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# SEX AND GASOLINE: SELLING SEX IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

by

ELIZABETH PUCKETT

(Under the direction of Craig Roell)

## ABSTRACT:

The adult entertainment industry as modern mankind knows it began to form at the end of the Victorian age, a time where America also happened to become a major international power for the first time. The history of the adult entertainment industries from 1900 till today can almost be seen as a history of amazing business savvy, moral battles and classic T and A. No one book or one story would capture all the jobs and products that fall under the heading of adult entertainment. But the adult entertainment industry is made of up of people and business that have endured, through recession and depressions, and reform movements outlining what was popular with each decade, as well as legal and technological changes of the time. This includes sexual health in the United States. The sex trade, print or film or actual sex worker, has influenced many aspects of American life from technology, advertising, fashion and business models. The adult industry is made up of more than pay-per-view movies and sex toys. The adult industry includes video and DVD products as well as Internet materials, printed media books, magazines, sex tourism and fetish paraphernalia as well a brothel industry. The United States came into its own in terms of the sex industry at the same time the nation first really stepped on to the world's stage, becoming part of the international industrial revolution. The sex industry has always been tied to technological advances in the United States, from 1900 till 2000 adult entertainment changes drastically in the United States. This thesis analyzes what was in vogue in each decade, focusing on similarities and differences, and how technology, poverty, legalities

and times of war affected adult entertainment in context of the larger American history. Yet the adult entertainment industry endured- a remarkable skill that should be studied as an integral part of history

**INDEX WORDS:** American history, Sexuality, Twentieth century, Consumer history

SEX AND GASOLINE: SELLING SEX IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

by

ELIZABETH PUCKETT

B.A., Georgia Southern University 2009

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SEX AND GASOLINE: SELLING SEX IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

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Electronic Version Approved:

Spring 2011

DEDICATION:

To My Mother

and Grandmother and Grandfather

All the Family a girl would ever need.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

#### **Hello Love**

The scent of gasoline and lavender hangs heavy in the parlor of a house on a popular street, as money is exchanged for sexual pleasure. This was common scene for the early twentieth century America; the scent of choice and the street address may have changed with time. The business of pleasure has not. Gasoline as a perfume base signified the importance of automobiles had in the start of the American industrial revolution. Gasoline as a perfume and sign of beauty is also an appropriate symbol for the adult entertainment industry as a whole, an industry forever tied to technology and ever changing fads.

Pornography and erotica or, as it is more commonly referred to, the adult industry, is one of the longest standing and least familiar industries in our modern society. Pornography is defined as printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings. Erotica is defined as sexually stimulating, and pertains to sexual love or sensation. This slight difference is important to keep in mind, as our western society is very sexual but also very conservative on what it defines as pornography as compared to the definition of erotica. Many people draw a hard line between the different aspects of the adult entertainment industry. The adult industry is made up of more than pay-per-view movies and sex toys. The adult industry includes video and DVD products as well as internet materials, printed media books, magazines, sex tourism and fetish paraphernalia as well a brothel industry.

Sex was just as popular in the old world as the new. Many scholars have been fascinated by human sexuality from Freud to Foucault, Freedman and company. Freedman's and

company's Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America (1997) stretches from the colonies to modern day, touching on all forms in sexuality. Creating an amazing resource for anyone interested in human sexuality as a holistic view of American sexuality. Because Freedman and companies focus on sexual meaning and politics some of the more technical aspects of the selling of sex in America were over looked. Foucault's History of sexuality: Volume One An introduction (1990) focused on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century sexuality. Volume one is about western society and its attempts' to control its people's sexuality. Foucault was revolutionary in his rejection of the theory that western society was becoming more sexual. He states that Victorian society was basically fixated on sexuality and because of this tried to rigidly control sexuality. His second volume also focuses on ancient Greek and Roman sexuality further proving that the western world was not becoming more sexual as time went on. In fact a student of history and sexuality can easily see western society is not becoming more sexual with time, but goes through phases of more open sexuality and periods of sexual repression the 1920s as compared to the 1950s is a perfect example.<sup>1</sup> The United States came into its own in terms of the sex industry at the same time the nation first really stepped on to the world's stage, becoming part of the international industrial revolution. I am focusing on the 20<sup>th</sup> century sex trade, breaking it down by decade, looking at what the sex industry had to offer at the time as well as what medical, technological and legal changes came about. As advances in sexual health or the selling of pleasure happened, a committee hearing or legislation would come about in response to these advances. Much of America's legal history in association to sex has been moral or fear-

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<sup>1</sup> John D' Emilio and Estelle B Freedman. Intimate Matters: A History Of Sexuality in America. (Chicago The University of Chicago Press, 1997): Michel Foucault. The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction. Translated by Robert Hurley. (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1990).

based legislation. The logical way to discuss sexuality and the selling of pleasure is from a non-biased point of view.

The history of America's pleasure industry should be a pleasure to read. This is intended to be an overview of each decade, to show the people's taste at that time and how sexuality is interlaced with the rest of American culture and history. War, technology, prosperity and poverty have influenced Americans sexual lives just as much as it has affected our political or business history. Sex in all its forms has become an integral part of American social and cultural history. It needs to be reintroduced into our historical understanding. The history of the sex trade often awkward to discuss at most it gets a giggle and a few scholarly works. It is never the less a history worth writing and reading. Not only does the history itself hold the possibility of titillation it helps to paint a more complete picture of American history and current social norms.



**Figure 1:** New Orleans "Down the Line": A picture of Basin Street from Anderson's to Lulu White's, c. 1900. Source: Guy Bisson, flickr.com <http://www.flickr.com/photos/gbshots/4945193449/>

## CHAPTER 2

### 1900-Ladies of Ill Repute

Sex has always sold and in 1900 in the United States what sold was the actual sex act. The United States was going through a time of great change in 1900. The automobile had just come on the market. The United States was just beginning to step on to the world stage as an international Power. One of the attractions to the United States for national leaders, including our own, was sex, in red light districts all over the country. Brothels and gambling halls were built in side-by-side streets and neighborhoods. High-class brothels were the thing of legend. The future Playboy mansion would pale in comparison to the mirrored parlors of Storyville in New Orleans or the themed rooms and perfumed fountains of the Everleigh Club in Chicago. These red light districts had something for every budget and every taste. Gambling halls and dance halls sold cheap thrills and possibly illegal liquor. Crib joints were brothels for the lower-class men, a few dollars for a visit to a girl. Dope, meaning morphine or cocaine, could be purchased on any corner in these districts, or this is what reformers of the time believed.

Men or women with greater disposable income went to high-class brothels, a sort of boarding house for whores. The interior of these homes were opulent to say the least; mirrors, gems and fine art graced the walls. Oriental carpets were laid over mahogany floors. Many of these high-class places were designed to outdo each other. Their girls were not the cheap and tired crib girls who income was based on the amount of clients they saw instead of how much time they spent with a client. Rather, they were clean women who dressed as immaculately as the houses they worked in were decorated. This was one of the few jobs for women of color or mixed race, or women in general, in 1900 that paid well. Women gained the ability to live on

their own as well interact with and live in a higher social class than would have been possible.<sup>2</sup>

Women and men of the sex trade offered what people presumably could not get from their spouses. Women, especially in more expensive brothels, had clean-shaven under-arms, legs, and genitals. These women also favored the scent of gasoline and lavender (gas was a popular scent during the 1900s because of the recent invention of the automobile). Something almost no man could find at home. “Exotic” was also a huge money maker. Women in Storyville gained clients from their mulatto or multiethnic background. Ladies in Chicago and New York competed with girls from the Far East. Tattoos and impressive measurements or corseted waists were also a good way to make cash.<sup>3</sup> Crib girls and more working-class brothels were very different than high-class establishments. Many women ended up working in brothels to make ends meet or to gain things that they never could have afforded before. Some women simply had no other choice. They were alone, lost, or had a drug habit to support. This is not to say that a girl with a checkered past or a drug habit had never worked in some of the high-class brothels. Both types of brothel workers did not keep all the money they took in; in fact they only kept a fraction. Each girl had to pay for her room and board as well as the cheap paper-thin shift she would wear if she was working in a cheap house, or for the satin dresses she would wear in the more expensive houses. All doctor visits or similar personal needs came out of what a girl was

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Abbott. Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America's Soul. (New York: Random House, 2007); Elizabeth A. Clement. Love For Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Storyville: The Naked Dance. Directed by Anne O Craig, & Maia Harris. 2000. ; George J. Kneeland Commercialized Prostitution in New York City (Montclair: Patterson Smith, 1969); Al Rose. Storyville, New Orleans: being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red-Light District. (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Abbott, Sin in the Second City.



paid in high-class establishments, but the girl still could make good money. In cheap houses, girls would have to work constantly just to pay for their rooms, much less turn a profit. This tribute system as well as syphilis outbreaks made many reformers set their sights on brothels, cheap and high-class houses alike. Indeed, some women were basically kidnapped and forced into prostitution. Young women were drugged and professionally (meaning they were paid to rape young women so they could then be sold as sex workers) raped by men, then sold to brothels or dance halls for others to use. This was quite simply white slavery. Women were told they could not leave unless they paid back their cost of living. Many would never pay that back and wasted away, getting strung out on dope or contracting syphilis.<sup>4</sup>

The crème de la crème brothel in Chicago was the Everleigh Club on South Dearborn Street in the South Side Levee District. The Everleigh Club was run by two sisters, Ada and Minna Everleigh; their ages, names, and histories were almost entirely made up of lies about a glorious southern childhood and abusive husbands married to young. This sense of fantasy and mythos that surrounded the sisters extended to the actual club itself. The Everleigh was not only a play on the sisters' last name but also that of their favorite author. It was a fusion of all the top houses in the nation blending the best décor and practices from all the other brothels that Minna and Ada had visited or heard of. Mirrors that decorated parlors and rooms in Storyville graced the Everleigh. Rooms were themed by precious metals or exotic regions. There was a gold room, a Persian room, and a Chinese imperial room. The parlor boasted a "solid gold piano", which meant the piano was covered in solid gold leaf, which both sisters were very proud of. The Everleigh sisters wanted to make an exclusive and high class establishment. All the girls were

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

healthy, attractive and were always to be turned out in formal wear. The dining room was named after the classy “Pullman” dinning cars on trains. Dinner was \$50, a bottle of champagne \$12, and private time with one of the girls was another \$50. The prices went up from there, making it difficult for a caller to leave without spending at least \$200, which taking into account inflation, would be over 5,000 dollars today.<sup>5</sup> Girls waited in line to work at the Everleigh Club because money could be made quickly and steadily. Ada and Minna worked very hard to keep the club this way. They bribed the right people and kept their names out of the papers the best they could. Politicians and powerful people were their friends and they paid the champagne supplier on time. Ada, Mina and their girls were in the middle of it when reformers focused on brothels and pleasure districts. The first US scare of white slavery was squarely in the South Side District. The hysteria surrounding white slavery would spread from Chicago to the whole nation in time leading to the passing of the Mann Act.<sup>6</sup>

Like Chicago, New York had its share of prostitutes and brothels. But New York was different than Chicago in that many of the brothels and pleasure districts were being phased out by the move to factories and more industrial work places. Brothels and theaters lost preferential treatment by landlords. Moreover, a phenomenon called “charity girls” or “treating”, which will be discussed at length later, took away business. Brothels faded from view. Many middle-class reformers thought that sin had been wiped from the streets of New York, but working-class men

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid. ; MeasuringWorth.com. 2010

[http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/result.php?use%5B%5D=DOLLAR&use%5B%5D=GDPDEFINITION&use%5B%5D=VCB&use%5B%5D=UNSKILLED&use%5B%5D=MANCOMP&use%5B%5D=NOMGDPCP&use%5B%5D=MINALGDP&year\\_source=1900&amount=200&year\\_result=2011](http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/result.php?use%5B%5D=DOLLAR&use%5B%5D=GDPDEFINITION&use%5B%5D=VCB&use%5B%5D=UNSKILLED&use%5B%5D=MANCOMP&use%5B%5D=NOMGDPCP&use%5B%5D=MINALGDP&year_source=1900&amount=200&year_result=2011) (accessed May 2, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Abbott, Sin in the Second City.

and women knew differently. Prostitutes took to the streets.<sup>7</sup> Many white women now were working at the street level with African-American or Latino women, whose color kept them from becoming part of the brothel system. This caste system of sex workers based on ethnicity was not just a New York thing, nor is it just a historical thing. To this day many of the women in the higher end of the sex work industry are white women or Asian women, while African-American and Latino tend to be in a low pay bracket or more dangerous work.<sup>8</sup> Many of the women who had once worked in the safety and credit-dependent brothel system moved out on their own, working from their room in apartment houses where they paid higher rent than the average tenet to be allowed to bring up male guests. One would think the other tenants would not like sharing a hallway with a prostitute or having one calling her wares from the window above you. Many did not like the noise, drunkenness and late hours of business many of the prostitutes kept. Yet, the landlord or lady would not kick out the prostitute because she paid more rent and more often on time than the families who lived there. Many working-class people did not see prostitutes as low or amoral women; they knew that many of them had come to the line of work to support themselves and their children and spouses. One example is a young couple, where the girl May was prostituting herself to raise enough money for her fiancé to go into a trade for himself. May put off the marriage until she had raised enough money to see her fiancé and herself set up in trade. Another example of the working class view of tenant prostitution can be found in the novel A Tree Grows in Brooklyn (1943) which is set in the first two decades of the twenty century, where the young female narrator sees a prostitute soliciting her father from the doorway of her

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<sup>7</sup> Clement, Love For Sale.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

home. The young girl asks her father if that was a bad lady; her father said “no there are few truly bad people in life, but they are a lot of unlucky ones”.<sup>9</sup>

New York also attempted legislation on the sale of alcohol on Sunday and in hotels, turned prostitution into a small business. The Rains Hotel Law was written to keep people from drinking on Sunday. It stated that the only places that could hold a liquor license were hotels with at least ten beds. So most saloons and dance halls boarded up and separated many back halls into rooms with ten beds and made deals with prostitutes to work them. The salon got a cut of the prostitutes’ business, the prostitute gained some of the safety she had in the brothels by no longer being on the streets as well as a cut of the drinks she made customers buy, or by the amount of customers she brought in. In this small business set up, both the prostitute and salon could make phenomenal profits. Many of the girls who had moved from brothels or immigrated with no family and wanted to supplement their meager incomes could now do so in safety but without paying half or more of their profits to a madam.<sup>10</sup>

New York was not immune to the fear of white slavery or the later Mann Act. Scores of immigrants flocked to New York. Yet, statistics show few of these women ending up in in prostitution were the result of a white slavery ring many women became prostitutes for money or because as immigrants no other jobs were open to them. The idea that many of the people running white slavery rings or brothels that were the dumping grounds for white slavery rings were French was pervasive in both New York and Chicago. This was simple not true. French immigrants made up a very small percentage of immigrants to Chicago and New York.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Kneeland, Commercialized Prostitution in New York City, 52, 100-163.

