

DANGEROUS, DESPERATE, AND HOMOSEXUAL: CINEMATIC

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MALE PROSTITUTE

AS FALLEN ANGELS.

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The purpose of this study is to frame the cinematic male prostitute as a “fallen angel” to demonstrate that the evolution of the cinematic hustler has paralleled historicized ideological definitions of male homosexuality. Because cultural understandings of male homosexuality frequently reflect Judeo-Christian ideological significations of sin and corruption, the term “fallen angel” is utilized to describe the hustler as a figure who has also succumbed to sin due to his sexual involvement with other men. This study constructs an epochal analysis of eight films that explores the confluence of the social understanding of homosexuality with the cinematic image of the hustler from the mid 1960s through the present. In doing so, this study shows that the image of the cinematic hustler is intricately tied to the image of the male homosexual in material cultures and eras that produce them. A filmography is included.

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROSTITUTES AND ANGELS: AN INTRODUCTION.

The popular gay magazine *OUT* features a section on its companion web portal called “Hot Guy of the Day.” Each day the site posts a picture of a half-dressed model and allows members to comment on his relative attractiveness. Comments range from cynical indifference to enthusiastic approval. In one such case, a young model named “Jesse” stands in nothing but his “tighty-whities” as he cradles his crotch in one hand and gazes indifferently into the camera. Very early in the comment string, Jesse is established as “a whole lot of hot” and as looking like a sexy street hustler. The proceeding comments continue to objectify Jesse and outline a wide variety of sex acts the commentators would like to engage in with him. Jesse is a romanticized figure that stands ready to fulfill the fantasies of same-sex desire for those admiring him. And while Jesse stands pretty in a frozen image, he provides no historical context to how he has come to be there nor does he supply any insight to the many incarnations of homosexual identity he may represent. He is simply a “hot,” “gorgeous,” or “sexy” member of a gay sub-culture.

The image of the hustler that Jesse is said to resemble, however, has a long history in the literary and cinematic gay imaginary and an even longer history in the conceptualization and taxonomy of male prostitution by social researchers. It is through the evolution of this conceptualization that studies of male prostitution have resulted in quantitative studies on homosexuality. In his essay on the rise of the male prostitute in nineteenth century England, Jeffery Weeks highlights the simultaneous appearance of writings on male prostitution and those on homosexuality. He notes that early sexologists were regularly concerned with the prevalence of same-sex prostitution for men and the degree to which practice in prostitution could lead to actualized self-identities (Weeks 113-4). As the research continued into the twentieth and

twenty-first centuries, what concerned many of the commentators were not the social conditions that contributed to the prostitute's daily existence, but rather how they might ideologically characterize his sexual orientation. Frequently capitulating to Judeo-Christian doctrines of morality and prevailing cultural attitudes toward homosexuality, these same commentators were concerned with how the hustler's sexual practices might harm dominant heteronormative structures.

To the same degree, the hustler in gay literature and cinema charted the same simultaneous ideological evolution of homosexual identity. Yet instead of making speculative associations between male prostitution and homosexuality identity, the hustler came to represent the homosexual himself. The challenges he faces are those created by the very studies that seek to explain his nature: studies that moralize and relegate the prostitute (homosexual) to the outer boundaries of mental health and social tolerance. The hustler does not so much oppose these representations as he does embody them. He is the "fallen angel" who not only found himself ostracized and demonized by society but also struggled to negotiate his space within it. He is the deviant, the pedophile, "vector of disease," or promiscuous sinner. Building upon this premise, this study constructs an epochal analysis that explores the confluence of the social understanding of homosexuality with the cinematic image of the male prostitute within different historical periods. It utilizes the loaded concept of "fallen angel" to demonstrate that while term "prostitute" frequently reflects a decidedly Judeo-Christian ideological signification of sin and corruption, its cinematic representations are in a constant state of transformation that parallel historicized ideological definitions and transformations of "homosexuality." In being so, the two images are intricately tied to the material cultures and eras that produce them.

This idea that cinema is able to convey ideologies of a material culture in which they appear follows largely on the theoretical approach called “structures of feeling.” In his book, *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Raymond Williams explains that developing social ideas rarely appear as fixed inventories of social consciousness. Instead culture is a productive process in which institutions and practices are developed through interpretation and practical experience (Williams 130). Ideologies only derive their “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” (132). A structure of feeling, then, is a cultural hypothesis that attempts to understand changes in social experience within a specific generation or period. It is a hypothesis that has particular relevance to art and literature which are “finished and explicit” representations of the cultures they are depicting and allow for the theorizing of certain ideological belief systems as they evolve through time:

The idea of a structure of feeling can be specifically related to the evidence of forms and conventions—semantic figures—which, in art and literature, are often among the very first indications that such a new structure is forming ... this is a way of defining forms and conventions in art and literature as inalienable elements of a social material process: not by derivation from other social forms and pre-forms, but as social formation of a specific kind which may in turn be seen as the articulation (often the fully available articulation) of structures of feeling which as living process are much more widely experienced. (Williams 133)

As such, the “hustler film” allows for a glimpse in the hegemonic negotiation processes in which homosexuals attempt to delineate for themselves autonomous sexual identities and define these identities against a larger heteronormative society. This study uses specific cultural artifacts to demonstrate the influence of dominant ideologies found within the film texts on the cultural understanding of what it means to be homosexual. This is accomplished by closely analyzing various film and television texts within the larger matrix of western gay and lesbian history as it pertains to the evolution of the male prostitute.



