking over from Marilyn Monroe," America's reigning, homegrown sex symbol.[8]

The trend of cinematic sensuality from France continued with the advent of *La Nouvelle Vague* (the New Wave), as well as with more conventional imports such as *A Man and a Woman* (1966). Furthermore, Hollywood movies frequently chose France as a setting for tales of seduction and amour in films such as Howard Hughes's scandalous *The French Line* (1954) with Jane Russell and *Gigi* (1958), as well as *Paris—When It Sizzles* (1964) and *Made in Paris* (1966). Exploitation films also capitalized on the French connection in *Paris after Midnight* (1951), *The French Follies* (1951), and *French Peep Show* (1952). In *The Naked Venus* (1959), not only is the heroine French; she is also a nudist—a combination that indicates her innate immorality for her American mother-in-law. *The Naked Venus*

and other films reliably presented French candor and joie de vivre as a stark contrast to American prudishness and repression.

By the late 1950s distributors such as William Mishkin, Audubon, and others were turning to France for films that could be imported without customs challenges; the films trimmed of extraneous plot and dolled up with inserts featuring striptease dances or additional nudity. A few of the French imports released on the American sexploitation circuit include *Nights of Shame* (1961), *Hotbed of Sin* (1961), *Vice Dolls* (1961), and *The Twilight Girls* (1961).[9] Directors Max Pecas and José Bénazéraf, who specialized in sexy potboilers, provided many, including *Sweet Ecstasy* (1962), *The Erotic Touch of Hot Skin* (1965), *Sin on the Beach* (1964), and *Sexus* (1965). Other movies made in the United States for the growing sexploitation market were set in France, such as *Indiscreet Stairway* (1966); some alluded to the location in their titles: *A French Honeymoon* (1964) and *Paris Topless* (1966).

By evoking France or Paris in their titles and their advertising, or by using the *terra erotica* of France as a setting, the movies relied on the country's permissive reputation regarding sexuality. Ads for *The Fast Set* (1961, aka *The Nude Set*) announced, "When sex takes a holiday it goes to Paris!" and introduced "the new 'French Love Kitten'—Agnes Laurent." Narration in the trailer for *The Fourth Sex* (1963) insinuated promiscuity with the words "Paris, the world capitol of love, where variety is the *necessity* of life." A trailer for *French without Dressing* (1965) claimed, "They only make females like these in la belle France. Ask any Frenchman. So round, so firm, so fully packed. So free and easy—on the eyes." For the former GIs, who made up a good portion of the sexploitation audience in the United States, such lines may have recalled memories of wartime liaisons and a time when they weren't encumbered with obligations of family and the day-to-day routine of work. Indeed, in interviews sexploitation director Russ Meyer frequently—and with a touch of wistfulness—recounted losing his virginity in a French bordello during the war.

Films made in France, as well as American sexploitation movies set in France (all of which I will refer to as "the French films"), operated out of what I term an "observational/retrospective" mode. The observational mode was rooted in a touristic gaze. A major component of the films was voyeurism from a privileged vantage point. Visiting famous Parisian landmarks or recognizable locations, or engaging in other acts of looking—in particular watching dancers, strippers, posers practice their trade, art, or avocation. In these movies, the authentically erotic in France is generally found in performative acts, which are watched by a character within the film but at a step removed by the audience viewing

Fig. 8.1 Characters often attended striptease performances in the "French" films, an expression of their "observational" mode and something highlighted in their publicity, as seen in this still from *Paris Ooh-La-La* (1963).

the film. For instance, striptease performances play a central role and are the primary erotic charge in many of the movies, such as *The Fast Set*, *The Fourth Sex*, and *Sin on the Beach*. This observational mode was largely retrospective in nature as it served to rekindle memories of France as a site of erotic experience for the individual who had been there. Even for those who had never set foot in France, the mode was retrospective, since it recalled images of France in the popular imagination as a setting for sexual adventure. Finally, the films are retrospective in that they maintained or promoted a status quo version of gender roles and male/female relationships—one firmly rooted in male privilege and dominance and female submissiveness. Sex in the films was usually framed as something attached to sin, which extended to feelings of guilt and shame.

Paris Ooh-La-La (1963) illustrates these points (figure 8.1). The film features American expatriate producer Dick Randall as Sam Smith, who makes a trip to Paris to see the sights and find women. As he confides to the audience in voice-over, "I've heard all the girls *vivre l'amour*, you know?" Sam's knowledge of Paris is based on stories he has heard about the city. Most of the French films have a travelogue quality to them, with postcard shots of Paris, images of boulevard life, and visits to such hot spots as the Crazy Horse Saloon and the Moulin Rouge, and notori-

ous districts such as Pigalle. *Paris Ooh-La-La* is no exception. When Sam enters the Crazy Horse he indicates that he feels guilty, "which every self-respecting Anglo Saxon feels when he goes into an emporium of pleasure." He samples the nightlife, particularly striptease acts, and tries to sample the mademoiselles only to find that they ignore him. He watches a beauty contest, spies on some showgirls, and takes in still more shows. As the film progresses, Sam becomes increasingly despondent and disillusioned, discovering that France is not the storied sexual playground of his imagination and that observation is not as satisfying as participation. When he does find a woman who is willing to be with him, he says, "I'd always been told French girls were the most wonderful in the world. It was true." But a twist reveals that the woman, like Sam, is an American tourist. France's reputation as an erotic capital is finally shown as disappointing because it is retrospective in nature—bound to the past, to legend, more than reality—and that its appeal rests on watching rather than on participation.

Similar attitudes and tone are invested in other films with a French setting. *The Dirty Girls* (1965), Audubon's first original production directed by Radley Metzger, opens with a segment set in Paris concerning Garance, a streetwalker. As she sits in a café, the patronizing narrator intones, "Well, pretty Garance, you can be many things to many men. . . . Desire will seek you out, for every man seeks a Garance." Although the sequence is ostensibly about Garance, she is framed through the desire of several male customers in a single evening—a virgin hoping to have his first sexual experience with her, a sadist who beats her, and a married regular who has her beat him while she is dressed as a circus ringmaster. The men's encounters with Garance have a clandestine quality, cloaked in guilt. Similarly, *The Alley Cats* (1966), Metzger's second film for Audubon, centers on Leslie. She is engaged to Logan, who sees other women on the side while Leslie confronts her latent lesbian longings. When she finally acts on her desire with Irena, an aggressive social butterfly, Logan angrily tracks them down, beats Leslie in her apartment and then by a public fountain. He eventually wipes the blood off Leslie's face and walks away, commanding her to follow him. She says, "I don't know who I am." "You're my girl," Logan tells her as they depart together. *Fin*. Again, the film is retrospective in terms of the gender dynamic, as the passive Leslie denies her incipient lesbian desire and returns to her neglectful, abusive boyfriend. *Therese and Isabelle* (1968), another Metzger film set in France, is even more overtly retrospective, as Therese visits the grounds of a private school she left years earlier and reminisces about her relationship with a classmate, Isabelle. As one contemporary account concluded,

Therese "ends up as a tragic figure, frustrated and alone, contemplating her past and an impossible future."[10]

If France was relatively open and secular in its erotic expression during the 1950s and early 1960s, the legacy of Catholicism as the official state religion held on.[11] The number of times that the words "sin," "shame," and "dirty" turned up in the titles of films is evidence of this, and the country became positively Comstockian following Charles de Gaulle's consolidation of power with his reelection in 1962. De Gaulle's "rigidly puritanical" wife was said to exert tremendous influence on him, and "during his reign [until 1969], erotic movies and books were censored or banned outright."[12] From an American perspective, sex in France was looking tired and unappealing, particularly in light of new ideas and representations emerging elsewhere.