The French women that immigrated most likely were already prostitutes moving away from the regulated brothel system in France to America where the brothels were less rigidly controlled and more profitable.<sup>11</sup>

Storyville in Louisiana rivaled any pleasure district in Chicago, New York or any place in the nation. “The district,” as it was remembered, was much like South Side Levee District in Chicago. One cannot tell from the muddled and tampered historical record whether prostitution was legal in Storyville or just merely tolerated because of the money it brought in. Storyville stands differently than many of the other pleasure districts where houses and dance parlors just popped up near each other. The city of New Orleans legislated Storyville into existence, to create one area to be where all prostitution and sex work took place in but nowhere else. Other laws were made based on the race of the prostitute; As well as the popularity of the brothel workers. White women and lighter skinned African American women were more popular with clients than women with a darker complexion. It was easier for a white upper class client to warp his or her mind around sleeping with a woman who was black and there for exotic if she looked more like the white man she was sleeping with. These laws were not only hard to enforce, but for the most part were ignored by working girls. Because of New Orleans’ and Louisiana’s multi-ethnic history, many of the working girls were of mixed race, having African, Creole and possibly Spanish bloodlines. Storyville history starts well before 1900 and grew out of the French and Spanish views on sex work, which differed greatly from a more puritanical New England view. Storyville was born and the girls went to work on Basin Street simply because it was what they

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

knew how to do and they were not welcome into the main part of downtown.<sup>12</sup>

Storyville had a host of characters and personalities that inhabited it similar to the women of the Everleigh Club. Lulu White was one such woman, a madam of West Indian descent who claimed she was white; however no one really believed this. She was a short round soul that made up for what she lacked in looks with personality and diamonds. Lulu was the life of the party dripping in diamonds with rings on every finger, necklaces, bracelets and diamonds set in her teeth. Lulu did a booming business during her time in Storyville, gaining enough money to try to invest in Hollywood; but her man ran away with the funds. Lulu disappeared from history with the closing of Storyville in 1917. One story talks of Lulu dying poor and alone on a train while heading back to the place of her birth, Selma, Alabama. There is no evidence to back up this story, which seems to be more of a morality tale than fact. One of the most famous men of Storyville, Tom Anderson, became the District's unofficial mayor. He was a smart and pleasant young man with a head for numbers, who united the law abiding people of New Orleans with the not so law abiding in Storyville. He also divorced his virtuous wife for a rough and tumble madam named Josie Arlington. Tom's dealing in Storyville did not hold him back. He ran and won political office many times in New Orleans and worked within Storyville until the times of its close.<sup>13</sup>

Madams who did well in Storyville knew how to put on a show. Lulu White started her career by sharing a stage with a large breed dog. Some women were hard, violent and (for lack of a better word) evil women, like Emma Johnson, who got virgin girls drunk and sold them to

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<sup>12</sup>Rose, Storyville, New Orleans. 5-97.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

men. They would put on depraved sexual circuses for viewers. She never was fined or made to serve any time for the many crimes she committed because of all the money she brought into New Orleans. Indeed, people traveled to New Orleans specifically to see Emma's twisted shows.<sup>14</sup> Another madam of note in Storyville was the Countess Willie V. Piazza, who was a woman of a multi-ethnic background who spoke English, French, Spanish, Basque, and some Portuguese. She ran the most upscale brothel in Storyville and was the fashion plate of New Orleans whom even law abiding women copied. Willie was the exact opposite of Emma; she was kind to other working girls as well as to customers. Another thing that set Storyville apart was voodoo. In other pleasure districts madams fought one another, framed each other for crimes or tried to get girls strung out on dope. Only in New Orleans would curses be set on other women, such as threats to "close a girl up" so she could not work anymore. A woman made a mint selling brick dust to madams to protect them from voodoo practitioners. Jazz also was as much a part of Storyville as voodoo was. Almost every brothel the nation over had a piano player called a "professor." Storyville had some of the best and biggest names in jazz, like Jelly Roll Morton. Storyville like South Side Levee District and the Tenderloin districts of New York was closed by the end of the decade. Storyville was closed by the United States Department of the Navy in 1917, the navy justified the closing of Storyville claiming it saved enlisted men from a hot bed of syphilis and New Orleans could keep its naval base or Storyville but it had to pick one.<sup>15</sup>

Storyville and company were closed and fell into disarray. The Everleigh club, from where the slang term "to get laid" originated was closed and torn down in 1933; today a

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<sup>14</sup> Storyville: The Naked Dance. Directed by Anne O Craig, & Maia Harris. 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Rose, Storyville, New Orleans 5-97.

government housing project stands on the site. Most of Storyville was torn down in 1930s to make way for other building projects. The city government desired to wipe Storyville from the historical memory, renamed Basin Street as North Saratoga, only to have it changed back to Basin Street when old Storyville became a tourist destination 20 years later. Many of the brothels in New York became factory buildings or were already part of apartment complexes that are no longer standing. Though these places are gone, they are part of the nation's collective memory. Every time someone talks of getting laid, it's a tie to Chicago's pleasure district, when one listens to jazz that was fostered and grew out of the brothels and dance halls of Storyville. Modern burlesque stars like Dita Von Tease would not exist today without pleasure districts like the Tenderloin in New York. Dancers from Dance halls and circus would later become the signature of burlesque stars we know today.<sup>16</sup>

### **Sex in the Courtroom**

Many of the morality laws passed in the early 1900s were local, such as the Rains Hotel Act. One national law was the Mann act, attempted to prevent the capture and enslavement of young girls. The fear of white slavery caused a kind of hysteria that swept through Europe to the United States. One of the first places to embrace this concern for young women being sold as sex slaves was Chicago. Preachers spoke and wrote on it, becoming famous as they traveled the nation fighting the demon of white slavery.<sup>17</sup> Pleasure districts were also looked at negatively because they were a den of syphilis and whores spread the illness. White slavery did exist, which is evident by Madam Emma's actions in Storyville, but it was not as rampant as the American

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<sup>16</sup> Abbott, Sin in the Second City xi-247; Rose, Storyville, New Orleans 5-97 ; Clement, Love For sale 13-177.

<sup>17</sup> Abbott, Sin in the Second City . xi-247.



public believed. Claiming to be a white slave got a prostitute out of severe jail time though. Many lawyers and politicians made a name for themselves by hunting down white slave rings and supporting laws to stop the slave trade.<sup>18</sup> The Mann Act, named after Illinois Congressman James Robert Mann, a lawyer from Chicago, fought for the White Slave Act of 1910. It also targeted polygamist such as Mormon fundamentalists and made their lifestyles illegal. The fledgling FBI created a new department to watch men or women tied to prostitution that travel across state lines. The Mann Act did not fall out of favor after the fall of the brothels and pleasure districts. People from Charlie Chaplin to Charles Manson to a spy were either threatened to be arrested under the act or were actually convicted of breaking the Mann act or white slavery act of 1910.<sup>19</sup>

### **Tricks of the Trade**

The biggest dangers to a working girl or a sex worker in 1900 were not the police or reformers but pregnancy and venereal diseases, specifically syphilis. Although easily curable now, syphilis was a death sentence in 1900. The illness would leave its victims scarred and in the latter stages mad from lesions on their brains. There would be no cure for syphilis until the discovery of penicillin decades later. Working girls stove off unwanted pregnancies and syphilis with a verity of snake oils, purple black pills, douches of vinegar and other acidic products. Peccaries or diaphragms and cervical caps made of sponge were also used to stop pregnancy. Abortions were possible to obtain but were illegal and very dangerous for the women to endure.

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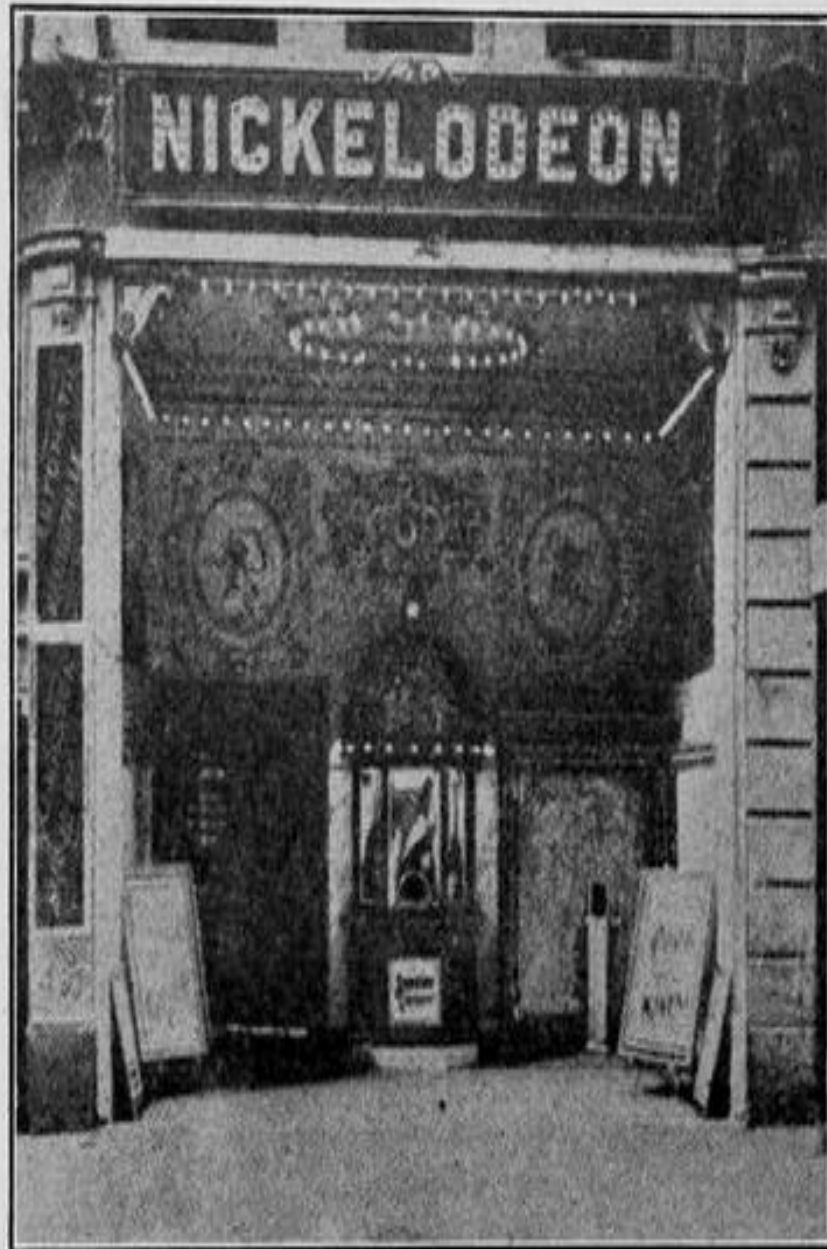
<sup>18</sup> Rose, Storyville, New Orleans 5-97; Abbott, Sin in the Second City xi-247.

<sup>19</sup> Knockout. January 2005. <http://www.pbs.org/unforgivableblackness/knockout/mann.html> (accessed May 2, 2011).

Midwives and doctors tied to brothels looked after girls. Non-brothel system sex workers would see doctors, quacks, or otherwise along with home remedies to heal venereal diseases or prevent children. It was not until WWI that condoms would be available but oral contraceptives were decades from being available to women, sex workers or housewives.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Andrea Tone, Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).



*The first nickelodeon—Harry Davis, proprietor. Located in Pittsburgh.  
From an old issue of The Implet.*

**Figure 2:** The First Nickelodeon, opened in Pittsburgh in 1905 Source: CharmaineZoe, Flickr.com

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/charmainezoe/5708404278/sizes/m/in/photostream/>

## CHAPTER 3

### 1910- Treating Yourself

Titillating entertainment and courting between couples is as old as time and not only relegated to the decade of 1910. Yet in the nineteen teens, “dating” as we know it came into being. This style of social interaction was called treating. Girls would take gifts from men who wanted their company or allow them to buy dinner, drinks or a show. These girls were not prostitutes but were called charity girls. Young women in urban areas worked for a living but most or all the wages they earned were given to the family. In order to enjoy the entertainments of city life themselves, many girls turned to treating. Treating is a hybridization of homosocial and heterosocial outings; girls would go out in groups and flirt with men who would buy drinks and presents at dance halls or theaters. The group of girls would police themselves, drawing a line for their friends between prostitution and treating, and defining what it was to have a good reputation or a bad one. Many parents and reformers were naturally worried about this behavior. Because of the tight urban living styles, parents lost much of the control that they once had over courting or whom their children married. In fact, many young married women would still take part in treating; a group would go out and leave their wedding rings at home and give false names and addresses. It should be stated that charity girls all had a different level of intimacy that they were willing to perform. Many would never sleep with the men who treated them, but rather would string one along and would have as many as three or more men on the line. Most girls looked to older men, or white men, if the girl was African American or Latino, to treat with because they felt these men had more money and knew what was expected of them. The girls that did perform sex acts for stockings or movie tickets focused mainly on hand jobs or sex in

hallways or on the way home. Treating girls did not go to hotel rooms; prostitutes went to rented rooms.<sup>21</sup>

Treating was mainly a phenomenon of large cities, like New York where the practice started. All major cities had theaters, nickelodeons (cheap films one could see) and dance halls. Large and small cities alike had fairs and traveling shows. Brothels and pleasure districts did not all close their doors at the start of 1910. But many young urbanites like the charity girls did not frequent pleasure districts. Most of these young men and women got their thrills from nickelodeons, films that showed simple everyday tasks or small scenes. Titles like Girl in a Nightgown, or Girl Climbing Apple Tree were pure sounding, but were pornography of the day. Drawing of women graced Ivory soap ads and many other products. Paragons of feminine beauty were on almost every toiletry item ad. Images of the pretty titillating girl come about in the nineteen-teens just for the sake of entertainment. The pin up image we think of painted on the nose of planes was first created in this decade. The image was a delineation of the Gibson girl and the women on the Ivory soap ad. Nickelodeons or silent films had been in production since the late 1800s in Europe as well as in the United States. Soft-core stag films like Girl Climbing Apple Tree were very suggestive by early 1900 standards. Many nickelodeons showed women in states of undress, not doing anything sexual, but just getting dressed in the morning or going to bed at night or exercising in some way. Silent films based on some hum-drum everyday task required the young women to be in a night gown or in tights for peoples' viewing pleasure. More hard-core films such as A Free Ride could not be viewed publicly or in homes (because the cost would be astronomical to have a viewing in a private home). Most stag films were shown to

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<sup>21</sup> Clement, Love For Sale.

fraternities or similar men's groups by traveling sales men.<sup>22</sup> This is why many people do not think of pin ups or stag films until the 1950s or 1960s, when partaking in these pleasing images was more economical and practical for the everyday person.