## The Male Prostitute: From Fairy Man to Deviant Child

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, male prostitutes were simply known as “fairies” due to the frequent identification by early sexologists of same-sex sexual practice with gender deviance, or “inversion.” Sexology refers to a theoretical discipline that emerged in the mid nineteenth century which studied the bizarre, dangerous, and supposedly unhealthy aspects of sex and sexual identity. These fairy prostitutes ranged in age from fifteen-years-old to the early twenties and they solicited their straight (“normal” gender affiliated) clientele alongside female prostitutes on district strolls or in specialized fairy brothels. They often adopted both feminine mannerisms and names, and regularly wore make-up and extravagantly colorful and fashionable clothing. Occasionally they would cross-dress in women’s clothing to produce a more complete facsimile of womanhood. Yet the fairy prostitute did not simply dress and act like women, they affected the pretense of a particular type of woman, the female prostitute (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 7). It was in this way that these fairy prostitutes were able to announce publicly that they were not only sexually different from other men, but that they also sexually desired other men (Chauncey 61). Although many of the fairies may not have self-identified as homosexuals, they were most likely to have been seen as such by their mostly straight clientele. By adopting feminine characteristics, cross-dressing, and assuming the passive role in sex, male prostitutes occupied a similar social position within working-class culture as did female prostitutes (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 8).

Owing to this close association of male prostitution with effeminate behavior, male prostitution during this period was seen as a moral problem linking same-sex desire with gender transgression (Scott 180), making commercial sexual activity involving males and same-sex desire indistinguishable from one another (181). However, given the limited impact of sexology,

many working class men felt free to pursue sex with male-prostitutes. “Homosexual” had not been incorporated into the common lexicon as a classification of self-identity. Because of this, engaging in homosexual activities had yet to carry the stigmatizing label. Straight men were able to maintain their “normal” sexuality as long as they only took the active, or “man’s role,” during sex with other men. Additionally, many working-class men pursued sex with fairy prostitutes because fairies engaged in certain forms of sexual behavior which many working-class women rejected as unbecoming, “dirty,” and/or “perverted,” namely oral sex (Chauncey 61). This was coupled with the misconception that only female prostitutes carried sexually transmitted diseases, whereas sexual contact between men was thought to be safe (86).

Yet while fairy prostitution was widespread during the turn of the century, by the mid-1920s fewer and fewer “normal” men were willing to hire male prostitutes owing to increasing cultural suspicion, coinciding with the spread of sexological discourse, that clients of male prostitutes were themselves homosexual. By the 1920s the effeminate fairy prostitute was becoming an increasingly marginalized figure. The majority of the clientele had become gay-identified and were seeking the passive roles not offered by fairy prostitutes (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 8). In place of the late nineteenth century forms of prostitution in which gay-identified men sold sex to straight men, it was increasingly common for many working-class “normal” men to supplement their wages by prostituting themselves to these gay-identified men (Minton 138). The economic hardships of the Depression in the 1930s only strengthened this new form of prostitution as it became a means of survival for young men who migrated into the cities looking for work (139). While some of these men worked regularly as prostitutes, the majority worked only occasionally and only when gay men approached them directly. Most were young and might spend only a few weeks actively pursuing clientele, using prostitution as simple

means to an end (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 11). By performing only "insertive" roles, they tended to avoid gay self-identification ("Male Prostitution" 16). Indeed, many became "aggressively masculine in their self-presentation" which ultimately produced a new type of male prostitute: "trade." The term "trade" was derived from the monied exchange for sex and originally only referred to the customer of a fairy prostitute, yet it soon came to refer specifically to "straight" male prostitutes (Chauncey 70). More rugged or aggressive prostitutes came to be referred to as "rough trade."

During the middle third of the twentieth century, definitions of childhood began to change and be expanded upon. Meanwhile, new understandings of sexual behavior began to raise new questions concerning the governance of sexual behavior (Chauncey 140; Scott 183). After two children were murdered in New York in the late 1930s, residents began to protest that police be given more power to "Take suspicious characters in hand before they commit the crimes" (*New York Times*, Aug. 15, 1937, as quoted in Freedman 91). This event prompted J. Edgar Hoover to call for a "war on the sex criminal," charging that "the sex fiend, most loathsome of all the vast army of crime, [has] become a sinister threat to the safety of American childhood and womanhood" (94). The national hysteria that followed Hoover's call to action against the "sex fiend" aroused latent concerns surrounding the characterization of sexuality and served to draw even stricter boundaries between the definitions of "normal" men and "perverts." Meanwhile, the medical and social sciences became progressively more concerned with the management and "treatment" of sexual aberrations (Scott 183-84).