Cold Hands, Warm Hearts

As the sexual revolution commanded increasing attention in the states, France, as the sexy nation par excellence in the minds of Americans, got a run for its money from Sweden and Denmark. American impressions about the Swedes and the Danes were changing, initially fueled largely by Swedish attitudes about sex education and premarital sex. As early as 1955, *Time* magazine had published a provocative, if not entirely accurate, article on Swedish sexual mores that promoted the notion of "Swedish Sin"—a laissez-faire attitude toward sexual morality promoted by a permissive government.[13] This attention grew during the mid-1960s, the press filled with articles about the need for sex education in light of increasing venereal disease rates and out-of-wedlock births in the United States. A *Time* article in 1966 asked, "Who should teach American children about sex—parents, family doctors, clergymen or schoolteachers?"[14] What came to be known as the "Swedish welfare state" seemed to provide a model for an enlightened approach to dealing with the problems facing many industrialized Western democracies. Carl Marklund has noted that at the center of the apparent paradox between Sweden's sexual liberalism and the discipline of the modern welfare state "was the claim that breaking down traditional borders would lead to the emancipation of 'natural' forces and desires." "Sex was," he continues, "only one among many natural urges which made up part of human life, the new message went. As such it changed from something sinful (unless inside of heterosexual marriage, that is), which only promiscuous people engaged in, to becoming something natural which everyone needed in order to be happy, healthy, and satisfied members of society."[15]

In a 1966 *Look* article J. Robert Moskin wrote, "The Swedes are making sex dangerous—by American standards. They are stripping away the old taboos. Their open attitude intrigues many Americans and stimulated visions of a land where magnificent blondes enjoy their sexuality, but it also generates worry here that our young may get some Swedish ideas in their heads."[16] Classes on reproduction and sexuality had become compulsory in Swedish schools in 1956, which fascinated the American public. Indeed, when Birgitta Linnér's book *Sex and Society in Sweden* was published in 1967, it was widely reviewed, receiving favorable comment from anthropologist Margaret Mead and a *Saturday Review* write-up that called it "an important book."[17] Greater strides toward equality between the sexes were often commented on, but the aspect of Swedish society invariably noted was that a "large percentage of young people have premarital sex relations."[18] Writers, however, felt compelled to qualify this characterization. The text accompanying a 1965 *Look* photo essay on Sweden by photographer Irving Penn declared, Swedish women's "notorious sexual freedom is largely a pose."[19] An article on Scandinavian women in *Esquire* laid the characterization at the feet of Americans: "Actually the sexual mores of the Scandinavians are just about what you'd expect of a highly advanced society; they differ from ours mainly in attitude—the Scandinavians lack the hypocrisy of our Puritan heritage."[20] Oregon State University educator Lester Kirkendall concluded in his preface to the Linnér book, "American public opinion for some time now has regarded the Swedes as 'promiscuous' and, naturally, as less virtuous than ourselves."[21] Put another way, the major difference in sexual attitudes between the Swedes and Americans was, according to one member of the Swedish Royal Board of Education, "we talk about it."[22]

In addition to talking about sex, the Swedes also read about it and watched it. By the mid-1960s Sweden faced a "rash of pornographic literature," and the trend was also "apparent in commercial films, which more and more often include daringly frank scenes."[23] It was only a matter of time before enterprising distributors began to import the "frank" films for U.S. screens. Scandinavian countries had provided a handful of movies for the art and exploitation circuits from the 1930s to the 1950s that had an erotic component (*Man's Way with Women* [1934], *One Summer of Happiness* [1951], and *Summer with Monika* [1953], the latter reedited by exploiteer Kroger Babb to become *Monika: Story of a Bad Girl*). Yet nude dips in icy waters never captured the American imagination to the degree that saucy strippers in the Paris nightclubs had. During the early 1960s, Scandinavian films appearing on the art house circuit

proved to be more daring. *A Stranger Knocks* (1959), a Danish film released in the United States in 1963, featured a crucial revelation during simulated lovemaking. It churned the censorship waters—Maryland's assistant attorney general called it "pure smut"[24]—and conflict over the film contributed to the dismantling of the New York State Board of Censors. The Swedish *491* (1964), based on Lars Görling's 1962 novel, dealt with six delinquents sent to live with a naive social worker as part of an experiment. The boys destroy the social worker's home, bring a teenage prostitute in to service them, and degrade her by forcing her to have sex with a dog. Ultimately the youngest boy, crushed by his experiences, commits suicide.[25] Despite the fact that the sex acts were only suggested, *491* was barred by U.S. Customs until the courts freed the film. Although both *A Stranger Knocks* and *491* were framed as art films, they indicated that Denmark and Sweden were capable of making sexually daring movies. It was, however, a sexploitation film, *I, a Woman*, that most clearly marked the shift from France to the Scandinavian countries as the sexy terrain of choice for American filmgoers.

A Danish-Swedish coproduction *I, a Woman* (1965) was directed by Mac Ahlberg and released in the states by Audubon in 1966. Essy Persson stars as Siv Holm who, at the start of the film, waits in her apartment for the arrival of a 10 PM date while she muses about her sexual awakening through a series of flashbacks. We see Siv singing in folk-rock services in the church in her small town, where she is engaged to the uptight Sven. Carrying out her duties as a nurse, Siv meets a married middle-aged antique dealer. Sensing Siv's lack of satisfaction with Sven, he flirts with, and soon seduces, Siv. He promises to divorce his wife and marry her, but she tells him, "Perhaps you want to own me—and I don't want to be owned by anyone." Siv leaves home and moves to the city, where she has affairs with a merchant seaman and a surgeon. She turns down the sailor's offer of marriage. When the surgeon tries to tell her he is duty bound to marry another woman who is pregnant with his child, he falls apart, telling Siv he would rather marry her instead. She turns him down while doing a seductive strip in front of him. Throughout the film, Siv's lovers comment that she will never be happy with just one man. The flashbacks end with her anticipating in voice-over, "He's coming—a new man. I have the right to be happy—deliriously happy." When the new man arrives, however, he shoves into the apartment, slaps Siv around, and has rough sex with her. As he dresses to go, she asks if he must leave. The man replies that if he stays or returns, she'll want to marry him within three weeks. Siv, who has avoided commitment to any one

man, laughs in his face. Despite Sven's contention that Siv will "end up a whore," she's never presented as a nymphomaniac or, as *Variety* delicately put it, "she is no prostie."[26]