### **Dirty Letters**

If a girl or guy could not make it to the nickelodeon shows or to the brothels, many turned to photographs or drawings for pleasure and entertainment. Some even came from ads of the day, face soaps and Gibson girls. It was not an easy task for men and women to get ahold of salacious or sexy images. The Comstock Act passed in 1873 and was named for Anthony Comstock an anti-obscenity crusader. The Comstock laws, as they were collectively called, dictated what could or could not be sent through the mail; defines what was too obscene for people to order from a catalogue. Comstock laws prevented many of the nickelodeon films that were more graphic than Girl Climbing Apple Tree from being mailed across stateliness. Along with many other adult products, contraceptives of any kind could not be put in the mail. Comstock laws fit perfectly into the mind of early 20<sup>th</sup> century reformers thereby keeping people from being able to purchase salacious images and contraceptives; thus, men and women theoretically were less likely to engage in perverse and inappropriate behavior.<sup>23</sup> But Comstock laws ironically created a huge black market in sexual materials. Films and provocative pictures

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Turan, Sinema: American Pornographic Films and the People Who Make Them (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1974).

<sup>23</sup> Nicola Kay Beisel, Imperiled Innocents : Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997).

that showed a bit more than the pretty girl on a soap ad or seen exercising in a nickelodeon were carried from state to state by traveling salesmen. This smuggling tradition would last until the 1960s which contributed to the traveling salesmen's questionable reputation. Comstock laws are still in effect and prohibit things of an adult nature to be sent through the mail. Later cases against Comstock laws will include glamour and pin up photographers. The main case that ties the Comstock laws to the nineteen-teens was a case against a man and wife who were promoting birth control and family planning. William Sanger and Margret Sanger were both punished and the government did not allow contraceptives to be sent through the mails for another 18 years. Sending soldiers off to the Great War with no protection against sexually transmitted illnesses was a mistake. By 1920 women and men were smuggling in gin and diaphragms in the same shipments.<sup>24</sup>

### **Safety in the Mail**

Since the beginning of time men and women have attempted to engage in sexual activities with little or no physical repercussions, meaning pregnancy and the whole host of illnesses and infections one could contract. Ancient Egyptian women used crocodile dung as a sort of organic diaphragm. Men in early Japan wore sheaths around their penis made of tortoise shell. Renaissance men used animal bladders or tight tubes of linen to protect themselves.<sup>25</sup> Men and women in the nineteen hundreds and nineteen-teens in the United States used a variety of unreliable products. Women used diaphragms smuggled into the country and their homes or

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<sup>24</sup> Tone , Devices and Desires .

<sup>25</sup>Ronald O Valdiserri, "Cum Hastis Sic Clypeatis: The Turbulent History Of the Condom." Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine , 1988: 237-245.

douches made of Lysol. Comstock laws outlawed the mailing of birth control through the U.S. postal system, making them very difficult to move from state to state. Many women relied only on douching to prevent an unwanted pregnancy or illness. Not just working women did this. Charity Girls in New York were interviewed by social workers of the time. All of the girls mentioned douching to prevent pregnancy but only a handful of these young women knew anything about sexually transmitted illnesses.<sup>26</sup> Men had the option of using a rubber condom, which was costly to make and had only a three-month shelf life. A condom was an investment of sorts and many men could not afford this kind of protection. Sexual education and knowledge would not change from 1900 until WWI and WWII. People were just taught to abstain until marriage or if not, then merely to douche before and after. In the coming decades, latex would be perfected and condoms made of latex would be much cheaper and last a great deal longer, and eventually changed how sexual intercourse was practiced in the United States forever. Yet in the early 1900s many men and women thought the fear of catching syphilis would keep citizens moral. Society over all would prevent the sale and promotion of “safe sex” until WWII, and that was only because the military found most of their soldiers could not abstain.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Clement, Love For Sale.





Figure 3: Eltinge 1916, A playbill for a Drag show, Source: Confetta, Flickr.com

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/confetta/2341174964/in/set-72157604133138186/>

<sup>27</sup> Tone , Devices and Desires.

## CHAPTER 4

### 1920: Burning Your Candle at Both Ends

The 1920s in the United States was quite simply the first sexual revolution. Women had more freedoms than they had ever had. Movies and movie stars began to hold the power and glamour that would reach its peak in the 1940s. Alcohol was made illegal by the 18th Amendment making dance halls and gin joints even more popular and inviting. The 1920s were generally a time of prosperity as men and women worked to be fashionable. Skirts got shorter corsets became obsolete, and gender lines and race lines blurred.

Women's fashion changed radically, ushering in a decade of fun and freedom. Corsets and long skirts were cast aside for a more youthful and comfortable shape. A camisole and a shift dress and stockings had become the new fashion statement of the day. Hair was now short, and bobbed and styled. In fact, smoking had become a sign of vampy and vivacious women. Some women went so far to gain this "just inhaled" look that they had their back teeth removed to create a sunken in sexy look. One cannot argue that 1920s woman's fashion was one of youth and a sense of chic that had not been seen before on everyday women.

Armed with an education of Freudian sex and a sassy bobbed hair cut purposely to be rebellious, young women and men of the 1920s stepped out into the world-and a different world it was. Bisexuality (something that was rarely or not mentioned at all in previous decades), was openly experimented with. Admittedly more women dabbled in homosexuality than men. Women's friendships that were just close friends in Victorian terms were now assumed to be of a sexual nature because they most likely were. Slews of books from the 1920s dealt with

lesbianism and with bisexuality such as Hemingway's, The Sun Also Rises (1926) and other books and short stories like "The Sea Change" (1931) were published in both novel form and serialized in magazines. There were also plays that dealt with lesbianism and bisexuality such as Sholem Asch's God of Vengeance (1907) or The Captive (1926) as well as William Hulburt's Sin of Sins, which opened in Chicago in 1926, which ran only for three weeks because of the scandal it caused with its lesbianism themes. From the shows of Broadway, major cities catered to this sense of rebellion and sexual exploration by having drag balls, where men wore ball gowns and women wore tuxedos, but it was more of a spectator sport. Straight men and women would go to watch. Because of this sense of exploration and fascination, clubs, night life, and private parties began to spring up specifically for lesbian or bisexual women of any class, black or white. One should ask though, what about gay men? Gay women were fascinating but harmless. Gay men were an afterthought in homosexual history of the 1920s. Many "out" lesbian men and women lived in Harlem or other artist communities such as Greenwich Village. After the market crash, many of these bohemian havens disappeared and with it, many of the openly homosexual men and women of the 1920s.<sup>28</sup>

Homosexual men did take part in this new sense of freedom and sexuality. The new sense of experimentation and fun allowed gay men to interact with each other in a new way. Many of the gay men had become used to interacting with straight men or men not comfortable with their sexuality in semi-public places for most of their sexual experiences. By the start of the 1920s, bathhouses had become popular in cities like New York and San Francisco. Built in a Turkish or Russian style, these bath houses became popular spots in the homosexual community. The

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<sup>28</sup> Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers (New York: Penguin Group, 1991).

proprietors of these baths allowed gay men to meet and interact with each other in a safe and secure environment, allowing them to have the sense of experimentation and freedom like other young men and women of the 1920s were enjoying.<sup>29</sup>

Like many other minority groups in American cities, gay men and women lived mainly in certain districts or areas to stay within a community that understood their needs and culture. The districts in New York that had concentrations of gay men and women tended to be the same districts that were red light districts or entertainment sectors, such as the Bowery and the Tenderloin districts; These districts were also home to many of the working-class immigrants in New York such as Italians and Jewish families. Like the prostitutes who worked in these working-class sectors, gay men and women had been living there since the 1900s and were part of the community. Girls and boys who lived in the Bowery and Tenderloin districts knew at a young age what the prostitutes in their apartment complex were selling and doing. These children also grew up knowing the “fairies” (homosexual men as they were called by their 1920s straight counter parts) and how they lived. They were simply just part of the local community. Many of the dance halls and salons were havens to working-class men and homosexual men alike. Salons offered a cheap meal and company along with a host of other functions, such as meeting halls and check cashing services.<sup>30</sup>

Other communities and the city governments acknowledged prostitution and homosexual behavior to be obscene and attempted to regulate both. Yet, as one women of the time put, “it

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<sup>29</sup> George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

was very smart to go slumming in New York...”, just like it was in many other major cities, which made it very hard for the city government to limit people’s exposure to prostitution and homosexuality. By 1923 New York alone had made the solicitation of men for any lewd or unnatural act by other men disorderly conduct. Raids were made on hotels and restaurants that catered to men and women of homosexual persuasions. Restaurants like Child’s in New York or any cabaret show in any major city ended up being called Pansy clubs because of their association with the gay community. In the long run, gay history of the 1920s tied itself to this title of Pansy clubs and Fairy men. This did not stop the proprietors from catering to them or men and women from going to these places. Many places got around these laws by allowing gay men and women to gather in only one area of their establishment. Prohibition made alcohol a key factor in the changes in performers and clients of many adult entertainment and hotel industries the nation over. People had to find a new way to attract business since they could no longer openly serve alcohol. This meant prostitution and jazz and gay performers.<sup>31</sup>

The 1920s helped to form the homosexual culture and communities that we know today. Restaurants, hotels, and San Francisco bath houses fostered a sense of self-acceptance and community that was hard to find outside of the red light districts. Laws like the ones passed in New York that made all the trappings of homosexuality unnatural and illegal persist to this day in some form and color people’s views’ of what is or what is not homosexual. The freedom of the 1920s allowed an entire culture to form, grow and endure the hard times to come.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## The Noble Experiment

In 1919 the National Prohibition Act was verified and made into law. It defined what alcohol was and made it illegal in all of the United States. Together with the Eighteenth Amendment the National Prohibition Act would change how Americans socialize. Prohibition was also known as the noble experiment. The sale of alcohol nationwide was illegal from 1920 to 1933 in the United States. Though the law did keep alcohol from being sold legally, it gave immense power to illegal and underground operations to smuggle it into the country and to sell it in underground establishments called speakeasies.<sup>32</sup> Prohibition is tied to America's sexual history because of these smuggling rings and illegal clubs. Many of the same crates or bottles of imported liquor also contained contraceptives, which were also illegal in the United States. For example, one woman would have diaphragms and condoms smuggled into the states by hiding them under the caps of gin bottles.<sup>33</sup> Illegal clubs became a center for jazz and cabaret acts that accepted and encouraged homosexual performers and patrons. Women of all types also began to drink and socialize in these clubs, whereas before, only prostitutes or treating girls really frequented dance halls or salons. Since many of the illegal clubs were semi-private, married women and "good girls" could now go out and drink. This also helped to change America's sexual experience as a whole. Prostitution also became a way for clubs and hotels to make back the revenue they had lost in alcohol sales. Nevertheless prostitution could now expose brothels and dance halls to the support or pressure of crime rings and Mafia groups that had sprung up to

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<sup>32</sup> Digital History. 2006. [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article\\_display.cfm?HHID=441](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=441) (accessed may 2, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers.

run illegal liquor. Men, women, prostitutes, and drag queens could now all be seen in the same establishment, protected by the owners and possibly organized crime rings, because they were all doing something illegal by having a drink.<sup>34</sup>

### **For the Greater Good**

Eugenics programs started during the 1920s in the United States. Many of the inferior immigrant class were sterilized to keep from having deficient children that the state might have to raise. This went far enough to include prostitutes and other sex workers. Girls and women who ended up in asylums to take care of unwanted pregnancy or on prostitution charges now ran the risk of being forcibly sterilized because of their potential to have imperfect children. Prostitution was one of the few jobs that warranted sterilization. Immigrant groups such as the Irish and Italians or even poor southerners were other groups targeted. Eugenics promoters effectively concluded the working class to be mentally deficient and if stopped from having more children, the nation would save money by not supporting generations of prostitutes and the poor.<sup>35</sup>

Eugenics although motivated by xenophobia and a need for social control did do some good.

Artificial insemination started to become an option in the late 1920s. Most of the people seeking insemination were women who had trouble conceiving or couples seeking to make a “healthier family” in a very Mendel kind of way by selecting sperm that would look like both parents just possibly more attractive and smarter.<sup>36</sup> Like the noble experiment of prohibition, the eugenics

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Johanna Schoen, "Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America." Journal of the History of Sexuality 18, no. 3 (September 2009): 541-544).

<sup>36</sup> Paul A. Lombardo, A Century of Eugenics: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2011).

movement ultimately fell from favor and was seen as a flawed plan with faulty science backing it.





**Figure 4:** A picture of the Madam Jessie and other employees at the Chicken Ranch before the Great Depression, possibly the only photo of the Chicken Ranch's early employees. Source: Jayme Lynn Blaschke, Texas Monthly ("Closing Down La Grange," Oct. 1973),

<http://www.jaymeblaschke.com/ChickenRanchImage1.html>

## CHAPTER 5

### 1930 Comics to Forget

The splendor and freedom of the 1920s had rolled back and left the nation in poverty. Everyone felt the depression that defined the 1930s: the rich, the middle class, the immigrant poor, and the farming poor. Saloons, brothels, and practically all adult entertainment suffered. Many people turned to a cheaper way to escape and enjoy themselves, such as dime-store novels, penny dreadfuls and Tijuana bibles. Tijuana bibles were about art and more about sex. The bibles usually had the same characters as everyday comics or were spoofs of major actors and actresses. They were small (4x3) and were mainly printed in black and white, and usually eight pages although some swelled up to thirty-two pages. Tijuana bibles were crude and violent yet they made it into almost every home. It made sense. Tijuana bibles suited peoples need for escape and the graphic sex meshed well with the jagged emotions caused by the depression. The books also catered to both hetero and homosexual fantasies by offering a variety of scenes of Popeye and Olive oil, Mae West and Cary Grant or Clara Bow. Tijuana bibles offered something different, just sex, no plot, just the act.<sup>37</sup>

Dime-store novels were not as graphically sexual as the Tijuana bibles, but sold fantasy. They were romance novels, westerns, and science fiction and murder mysteries. The dime-store heroes were frontiersmen, a man's man. The plot was melodramatic and full of high drama.

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<sup>37</sup> "Lust and Lechery in Eight Pages: The Story of the Tijuana Bibles. Pt. 1." CarnalNation. March 20, 2009. <http://carnalnation.com/content/4380/10/lust-and-lechery-eight-pages-story-tijuana-bibles-pt-1> (accessed April 5, 2011); Hall, Chris.; "Lust and Lechery in Eight Pages: The Story of the Tijuana Bibles, Pt. 2." CarnalNation. March 27, 2009. <http://test.carnalnation.com/content/4381/10/lust-and-lechery-eight-pages-story-tijuana-bibles-pt-2> (accessed April 5, 2011).