By the 1940s homosexuality as a mental illness was the predominant model held by psychologists and psychiatrists and it was in this context that academic research began to appear on the male prostitute. In one such report, F. A. Freyhan described a young man arrested for

solicitation near a naval base as “intellectually dull,” socially crude and egocentric, and without remorse about his “sexual inversion” (93). He was already “aggressively” homosexual; rather, he self-identified as homosexual. Freyhan diagnosed the young man as a psychotic and recommended a lobotomy—the preferred treatment for homosexuality. That same year, another researcher reported on a convenience sample (a sample chosen from easily available subjects which does not represent the entire population and is therefore considered to be biased) of street-based prostitutes and described them as “fixed inverters” who engage in “all forms of perversion” (Butts 675). He claimed that they were all heterosexual youths until they were seduced into the homosexual subculture, reflecting the common belief that engaging in homosexual behavior caused homosexuality. His solution was to institutionalize the youths rather than punish them because in doing so they would be able to realize a normal, happy, and useful life. Ironically, while homosexuality was pathologized and classified as a mental illness, the research was driven not by a focus on homosexual prostitution but rather by a focus on “normal” men who engaged in prostitution due to an assumed “deviant” psychological disorder. Shortly after, Alfred C. Kinsey would publish his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948). This work challenged the rigid adherence to traditional gender roles by revealing higher rates of homosexual activity among his male subjects than had been previously expected. By counting heterosexual experiences and comparing them to homosexual ones, “normal” sex and sexual identity came to be understood as “majority” sex (Katz 97). This finding only served to frustrate the national consciousness and send the nation into a sex crime panic which, in turn, reinforced a connection between homosexuality and moral depravity (Paton).

The rise in influence of the pathological model of prostitution coincided with McCarthy’s “red scare.” With the rise of McCarthyism, the campaign to demonize

homosexuality became an essential component of the anti-communist witch-hunt. Senator Joseph McCarthy began to target homosexuals as a national security threat after an admitted ex-communist and homosexual spy named a State Department official as his accomplice. McCarthy compounded this by pointing out that several of the men on his list of alleged communists were also homosexual. This prompted many Americans to make a connection between communism, political subversion, and homosexuality (Paton). These accusations inseparably linked sexual and gender “deviance” to communism and made them virtually synonymous.

In this context, a wave of anti-homosexual rhetoric and repression drew a strict boundary between heterosexual and homosexual males. The homosexual became a malleable symbol for popular fears, and young male prostitutes were transformed into naïve children who lacked judgment and were susceptible to victimization by older, predatory perverts (Scott 183). While in the early part of the century, the young male prostitute was automatically presumed already to be a morally depraved homosexual, in the middle part of the century he was presumed to be a young heterosexual child in danger of *becoming* a homosexual through recruitment. The solicitation of young male street hustlers by older homosexuals was often cited as a primary way in which this recruitment took place. Young male prostitutes were problematic because they were seen to be young heterosexual boys verging on “aggressive” homosexuality who, through practical welfare of medical interventions, could be “cured” (184), or effectively “saved” from a life of moral depravity. It was from this standpoint that the prostitute maintained his innocence as an exploited youth rather than automatically being condemned as a sexual deviant (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 43). This status as a sexually exploited victim cast him as fallen innocent: a “fallen angel.”

## “Fallen Angel” Defined

“Angel” is a concept that carries with it a great deal of associative significance and one that is sufficiently malleable for the community seeking to appropriate it. The “fallen angel” of Christian tradition signifies the first of God’s “beloved creations” who have been banished from Heaven for disobeying, or rebelling against God. This concept was originally put forth by Origen of Alexandria, an early Christian scholar from the third century C.E.<sup>1</sup> Yet he also theorized, however, that although some of these angels fell, by practicing virtue they could return to their rightful place at God’s side. Reinforcing this idea of returning to complete conformity with God, Augustine of Hippo, another early church scholar from the fourth century C.E., believed the fall of mankind originated with the creation of free will, and as a result of the fall, man lost the ability to do good without God's grace. Augustine believed man was created without sin, but when Adam sinned, “all man sinned in him seminally.” Man, nevertheless, retains the ability of free choice to accept God’s grace and in doing so he is redeemed (C. Johnson).

Defining the angel in a biblical context is useful in understanding cinematic representations of the male prostitute because the transforming understandings of sexual purity and morality coincided with the rise of evangelical Christianity. Founded in 1941, fundamentalist preacher Carl McIntire began the American Council of Christian Churches as an organization of “Bible believing Christians” who were repulsed by religious modernism and social liberalism invading American society and the mainstream Protestant Federal Council of

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<sup>1</sup> C.E. stands for "Common Era." and is a relatively new term that has gained popularity among religious scholars and replaces A.D. ("Anno Domini," or "the year of the Lord"). B.C.E. (before the Common Era) replaces B.C. (before Christ). The reason for this change is due in part to a belief that non-religious, neutral terms would be less offensive to the non-Christian majority (only one-third of the world’s population claims a Christian faith) who might see the use of A.D and B.C. as a coercive effort to acknowledge the supremacy of the Christian God and of Jesus Christ.

Churches (Lichtman). This was followed in 1942 with National Association of Evangelicals who hoped to revive “the fortunes of evangelical Christianity in America” (“History of the N.A.E.”); The Youth for Christ in 1944; the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1950; and the Campus Crusade for Christ in 1951 (Douglass). In 1946, the National Council of Churches of Christ in America published the first edition of their newly translated New Testament, the Revised Standard Version. What had been previously translated as “male prostitutes” (malakoi, literally “soft”) and “sodomites” (arsenokoitai, literally “male bed”) in most protestant bibles was condensed to simply “homosexual.” It was the first instance in which the word homosexual appeared in any Bible translation (Truluck). Yet by conflating “male prostitute” into “homosexual,” Christian tradition effectively intimated there to be no difference between the two. This conceptualization would then be promulgated through research on the sexual deviance of prostitutes and appear as cultural artifacts in literature and cinema despite the stated sexual self-identity of the subjects or characters. To be a male prostitute was no different than being a homosexual.