I, a Woman announced its origins in its advertising ("From Sweden . . . A totally new concept in artistic motion pictures for adults!") and broke records as it played around the United States. Emancipated from downtown grind houses that typically programmed sexploitation fare, it played urban showcase cinemas and suburban theaters. It was one of the first sexploitation films to make inroads into the lucrative "date" market and to show a degree of popularity with women.[27] *I, a Woman* also points at a major difference between the Scandinavian films and the French films they would soon supplant in terms of popularity in the United States. If French films can be considered observational and retrospective, the Scandinavian films can be seen as participatory and modern—participatory in that they were more likely to present characters engaging in sex rather than watching strip shows or other erotic performances, modern in that they challenge normative moral standards that existed in the United States at the time.[28]

I, a Woman invites the audience to identify with an active, enthusiastic participant in sex: Siv. She has affairs for her own pleasure, which is the central concern of the film, rather than for economic gain such as the case with Garance in *The Dirty Girls*. Moreover, the representation of Siv's pleasure provides the primary erotic charge for the audience, whether she is tantalizing the surgeon with her languorous dance or writhing in ecstasy at the touch of her lovers. Shots of her face in reaction to erotic stimulation were the centerpiece of most of these scenes and served as key art in Audubon's advertising campaign. The film can be viewed as modern because of its presentation of a sexually liberated woman, capable and independent, confident in her sexuality, and who is ultimately unwilling to submit to the old double standard of traditional sex roles.[29] As Deane William Ferm observed in 1970, "Sweden has probably made more progress than any other country in breaking down the double standard that applies as between men and women."[30] These differences from the French model must, in some measure, account for the popularity of *I, a Woman* and its status as a crossover hit, particularly with female moviegoers, something frequently noted in stories about the film's success.

As changing attitudes toward sex in the United Stated roiled in the public discourse, the mass media continued to draw attention to the "liberal laws and attitudes on sexual matters" in Denmark and Sweden. A November 1968 *New York Times* article suggested that the two nations

Fig 8.2 Produced in Sweden, *Inga* (1968) proved to be a major hit in the United States. This was in no small measure because star Marie Liljedahl had a fresher, more innocent look than most sexploitation actresses from the period.

were "moving toward even greater freedom," citing a radical party's plans to introduce a bill in the Danish Parliament to legalize marriages between homosexuals and brothers and sisters as well as moves in the Swedish Parliament to make abortion easier to obtain. "The sexual liberty in Scandinavia," the article went on, "is championed particularly by the young who often take different views from adults."[31]

This generational divide on matters of sexuality in Denmark and Sweden had parallels to the oft-cited "generation gap" in the United States at the time.[32] The next major sexploitation import from Scandinavia focused on the rift between older and younger people. *Inga* (1968; figure 8.2) was a Danish-Swedish coproduction, bankrolled by New York exhibitor Bernard "Bingo" Brandt and directed by American sex-pic veteran Joe Sarno. Like *I, a Woman* it became a breakout sexploitation hit for Cinemation, the movie's distributor for most of the United States. *Inga* deals with the sexual coming of age of an orphaned seventeen-year-old (Marie Liljedahl). She moves to the country to live with her aunt, Greta, who uses her diminishing bank account to keep her young lover, Karl, on the hook with extravagant presents. A family friend offers Greta money

to become the paramour of her brother, Einar, whose wife is in a sanitarium. Knowing of Einar's predilection for younger women, Greta tries to maneuver Inga into Einar's bed in exchange for a weekly stipend. A misunderstanding causes the plan to backfire, and Inga decides to lose her virginity to Karl. They leave the town together on the boat that Greta bought him. Again, this film can be seen as participatory because the audience is invited to identify with Inga and her awakening sexuality, most notably in a scene in which she masturbates alone in her bedroom. It can be considered modern because Inga loses her virginity on her own terms, not those of her aunt, who attempts to steer her toward an older man for her own economic gain.

Inga, much like *I, a Woman*, was aligned with the sexual ethos ascribed to Denmark and Sweden in their espousal of individual autonomy, equality, and healthy experimentation, and in their rejection of guilt feelings and traditional notions of sin associated with premarital sex. Sex in these films conforms to what anthropologist Don Kulick identifies as "good sex in Sweden":

> Sex, Swedish authorities and politicians tell us, is good. The catch is that for sex to be good, it has to be good sex. That is, it has to be socially approved, mutually satisfying sexual relations between two (and only two) consenting adults or young adults who are more or less sociological equals. It must not involve money or overt domination, even as role-playing. It should occur only in the context of an established social relationship. This relationship does not have to be a particularly deep one, and sex on the first date is acceptable, with the proviso that the date has to have happened and there has to have been conversation.[33]

By the standards of Sweden (as well as the developing mores of the sexual revolution in the United States at the time), *Inga* represented "good sex" on every count—especially in Inga's rejection of her aunt's machinations to pair her with an older man in exchange for material gain. Moreover, the behaviors in the film aligned closely with the attitudes that were becoming accepted norms of sexual behavior in the United States, notably, the notion of "permissiveness with affection" identified by sociologist Ira L. Reiss in a large-scale postwar study.[34]

When Inga and Karl finally have their sexual encounter, it is shown as gentle and seemingly natural, and the Scandinavian films often framed sex in this fashion. Regarding the presentation of sex in the Swedish films of the time, Kulick suggests that they "most commonly represented sex by lingering on clean, fresh, svelte women who without hesitation

or guilt had intercourse with their clean, fresh, svelte boyfriends."[35] Film scholar Tytti Soila has written,

> In the Scandinavian world, nature is perceived as a fundamentally positive phenomenon—something that provides strength and competence for survival and which is a source of renewal and recreation. The naked human body is perceived as part of nature, and is assigned the same value of nature itself. In addition to this—and despite the hostile views of many nonconformist movements—sexuality is considered natural and thereby principally positive."[36]

It is worth noting that the actors in the Scandinavian films also possessed a more "natural look," which was gaining popularity at the time, when compared with their French counterparts. A *Life* magazine spread on Swedish fashion in 1968 managed to include two dominant discourses on the Swedes into a single sentence: "A new style of *uninhibited* and imaginative dressing has been added to their *natural* attractions and is thrusting their country into the bigtime fashion scene."[37] Marie Liljedahl, *Inga*'s main attraction, possessed an innocence and freshness that was unusual for the majority of sexploitation starlets, and most of the other Scandinavian actresses who would join her embodied this more "natural" style. With straight hair, little makeup, and simple clothing, they provided contrast to the French reputation for excess, be it in haute couture, voluptuous figures, strong perfume, or heavy cosmetics.