Dime novels were originally a brand name but grew to encompass all cheap novels. The books ranged in size and page count. Many of the books also came with illustrations or ran as serial publications. Dime novels offered sweeping romance and honorable characters along with horror and maybe a gun fight. Like Tijuana bibles, dime novels were cheap and practical during a time of great poverty.<sup>38</sup>

This does not mean all brothels and prostitutes were out of work. One place in Texas in fact became famous and later a popular musical for its unique way of surviving the Great Depression. This place was the Chicken Ranch, which opened in 1884 in La Grange, Texas. The Ranch has been billed as the oldest operating brothel in the United States. Like many of the brothels that had survived into the roaring twenties, the Chicken Ranch went through a drastic change during the Great Depression in order to stay open under then madam Jessie Williams. Prostitution as a whole did good business in the depression simply because everyone felt bad. Men whose home lives had been made tense by the lack of money now went to prostitutes, who charged less than they ever had before, not only because of the depression, but because many of the girls were women who had lost their livelihood as a result of the severe economic conditions. A standard date at the Chicken Ranch (there was no other kind) cost a visitor a dollar fifty. Yet many doctors, shopkeepers, and farmers were trading goods and services instead of hard to get cash. The Chicken Ranch accepted as a new form of payment: one chicken per date. So the girls got to eat, men got to feel a bit better for a few minutes, and everyone was fed. This is how the

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<sup>38</sup> Lisa K. Speer, "Paperback Pornography: Mass Market Novels and Censorship in Post-War America." Journal of American & Comparative Cultures 24, no. 3/4 (2001): 153-160.

Chicken Ranch got its name.<sup>39</sup>

Prostitution may have endured the Great Depression but gone were the mahogany stair cases and perfumed houses and 500 dollar price tags of high class brothels. Not until modern day would that much money again change hands in brothels. But as one can see, sex not only endured the depression, but even became a way to keep one's family fed or lift one's spirits out of worry, and satisfy one's own hunger.

### **A Naughty Graph**

The 1930s is the first decade one can get numbers and data on men's and women's sexual behavior. Many professional women from previous decades left interviews with social works or police girl. Data of every day men or women sexual behaviors had not been compiled until 1930. The 1930s women--as compared to coming decades--were more likely to have slept with only one or two men and had no female sexual partners. Men of the 1930s were less likely than any coming decade to have slept with five or more partners, though they were much more likely to have slept with more than one or two partners than women of their own time. They were also more likely to have had some same-sex sexual experience than any other decade polled. One would assume this statistic would be a left over from the fascination and acceptance of homosexuals in the 1920s.<sup>40</sup> One does have to wonder just who was being interviewed. It is

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<sup>39</sup> Jan Hutson, The Chicken Ranch: The True Story of the Best Little Whorehouse in Texas (Lincoln, NE: Authors Choice Press, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Charles F Tuner, et al, "Sexual Behavior in the United States. 1930-1990: Trends and Methodological Problems" Sexually Transmitted Diseases 22, no. 3 (1995): 173-190.

obvious no one like Jessie Williams or the Chicken Ranch girls was interviewed. But the statistics fit the morals of the day. It would not be until the 1960s that women's responses would change greatly. If polls could be found for the 1920s, one wonders if the women's responses would look more like their 1930s sisters or the girls from the 1960s.

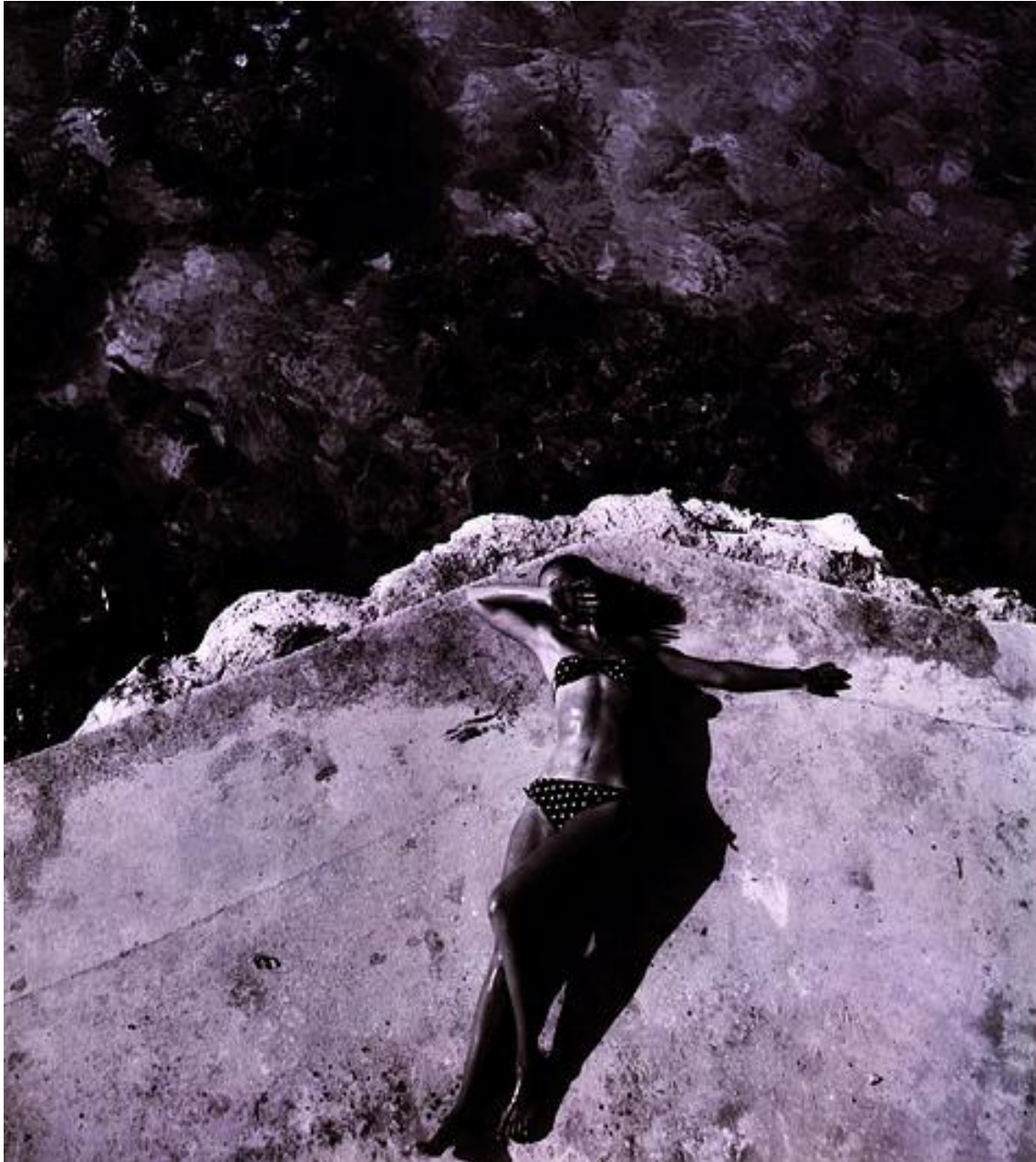
### **Bad Blood<sup>41</sup>**

In 1932 a study was started in Macon County, Alabama, to investigate the stages of syphilis. The study focused on African-American men who were told they were being treated for "bad blood." The PHS or Public Health Service offered free meals and treatments for not only the bad blood but other minor ailments. The study cruelly did not inform the patients what they were dying of, yet 400 plus poor black men were dying of syphilis and remained untreated from 1932 to 1947. Treatment for syphilis until after WWII involved giving the patient malaria to cause a high fever to kill the syphilis bacteria, and then cure the malaria with quinine. During the late 1940s it was discovered that penicillin would cure syphilis. Yet the men of Tuskegee would not get treated in either way. It was not until 1997 that the United States apologized for the experiments performed in Macon County, Alabama.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Many Publications and information is available on the Public Health Service study on syphilis in Macon Alabama. This is a vital part of America's sexual and medical history yet it is not this publication's focus. Many of the articles and publications in the bibliography will have more information and greater detail about the study in Macon Alabama.

<sup>42</sup> John Parascandola, Sex, Sin, and Science: A History of Syphilis in America ( Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2008).



**Figure 5** Dovima in Jamaica, by Toni Frissell (1946), one of the first shots of the bikini. Source: Trialsanderrors, flicker.com

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/trialsanderrors/2922487671/>

## CHAPTER 6

### 1940: A Time for Pretty Girls

Burlesque brings to mind today the image of pin up girls and glitter pasties. This was not always so. The first burlesque stars came to the United States in the late 1880s. One of the first burlesque stars was a woman called Little Egypt, an Arab performer at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair who belly danced removing veils. Soon knock off "Little Egypts" were nationwide. The pioneer into burlesque as a stage show was one Gypsy Rose Lee who disliked the term stripper or striptease. A friend, H.L. Mencken, is credited with creating the term ecdysiast, which originally was used to describe arthropods molting their shells or exoskeletons, to describe her act of stripping. Other performers on the other hand much preferred the word stripping or striptease. Acts varied as much as performer's word choices. Gypsy Rose Lee would stand still on stage and talk about how modest or interested in art she was as she removed articles of clothing, while she continued her monologue on modesty as though she were completely unaware she was more and more naked. Another performer, Sally Rand, used huge feathered fans or a giant bubble not only to make her performance more interesting but to create only the image of nudity allowing her to perform in public more often without breaking decency laws. Though burlesque acts and performers varied greatly, almost all acts included two moves: The Bump and Grind: which was a gyration of the hips one performer compares to grinding coffee; the other was The Tease. The Tease referred to the removing of clothing in a playful and drawn out manner, usually a glove or the bra was taken off in three distinct movements or more. The choreography and subject matter may not strike the modern audience as stripping or very

sexual, but that was the point. In a way burlesque was meant to be sexy and funny.<sup>43</sup>

In the Roaring Twenties Burlesque performances would have up to six acts with two comedians. Burlesque went into decline by the end of the 1940s. But the amazing hybrid theater tradition bears interest as a mix of vaudeville and striptease. Burlesque stars in the 1940s did bear a great resemblance to pin-up girls and Vargas girls. Many of the girls also became the focus of photo clubs in the 1950s, such as Bettie Page. Yet all burlesque acts had to abide by laws. In each major city, there were different decency laws, costumes, and dance routines varied from state to state. Some did not allow nudity or the dance to be topless. For example, to do a Boston show was to keep both the performers breasts and genitals covered.<sup>44</sup>

The image that graced the noses of American warplanes looked just like the burlesque stars: bosomy smiling girls with perfectly coiffed hair. Hollywood stars sold dreams of glamour and sex good girls, vamps and downright bad girls. One of the names forever tied to 1940s glamour would be that of Alberto Vargas (1896-1982) among other artists such as Zoe Mozert, who art graced ads for many different products one such being Irresistible perfume. Sometimes her own image was used in her art (1907-1993), known for her dream girls and airbrushed and watercolor beauties would become iconic for the age. Such art appeared in *Esquire* and before that on movie posters and ads for the burlesque group the Ziegfeld follies. *Esquire* became the premier men's magazine of the day and age delivering these "pin-up" images to any home or person who purchased the magazines.<sup>45</sup> A name that would be forever tied with 1940s pin ups

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<sup>43</sup> Jo Weldon, *The Burlesque Handbook* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Maria E. Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*( North Carolina: Duke University Press,



was that of Betty Grable, who was partly responsible for the term bombshell. Her likeness was painted on one of the bombs dropped on Japan. Grable was allegedly furious that her likeness was used in this way. Nevertheless this is where the term bombshell originated. The bikini was introduced during the late 1940s. Like the term bombshell, Bikini was rooted in post-WWII, came from the Bikini Atoll where a major nuclear bomb testing had taken place. The bikini was originally a French invention that not even models would wear. A nude dancer has to be hired to wear it for its first photo shoot.

Bikinis came to the United States and stayed. Pin-up girls and Hollywood actresses alike wore them. Models and even everyday girls wore them as well. In fact, in the 1940s the first few breast augmentations coincided with the bikini taking hold of the United States.<sup>46</sup> Movies had gained sound in the late 1920s. In the 1940s stag films were transported by a handful of men who called themselves the forty thieves. These men produced and showed adult films at any of the “grind houses” or cheap theaters that would pay for them. Not all of these films were pornography. Many dealt with syphilis or the ills of drugs and alcohol. If the films did not do well, many of the producers would have the young actors and actresses travel with the film to speak on the topic to draw in fans. It was not a great jump from innocent nickelodeons that showed women doing nothing wrong but were still suggestive. These films were explicit and titillating all at the same time.<sup>47</sup>

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2006).

<sup>46</sup> James R. Petersen, The Century of Sex ( New York: Grove Press, 1999).

### A New World View

WWII, and new scholarly work in the 1940s, altered how many Americans and other cultures interacted with each other drastically. Dating between young men and women changed not only in the United States but all the places G.I.'s were stationed. Freud and marriage or sex manuals have been popular in the United States since the early 1900s but new anthropological and psychological texts added new weight to how young men and women were supposed to interact. Margaret Mead compared American sexuality with the Pacific Islander group she worked with as well as European societies. Americans, she found, were less sensual and more focused on looks than the other study groups. She also pointed out much of the rest of the world did not sexualize the female breast as much as 1940s Americans did.<sup>48</sup>

It was one of the first times in American history that American sexual behavior was compared with or influenced other groups. G.I.s stationed in Northern Ireland was viewed as temptation for the local young women. Women who did date or sleep with the visiting American soldiers were viewed as subversive to their own communities and nations. The massive American troop presence also changed much of how Japan dated or the sexes interacted. American soldiers brought "Hollywood" images to north Ireland, Britain and Japan creating competition for local men and altering what was socially acceptable for each culture. The same can be said for Americans at home and abroad. Many a war propaganda poster cautioned against promiscuity; sleeping with a local girl became a dangerous act and possibly traitorous. Not only

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<sup>47</sup> Turan, Sinema.

<sup>48</sup> Margaret Mead, Male and Female :A study of the Sexes in a Changing World ( Westport, Greenwood Pub. Group 1949).

could this mythical girl betray the soldier to axis powers; she could also make the soldier ill so he could no longer fight for his country. War time also caused moral dilemmas for the women left behind. Women were to entertain and support the men fighting yet they were supposed to be moral and a paragon of American virtue, somewhere between patriot and prostitute as one journal article puts it. They were to be mothers and cheerleaders, sexual but good girls. This was just as confusing a message to American women as Irish or Japanese girls who wanted to represent their communities but also interact with the visiting troops.<sup>49</sup>

### **A Healing Balm**

The 1940s were a revolutionary period for the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted illnesses. Antibiotics were discovered to treat syphilis and gonorrhea, two illnesses that had plagued many men and women for decades. Gonorrhea in fact has a history dating back to the Elizabethan era and was almost epidemic in the United States in the early 1900s till the 1940s. Many young girls contracted gonorrhea; doctors could not understand how so many young girls would catch this illness in upper-class families. It was not until the late 1940s that many doctors would even venture to guess that these girls had not contracted the same strain of gonorrhea that the rest of her family had from a dirty bathroom or sharing a bed with an older sister but was a sign of greater amount incest in upper-middle-class homes.<sup>50</sup> Herpes, which has been part of history since ancient Rome, was finally diagnosed as a virus in the '40s. Condoms

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<sup>49</sup> Leanne McCormick, "'One Yank and They're Off': Interaction between U.S. Troops and Northern Irish Women, 1942-1945." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 51, no. 2 (2006): 228-257; Mark McLelland. "'Kissing Is a Symbol of Democracy!' Dating, Democracy and Romance in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010): 508-535; Marilyn E. Hegarty Patriots, Prostitutes, Patriotutes: The Mobilization and Control of Female Sexuality In the United States During World War II (Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1998).