Yet “angel” has connotative implications that, although influenced by Christian conceptions of purity, do not automatically denote a Christian philosophical view. In a purely secular sense, angel can refer to a kind-hearted person or simply refer to a child: i.e. “my little angel.” For a “fall” to occur, then, the child needs only act out or behave in a manner contrary to parental obedience. Considering that most post World War Two depictions of male prostitutes tended to emphasize the prostitute’s youth and vulnerability, frequently calling them “children” (Kaye “Male Prostitution” 40), it is not surprising to find the street hustler equated with a fallen innocent, or “fallen angel.” However, when coupled with the religious and spiritual connotations of the word “angel,” the male prostitute becomes not only childlike but also Christian. This

occurs regardless of the prostitute's actual spiritual beliefs (which, incidentally, are usually never mentioned). Because the young male prostitute is depicted as a "child," and by extension Christian, he remains subject to social conventions determined by heteronormative, patriarchal, Christian dogma. In other words, male prostitution, and the homosexual identity it is equated with, runs counter to "appropriate" forms of gender expression, sexual morality, and social conformity. In a grand sense, the male prostitute is a substitute for the homosexual which transforms films about hustlers into allegories of male homosexuality.

However, Christian ideologies are not the only ideological structures influencing the hustler film genre. From its inception, a "gay sensibility" is clearly present in the genre which reflects the personal experiences of the filmmakers. This gay sensibility is not necessarily the actual acts of prostitution, per se, but rather the lived experience of being and negotiating a homosexual position within larger heteronormative societal structures. What appears in the hustler films, then, is experimentation with the boundaries of social acceptance: an exploration of identity. A key belief in ideological theory states that the dominant class provides a general conceptual framework for a society's members, and as a result furthers the interests of that class (Stam 133). In this respect, the films do not negate the hustler as "troubled victim" or "deviant pervert" but rather highlight the controlling ideological apparatuses that see him as such. In the earliest appearances of the cinematic male prostitute, he is defined by the cultural, medical, and religious structures that view his "affliction" as damaging and abnormal. Yet as the genre progresses and the gay community grows in strength and numbers and voice, the hustler begins to demonstrate the values of the gay community. These values are sometimes opposed to the larger hegemonic society and, at other times, engaged in a process of cultural cleansing in an effort to make the community more tolerable to the dominant hegemonic society.



## The Hustler Film

With few notable exceptions, film texts centered on the male prostitute were, and continue to be created primarily by and for homosexual audiences. While the progress of the historical male prostitute often mirrors the progress of queer identity, often appearing in literature as a proud and sexually liberated individual, the cinematic hustler has more typically reflected dominant Judeo-Christian ideological perspectives. These ideological perspectives construct the homosexual male as an ill-fated figure who has fallen from morality, grace, or good mental or physical health. These common perceptions are then projected onto the filmic representations of the male prostitute. The cinematic hustler is, in essence, the homosexual himself caught between negotiating a unique space within the dominant culture and re-inscribing the role already created for him. As a general rule, he is a tormented young man who is in a constant struggle with his own sexual identity and burdened by guilt activated by Judeo-Christian doctrine. He is the “fallen angel” who labors to gain approval by a society that has labeled him as a deviant child, or a predatory pederast, or deserving of the plague he is accused of initiating. Yet while sexological research on the prostitute (homosexual) has a history that precedes from the late nineteenth century, the cinematic hustler has had a relatively short lifespan.

Due to the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) production code, which prohibited any reference to illicit drugs, homosexuality, premarital sex, profanity, prostitution, and white slavery, the only film known to have featured a male prostitute before the 1960s was the now lost film *The Soul of Youth* (1920). Directed by William Desmond Taylor, the film included a scene in which the film’s protagonist was sold into prostitution (“The Soul of Youth”). With the relaxation of the Hollywood Production Code in the early 1960s, and

complete abandonment of it in 1967, filmmakers were free to begin exploring issues related to illicit drug use, premarital sex, homosexuality, and prostitution.

With the release of Andy Warhol's *My Hustler* in 1965, a fascination began with the image of the male prostitute. As a result, one of the genres to emerge among the sexploitation and underground films was the "hustler film." Partly replacing the coded sissy who spoke in innuendo and double entendres was the hustler who was a tough, straight-acting young man. He was sexy and made no apologies. Yet despite beginning as an idealization of a masculine sexual object, as the genre persisted, this new figure increasingly became presented as a troubled "victim" or "fallen innocent." While there have been a handful of mainstream films in which straight-identified heroes serve a mostly female clientele, such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and *American Gigolo* (1980) or more recently the *Deuce Bigalow* series (1999 and 2005), the majority of hustler films have been independently produced and represent the hero as either a quasi-straight- or gay-identified character serving a mostly male clientele. The independent hustler films are marketed primarily for art house distribution and the niche gay video market. In the years immediately following Warhol's *My Hustler*, there was a scattering of films in both the American and international markets. Then, in the mid-1980s, a surge of gay-centered films began to flood independent movie houses and video shelves, culminating in the birth of what became known as the 'New Queer Cinema' movement in the early 1990s. Since this movement, films with male prostitutes as either the lead or a central character have been steadily produced.