The "natural look" was being embraced in the United States by the counterculture as yet another rejection of the establishment and the status quo. This included long hair, minimal makeup, and a general lack of artifice. It was quickly taken up by Madison Avenue as a new marketing tool in its arsenal and used for shilling everything from shampoo to the latest fashions. The advertisements for sexploitation films were not immune either. *Siv, Anne & Sven* (1972), another Sarno made-in-Sweden effort, explicitly tied Swedish sexuality to nature. Text blocks on U.S.-release posters quoted "Edmund Edro," who claimed, "Make no mistake, what goes on on the screen is strictly 'no holds barred,' but this overpowering emphasis on the possibilities of pleasure with more than two people is dramatically balanced with a story set against the breathtaking beauty of the Swedish countryside." Canned stories in the pressbook for *One Swedish Summer* (1968), about a young man's sexual awakening in the countryside, described the "beautiful archipelago surroundings, a natural habitat for the color camera." Adopting "the natural look"—emphasizing the ties between Scandinavian culture and the

natural landscape, as well as Scandinavians' more "natural" approach to sexuality, which was unencumbered by restrictive social strictures—made the Scandinavian films more youthful and more modern in their outlook.

Sexual freedom; a greater sense of gender equality; an apparently cooler, more rational approach to sexual matters—these elements combined with a more youthful and natural look to made Denmark and Sweden appear both more enlightened and more sexy than France, which was increasingly mired in social and political turmoil. A 1968 article in *Candid Press*, a weekly tabloid out of Chicago, made the link between sexy movies and Sweden's progressivism. After ticking off a long list of dubious "firsts" ("Sweden was the first country to every make a movie for public consumption that showed bare female breasts . . . to ever show the actual birth of a child in startling filmed closeups . . . to ever show a man actually touching a female's breast," etc.), the author tied permissive films to the policies of the Swedish welfare state, including compulsory sex education, sympathetic attitudes toward unwed motherhood, and the widespread availability of birth control. "While American films were worried about showing an extra inch of breast, the Swedes were talking about showing a woman's vagina on screen. The whole Swedish attitude towards movie sex is a world apart from that of our own country." The article made special note of a new film, referred to as *I am Inquisitive*, because it showed "the actual act of sexual intercourse." However, a member of the Swedish Film Censorship Board interviewed for the article said, "I know that when Swedish people walk out of the theater after seeing this movie, they will be talking about everything but the sex act."[38]

As detailed in chapter 4, that film, *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, became a phenomenon when it hit U.S. theaters in 1969—and not because audiences were talking about its political content. One writer described the scene in front of New York City theaters not as lines,

> but hordes of the curious clogging 57th Street . . . in all kinds of weather; front-page debates appearing on Sunday in the entertainment section of the *New York Times*; a run-away flood of irate Letters to the Editor drowning columns and columns of the same distinguished newspaper; tourists from out of town tapping native sons in restaurants and whispering low, "Say, buddy, where can I see that dirty movie? You know, the curious yellow thing."[39]

Scandinavian sex films constituted enough of a trend to generate two satiric articles in the *Times*. In one, a boy asks, "Where do movies come from, Daddy?" The nonplussed father, alluding to adult films, says, "From

Scandinavia, mostly." He explains, "The Scandinavians are a very diligent people. They used to be diligent at furniture-making and stainless steel and stuff like that. But they were always getting splinters, or cutting themselves, so they changed products." The other piece features three imaginary upcoming sex films, including *Hjolga, a Woman, Part IV*, "at once a bitingly satiric attack on those ostensibly serious filmmakers who hypocritically turn out prurient movies merely for financial gain and, with its daringly explicit scenes of nude driving instruction, a ringing cry for Scandinavian highway safety."[40] That these spoofs even appeared in the *Times* meant its readers were sufficiently aware of the status of Denmark and Sweden as exporters of sex films to appreciate the lampoon.

Filmmakers in Scandinavia were cognizant of their new status as exporters as well. In 1970 Frederic Fleischer wrote, "*Export or die* is the guideline of the Swedish film industry. Everyone concerned realizes that the domestic market alone is much too small to keep Swedish producers in business and to enable creative talent to flourish." Fleischer claimed that "Swedish sex was known to appeal to foreign audiences," and "Now they realized that they could win a more secure distribution footing abroad by exposing their nation's advanced attitudes in an artistic context." He quoted a producer from one of the three major Swedish companies who said his firm's films sold well abroad, "because they are controversial and because Swedish directors are interested in subjects that attract foreign attention, particularly sex."[41] Per Olov Qvist and Tytti Soila have noted that smaller independent companies, such as Swedish Film Production Investments, were able to take advantage of this growing interest.[42]

An Unfettered Sexual Utopia

If there had been a steady increase in American attention to Scandinavian sex ways, it exploded in mid-1969, when Denmark abolished laws restricting the sale of pornography. After initially freeing the sale of pornographic literature in 1967, Parliament lifted the remaining restrictions on the sale of photographic and filmed porn to those sixteen and older.[43] Much as the Swedish system of sex education had fascinated and frightened readers in the states, the Danish experiment with pornography had a mesmerizing effect—particularly in light of the growing availability of sexually explicit material in bookstores and in theaters in the United States as well as in anticipation of the findings of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. Press accounts indicated that the Danes greeted the open availability of porn with a yawn and that

the largest market for their newly found freedoms came from tourists. In October, Sex 69, a pornographic trade show in Copenhagen's Sports Arena, opened to "lines that stretched around the block"[44] and drew some 350 reporters from around the world. Statistics showed that the curious who attended were not the proverbial dirty old men: 75 percent of males were under the age of forty; 85 percent of the women who attended were between eighteen and forty.[45]

Coverage of Sex 69 further solidified the notion that the Danes and their attitudes represented both progressivism and youthfulness. An extensive piece in the *New York Times Magazine* in early 1970 tied the sex fair to social and political progressivism.[46] The foreword to a book on the Danish porn fairs reflected on the sexual openness and equality represented by the Danes:

> We can opt for the kind of situation which obtains in the contemporary United States in which monogamy is still the legal norm but in which divorce is a usual event, and where the establishment with devoted hypocrisy attempts to defend the citadel of rectitude; or we can choose the way of Scandinavia which is an attempt to accept the fundamental sexual nature of man and woman, and to build sexual relationships which are free from inhibition and fear.[47]

Within months, American publishers were offering accounts of the Danish experiment, such as Banner Books' *A Report on Denmark's Legalized Pornography* and Academy Press's two-volume *Decision in Denmark: The Legalizing of Pornography*. For those not wishing to wade through pages of interviews with clerics and psychologists or reprints of Danish penal codes, the publishers cut to the heart of the matter by reprinting pages of black-and-white and color photos of hardcore action from Danish sex magazines. A book on the sex fair concluded, "Pornography is becoming one of Denmark's most prosperous industries. If it had shares on the stock market, their value would have already multiplied by five, and dividends would keep pouring on the astonished stockholder. The outlets for this industry are considerable, particularly abroad, and the main efforts are directed at countries with a strong currency."[48] In 1970 one Danish official remarked, "Without foreign tourists and illegal exports, this trade would probably fade away."[49]