<sup>50</sup> Lynn Sacco, "Sanitized for Your Protection," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 80.

also gained popularity in the '40s to prevent American G.I.'s from catching sexually transmitted illness while they were stationed in Europe. These developments changed American sexuality in real ways. Much to people's distress, the USPHS, or the United State Public Health Service, wanted all sexual health films to talk about the moral needs of abstinence because condoms and penicillin revealed the death threat to multiple sexual partners. During the Eisenhower administration, the usefulness of the PHS was questioned because antibiotics and condoms made the venereal diseases irrelevant. Yet doctors and reformers still taught that abstinence was the only way to avoid the killer syphilis and other infections.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Karen Anijar and Thuy Dao Jensen, Culture and the Condom (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

**Charmode Latex in Two Qualities**

Compare with Nationally Advertised Brand . . . Buy Charmode, save \$1.21

Save 13% . . . **Figure Controller \$7.74**

**Mold 'N' Hold Girdle, Panty \$9.95**

**Magic Controller by Playtex \$9.95**

**Thrifty, Lightweight Quality Lanes \$3.77**

**Size Chart for Charmode Latex Styles**

Size	Bra	Waist	Hip	Girdle Length	Panty Length	Inst. Length
Extra Small	30-32 in.	28-30 in.	34 1/2 in.	12 1/2 in.	11 in.	10 in.
Small	32-34 in.	30-32 in.	36 in.	13 in.	11 1/2 in.	10 1/2 in.
Medium	34-36 in.	32-34 in.	37 1/2 in.	13 1/2 in.	12 in.	11 in.
Large	36-38 in.	34-36 in.	39 1/2 in.	14 in.	12 1/2 in.	11 1/2 in.
Extra Large	38-40 in.	36-38 in.	41 in.	14 1/2 in.	13 in.	12 in.

**Price List:**

Style	Price
A. Girdle	18 G 947
B. Brief	18 G 997
C. Panty	18 G 985
D. Girdle	18 G 999
E. Brief	18 G 992
F. Panty	18 G 995
G. Girdle	18 G 990
H. Brief	18 G 993
I. Panty	18 G 996
J. Girdle	18 G 998
K. Brief	18 G 991
L. Panty	18 G 994

Figure 6: An ad for women’s underwear in 1950, an example of fashion of the day. Source: AZAdam, Charmode Latex in Two Qualities

## CHAPTER 7

### 1950 Leave it to Bettie

Pin up girls and burlesque stars did not die out at the end of the '40s. Many of the girls did double duty both as models and dancers. Much of the modeling work was done for photo clubs. This was driven by the fact that fashion and glamour were an integral part of the 1950s. Many of the girls posed in bikinis as well as the layers that made up of '50s undergarments. Women's fashion adopted a structured shape similar to the 1900s corseted look. Garters and corset like-long-line bras had become the norm. Many of the garments that girls from the '20s lost in favor of a shift dress were now embraced whole heartily. The '50s were tainted by the fear of communists and atomic war but it was a time of prosperity and family life. Men and women for the first time lived outside the cities they worked in. Strict gender roles that the United States had not seen since the early 1900s were enforced again. It was simply a man's world. Young women would go to college or in high school would take classes like home economics or marriage classes that had not existed previous to the 1950s.<sup>52</sup>

Society in the form of toys such as play houses and dolls, taught little girls to play house and dress in corsets and garter slips that were influenced by corsets, fetish works, such as the story of O, and from decades previous. The themes of pornography and erotic art of the fifties were also laced with fetishism. One of the most famous faces of the 1950s pin-up girls was Bettie Page. Her most popular scenes were normally the ones that were fetish styled. These led her and the company that employed her into the most trouble including being drawn before a

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<sup>52</sup> Petersen, The Century of Sex.

Congressional committee. In this game, girls in traditional fifties undergarments with stockings, high waist underwear, and bullet bras were tied up, posed, or positioned to look like they were being paddled with hair brushes, riding crops or other firm objects. Girls posed in extremely high-arched footwear. Reprints of the graphic Tijuana bibles and wood cuts of early protestant women being “tried” as witches were also popular. Fetishism went hand and hand in with old world influenced underwear and presumed hidden feelings of fear in the fifties home.<sup>53</sup>

Men’s magazines and calendars also evolved during the 1950s. The Vargas drawing that graced the inside of *Esquire* now had serious competition. Nature and fitness magazines now had photographs of bikini clad pin up girls. Some such as *Sunshine* and a few other magazines would even have topless models. The magazines were able to publish photos of the naked breast or backside for the first time legitimately. The sales of these magazines could also now be done openly. Photographers shooting these pin-up women were not limited to men or professional photographers. Many of the girls started with amateur photo clubs, as chorus girls or as parts of burlesque acts. Burlesque continued on well past the forties. A burlesque star of the fifties that still performed till 2008 is Tempest Storm, a statuesque red head who started, like many of the pin up girls, as a chorus girl. Tempest did plenty of work with Bettie Page and Russ Meyers, two names many people will forever associate with naked girls, breasts and the 1950s. Another star who worked with Tempest Storm was a Blaze Starr, also a busty redhead, who worked on stage, in film as well as calendar and pin up girl modeling. Blaze, moreover, was well known for her affair with a Louisiana Governor Earl Long, which led to Long being committed. Blaze was also known for performing with some of the most unique props in burlesque including a sofa that was

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<sup>53</sup> Buszek, [Pin-Up Grrrls](#).

rigged to smolder and burst into flame during her routine.<sup>54</sup>

The early '50s also bred one of the most well-known images and figureheads in adult entertainment, Hugh Hefner. Hefner created *Playboy* in 1953. His original idea for his men's magazine was based on his time at *Esquire*. The original moniker for the magazine was going to be Stag Party and have a deer in a smoking jacket as its icon. Hefner received a cease and desist by the owners of *Stag*, an outdoors magazine that stated they would protect their trademark. Hefner started his magazine on a shoe-string budget. He built the foundation for the name and pull that his magazine was later know for by finding the one studio that had an early photo of Marilyn Monroe, which had been used in calendars previously and then securing the rights for the photo's use in his magazine. This Monroe photo became the sweetheart in his first issue. This first issue had no date or issue number because Hefner feared it could be the only issue of *Playboy* ever printed. This issue was printed a total of 53,991 times and sold for a now measly 50 cents a copy. *Playboy* was different from the major men magazines of the time, *Esquire*, not only for its soft-core nudes but for the featured articles and authors. Writers like Ray Bradbury would be featured; his first novel *Fahrenheit 451* would be serialized in the summer issues of 1954. Many authors who had been excluded from other printers because of their subject matter or political leanings found a home in *Playboy*. Hefner's magazine would continue to grow and change reaching its pinnacle of its popularity in the 1970s.<sup>55</sup>

The world of print media changed in the 1950s. Paperback novels similar to the dime

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<sup>54</sup> Weldon, *The Burlesque Handbook*; Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls*; Frank. "Franklovece.com." Lovece Journalism La Times. December 13, 1989. <http://franklovece.com/subpage.html#blaze> (accessed April 3, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> *Hugh Hefner: Playboy, Activist and Rebel* ( Directed by Brigitte Berman. Performed by Hugh Hefner, Joan Baez, Tony Bennett, & Pat Boone, 2009).



store novels popular in the 1930s had become popular again, much too many people's horror. Many states such as Florida and California protested the sexy covers and subject matter in paperback novels and demanded censorship. In 1952, a committee made up of members of the House of Representatives, called the Gathering Committee, and discussed the censorship of paperback novels. Eighty titles were investigated because of obscene subject matter. Obscene for the committee's purpose was defined as anything to deal with prostitution, homosexuality, nymphomania, or drug use. Only eleven books were chosen as an example of the obscenity in paperback novels. These eleven books dealt with drug use (The Lady of the Evening), prostitution (She Made It Pay), homosexual men and women (Women's Barracks and the Twilight Men), as well as strong sexual female characters (Unmoral). Though all of the books show either sex in a graphic nature or the details and dangers of drug use, the titles almost always wrapped up with a tragic end or moral catharsis for their obscene character, to show how dangerous and unnatural their lives were to the reader. Yet the books were still found immoral and obscene for the details of the characters actions and thoughts. For example, the Gathering Committee had no issue with the book detailing the decline of a heroin addict but objected to the descriptions of mixing and injecting the drug.<sup>56</sup>

Like many of the novels of the day, 1950s films dealt with serious issues, like unwanted pregnancies or drug use, but were termed B movies or exploitation films. A uniquely fifties addition to naughty pictures were the full-length burlesque films, nudie or nudie cutie films. Unlike the nudie films, burlesque films were shot with cinematographic techniques that were old

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<sup>56</sup> Lisa K. Speer, "Paperback Pornography: Mass Market Novels and Censorship in Post-War America," Journal of American & Comparative Cultures 24, no. 3/4 (2001): 153-160).

by the start of the century. Burlesque films' popularity was simply because many burlesque houses had closed and it was now the only way people could see their favorite performers.

Burlesque films fell out of favor not only because of the quality of filming but many of the stars also appeared in the nudie cutie films. The nudie film was just that, films of attractive actors or models pretending to be members of a nudist camp. The films came about as a loophole to show nudity at the theater. The films were similar to early nickelodeons in a way. They showed the actors doing everyday things like playing volleyball or ping pong rather than something of a sexual nature. The plots was always very similar: a pretty young girl was shown the virtues of nudity by an older woman in an awkward striptease that allowed some level of titillation and allowed the narrator talk about the benefits of nudist lifestyles.

It was not until 1959 that the nudie cutie came about and one man was on the leading edge of its creation, Russ Meyer with *The Immoral Mr. Teas*. The plot to *Mr. Teas* reads like the plot to many bad pornos of the coming decades. Mr. Teas delivers dental supplies and on his route will imagine the girls he sees naked. He is giving medication after he has dental work done that allows him to see every woman he meets naked--burlesque star, therapist, waitresses, the dental assistant, and receptionists, all naked. *The Immoral Mr. Teas* packed more nudity into a film than any nudie film had managed before. People were outraged not only by the amount of naked girl flesh but the amount of success Russ Meyer and his companions Pete Decenzie and Bill Teas gained from the film by earning a one million dollar return on their initial investments. Meyer and Decenzie had worked together previously on *The French Peep show*, a film set in Decenzie's own burlesque club featuring Tempest Storm. Both the nudie and nudie cutie did not show any sex act. The nudie cutie showed nudity in an everyday atmosphere without attempting

to tie in a healthy lifestyle explanation for the waitress's nudity. Mr. Teas breathed new life into the stage film industry, which would blossom into a booming trade that would continue until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup>

### **Cleaning House**

Many of the laws passed or congressional committees formed in the 1950s sole purpose was to define what was obscene in with a form of entertainment. The Gathering Committee's sole purpose of finding obscene themes in paperback novels and censoring them is prime example. The ruling of the court of appeals in the matter of *Excelsior Pictures Corp. v Regents of the University of the State of New York* helped to create the nudie films of the fifties, by basically stating the films could be made using a free press guarantee. It also helped that the nudie films were presented in the same way tribal nudity was in National Geographic Magazine. The Kefauver Hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency were the culmination of the smaller state rulings against obscenity. The Kefauver Hearings focused not only on comics but on adult materials being sent through the mail. The 1954 session of the hearings focused on obscene and graphic comics. The conversation between William Gaines and Kefauver became a front page *New York Times* story. Gaines defended the horror comic cover of a woman's severed head in the hands of an axe-wielding man as a fine cover for a comic book. The '54 hearing generated so much bad press against the comic book industry that almost all comic book publishers adopted the CCA, or Comic Code Authority. Similar to moral code that movie producers adopted a decade earlier, this CCA was privately adopted in the hope of keeping government regulations from dictating what could be in a comic. A later hearing was

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<sup>57</sup> Turan, Sinema.

used to discuss the effects of pornography on American citizens. One book, Seducing the Innocence, was cited against graphic comics suggesting it would turn American youth into perverts. Irving Klaw and his sister Paula were famous photographers of pin ups, shooting many of the movies and photos that quintessentially fifties pin up or burlesque star, like the films of Tempest Storm, and the fetish photos of Bettie Page. Much of the Klaw's work was destroyed out of fear that the government meant to try him again. What is left of 1950s pin up work of the Klaw's was saved by his sister Paula, who shot and even posed for many of the photos.<sup>58</sup>

### **Sex by the Numbers**

Alfred Kinsey was a biologist and professor of entomology and zoology at Indiana University. Kinsey was one of many professors in the United States who began to teach a course on marriage and sexuality. Kinsey created the Institute for Sex Research in the late 1940s. Kinsey's studies ran from 1938 to 1963 and included both men and women of varying ages. All of the participants were white and most were college students or college age individuals; 5300 men and 5940 women were interviewed. The interviews would contain up to 500 or more questions, about past sexual histories as well as economic background, physical and physiological data. Topics that were discussed ranged from anal sex to erogenous zones and even sadomasochism. A great amount of data was collected including about how men and women masturbated and how often they performed oral sex for example, finding more people performed oral sex after marriage. A major failing with all of Kinsey's studies or scale of sexuality was the fact that all of the participants were white and a vast majority of them were college students.

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<sup>58</sup> Whitney Strub, Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

This sample was limited to only the middle class, white, and educated. The different or similarity in other cultural sexual practices or practice of different classes was not discussed in any way in Kinsey's studies.<sup>59</sup>

Controversy surrounded all Kinsey's work. The aspect that led this controversy especially was his assessment of sexual acts with children. He extrapolated data from prisons, diaries of pedophiles and prostitutes and applied it to American populous. Many people were disturbed that he supported sex at a young age as beneficial and education for young men and women. Kinsey had wrongly applied data to the rest of America. Yet doctors in 1940s did find a rash of gonorrhea in young women whose family members had the same strand. So maybe Kinsey was not far from wrong about the frequency of pedophilia behavior; he was just one of the first to speak openly about it.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Inc. 1996-2011.  
<http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/ak-data.html> (accessed April 4, 2011).