Yet while many social researchers have divided male prostitution into categories such as "street hustler," "bar hustler," "callboy," or "kept boy" (Caukins and Coombs), film representations of male prostitution have been relatively consistent. With few exceptions the prostitute figured within the hustler genre is portrayed as a street hustler living and working on

the streets. Nevertheless, his portrayal as a street hustler serves several significant purposes. First, the street hustler is the most visible of any of the male prostitute classifications and in being so he is more readily attributable to a public face of homosexuality. Because a homosexual identity is frequently defined by the sexual practices of the individual, the hustler's free association with easily available sex provides for an irrevocable linking of sexual practice with sexual identity. The hustler is able to represent the homosexual because his clientele are other men. Second, the transient nature of the hustler, moving from one locale to another as well as the adoption of different personas for different clients, allows for the depiction of homosexual identity as it progresses through different epochal moments. Finally, the hustler is a subversive figure. As a representative of a community in a constant struggle against the restrictions of hegemonic patriarchal society, this subversive quality is useful. Through his moneyed exchanges, the hustler threatens an institution of patriarchy in which men are never treated as commodities. As Luce Irigaray has observed, the patriarchal economy of a man's desire is one in which only *women* are circulated among men (Irigaray 173). But more importantly, his sexual practice, as are those of the homosexual, stands in defiance of heteronormative, patriarchal, and Christian social conventions.

This denial of other forms of prostitution in the hustler genre, however, does not preclude a taxonomy that can be located within the genus category of "street hustler" itself. Indeed, the street hustler in many of these films generally falls into one, or more, of three categories. In their voluminous and detailed book, *Male Prostitution* (1993), West and de Villiers labeled these categories as homosexual, desperate, or dangerous (xi). The "homosexual" male prostitute moves into prostitution by choice and as a means of exploring his own sexual identity. This classification is more prevalent in later films, and generally ends with the prostitute leaving the

streets having fallen in love with another character who is *not* a prostitute. The “desperate” male prostitute, while not always gay-identified, is described as runaway, usually because of some dysfunction at home, who exploits prostitution as a means of basic survival. His want of money for essentials is his driving force to sell his body. While drugs and drug addiction are more typical foundational causes for this type of prostitution (Kaye "Email"), their presence within the hustler genre is typically overlooked or downplayed. Finally, the “dangerous” male prostitute is typically portrayed as a straight identified, “amoral delinquent” who travels in packs with other delinquents soliciting clients for extra spending cash often times threatening or robbing them. Another classification not utilized by West and de Villiers but was prevalent in research occurring prior to the gay liberation movement was “pseudo-homosexual.” This term arises from the belief that “normal” sexuality is innately heterosexual and that homosexuality was only an acquired orientation. In this respect, the hustler was never actually homosexual but rather only exhibited homosexual-like characteristics as a consequence of his involvement in sex with other men.

These classifications are not only useful in categorizing a type of street hustler; they are also practical in labeling the epochal moments that define this study. The division of this study into specific epochs does not follow specific decade delineations, but rather the chapters are grouped according to specific movements or happenings. Pseudo-homosexual, dangerous, desperate, and homosexual serve not only as descriptions of the male prostitute, but also as instructive descriptions of these movements because they describe how the homosexual male was perceived in each of these periods.

“Pseudo-homosexual” demarcates the period surrounding the events leading to gay liberation in which a unified vision of homosexual identity was only just beginning to emerge.

Many men of the period were seen as not actually homosexual but rather emotionally defective *heterosexual* men. “Dangerous” defines the period immediately following gay liberation and extends into the mid-1980s which saw an increase in anti-gay backlash from emergent Religious-Right movements that defined homosexuality as a threat to children and the traditional family unit. While the hustler was thought to be a desperate runaway during this period, the homosexual male was thought to be a dangerous corruptor of the innocent. Conversely, the hustler of the 1980s was seen to be dangerous because he was seen to be a vector of AIDS into mainstream society, yet it was homosexual men who were desperately trying to survive the epidemic. The AIDS crisis that appeared in the mid-1980s and extended into the mid-1990s threatened the very foundations of the gay identity. As such, this moment is labeled “desperate.” Finally, “homosexual” delineates the most recent period in which the gay community has appropriated control of its own image and representations. The hustlers appear as self-identified homosexual men and engage with distinctively homosexual concerns.

With few exceptions the films discussed in this study are independently produced films separate from any major studio backing. Mainstream Hollywood films courageous enough to feature a male prostitute who actually services exclusively male clientele, such as *Less Than Zero* (1987) or *Boogie Nights* (1997), invariably present these acts as the nadir of the character’s existence and the ultimate representation of de-masculinization. Independent features, because they are presumably made by and for homosexuals, tend to reflect the more truthful lived experiences of being homosexual and negotiating homosexual positions. The films in this study are also specifically English language and Western films. This is due to the wide variation in different socio-political experiences of same-sex attraction in different countries. Yet while acknowledging a cultural specificity among countries like the United States, Britain and Canada,

it must also be recognized that these countries share an Anglo-North American gay cultural production that travels easily between them.