American publishers were joined by opportunistic filmmakers from the United States, eager to capitalize on the change in the Danish laws by making documentaries for the American market.[50] Alex de Renzy, who made short films for his pioneering San Francisco porn theater, the Screening Room, traveled to Copenhagen for Sex 69 to shoot *Pornogra-*

phy in Denmark: A New Approach (1970).[51] Los Angeles–based producer-distributor John Lamb made the trip to produce *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (1970); Signature Films' *Wide Open Copenhagen 70* (a.k.a. *Pornography: Copenhagen 1970*) was also in the mix. The films were often confused by ticket buyers, but that, according to *New York Times* critic Vincent Canby, "should be to the detriment of no one, except perhaps to the movies' distributors, and to those moviegoers who measure their entertainment in terms of the number of feet exposed to the mechanics of lust." "In outline and in content," he determined, "the documentaries are almost indistinguishable." All featured shots of Danish landmarks, man-on-the-street interviews, "then interviews with producers, directors and actors of porno films, visits to porno clubs, interviews with psychologists, sociologists and 'sexologists' . . . followed by, or preceded by, an extended sequence showing a porno film being made."[52] *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* also included sequences on anatomy, venereal disease, childbirth, and the mechanics of coitus—sequences that Lamb's Art Films International frequently loaned to medical schools and colleges. Each film featured hardcore material within its documentary frame, prompting critic Stanley Kauffmann to deem their theatrical exhibition "too pressing to ignore."[53]

Kauffmann, normally the most aloof of reviewers, found the films shocking "because I could walk in off the New York street and see them." He continued, "In other countries, other customs; shock is a matter of place and time, and in New York, this month, those pictures shocked me, by their availability. . . . These films are sheerly sexual functions; they extol porno as physically and morally desirable, and they praise Copenhagen as the Rome of a new church."[54] Kauffmann had plenty of company with whom to share his anxiety—even those considered among the most secular and sophisticated—because the films that concerned him were among the first theatrical features to include hardcore material on U.S. screens.[55] Even *Variety*'s jaded chronicler of the sex scene, Addison Verrill, concluded that *Pornography in Denmark* "in a mere 75 minutes exploded the last of the screen conventions honored in recent permissive years."[56]

In keeping with the other Scandinavian films, the porn documentaries were predicated on the precepts of participation and modern notions about sexuality rather than on the shame and regressive attitudes of most sexploitation movies up to that time—including the French films. In an on-the-street interview in *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (figure 8.3), reporter Ole Lassen asks a young woman named Karen her opinion of premarital sex. She responds, "Yeah, all my girlfriends think it's okay.

Fig. 8.3 Sex was continually framed as a participatory activity in the "Scandinavian" films. Here, Ole Lassen interviews several participants in a porn movie shoot in *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* (1970).

Everybody in school is having sex before marriage." Dorritt Frantzen, a model and Miss Denmark in the Miss International beauty pageant, expresses her opinion that premarital sex at thirteen or fourteen is the norm while averring that she did not have her first "affair" until she was eighteen. Lassen talks to a photographer, Freddy, shooting a porn film; he agrees with the statement that sexual freedom is good: "My personal opinion is that it can't be free enough." The models participating in the shoot all express a blasé attitude about their work and sex in general. Even the instructional scenes showing sexual positions in *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* are designed to encourage participation through imitation of positions, explaining the kinds of sensation and pleasure that each one affords.

Similarly, in *Pornography in Denmark*, people questioned outside the Sex 69 fair express their enthusiasm for the show and the increased liberties in Denmark. During an interview with Toni, a young woman who does porn shoots with her boyfriend, the narrator intones, "Toni takes pride in her work. . . . Toni is more interested in having a warm emotional relationship with the people she works with, and in making a good movie." Later scenes of Tanya, a dancer, and Ilsa, a performer in a live sex show, are more concerned with the development of their performances as creative expression rather than the mere acts for the audience to observe for pay. The film concludes by urging the viewers to ask themselves "to question the validity of the legal sanctions against such material in this country." It asks, "Is there sufficient justification for censorship of

adult entertainment? Do you feel that the suppression of pornography in the United States constitutes an infringement on the inalienable rights of adults? Should legislation against pornography be restricted in the United States?"[57] *Pornography in Denmark* guided viewers toward affirmative responses to the latter questions by positing Denmark as an exemplar. Writing about the Scandinavian documentaries in the *New York Times* in early 1971, Foster Hirsch recognized their role in reminding "Americans of the Scandinavians' sexual health and happiness."[58]

Reviewers were not so naive as to believe the films were made for altruistic purposes, but many accorded them more latitude than they did the typical sexploitation fare. After suggesting that *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* often oversimplified its case, John Mahoney concluded, "So long as ignorance allows for an audience seeking titillation, there is no reason why that curiosity should not be satisfied by an intelligent presentation. . . . [It] is one of the few films on the circuit which is genuinely erotic without the necessity of making its audience feel dirty."[59] *Daily Variety* determined, "Although its market motives may be suspect, it is nevertheless a frequently interesting document, slickly produced, edited and photographed, and not less intelligently scripted than an average TV news special."[60] Even if the documentaries were made to pull in a quick buck, reviewers reluctantly admitted they could initiate a dialogue about the sexual attitudes in Denmark and how they differed from prevailing norms in the United States. The movies certainly invited their viewers to consider their own relationships to those norms.

Of course relatively few Scandinavian sex films were documentaries. Most were narratives such as *I, a Woman* and *Inga*. Some featured typical sexploitation scenarios, but even when they did they often had a more positive spin than their French or American counterparts. Rather than focusing on degradation and exploitation, the prostitute protagonist of *Dagmar's Hot Pants* (1971) sees sex as a means to an end. "To some girls it's a way of life. To me it's been a temporary, high-paying job," she tells a friend. The end of the film finds her marrying her boyfriend, whom she has been putting through medical school in Stockholm with her earnings. *Anita* (1973) deals with a nymphomaniac who samples all the men in her small Swedish village, scandalizes her family, and then moves to the big city. A student named Erik runs into her—literally—as she emerges from a tent at a construction site with one of her pickups and resolves to help her overcome her condition. He determines that poor self-esteem, difficult family relations, and an inability to have orgasms have led to her life of promiscuity. Unlike many other films that deal with nymphomania (e.g., *Nympho—A Woman's Urge* [1965], *Alley Tramp*

Fig. 8.4 Birte Tove played the title role in *Christa* (1971, a.k.a. *Swedish Fly Girls*), the embodiment of modern, enlightened sexual attitudes of Denmark and Sweden.

[1968]) that end ambiguously or tragically, *Anita* concludes with the troubled girl cured and in a mutually satisfying relationship with Erik.

Christa (1970; figure 8.4) stands as a prime example of a movie that extolled the virtues of the Scandinavian lifestyle and political system as the vanguard of sexual freedom. Most commonly—and incongruously—known by the title *Swedish Fly Girls*, the film follows Christa, a Danish flight attendant. The story involves her search for the right man to be her husband and a father to her toddler, Rolf, who lives with her parents. Torben, her former lover and the child's father, wanted her to have an abortion and still hopes to win Christa over, although she wants nothing to do with him. Christa is characterized as a young woman who is both principled and pragmatic, as someone simultaneously free-spirited but also rooted in the real world. Lyrics of the Manfred Mann songs on the soundtrack describe her as "free as the early morning sun." She takes on a veritable United Nations of lovers—Italian, American, French, Australian. She engages in "now" behaviors: smoking pot, visiting a porn shop, weaving at her loom in the nude, and living in a commune with several other young men and women who share a bathroom and are comfortable with casual nudity. At the same time Christa admits to being "straight" because she works for a big corporation and her lovers are essentially

auditioning for the role of husband and provider. She eventually decides to marry the Australian, Derek, but is confronted by Torben with information detailing her string of affairs. He says he'll take her to court to have her declared an unfit mother. On a drive in the country, Torben and Christa talk of reconciliation. But realizing that a reunion is futile, Torben lets Christa out of the car and speeds into a wall, killing himself. The film concludes by cutting between Torben's funeral and Christa, Derek, and Rolf on a beach, with a final shot of the setting sun dissolving into images of a galaxy in space.