Figure 7: Poster for *Blood Feast* first of the three David F. Friedman films that would start the wave of horror films in the 1960s. Source:

Suttonhoo, detritus: My Very Own Blood Fest <http://suttonhoo.blogspot.com/2008/05/my-very-own-blood-feast.html>

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.; Sacco, "Sanitized for Your Protection."

## CHAPTER 8

### 1960 Turn On, Tune In, and Get Off

The 1960s were a time of exploration and change fueled by a youth culture. Not since the 1920s has American youth been so central to culture and sexual behavior. Cinema and photography had begun its change in the 1950s. Nudity and hardcore sexuality were becoming more and more prevalent in American culture but so was the backlash against it. *Playboy* and grindhouse nudie cutie films were just part of the entertainment available. This counterculture movement also added a new layer to America's shifting views on sexuality. Free love and sexual experimentation meant more young women had homosexual experiences in the '60s than any previous decade in the United States. Homosexuality and homosexual culture regained the limited presence it had lost at the end of the roaring twenties. Homosexuality by no means was accepted. Much of the research and publications on homosexuality were incomplete and discussed homosexuality as a disorder or perversion. Homosexual men were effeminate "queers" across the board in the 1960's making it hard for many men to accept their homosexual tendencies for fear of losing their masculinity.

Lesbianism is fascinating in the '60s because there were two major beliefs. Women it was believed were born lesbians or became aware of their love for the same sex early. There were also the phenomena women that chose lesbian relationships as a political statement. Nonpolitical lesbians were hesitant to band together and fight for rights because of the social backlash stemming from a woman not meeting the appropriate female mold. To be openly lesbian also required the women to adopt an ultra-feminine persona or an uber- masculine

identity, the cliché lipstick and butch. As one lesbian in the '60s put it, they were too busy trying to survive in a hostile environment to come up with their own social roles and norms. In the '60s, the first few gay and lesbian groups formed. The Daughters of Bilitis was originally just a social group for California lesbians but the group quickly became political. As the '60s moved on, gay and lesbian groups began to work together to fight anti-gay laws adopting the slogan "gay is good." Gay men and lesbian women picketed the White House when they found out how deplorably gay men and women were treated in Cuba also.<sup>61</sup>

Cinema was also changing radically in the 1960s. The nudie and nudie cutie films of the '50s were becoming bland. Russ Meyer, who had created the nudie cutie, had been eclipsed by the ghoulies, roughies and kinkies, basically horror torture films, which had buckets of blood and pretty girls in bondage or castrating men. The American Film Distributing Corporation made the most revolting kinkies of the 1960s. *Olga's Girls*, *Olga's Massage Parlor* and *White Slaves of Chinatown* had the same main character, the cruel madam Olga who ran whorehouses with her Chinese assistant and tortured her "girls" in cruel and creative ways: water torture, bondage, girls in stocks and being beaten with rubber hoses. Some of the most violent and gory films of the '60s were made by a David F. Friedman. He made three bloody exploitation films. *Blood Feast*, featuring *Playboy* centerfold Connie Mason, which focused on an insane Egyptian caterer who was killing people to include in his meals and sacrifice to his Egyptian Goddess Ishtar (really a Babylonian goddess). *Two Thousand Maniacs*, which was about killer Confederate ghosts who draw and quarter northern visitors and rapes *Playboy* centerfold Connie Mason. The third and last film was *Color Me Blood Red*, in which a crazed artist kills and uses his attractive female

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<sup>61</sup> Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*.



models' blood for red in his paintings. Many states would not let the films be viewed without being severely edited. Russ Meyer also got in on the dark and sexy films. He made *Lorna*, a film about rape, sexual satisfaction and murder, a very deep film for Meyer but still starring his signature huge busted girl. *Faster Pussycat Kill Kill*, a film about go go dancers, fast cars and murder, was also made during this time. Although not initially popular it would later become a cult classic even to this day. In fact, 257 ghoulies, roughes, and kinkies films were made during the '60s for local grindhouses and drive-ins.<sup>62</sup>

Comics and illustrations of the '60s continued with the images of graphic sex and violence. They also created the stereotype of the doe-eyed flower girl tripping on LSD, drawing her in wispy clothing or in a nature setting to show the girl's youth and long slender features. They also drew out the crazed dark vamp that could be seen on the silver screen castrating or tempting good men to ruin. This vamp was dark eyed, wild haired, older and sexual experienced women with witchy trappings. Both these images were popular album covers, flyers for music venues or newsletters.<sup>63</sup>

*Playboy*, unlike the movie industry and many counterculture publications, did not embrace buckets of blood. Connie Mason, who starred in two of Freidman's blood films, did grace its covers, but *Playboy* was still soft-core for the most part. In ten years the magazine had come very far; no longer was the magazine being put together on Hefner's table. The magazine now included famous authors and featured political figures. Alex Healy served as the interviewer

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<sup>62</sup> Turan, *Sinema*.

<sup>63</sup> Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture*. (Lawrence :University Press of Kansas, 2009).

for several important articles in the 1960s, such as the interview with Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.<sup>64</sup>

*Playboy* also diversified its products in the '60s, opening its first few Playboy Clubs. The first Playboy Club was opened in Hefner's home town of Chicago; girls were required to wear a corset one piece with a sweetheart neck line and with heels, stockings, bunny ears and tail. The costumes, concept of a gentleman's club and busty waitresses, were adopted from the Gaslight Clubs, which were also founded in Chicago earlier. The Playboy Clubs were key clubs, meaning people would pay 25 dollars a year for a membership, yet few members actually went to the club as it was more of a status symbol. The bunny girl outfit was only offered in a very select range of sizes of 34D and 36D and in a variety of colors even psychedelic ones for the late '60s. The third location the new Playboy Clubs was New Orleans, which would not allow African -American members. Hefner and *Playboy* had intended the Playboy Clubs to be integrated, which could not be done in New Orleans at that time and were forced to buy back the Playboy New Orleans club. Many big name performers, black or white, got their start in the Playboy Clubs such as Aretha Franklin and the Clancy brothers. The clubs also functioned with a strict look-don't-touch policy. Girls were not to be pawed at nor could they date key holders or even bring their husband or boyfriends near the club. Special care was taken with the look of costume and their actions. A unique way to serve drinks was created because the corset bodice of the Bunny costume did not allow the girls to bend well. This Bunny Dip was required so as not flash the customers while serving them. A feminist author that would play a part in '60s and '70s history of pornography and adult entertainment, Gloria Steinem, did a week long stint as a Playboy bunny, and wrote a

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<sup>64</sup> *Hugh Hefner: Playboy, Activist and Rebel.*

scathing article about the poor conditions and pay of the Playboy club, thus launching her career and leaving a black mark on the bunny tail.<sup>65</sup>

*Playboy After Dark* first aired in 1969; it was basically a filmed house party. With Hefner and guest looking well dressed and having fun, major musicians, actors and authors were featured on the show as well as Hefner's girlfriend of the time, Barbie Benton. *Playboy After Dark* was not porn but closer to a variety show. Though beautiful girls were there in spades, they were not engaging in any sex act. *Playboy After Dark* ran for two seasons and was then canceled. Playboy over all lost money on both the Playboy Clubs and Playboy After Dark. The next time *Playboy* would be seen on television it would be pay-per-view movies in the '80s. A myth about the actual *Playboy* magazine circulated in the '60s. The "P" in the Playboy on the covers for over a decade had a series of stars. Rumors said it was how attractive Hefner thought the centerfold was, how many times he slept with her, or how good she was in bed. It actually showed where the routing codes for shipping, nothing as sexy or tawdry as a rating system of girls.<sup>66</sup>

### **Lucy in the Sky**

Like the 1920s much of the cultural changes were driven by the youth, especially those who found comfort and freedom to experiment and stand up for themselves in an illegal setting. Comparisons can be made between 1920s' speakeasy experiences and LSD experience of young men and women in the 1960s. Most people associate the 1960s with drug use and sexual

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<sup>65</sup> Sean Parnell, "CHICAGO PLAYBOY CLUB." Chicago Bar Project. 2000-2010. <http://www.chibarproject.com/Memorial/PlayboyClub/PlayboyClub.htm> (accessed April 5, 2011).

<sup>66</sup> *Hugh Hefner: Playboy, Activist and Rebel.*

experimentation which did happen but as previous paragraphs pointed out violence and fetishism were also an integral part of 1960s sexuality. Many men and women experimented with open relationships, eastern religions, LSD and tantric sex. Much of popular news of the time talked of the ills of LSD on young men and women, such as to tempt young women into bad behavior and group sex. This was not totally true; a double standard did exist in much of the hippie counterculture. Free love was used as an excuse for men to belittle their female partners and women to do the same thing to their male partners. The drug culture opened the door for a lot of personal discovery and experimentation with traditional sexual roles. Sometimes these experiments failed or created extreme gender roles like one could see in homosexual culture at the time.<sup>67</sup>

### **The Pill**

Possibly nothing has changed American sexuality as much as one little pill. Oral contraceptives were invented in the sixties. For decades, women had been fighting diaphragms with sometime disastrous results and risking poisoning themselves with douches that claimed to cure everything from athlete's foot to feminine discomfort and would later be used to clean kitchen counters. Since 1917, a whole host of scientists had worked on the creation of the pill, funded by two women: Katharine McCormick whose husband had more than enough money to fund the research and Margret Sanger, who was arrested in the 1920s for sending diaphragms through the mail. After scientist figured out the important of progesterone and its ties to pregnancies, progress was made. But the cost of the hormone was more than an automobile in

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<sup>67</sup> Lemke-Santangelo, Daughters of Aquarius; Women of the Sixties Counterculture: , Hilary Rader and Moya Lockett. Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s ( Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press , 1999).

the '50s. It was not until a chemist figured out how to create synthetic progesterone that the pill was made feasible. As soon as the FDA allowed it on the market women requested it in mass to reduce menstrual complications. In spite of not being able to openly advertise, many doctors found female patients dropping by to ask for the pill constantly. Many women were uncomfortable with the side effects, weight gain, bloating and the possibility of death. It was not till the pill had been on the market for a while that it was found to be very rough on some women's hearts. This did not matter; many women refused to give up the peace of mind they had gained. The amount of progesterone in the pill was lessened, making it less hard on the women's body but still effective at preventing pregnancies. Fad diets and bigger bras were another much less serious side effect of the pill. With 65 million married women and an unknown number of single women on the pill, gaining weight and cup sizes, industries sprung to life to meet these new challenges.<sup>68</sup>

Moral questions were raised by the pill. Feminist feared generations of women had become human guinea pigs. Black power groups feared the pill was a new form of eugenics controlling the growth of races. Catholics believed the pill to go against God. Some also thought it was Jewish plot to control the growth of Catholicism. The pill was politically repugnant to discuss, which did not help any of these fears about the pills possible sinister uses. Yet as a whole the women using it were so happy to be free of the fear of an unwanted pregnancy. Whether it was a single girl who did not want to get pregnant before marriage or a married woman who did not want any more children for a variety of reasons, they now had the ability to control their reproductive cycles without being embarrassed or risking mishap that would cause

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<sup>68</sup> Tone, Devices and Desires.

pregnancy anyway. The pill not only changed how women viewed sex, there was now less fear of repercussions, and even in how Americans viewed medication. Women now took a pill daily not to fight an illness. This would have implications for American view of pills and medication forever.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

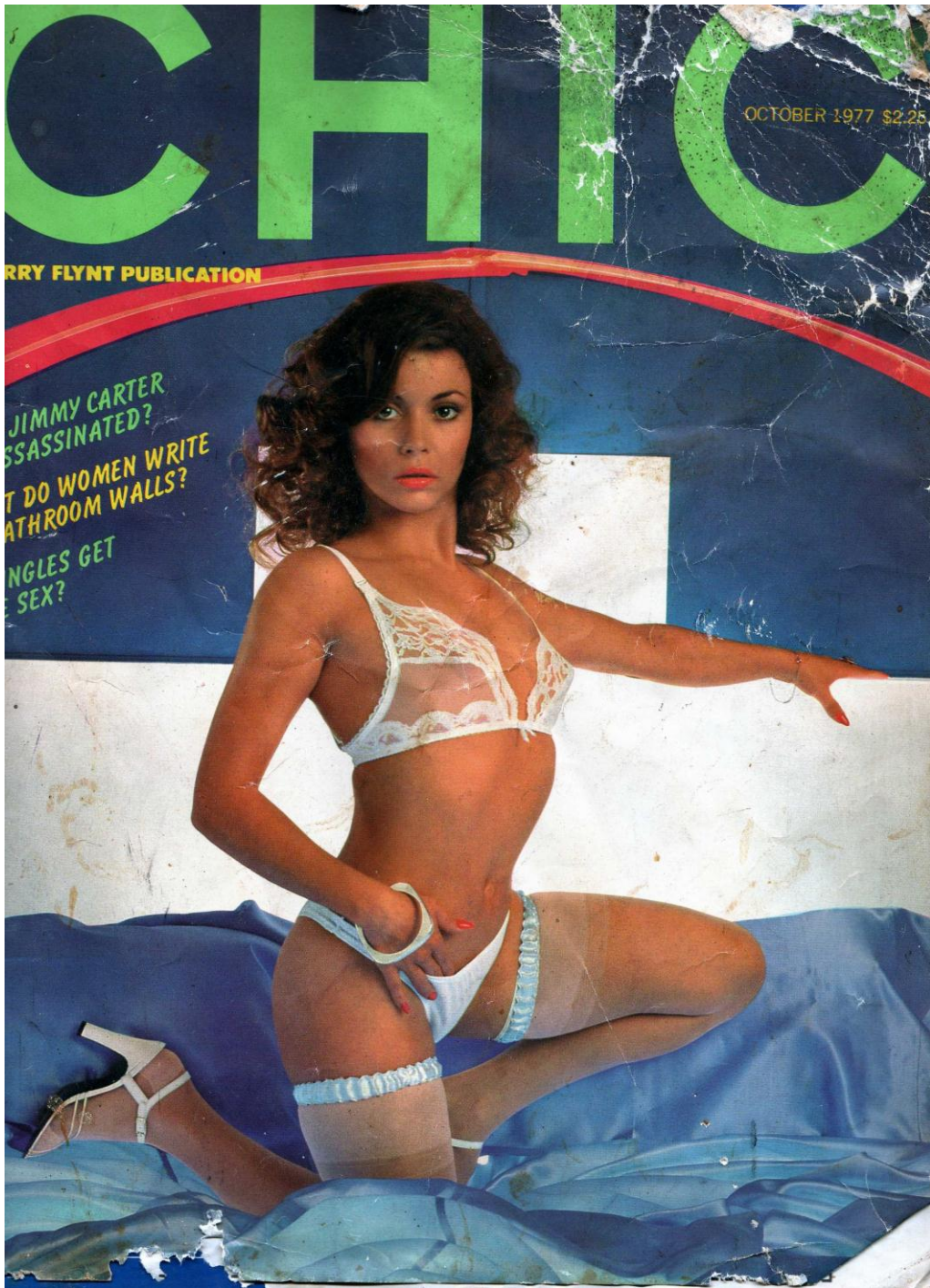


Figure 8: Hustler 1977 Cover Art Source: Author's personal collection

## CHAPTER 9

### 1970 Porno Chic

The 1970s was marked by technological advances in entertainment, both in the adult sector and family entertainment. The camcorder, VHS tape and VCR changed how people viewed films. Taking pornography out of the grind house and into a private home would change the market forever. Two of the most influential and popular pornographic films were created during this time, *Deep Throat* (1972) and *Behind the Green Door* (1972). *Playboy's* bestselling edition came out this decade. *Hustler* and *Penthouse* came on the scene giving *Playboy* serious competition for the first time since *Playboy's* sales eclipsed that of *Esquire*. Prostitution also became legal in the state of Nevada again, which would start a chain of legal brothels that are still running today. Sexuality and pornography were discussed much more openly than both were previously. Hearings were still being held on the merits of obscene entertainment. But interviews were also being done of the public standing in line at reputable movie theaters. Grandmothers and married couples were going to see these films or renting them to watch at home.