In many cases, specifically within the first two chapters, the films chosen for this study were done so because of their availability. Because the hustler film tends to be independently produced and distributed, few of the early films are readily available and frequently exist only in archival reviews. In the last two chapters, the films were chosen according to their specificity to the prevailing cultural movements. This is true to a lesser degree during the AIDS moment in which the majority of the films touch on some aspect of the crisis. In this case, the films were chosen to exclude those that had been previously analyzed by other authors. In the last chapter, however, the New Queer Cinema movement had opened the door for a plurality of different voices and representation and many of the films appearing after this moment revisited subjects already explored in previous decades. For instance, *L.I.E.* (2001) and *Mysterious Skin* (2004) explored pedophilia and sexual abuse while *Life as a House* (2001) and *Ethan Mao* (2004) dealt with issues of troubled youth and the patriarchal family. This re-visitation of old themes arises in part from the need to provide material output to meet the demands of an increasing gay consumer niche market. While the themes of pedophilia and troubled youth in this period do not lessen the conceptualization of the hustler as a fallen angel in any way, they tend to be backward looking rather than providing any new insight to the lived experiences of gay men in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The patriarchal nuclear family and child abuse were common themes of the 1970s. The dominant cultural push for the most recent moment, however, has been (and continues to be) cultural assimilation and the films were chosen with this in mind.

## Chapter Breakdown

The definitions of male prostitution have evolved over the course of the twentieth century in tandem with the cultural understandings of homosexuality. Because the status given to the male prostitute in the middle part of the twentieth century was that of a fallen innocent, or “fallen angel,” many of the representations of the hustler tend to reflect a desire to rehabilitate him into some more acceptable mode of behavior. Yet while the term “fallen angel” signifies a decidedly Judeo-Christian perspective, it also connotes a ruin due to vice, promiscuity, or some other unsanctioned self-identity. Filmmakers from every period have interpreted its meaning differently. The hustler character has been useful in the exploration of these interpretations due in large part to his close association with homosexuality. The struggles the hustler faces in these narratives frequently mirror the struggles of the homosexual community and as those struggles change throughout history so too do those of the cinematic hustler.

In Chapter 2, Naïve Angels and Pseudo-Homosexuals: Underground Cinema and the Birth of the Gay Liberation Movement, *My Hustler* (1965) and *The Meatrack* (1969) are examined to explore the phenomena of an emergent sexual identity that struggled to define itself against the many proscriptions being advanced by psychological and religious communities. With the rise of a visible gay community, it became increasingly more difficult for men to have sex with other men without being burdened by homosexual identification. The characters in the films demonstrate this struggle as they attempt to define their personal identities against hegemonic categorizations. While both films display a vicarious fascination with sexuality and an idealization of gay masculinity, *My Hustler* presents the new sexualized hustler as titillating and exciting while, at the same time, questioning societal definitions of homosexuality. Alternatively, *The Meatrack* remains entrenched in the hustler as the sad young man prevalent in

much of the era's film and literature. The hustler in this film is tormented by his attraction to another man and actively fights against it.

Chapter 3, *Runaway Angels and Dangerous Homosexuals: Anti-Gay Backlash and Reactionary Cinema*, documents the cultural shift that transformed the hustler figure from an unstable juvenile delinquent into a helpless child. With the rise of an increasing runaway youth problem, anti-homosexual organizers shifted focus away from the street hustler onto his perceived victimizer and enabler. As a result, the hustler films that emerged in this period were highly reactionary and painted the hustler as victimized middle-class child and the male homosexual as a dangerous predator capable of moral corruptibility and murder. The made for television film *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* (1977) presents its hero as a clean-cut middle-class *heterosexual* child from America's heartland who is lured into prostitution by older homosexual men. The film *Forty Deuce* (1982), on the other hand, exemplifies the homosexual as victimizer dynamic by focusing on the inhumanity of the older hustler/pimps who are so corrupt as to try and sell the dead body of a young runaway.

In Chapter 4, *Dying Angles and Desperate Homosexuals: AIDS and New Queer Cinema*, the films *Postcards from America* (1994) and *Johns* (1996) are examined as products of the AIDS crisis in which the gay community was desperately struggling for its continued existence. AIDS was cutting short the lives of many gay men while the government and other social agencies stood idly by. The films from this period tended to reject dominant cultural ideologies, opting instead to focus on themes relevant to the gay community. As a result, the hustler returned to popularity in gay cinema in the early 1990s. Yet instead of capitulating to traditional definitions of "fallen angel," the hustler films redefined, or refined the term to highlight the lack of compassion being shown to those suffering with AIDS. The "fallen angel" became a



sacrificial martyr who was abandoned by society because of his sexual difference. *Postcards* documents the life of a street hustler, abused by his father as a child and traveling the country searching for acceptance in his later years. The film blames not only the dominant hegemonic society for his isolation but also the gay community itself. *Johns* suggests that the real victimization the male prostitute encounters is not from exploitation by other homosexuals, or the threat of forming an “unnatural” sexual identity, but rather from Christian ideology itself.

Chapter 5, Domestic Angels And Assimilated Homosexuals: Post-AIDS Hustlers and the Mainstreaming of Gay Identity, uses the films *In the Flesh* (1998) and *Sugar* (2004) to highlight the increasing distinction between “good gays” and “bad gays” being propagated by a gay “post-AIDS” community engaged in the process of assimilation. As early reports of the success of new drug regimens began to offer hope to AIDS infected individuals in the mid-1990s, shifts began to dramatically alter the communal mindset of the gay community. Men infected with HIV began to return to life and began embracing the new identity of “AIDS survivor.” At the same time the polarizing issues of gays-in-the-military and gay-marriage were being battled in the courts and legislature. The majority of the films appearing in this time tended to contain themes of acceptance and inclusion. Through the use of almost universally gay-identified hustlers, the films also provided appropriate behavioral templates for the homosexual community. The film *In the Flesh* uses its central prostitute character to illustrate the distinction between sexual practice and homosexual identity and ends with the monogamous pairing of its two leads. *Sugar*, on the other hand, is one of the few films that addresses the link between drug addiction and prostitution. Yet instead of being an extended anti-drug oration, the film uses drugs and the culture surrounding them to contrast approved and censured assimilationist values.