The symbolism in *Christa* is obvious, yet sincere: Christa represents the modern Scandinavian welfare state, combining the best elements of socialism and capitalism, modernity and tradition, individual liberty and personal responsibility—all wrapped in a progressive approach to sex. Although Christa auditions a series of men as a potential husband and a father for her child, the sex she has is "good sex" and the film was, as Howard Thompson wrote in the *New York Times*, "a determinedly civilized and confident tribute to [Denmark] as an unfettered sexual Utopia."[61] *Christa* received limited play in the United States under its original title with a mod ad campaign, but as *Swedish Fly Girls* it became a drive-in staple and perpetuated the image of the Scandinavian countries' modern and socially enlightened sexual attitudes. Other films, whether made in Scandinavia (*Without a Stitch*, 1970), or in the United States (*Danish and Blue*, 1970), conveyed similar sentiments.

Regardless of plot specifics it was, above all else, the provenance of the Scandinavian films that helped sell them and secured their success. If having "France," "French," or "Paris" in the title of a film or specifying its Gallic roots had once pointed to its provocative quality, by the late 1960s sexploitation titles announced their Nordic origins or subject matter, at times alluding to their "newer" or "freer" take on morality: *One Swedish Summer* (1968), *Scandal in Denmark* (1969), *Swedish and Underage* (1969), *My Swedish Cousins* (1970), *Sexual Practices in Sweden* (1970), *Maid in Sweden* (1971), *A Touch of Sweden* (1971), *Sexual Customs in Scandinavia* (1972), *1001 Danish Delights* (1972), *Swedish Wife Exchange Club* (1972), and *Swedish Swingers* (1974) are just several examples.[62] If a film's Scandinavian roots or setting were not immediately apparent in the title, advertising tags provided the necessary information. Ads for *Without a Stitch* (1969) stressed "This is the first film to enter the U.S. from Denmark since its liberalization of permissiveness!" *Threesome* (1970) claimed to be "the first film made in Denmark since that country abolished all censorship." London's *Cinema* magazine, quoted in *Threesome*'s ad, called it, "bold and interesting" saying it "smacks of Bergman in intensity . . . high

powered lesbian drama . . . certainly the best film yet in the fast moving new vogue of Scandinavian-American co-productions."[63] *Yes* (1968, a.k.a. *To Ingrid, My Love, Lisa*) was "From Sweden, A Cannon Production"; *Relations* (1970) was "the love story from Denmark." Distributors were happy to double up the title and tag line as with *Love, Swedish Style* (1972) in which ads said of the heroine, "She comes fully equipped . . . from Sweden!" Other movies recalled earlier Scandinavian hits: *2—I, a Woman, Part II* (1968), *The Seduction of Inga* (1971), and *Ann and Eve* (1970), whose tag suggested that "Just when you thought you'd seen it all" . . . "the love animals of *Inga* and *I, a Woman, Part II* trade secrets."

By 1970 the Scandinavian origins of a film were a significant enough selling point to warrant slapping an "imported" label on domestic product. *Sexual Practices in Sweden* (1970)—a typical, dry marriage manual film showing foreplay and various sexual positions—might just as well have been called *Sexual Practices in Hoboken* were it not for the hokey "Swedish" accent of the on-screen narrator.[64] Advertising for *Ride Hard, Ride Wild* (1970) simply stated "From Denmark," as though its status as a Scandinavian import were enough to tell potential ticket buyers all they needed to know about the film. In reality it was from Los Angeles, shot by R. Lee Frost for Phoenix International Films.[65] And films from other countries were offered up as Scandinavian imports. For instance the West German movie *Teenager Report: Die Ganz Jungen Mädchen* was released in the United States as *Swedish Lessons in Love* around 1973, sold with the tagline, "They teach love all the way. The way Swedish schoolgirls are taught."

The words "Danish" and "Swedish" soon came to signal the hardest material available in the U.S. market in the late 1960s into the 1970s. Sex magazines were peppered with ads hawking the latest offerings from Scandinavia. For instance, a random 1971 issue of the sex tabloid *Screw* offered Swedish "Invisible Mini-films" that arrived via air mail letters and supposedly evaded customs, "50 different action films" from Sweden, an "original Danish Mag without customs problems," "shocking sex scenes, Swedish style," and new color catalogues from the "sex-countries of Sweden and Denmark," among others.[66] The Copenhagen-based Color Climax Corporation exported its eponymous magazine to the United States and Europe, and soon became associated with pornographic material that stretched the boundaries of sexual freedom, even for its staunchest defenders: bestiality and child pornography.[67]

Toward a More Rational View of Sex

By the early 1970s the association between Scandinavian countries and sexual liberty was cemented. A few examples: American pornographic films continued to evoke Denmark and Sweden in their titles such as *The Danish Connection*, a 1974 hardcore film featuring John Holmes, and *Swedish Sorority Girls* (1978). In the early 1970s entrepreneur Noel Bloom and his father created a line of cross-marketed 8 mm movies and magazines titled *Swedish Erotica*, even though the films were made in the United States with American performers. The company eventually developed into an early powerful video porn enterprise: Caballero Home Video.[68] In Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), the unstable Travis (Robert DeNiro) takes the object of his obsession (Cybill Shepherd) to a "dirty movie," *Swedish Marriage Manual*, much to her disgust.[69] In the late 1980s Old Milwaukee Beer began featuring "The Swedish Bikini Team," a group of sexy swimsuit-clad blondes in a series of ads. The list could go on. Elisabet Björklund has observed that the characterization of "Swedish Sin"—originally seen as derogatory within the country—was transformed, and today "the connection between Sweden and sex has also become part of the self-affirming national discourse."[70]

The general shift away from France and the embrace of the Scandinavian films as a source of interest and inspiration for Americans can be seen as symptomatic of a general easing of social and moral constraints on sexuality in the United States. It would be misleading to suggest that American audiences received any kind of accurate depiction about sexual life and liberty in Denmark and Sweden from the films made in, or about, those countries during the sexual revolution—any more than they had been given a faithful account of France's sex ways in earlier films and popular culture. However, Americans did come away with an impression about those cultures, one that during the sexual revolution was appealing as the more hidebound aspects of American sexual attitudes and behavior began to flake away. They presented a new and engaging ideal.