*Deep Throat* came out in 1972; it was one of the first pornographic films that had a plot. A sexually frustrated young woman goes to her doctor to find that her clitoris, a word that would not even be understood in 1950, is in the back of her throat. The movie progresses from there. Not only did the movie show fellatio before many other films, the film also showed the female orgasm complete with a cheesy fireworks reel. Armed with a psychedelic soundtrack and a shoe-string budget, Jerry Gerard produced and directed *Deep Throat*. He filmed in several different locations; in fact quiet of few of the places checks bounced when Jerry paid the locations for the



rooms. The star of the film was Linda Lovelace, whose husband was friends with Jerry and suggested her for the leading role. Harry Reems was the male lead as well as sound and light tech. *Deep Throat* was a tongue-in-cheek production that started the porno chic trend of the 1970s. More and more mainstream theaters picked up the film. *Deep Throat* grossed 100 million dollars at least with the combined sales of movie tickets and VHS copies. The sale of the VHS copy of the film was banned nationwide and many states like New York and Mississippi banned screening the film. The backers for the movie had mob ties, making the sale and transportation of the film ever harder from state to state. Later that decade, Linda Lovelace would come forward at the Meese Commission, another hearing on the effects of pornography and other obscene materials, saying her husband Chuck Taylor had forced her to perform in the film, threatening her with firearms and beating her. In a later documentary, Lovelace's mother points out the bruises that can be seen on Linda in the film. Jerry Gerard also points out in the documentary that Linda Lovelace appeared to be a follower. Gloria Steinem, who gained fame by working as a Playboy bunny for a week and writing about it, also encouraged Linda to speak out about her experiences during the filming of *Deep Throat*.<sup>70</sup>

Another "classic" came out in 1972, *Behind the Green Door*, the first widely circulated feature-length pornography film ever produced in the United States. It was also one of the first films to have an interracial sex scene. The Mitchell brothers, the producers, claimed to be the first that allowed the actors part of the royalties to films, not just a flat fee for their work. So many films were produced in the 1970s that changed pornography into something closer to

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<sup>70</sup> *Deep Throat*. Directed by Jerry Gerard. Performed by Harry Reems, Linda Lovelace, & et ail. 1972; *Inside Deep Throat*. Directed by Fenton Bailey, & Randy Barbato. Performed by Linda Lovelace, Harry Reems, & Dennis Hopper. 2005.

mainstream cinema. *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973) was produced, written and starred in by Jerry Gerard of *Deep Throat* fame. There was nothing joking about *The Devil in Miss Jones*. The story focuses on celibate middle-aged woman who kills herself and is sent to hell for the sin. When the woman finds herself in hell, she makes a deal with the devil to live her life over and be consumed by lust, to live a life worthy of hell effectively. *Miss Jones* has a serious plot and shows more varieties of intercourse than *Deep Throat*. A *Playboy* review of *The Devil in Miss Jones* says in all seriousness, “Oscars have been won for scenes no better than the poignant unnerving opening of *Miss Jones*”.<sup>71</sup>

Men’s magazines, like adult films, were here to stay. *Playboy* had now eclipsed sales of *Esquire*. All men’s magazines now clamored for interviews and pictures of stars of these new feature-length adult films. *Hustler* was first printed in 1974; the company was formed by Larry Flynt, who started the magazine from a newsletter that he ran out of his gentlemen’s club. *Hustler* magazines gained popularity because of a more working-class graphic sexual content than could be found in *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. *Hustler* featured comic strips similar to the other magazines but the sexual images shown were just more graphic and it was very apparent the main character was a prostitute. Flynt’s first few issues were an odd combination of *Penthouse* and *Playboy*. Flynt almost abandoned the project until the focus of the magazine shifted to the images of real women, with imperfections and shots of their genitalia that could not be found in either *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. The language used in *Hustler* featured many four-letter words that would not elsewhere be seen. *Hustler* gained popularity quickly but also ran into trouble fast. Flynt was tried in Cincinnati for pandering, obscenity, and organized crime, and was convicted

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<sup>71</sup> Turan, Sinema.

on all three counts in 1976. It turned out the trial had been good for business, creating even greater desire for *Hustler*. In 1978 even before the appeal for Flynt's Cincinnati trial had finished, he and *Hustler* were brought up on obscenity charges in Lawrenceville, Georgia. At the start of the trial, there was an attempt on Larry Flynt's life, which he survived leaving him to continue his battles with the law and to allow him to continue to grow *Hustler*.<sup>72</sup>

In the early 1970s in the state of Nevada, prostitution and brothels came under fire. One of the most famous legal brothels in Nevada or "ranch," the Mustang Ranch, convinced the local government to make a law legalizing brothels. Las Vegas was worried that prostitution would become legal in their resort town and pushed for population to control whether or not prostitution was legal in the county. This was a law tailored to keep prostitution out of Clark County, where Vegas were located. The Mustang Ranch was owned by a couple, Joe and Sally Conforte. The brothel opened 1971 and consisted of four double-wide trailers and a group of girls clad in bikinis who worked twelve hours-shifts. The girls paid for their rooms on the ranch as well as all outside supplies. Doctors came regularly to do health checks. Make up and medication were by non-sex-worker employees of the ranch. Much of the growth of the ranch was a reflection of the nation. Black customers were original refused, then later they were served but in only one trailer. Even later this was abandoned but black clients were announced by a special sign. The ranch did not allow anal intercourse or kissing on the mouth. The ranch would run until the early '90s but would be closed for tax evasion. Many other brothels would spring up in Nevada and

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<sup>72</sup> "Fundinguniverse." Larry Flynt Publishing Inc. n.d. <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Larry-Flynt-Publishing-Inc-Company-History.html> (accessed April 16, 2011); Larry C. Flynt, Jean-Louis Ginibre, Peter Brennan, Paul Bruhwiler, Bob Elia, and Donald R. Evans. "*Chic*." A Larry Flynt Publication. Columbus: Chic Magazine, Inc., October 1977.

are still in operation to this day.<sup>73</sup>

### **Video Home System**

The VCR, VHS and Betamax, changed how America entertained itself. VCRs or video cassette recorders had been used in experimental stages since World War II, using magnetic tape to record sound and images instead of older reel-to-reel film. This magnetic tape method was found to be cheaper to use, could be recorded over several times, was easier to edit, and it was also easy to package and ship for home use. The VHS and Betamax were the rival platforms used to play the VCR cassettes. Betamax was created by Sony in 1975; VHS came out a year later created by Victor Japan Company (JVC). Though both platforms were intended to do the same thing, play cassettes, each took a different size cassette, making them totally incompatible. Betamax had the better picture quality. Yet the tape could not record more than 60 minutes, making it ineffective to film movies or television programs. VHS was also easier to produce than Betamax. Sony limited Betamax by not allowing pornography to be produced on its platform. VHS on the other hand had no problem allowing pornography. Pornography now was cheaper to film on video. To edit a scene, one just recorded over it, plus VHS was much easier to produce, ship to homes, theaters or rental places in a VHS form. Video recorders would be made available for home use opening up a whole new amateur pornography market.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Barry Farrell, "The Killing At the Notorious Mustang Ranch." *New York Magazine*, 9 (July 26, 1976): 41-49.

<sup>74</sup> Bryan Gardiner, "FOXNews.com - Porn Industry May Decide DVD Format War - Technology News | News On Technology." Internet Archive: Wayback Machine.  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070210100959/http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,245638,00.html> (accessed March 9, 2010).

## Good Bye Rubbers

By the 1970s the pill had become the preferred method of contraception. Only around 14 percent of couples chose condoms as a means of birth control. Many condom brand sales also suffered from a ban that did not allow them to advertise on television. The condom as well as the diaphragm and the IUD had fallen from favor. There was no need. The pill prevented pregnancy and antibiotics cured most sexually transmitted illnesses. The side effects and health risk of the pill did cause some couples or men and women to choose the condom method or use a diaphragm. Yet overall, the pill won out at least in the early '70s. As more and more women became afraid of the side effects of the pill, however, condoms regained popularity. One statistic suggests that condom sales spiked in 1975 and rose another 10% each year after that. The '70s were unique not just for changing contraceptive choices, but that the choice was openly discussed data collected to map people's choices. In the coming decade the preference for barrier method contraceptives would increase greatly, creating a need to use multiple forms of contraceptive.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Anijar and Jensen, Culture and the Condom.



Figure 9: Cover of a Playboy magazine from 1980. Source: Rchappo, Playboy - November 1980, flicker. com

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rchappo2002/3011657290/>

## CHAPTER 10

### 1980: 1-800-Sex

The Golden Age of Pornography did not start and end in the 1970s but continued into the '80s. One of the major pornographic films that spanned the bridge between the seventies and early eighties was *Debbie Does Dallas* (1978.) The film's basic plot was a high school cheerleader who wanted like to join a professional cheerleading team. Her parents don't approve and won't give her the money so her friends and Debbie try to raise the money by honest means. They find they can't so they start to trade sexual favors for cash. Pussycat Cinema, the company who produced the film, became part of a key case on trademarks because the professional sports team in the film, the "Texas Rangers," bears an eerie likeness to the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders. The film was shown everywhere from college campuses to in homes on VHS.<sup>76</sup>

The adult video producers and actors now could make enough films and profits to support themselves, leading to become a fully-fledged industry. This industry would create its own journal the AVN or the *Adult Video News* in 1983 a year before the first AVN awards took place. The *Adult Video News* is made up of adverts or advertisements, reviews of movies and adult products, as well as charts and figures of sales and production of much of the adult industry. It is like any other business journal but with the addition of naked flesh. In 1984, the adult video industry created its own award show. In February of that year, with little pomp or circumstance, awards were handed out for everything from best actor, actress, director, to best all sex release and best new starlet. The awards originally were very similar to other main stream cinema

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<sup>76</sup> Turan, Sinema.

awards but in time would grow into its own special show. In 1986 the AVN awards started to recognize film and video separately as well as best marketing campaigns, something one will never see in a mainstream cinema awards. In 1988 the category of top-selling and top-renting release was added. By the end of the '80s best music, best box set design and best non-sexual act were added categories. A separate award show had been created for homosexual adult entertainment, not to be prejudiced but because the show ran too long if they tried to do all the awards in a single run. Since 1985 the AVN awards are hosted in Las Vegas and have jumped from hotel to hotel there, the first being the Aladdin with six hundred guests, and then the Tropicana with over a thousand guests, moving again the early nineties.<sup>77</sup>

Adult video now had metamorphosed into a legitimate business. Other sex industries came into being in the 1980s to capitalize on a prosperous decade and a reflationary view of adult entertainment as a real industry. The phone sex industry started as a grass roots trade, with many of the men and women working form their homes and accepting cash in the form of Western Union checks. Movies like *Girl Number 6* and articles from *Esquire* and other magazines exposed the girls that phone sex operates really were and the characters that they portray. One article from the early '80s describes a girl name "Bliss" in a sardonic way, how she lives in the fast lane and was oh so wholesome and healthy with mad blonde hair, when the truth, most likely, was more like a girl named Heather an average looking women who was a college student, working to make money for school. Heather like, "Bliss," was one of the first phone sex-girls. Heather turned her little operation into a huge business, hiring women and men to work

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<sup>77</sup> 2011 AVN Awards Show. 2011. <http://avnawards.avn.com/about/history/> (accessed April 18, 2011); 2011 AVN Awards Show 1984-1989. 2011. <http://avnawards.avn.com/past-shows/past-winners/1984/> (accessed April 18, 2011).



under her. She in fact was one of the first phone sex businesses to take credit cards as a form of payment, transferring money from one account to the other faster and anonymously. Heather would go on to own more dial-a-sex businesses only later embrace the internet and add webcam performers to her business model.<sup>78</sup>

The 1980s had the advantage of the video cassette and the VCR becoming more and more mainstream. Even pornography was increasingly being filmed on video instead of old reel-to-reel set ups. Now not only straight porn was being made, also more gay pornography. The market was also shifting from the burly vague gay sex show in the '60s and '70s. By the '80s fellatio and anal sex were shown in detail with defined tops and bottoms. Now it was possible for men and women who wanted to view gay porn to rent them and watch in the privacy of their own homes. By the mid '80s the AVNs acknowledged not only their own gay adult award show, but specialty films like bondage or other fetish materials that had not too long ago in the United States been too dangerous to make, just like homosexual pornography was.<sup>79</sup>

*Playgirl*, a magazine for heterosexual women and gay men, came out in 1973 as a counter part to the nude women found in *Playboy*, *Penthouse* and *Hustler*. It was in 1987 the first full frontal nude was on cover of *Playgirl*. Like the other naked entertainment magazines, *Playgirl* would branch out into movies and television channels in the '80s.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Frederick S. Lane, Obscene Profits: The Entrepreneurs of Pornography in the Cyber Age, 1 ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000)

<sup>79</sup> 2011 AVN Awards Show 1984-1989.

<sup>80</sup> Chadwick Roberts, "Liberating Desire: *Playgirl* and the Education of Women's Fantasy 1973-1983." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Women's Studies Association. St. Charles, Illinois, June 28, 2007.