The concluding chapter, *Angels and Homosexuals*, ties the themes and issues discussed in the previous chapters back into the central argument of the cinematic prostitute as a fallen angel. As the ideological understandings of male homosexuality evolved and were reframed from the post World War Two period into the present, so too did the representations of the cinematic hustler. What remained constant was a tendency to depict him as a figure who continuously struggled against Christian ideology. The conclusion considers how the cinematic depictions of the male prostitute have contributed to the cultural understanding of what it means to be a homosexual. It also reflects on how dominant ideology has been negotiated to incorporate the transforming definitions of male prostitution. Finally, it looks forward to future representations to ask if the prostitute will continue to be victimized or if the wide breadth of circumstances for prostitution will be explored to give a more complex view of homosexuality and other possible sexualities.

## CHAPTER 2

### NAÏVE ANGELS AND PSEUDO-HOMOSEXUALS: UNDERGROUND CINEMA AND THE BIRTH OF THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

One of the most notable developments of the 1960s was the increased visibility of the gay community and of the social institutions of same-sexed desire. While the homophile movement of the 1940s and 1950s was predominately an underground movement that favored integration and quiescence, the emerging gay liberation movement actively began to protest institutionalized persecution and become involved in local politics (Licata 169). As a result, gay and lesbian identities became more recognizable through the 1960s, especially those of the urban underground. New voices began to complicate previous understandings of sexual identity while at the same time valorizing sexual “expressiveness” (Bernstein "Celebration and Suppression" 543). As such, the hustler and his clients and other sexual-subversives regularly began to appear as principal characters in gay underground film for the first time. The figure of the hustler and the subculture through which he moved became central preoccupations of films like Andy Warhol’s *My Hustler* (1965) or Richard Stockton’s *The Meatrack* (1969).

Yet with the rise of a more visible gay community it also became increasingly more difficult for men to have sex with other men without the onus of subscribing to a homosexual identity. Unlike in the previous decades where working-class men could, and often did, retain their heteronormative status by seeking sexual gratification with “fairy” prostitutes, the increasing visibility of gay life made maintaining that status highly problematic. The very act of engaging in same-sex relations placed one’s own sexual identity in doubt, particularly if any pleasure was derived from the act. Sexual gratification signified homosexual desire which in turn signified homosexual identity. The hustler films of the period often reflected this conflict. The cinematic hustler, like much of the gay community, was frequently burdened by the guilt

and shame of having fallen from expected social and moral standards. He was the “fallen angel” that was aware of his transgressions and vainly trying to remedy them.

This chapter explores this phenomenon by focusing on two films from the mid to late 1960s: *My Hustler* and *The Meatrack*. In a period in which society began forcefully questioning the “straightness” of any man who had sex with another man, the question became whether or not the hustler was actually a homosexual or “just a hustler.” The characters in the films demonstrate this struggle as they contemplate whether their work as a hustler is simply a professional choice or a more deep-seated personal identity. While both films display a vicarious fascination with sexuality and an idealization of gay masculinity, *My Hustler* presents the new sexualized homosexual as a titillating, naïve and a natural expression of an emergent gay identity. Alternatively, *The Meatrack* remains entrenched in the hustler as a tormented pseudo-homosexual paradigm that was prevalent in psychological research from the period.

### Populist Conceptualizations of the Hustler

From the turn of the twentieth century through the mid 1960s, homosexuals were regularly subjected to sodomy statutes that prohibited anal or oral-genital intercourse between consenting adults. Although these statutes were designed to prohibit sexual acts between different-sexed couples, they provided a convenient basis for the state control of homosexuals (Cain 1587). The sodomy laws were then used as justification for raids made on gays bars and gay male cruising areas. Police frequently targeted these areas to arrest gay men for solicitation, disorderly conduct, or loitering with the intent to commit the illegal act of sodomy (Gerassi 99). By definition, homosexuals were people who engaged in illicit activity. Bars lost their licenses for serving “known homosexuals” (Cooper et al. 313). Homosexuals were scapegoated for

foreign policy failures and blamed for State Department scandals (D. K. Johnson 95). Most religious institutions considered homosexuality a mortal sin and psychiatric associations considered it a mental disorder (Bernstein "Identities" 541).