Writing about "Swedish sin," Carl Marklund remarks on the predominant, often male, sexual fantasy "of a somehow 'free' love which is made possible only because of the 'natural' naivety of the predominantly 'female' native, such as the one enjoyed by European sailors, missionaries and artists philandering about the Southern Seas." He suggests that the fantasy of "the Swedish sin" flipped the equation because its "reason" was the Swedish female's liberating a male outsider "from the burden of his own traditionally conceived sin." Here we can locate the appeal of the Scandinavian films for American audiences. As Marklund speculates,

> What is exotic and possibly titillating in this message is that rationality replaces naivety as the sexually coded core of the image. This is also where "Swedish sin" becomes the most quintessential sin, the sin which is so sinful that it even rejects its own sinfulness as it unceremoniously and straightforwardly—rationally, even—denies the possibility of sin altogether. There are just natural needs and the right to enjoy their fulfillment.[71]

For Americans negotiating the sexual revolution and a new, highly sexualized media in the 1960s and 1970s, the Scandinavian films offered sex a mantle of rationality, modernity, and naturalness. A new ideal of what constituted the "sexy" had begun to put some distance between Americans and their Puritan legacy of shame and sinfulness associated with one of the most fundamental of human acts.

Notes

1. Crane Brinton, *The Americans and the French* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 35, 37.
2. Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 101.
3. James R. Petersen, *The Century of Sex: Playboy's History of the Sexual Revolution, 1900–1999* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 66.
4. Geoffrey Gorer, "The Erotic Myth of America," *Partisan Review*, July/August 1950, 589.
5. Vance Packard, *The Sexual Wilderness* (New York: David McKay, 1968), 71.
6. Although Americans looked to Europe as the source of sexual sophistication in the postwar years, some on the Continent saw American "sex-mindedness" as a threat, especially in light of the Kinsey reports and Cold War anxieties. As Miriam G. Reumann documents, "Liberals and conservatives alike noted time and again that negative international opinion regarding the United States harmed the nation, and many saw American sexual behavior as a particularly sensitive topic." "In the charged context of the cold war," she writes, "as the United States sought ideological alliances abroad, its image as a 'sex-mad' nation could harm key diplomatic and military relationships." See Miriam G. Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Report* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 44, 45.
7. Genet (Janet Flanner), "Letter from Paris," *New Yorker*, October 11, 1958, 191.
8. "Peck's Bad Girl," *Newsweek*, January 6, 1958, 68.
9. Note: Because the French films distributed in the U.S. often underwent considerable change, the dates listed here, along with the titles, are for their American release, not their original French release.
10. Review of *Therese and Isabelle, Candid Press*, April 27, 1969, 22.

11. A law was enacted in 1905 officially separating the state and the church in France.
12. "After De Gaulle—Sex Sells," *Newsweek*, September 29, 1969, 61.
13. Joe David Brown, "Sin and Sweden," *Time*, April 25, 1955, 29. For an extended analysis of the article and the role that it played in shaping Sweden's image abroad, see Frederick Hale, "*Time* for Sex in Sweden: Enhancing the Myth of the 'Swedish Sin' During the 1950s," *Scandinavian Studies* 75, no. 3 (2003): 351–374.
14. "Sex in the Classroom," *Time*, July 1, 1966, 83. In an article published the following year in *Saturday Review*, authors William Simon and John H. Gagnon summarized the questions as "What should be taught? How and when should it be taught? Who should do the teaching?" ("The Pedagogy of Sex," November 18, 1967, 76).
15. Carl Marklund, "Hot Love and Cold People: Sexual Liberalism as Political Escapism in Radical Sweden," Nordeuropa Forum, January 2009, accessed May 15. 2011. edoc.hu-berlin.de/nordeuropaforum/2009-1/marklund-carl-83/XML/.
16. J. Robert Moskin, "Sweden's New Battle over Sex," *Look*, November 15, 1966, 37.
17. Margaret Mead, "What We Can Learn from Sex Education in Sweden," *Redbook*, October 1968, 34; George Krupp, "Swedish Design for Living," *Saturday Review*, July 29, 1967, 26.
18. Eleanor Adams, "Sex Education: The Swedish System," *Scholastic Teacher*, April 21, 1967, 17.
19. "Sweden's Pagan Beauty," *Look*, February 9, 1965, 57.
20. Richard Joseph, "Nothing Rotten in the States of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland—Especially the Girls," *Esquire*, May 1965, 86.
21. Lester A. Kirkendall, Preface in Birgitta Linnér, *Sex and Society in Sweden* (New York: Pantheon, 1967), vi. At least some measure of this "superior" attitude might be traced to the popular Swedish-born actress Ingrid Bergman's affair with director Roberto Rossellini that scandalized Hollywood and the nation in 1950.
22. Moskin, "Sweden's New Battle over Sex," 42. For an in-depth account of sex education and the Swedish welfare state, particularly in relation to media, see Elisabet Björklund, "The Most Delicate Subject: A History of Sex Education Films in Sweden," PhD diss., Lund University.
23. Linnér, *Sex and Society in Sweden*, 3.
24. "Calls Danish Film 'Pure Smut,'" *Variety*, July 14, 1965, 17.
25. The film *491* was directed by Vilgot Sjöman, who would go on to make *I Am Curious (Yellow)*. Lena Nyman, who starred in *I Am Curious*, played the prostitute in *491*.
26. Kell, review of *I, a Woman, Variety*, September 29, 1965, 6.
27. *I, a Woman* advertisement, *Boxoffice*, January 23, 1967, NC-3; "Far out (Long Island) Sex," *Variety*, June 14, 1967, 13; Vincent Canby, "*I, a Woman* a Hit De-

spite Its Origin," *New York Times*, August 10, 1967, 44; Richard Corliss, "Radley Metzger, Aristocrat of the Erotic: An Interview by Richard Corliss," *Film Comment* (January 1973): 23.

28. In establishing the difference between those films made or set in France and those made or set in Scandinavia, I do not want to give the impression that every movie hewed tightly to this standard. There were certainly exceptions to the rule, but they are rather rare.
29. See Linnér, *Sex and Society in Sweden*, 9–12.
30. Deane William Ferm, "The Latest Scoop on Swedish Sex," *Christian Century*, January 14, 1970, 46.
31. John M. Lee, "Danes and Swedes Are Moving toward Greater Sex Freedom," *New York Times*, November 6, 1968, 44. "Men's magazines" were especially eager to explore the sexual freedom of Denmark and Sweden. *Playboy* featured a "Girls of Scandinavia" pictorial in its June 1968 issue; *Sir!* included an article titled "A Sociological Experiment in Denmark" (March 1970); *Swank* asked, "Is Sweden Really the Sex-Utopia?" (November 1970); and so on.
32. See, for instance, the *Life* magazine cover story by Richard Lorber and Ernest Fladell, "The Generation Gap," *Life*, May 17, 1968, 81–92.
33. Don Kulick, "Four Hundred Thousand Swedish Perverts," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11, no. 2 (2005): 208.
34. "Permissiveness with affection" held that premarital sex was acceptable within a committed relationship. Ira L. Reiss, *Premarital Sexual Standards in America* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 83–84.
35. Kulick, "Four Hundred Thousand Swedish Perverts," 209.
36. Tytti Soila, "Sweden," in Tytti Soila, Astrid Söderbergh Widding, and Gunnar Iversen, eds., *Nordic National Cinemas* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 186–187.
37. My emphasis. "Sweden's Smashing Fashions," *Life*, September 27, 1968, 89.
38. Jerry Victor, "Those Hot New Swedish Films!" *Candid Press*, January 7, 1968, 16.
39. Natalie Gittelson, "Sweden II: The Love Image," *Harper's Bazaar*, June 1969, 22.
40. "Where Do Movies Come From, Dad?" Arnold M. Auerbach, *New York Times*, June 7, 1970, sec. 2, 2; Thomas Meehan, "If You're Still Curious . . . ," *New York Times Magazine*, June 29, 1969, 12.
41. First quotation: emphasis in the original. Frederic Fleischer, "Export or Die: Sweden Feeds the World's Appetite for Swedish Films," *Film Comment* (summer 1970): 36–37.
42. Swedish Film Production Investments produced *One Swedish Summer* (a.k.a. *As the Naked Wind from the Sea*, 1968), *The Language of Love* (1969), and *Swedish and Underage* (1969), among others, many of which received play on the American sexploitation circuit. See Per Olov Qvist and Tytti Soila, "*Eva—Den Utstötta; Swedish and Underage*," in *The Cinema of Scandinavia*, ed. Tytti Soila (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 152.
43. The Danish government stopped enforcing restrictions on the sale of porn