## Pay Per View

Cable television had been around in one form or another since the 1950s. Early cable companies were mom-and-pop organizations akin to local radio. In 1960 the Federal Communication Commission, prompted by local TV companies who did not want large cable companies stealing local views, restricted the ability of cable companies to use distant television signals, which effectively killed cable till the mid-seventies. But restrictions on cable dropped in the seventies, allowing the creation of the first pay-per-view channel, the Home Box Office or HBO. The Cable Act of 1984 relaxed regulations to the point that cable and satellites pumped thousands of dollars into advertising and installation of cable to more and more homes. This was the largest private construction plan since World War II; 79 million homes had cable by the end of 1989. This meant mainstream companies now began adding more and more adult programs to compete with each other. Cinemax was added to HBO's scheduling to compete with the Movie Channel created by a Warner's company. Playboy, who had gone through several leadership changes, would also embrace cable coming up with its own pay-for monthly pornography channel. As the '80s rolled on more and more adult films were being shown on cable, admittedly either late at night or on channels that people paid for by the month. By the '80s the business model of most adult entertainment had changed. Magazines now also produced adult films and would soon have their own TV station. Marketing and packaging was just important to many of the adult companies as the product itself because the package was the only real way to hint at the content of the movie It also became a way for actors to create a brand around themselves.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> James Morrison. "The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States: Revolution or Evolution? a review." (*The Society for the History of Technology*, 2005: 432-434); National Cable and Telecommunication Association: *History*

## A New Scourge

The Pill had prevented pregnancy. Antibiotics had stopped syphilis from being a death sentence. Sex was now no longer a life threatening act for at least a few decades. Then something new appeared human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). HIV or AIDS no one knew about for most of US history because the illness was first contracted and spread in Africa, first contracted from the consumption of chimpanzee flesh, also called bush meat. In the early '80s HIV had made it to American shores. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS caused the legions that were identified as Kaposi' Sarcoma and the pneumonia killed apparently healthy individuals because AIDs had already severely weakened their immune systems. In 1982 scientists surmised that because people with hemophilia were seen with AIDS commonly, AIDS must be spread in the blood. The first AIDS support group was started by gay men in the same year. By the mid-80s research had proved AIDS spread also through heterosexual sex, from mother to child in birthing and milk, as well as through blood transfusions. Blood was starting to be screened by blood banks. Though the CDC encourages frank discussions about AIDS and how the illness was spread, hysteria reigned. AIDS tended to be associated solely with homosexual behavior. AZT, a drug cocktail, was found to slow the havoc AIDS wreaked on the body. In this same decade the United States decided that no one with AIDS would be allowed to immigrate to the country it would be two decades before this ruling would be revoked.<sup>82</sup>

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*of Cable Television* . n.d. <http://www.ncta.com/About/About/HistoryofCableTelevision.aspx> (accessed April 20, 2011); Christopher H. Sterling and Patrick R. Parsons. *Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Brunilda Nazario, AIDS Retrospective Slideshow: A Pictorial Timeline of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic. December 1,



Figure 10: An ad for Leisure Suit Larry one of the first Adult themed video games. Source: George Oates, Progress, Ficker.com

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/george/1720125/>

## CHAPTER 11

### 1990-2000 Log On to Love

The second “format” war took place in the ‘90s to mid-2000s. HD-DVD was in competition with Blu-ray players for dominance of the home movie market. Much like Betamax verses VHS, one format, Blu-ray, not only had much better picture quality but could hold more information. Pornography also played a key role in which form would become popular. Unlike the war between Betamax and VHS, both Blu-ray and HD-DVD would allow pornography to be produced in their format. Neither Blu-ray nor HD-DVD was handicapped by the multi-formats and rigorous control Sony had over Betamax production. Media mainstream and adult features are still made in both HD-DVD and Blu-ray. Blu-ray over all has a higher cost than HD-DVD. But Blu-ray has a higher potential to be interactive, something very important to an adult industry trying to turn a profit during a recession. Many of the feature-length adult films come with extras, such as interviews with the stars, but only Blu-ray adult films such as *This Ain't Avatar (2010)*, which premiered in the coming decade, would use a male sex toy that interacted with the movie playing. By plugging the toy into the Blu-ray player the toy would simulate the actors, actions on screen for the viewer’s pleasure.<sup>83</sup>

The brewing format war was just one of the technological changes that the adult industry embraced; As surely as adult video took advantage of cable’s many production companies invested in 3D or virtual reality research. They also jumped on the video game bandwagon. The

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<sup>83</sup> Bryan Gardiner, "FOXNews.com - Porn Industry May Decide DVD Format War - Technology News | News On Technology." Internet Archive: Wayback Machine.  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070210100959/http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,245638,00.html> (accessed March 9, 2010).

first few video games were text-based games, sort of like an ongoing story. One of the most popular was a game called *SoftPorn*. It was exactly what it sounds like: a text-based game where the player's goal was not to slay a dragon but to get laid in various ways without catching anything or getting beaten by boyfriends and bouncers. With the advent of the more advanced graphics subsystems, computer games moved away from text-alone format and could now come with a set of scintillating images. Enter *Leisure Suit Larry*; this game was *SoftPorn* with a face. However, the game was not very revolutionary; the female characters were predictably busty and vapid. The actual sex and nudity was limited and usually hidden under blankets, but the language was definitely adult and therefore the demographic this game was aimed at loved it. *Leisure Suit Larry* and its five sequels sold amazingly well, grossing sales in 1991 alone between 20 to 25 million dollars. Today the need for a special pornographic video game is almost unnecessary as the line between pornographic and just a sexy storyline has blurred with the creation of characters like Bloodrayne, Lara Croft and Bayonetta. These characters are statuesque women in various states of undress that have warranted even the attention of *Playboy*. Due to the efforts of brilliant gamers and programmers with the need to see pixilated breasts, Lara Croft in many of her games can now be seen nude with the help of one easy cheat code. If this is too much effort for some gamers, websites upon websites are devoted to the pornographic images of these video game vixens. *Playboy* has even allowed these virtual women to grace its pages. One can see the appeal in it; the perfect woman made sexy, deadly, totally comprised of silicon, and just waiting for you to turn her on and play her game.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Chris Morris, "Playboy Undressed Video Game Women - Aug. 25, 2004." Business, Financial, Personal Finance News - CNNMoney.com. [http://money.cnn.com/2004/08/25/commentary/game\\_over/column\\_gaming/](http://money.cnn.com/2004/08/25/commentary/game_over/column_gaming/) (accessed March 9, 2010); Lane, Obscene Profits.

The Internet would change the selling of adult entertainment more than anything else would. The Internet came to the home with basic dial-up access through a phone line. This slow but revolutionary new mode of communication allowed pictures of models, porn stars and ex-girlfriends to be a new way to entertain oneself. Amateur erotica and adult fan fiction was just a click away. Adult stories dealing with fetishes that many main stream publishers would not touch could now be found online, hurting not only men's magazine sales but erotic publications. Many of the companies that sold sex toys or marital aids jumped into the Internet enterprise as sending out catalogues was a bit dangerous because of old Comstock decency laws about what could be sent through the US mail. Buying a toy online also allowed one to be more discrete and private than going to a store and purchasing one or even looking through a catalogue. Many of these adult toy businesses were started on a local level selling condoms and lubes, then branching out further online to become huge industries today that produce their own pornographic films and lingerie lines such as Adam and Eve.<sup>85</sup>

Web 1.0 grew into a faster more streamlined form of information and entertainment. Web 2.0 usually used a cable or DSL connection allowing pictures to load faster, videos to play, as well as information to be saved on to one's computer or games to be played online. Pornography producers jumped at the chance to put their videos online, many creating websites for their companies and major stars. Each site showed clips of their new movies and for a membership fee, a viewer could see all of them from their home with no need to even rent a video anymore. But people found that if a pornography company could put its videos online then everyone else could as well. Sites popped up that were similar to YouTube; a video was uploaded to the site

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<sup>85</sup> Lane, Obscene Profits.

and the viewer could see the video play out on his monitor at home. The sites like YouPorn or Redtube showed pornographic films that people had purchased and just put back online for everyone else to view; or they uploaded videos of themselves and their partners. Although almost all the videos of professional pornography uploaded on free sites break copyright laws and are illegal, production companies have a nearly impossible task of policing the whole of the Internet for illegally posted videos, or illegally used pictures of its stars. Many men and women in the sex industry have created a brand around themselves. Thus, people using their image online to either create false stories or a separate persona can and would hurt their business.

Men and women also began to sell a hybrid of phone sex and adult videos online known as the webcam. Even an actor could be filmed and have the film play out at the same time online, making for a nearly completely interactive entertainment, with the viewer's typing requests or comments to the actor they were seeing in real time on their monitors. Both major pornographic producers and the amateur sex workers employed the new webcam girl or guy idea to make money. Yet the Internet had effectively killed big budget porn. No one will pay for something they can get for free elsewhere online. Consumer taste also was beginning to shift to a more amateur appeal, as men and women wanted to see their neighbors or the girl in their class having sex rather than professional models and actors.<sup>86</sup>

### **Domain XXX**

In the late '90s and early 2000s, much fuss was made about pornography on the Internet. It was thought best to mark adult sites with a specific domain name .XXX to let viewers know

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



that not only the site was adult in nature but was a real adult site and was not a fraud site. In the beginning conservatives were for this idea because it would protect their children from viewing adult materials by allowing the parent to block all sites with the .XXX domain. Pornography producers feared that if the government could regulate the domain name it would only be a short while before they would regulate what could be posted on the site. In 2003 both parties had a flip flop of views. Pornography producers decided for the most part the .XXX domain name would only apply to legitimate adult sites, blocking fraud sites, the Pornotube sites full of illegal uploads, as well preventing most unsavory pornography such as child porn from being tied to the adult industry. The debate continued to rage till it reached near mythical portion. First Amendment rights groups joined the fray claiming that ear-marking what is adult or not had the potential to block children and adults from sexual health information, much like Comstock laws of old had done. The ICANN or the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers would go on to approve the used of .XXX domain name in spring of 2011, putting to rest a nearly twenty-year-long debate on what, if anything, should be done to differentiate adult sites from the rest of the Internet. A detailed application will be required by anyone wishing to request an .XXX domain name in hopes to do exactly what producers wanted -- to separate the fraud sites and illegal sites from that of a legitimate business. But what will happen to adult dating sites, fetish forums or sites discussing sexual health one does not know and it will be interesting to see how this development changes the Internet communities. Will it create a digital red-light district? Or will .XXX domains become a cyberspace Comstock law?<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Molly Wood, "Triple-X: A Brief History of A Dirty Domain." Cnet. August 18, 2005. [http://www.cnet.com/4520-6033\\_1-6302380-1.html](http://www.cnet.com/4520-6033_1-6302380-1.html) (accessed April 11, 2011); "ICM Registry Receives Long-Sought Approval for .XXX." AVN, March 18, 2011. <http://business.avn.com/articles/technology/ICANN-Authorizes-ICM-Registry-s-XXX-as-TLD->

## A Good Buzz

The Internet opened new business plans for almost every form of adult entertainment. The same can be true of the adult sex toy industry. Adult sexual aids or sex toys had been around from the beginning of time practically. Originally used to cure “hysteria” in women in Victorian times, the vibrator had been sold for much of the Victorian period to 1920 in mail order catalogues to keep ones wife’s and girlfriends “happy and beautiful.” It was in the twenties when vibrators began to be shown as props in stag films and subsequently vanishing from mail-order catalogues. It would not be until the late 1960s that vibrators would be easily for sale in catalogues and stores. Adult sex shops would open in the sixties as well as seventies. Local sex shops and workshops ran to not only familiarize women with their bodies but popularize the female orgasm. Because of the discovery of AIDs in the 1980s in the United States, male masturbation toys gained in popularity becoming by the 1990s the most popular sex toy.

The Interactive Life Forms Company (LLC) started in 1996 as a sexual mom-and-pop organization. The Austin-based company created the patents for the Fleshlight, a male masturbation toy that looks like an over grown flashlight with a silicone flesh inside. The Fleshlight has become the most popular male sex toy to date worldwide selling over 3 million products by 2010. Men were not the only ones whose sex toys got an upgrade. Women’s vibrators had become associated with cheap creation and short shelf life. By moving online companies could now sell a smart sex toy, more technological advanced; they would interact with one’s phone or computer. Or they offered toys made of a higher quality material, such as precious metals or silks and pearls. By the ‘90s women’s sex toys had been shown on popular

television, *Sex in the City* and were even discussed in women's magazines. Although sexual aids were now much more socially accepted, they were still illegal in many states, such as Alabama and Georgia. Some Internet stores flourished, like that of AdamandEve.com, which has branched out from condoms sold in a catalogue to producing their own adult movies. Others such as Good Vibrations, one of the first sex shops in San Francisco area also one of the first to move online, had only staved off financial death, not because they sold an inferior product but the amount of competition between websites is extreme and the bigger names have won out. Adult sex aids either came from huge websites or sold boutique items.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ilana DeBare, SFGate.com. September 2, 2007. [http://articles.sfgate.com/2007-09-07/business/17263645\\_1\\_web-sales-toy-retailer-internet-sales](http://articles.sfgate.com/2007-09-07/business/17263645_1_web-sales-toy-retailer-internet-sales) (accessed April 24, 2011); Jacob Dirr. *Austin Business Journal*. July 2, 2010. <http://www.bizjournals.com/austin/stories/2010/06/28/daily59.html> (accessed April 24, 2011).

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Good Bye love**

The sex industry has not gone stagnant nor stopped creating and evolving. Perfumed parlors and smoky backrooms have morphed through each decade to become the multimillion-dollar multimedia industry of today. Street addresses like South Dearborn and Basin Street have given way to southern California production companies and .xxx domain names but in the end it's all still money for pleasure. Much press has been produced about the current recession and its effects on the adult entertainment industry. The industry is shifting to compensate for the recession. Playboy has recently become a private company again. Legitimate adult websites in the near future may all bear the tag .xxx. Will this spell the demise of the illegal upload porn sites that have stolen so much income from pornography companies? Many men's magazines and adult toy producers have diversified their companies to include women's wear, adult toys and their own pornography films. Actresses and actors in the adult industry also have turned themselves into brand names, releasing their own websites, and adult toys shaped after their own bodies or designed by the actors. This ability to brand and expand what a company produces assures that as a whole the adult entertainment will never go away.

The adult industry has also become an integral part of American life. Many reality television shows that have dealt with addiction, have discussed pornography as a new and growing addiction. Porn stars have run for public office such as Mary Carey for governor in California. Playboy clubs have reopened in Las Vegas. Playboy bunnies could be seen stuffing their costumes with socks in almost every home with cable thanks to the E! Entertainment's show about Hugh Hefner and his early 2000 girlfriends. Geeks have also entered the sex trade in

a real way. Sex toys are now being created by engineers and medical doctors as well as jewelers. Since well before the professors of Storyville music has been tied to sex and the current music industry is no different. Sex has become a key part of many music videos and lyrics from hip hop artists to Lady GaGa's most recent fetish wear based look.

It will be fascinating just how much the adult industry will change in the next century. Will it honestly even be recognizable to a madam from the 1900s? Will all adult entertainment be moved online? Will sexuality be an even larger part of American culture? History may repeat itself with a conservative response to the current porno culture, which is what many adult entertainment employees fear will come about with the new domain change. Almost no one living remembers the Everleigh Club or its sister owners. Should Jenna Jameson worry she will be forgotten from history as well? Historians tackle the history of war and politics, asking and answering the question how and why humans fight and hate. People should also look at how and why mankind loves or at the very least entertains themselves.

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