some months prior to July 1, 1969. "Pornography: What Is Permitted Is Boring," *Time*, June 6, 1969, 47.

44. John M. Lee, "Pornography Trade Show Is Opened in Demark," *New York Times*, October 22, 1969, 5.
45. "Who Buys Smut? Report from the Free World," *Screw*, November 24, 1969, 10.
46. Tom Buckely, "Oh! Copenhagen!," *New York Times Magazine*, February 8, 1970, 33+. Buckley noted that the Swedes stereotyped the Danes as "a rosy-cheeked machine for eating and love-making, devoid of subtlety, mysticism and passion," whereas the Danes viewed Swedes as "icebound, aloof and morbid."
47. Jean-Claude Lauret, *The Danish Sex Fairs*, trans. Arlette Ryvers (New York: Pent-R Books, 1971), 10.
48. Lauret, *The Danish Sex Fairs*, 66.
49. "When Pornography Curbs Are Lifted," *U.S. News and World Report*, October 19, 1970, 68.
50. Even before the American documentaries were released, the Italian-made "mondo" film *Sweden: Heaven and Hell* (1969) hit theaters. Trailers for U.S. release promised "things you just don't see at home": "In America, you don't see beautiful girls bouncing boldly out of the sauna, into the snow," as it depicted seminude blondes bounding for snow banks. "In America, you don't see public pornography shops where erotic books are displayed for both sexes—with government approval." In typical exploitation "See! See! See!" prose, it went on: "See the floating sex lab, a moon-lit cruise where 15-year-old girls learn the practical side of sex," and so on.
51. The film was picked up for national distribution by Sherpix, a company that had released some of Andy Warhol's Factory films such as *Lonesome Cowboys* (1968) and sexploitation items such as *The Stewardesses* (1969). Sherpix distributed the movie as *Censorship in Denmark* and succeeded in booking it "simultaneously in three classy cinemas in New York (the Fifty-fifth Street Playhouse, Lido East, and the Eleventh Street Theater) rather than in the dingy sexploitation-type houses where such movies are customarily shown." See Dorothy Allen, review of *Censorship in Denmark: A New Approach, Cinema X and Theater Annual*, 1971, 39.
52. Vincent Canby, "Have You Tried the Danish Blue?" *New York Times*, June 21, 1970, sec. 2, 1, 29.
53. Stanley Kauffmann, "Public Privates," *New Republic*, July 11, 1970, 22.
54. Stanley Kauffmann, "Public Privates," 22.
55. The others were the "white coaters" or "marriage manual films"—such as *Man and Wife* (1969), *He and She* (1970), and *Swedish Marriage Manual* (1969)—although they were often relatively discreet. *Pornography in Denmark* included "money shots," explaining they were an expected convention in Danish porn.
56. Addison Verrill, "Fear U.S. Sexplicit Films Made Tame, Biz Hurt Via 'Pornography in Denmark,'" *Variety*, April 22, 1970, 28.

57. *Pornography in Denmark* and *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* are both obtainable on DVD. *Wide Open Copenhagen* 70 may be lost.
58. Foster Hirsch, "He's Happy in His 'Blue' Heaven," *New York Times*, January 24, 1971, 13.
59. John Mahoney, "'Sex Freedom' In Denmark Has Everything to Be Seen," *Hollywood Reporter*, April 1, 1970, 8.
60. Rick., review of *Sexual Freedom in Denmark, Daily Variety*, n.d., n.p., contained in *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* press packet, collection of the author.
61. Howard Thompson, "Seeking Mr. Right," *New York Times*, August 21, 1971, 17.
62. As is typical with exploitation films, these movies were often released under multiple titles. This list, which is by no means exhaustive, is based on the films themselves, reviews, and existing posters or other advertising material.
63. Ad for *Threesome* in Hugh Fordin, ed., *Film-TV Daily 1970 Yearbook of Motion Pictures and Television* (New York: Wid's Films and Film Folk, 1970), 43.
64. Although the film was supposedly made by the Svenska Institut of Sexual Response, it appears to have been the brainchild of New York distributor William Mishkin and was almost certainly made exclusively for the U.S. market.
65. Frost and producer Armand Atamian made two other ultra-low-budget quickies passed off as Danish productions around the same time: *The Captives* (1970) and *Slaves in Cages* (1971). Although posters exist for both these obscurities, it is not entirely clear if they are distinct movies or if they are actually one and the same film.
66. *Screw*, March 1, 1971, various pages.
67. *Color Climax* featured photo spreads of a Danish woman, Bodil Joensen (spellings vary), engaged in sex with animals. Joensen was featured in a short documentary, *A Summer Day* (1970), engaging in sex acts with a boar, a dog, and a stallion. The film won the Grand Prize at the Wet Dream Film Festival in Amsterdam in 1970. She also appeared in *Animal Lover* (ca. 1971), which received some play in the United States and featured similar acts. For information see Jack Stevenson, "Dead Famous: The Life and Movies of Erotic Cinema's Most Exploited Figure," in *Fleshpot: Cinema's Sexual Myth Makers & Taboo Breakers*, ed. Jack Stevenson (Manchester, England: Critical Vision, 2000, 177–189). Color Climax's "Lolita" series (ca. 1971–1979) was one of the few instances of "kiddie porn" manufactured by a large-scale producer.
68. See Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 107.
69. Although the marquee of the theater displays the title *Swedish Marriage Manual* (AKA *The Language of Love*), the scenes intercut as Travis and Betsy watch are from *Sexual Freedom in Denmark*.
70. Elisabet Björklund, "'This is a dirty movie'—*Taxi Driver* and 'Swedish Sin,'" *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema* 1, no. 2 (2011): 172.
71. Marklund, "Hot Love and Cold People."