Yet despite this emphasis on the illicit and illegal behavior of homosexual men, research on male prostitution in the post-World War Two period rarely acknowledged the homosexuality of its subjects. Male prostitutes who appeared in research were almost always heterosexual young men suffering from some neurotic, psychopathic or psychotic syndrome (MacNamara 204). For researchers, hustlers engaged in same-sex activity as a means to resolve childhood developmental deficiencies. Prostitution allowed the hustler to use clients as substitutes for expressing anger and resentment held toward their parents (Ginsburg 180). He was often motivated to engage in prostitution by his delinquent peer groups. Then, as a means of protecting his heterosexual identity, the young male prostitute would often threaten or enact violence upon his older homosexual clientele. In *Children of the Night* (1985), Weisburg argues that early research often stated that male prostitutes were heterosexual men who overcompensated with hyper-masculinity and violence. David Bimbi notes, however, that much of this research was unclear as to whether these hyper-masculine behaviors were part of the erotic allure of the street hustler (the "rough trade" hustler) or actual attempts by the hustler to distance himself from homosexuality (Bimbi 13). As early as the 1940s, certain segments of the homosexual population had begun to abandon the flamboyant costuming of the effeminate swish in favor of the masculine symbols associated with working-class men, the sport of bodybuilding, and biker culture. Yet because heterosexuality was considered to be *the* innate human sexual drive, it is unlikely that researchers, much less the larger populist society, would have recognized the importance of role play in the sexual transactions between the hustler and his client.

Nevertheless, because of the frequent depiction of overcompensated masculinity in the hustler and the widely held belief that homosexuality was a deficient adaptation that could appear as late as adulthood, the hustler figure that appeared most frequently in literature and film was one that was straight-identified. Moreover, providing that the hustler exaggerated his masculinity in order to distance himself from homosexuality, the literary and cinematic hustler was also often portrayed as “unhappy” or “ashamed.” This portrayal mirrored those of the homosexual who was viewed as emotionally unstable, prone to substance abuse and suicide. This disease model of homosexuality additionally suggested that the homosexual was also borderline schizophrenic and commonly a murderer (Lewes 129). Quite simply, it was impossible for there to be a “happy” or “well adjusted” homosexual and the literature and films of the period frequently capitalized on these depictions.

### The Hustler in Literature

The stereotype of the unhappy young homosexual was found in nearly all representational media of the post-World War Two period. In any number of these pre-gay liberation media, the homosexual was often shown to be a sick and sad young man struggling against feelings of alienation and guilt. Notable novels such as Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* (1948) or James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) explored themes of murder and rape and end in the self-destruction of the main character. These same depictions of the self-loathing homosexual were equally present in theatre such as Ruth & Augustus Goetz’s *The Immoralist* (1954) (adapted from André Gide’s novel) and Mart Crowley’s *Boys in the Band* (1968). Even pulp fiction works written for the vicarious pleasure of gay men depicted their main characters as being emotionally tormented by their attraction to other men and frequently concluded with the

characters' deaths. For example, André Tellier's *Twilight Men* features a young French aristocrat who travels to America after losing his lover tragically. He is wracked with guilt over the death of his lover but also with his guilt of being attracted to men in general. Arriving in Manhattan he hopes to drown his sorrows in an endless whirl of morphine, alcohol, and general debauchery. Of course there are also endless gay sex parties followed by more consumption. Near the end, Armand's father suddenly appears, determined to save his son from a life of terminal depravity. Armand flies into a rage and kills his father only to die soon afterward from a drug overdose (Stryker 100).

In late the 1950s through the mid-1960s, however, landmark court cases began to redefine the legal standards of obscenity and allowed a broad range of protection for published material. While the majority of pre-1960s gay pulp novels had attempted to depict gay sexuality discretely, the new rulings on obscenity allowed for many kinds of published material that had been previously considered unprintable, including gay erotica. Much of what was published after was unadulterated wish-fulfillment (Stryker 109). Then, with the growth of the vocal homophile movement, new voices began to emerge that complicated the previous literary texts by addressing themes which questioned identity-based political issues and boldly confronted homophobia and gay life. As a result, the hustler and his clients, female and drag prostitutes, and other sexual-subversives began to appear as principal characters.

The willingness of many of the growing gay community to accept the homosexual label transformed the literary hustler into a symbol for reaffirming one's own sexual identity. Indeed, for a brief time, the gay-identified hustler seemed to become the face of a burgeoning gay liberation movement. As homosexual communities began to negotiate a space within the larger heteronormative social environment, literary accounts of hustlers evolved from "a literature of

guilt and apology” into those of “political defiance and celebration of sexual difference” (Hall). The imaginary (and not so imaginary) troubled and closeted hustlers of Charles Gorham’s *McCaffery* (1961) and John Rechy’s *City of Night* (1963) were transformed into bright and college educated characters like Phil Andros in the novel *Stud* (1966). Phil pursued every form of sex without apology (Preston 13) and was valorized for his sexual expressiveness.

### The Hustler in Film

The legal redefinition of obscenity had little effect on the film industry, however. During this period, Hollywood films were still regulated by the Production Code. The Code placed numerous restrictions on sex, but was most emphatic on homosexuality: “Sex perversion or any inference to it is forbidden.” Even after the amendment of the Code in 1961 to allow for depictions of homosexuality and “other aberrations,” they were to be treated with “care, discretion and restraint” that kept with the “mores and values” of the time (Russo 121). This meant that homosexuality could be a film subject but it could not be condoned, valorized, or made sympathetic in any way. As an editorial in the *Motion Picture Herald* stated, “homosexuality does not represent correct standards of life by any stretch of the imagination” (quoted in Russo 122). The resulting narratives featured miserable and sexless homosexuals who were ashamed of their sexuality and were frequently killed or committed suicide. Films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), *A Taste of Honey* (1961), and *The Sergeant* (1968) featured pathetic, self-loathing, “misguided” characters who, in most cases, fell victim to “compensating moral values” and were killed off in the last reel. Even proto gay-positive films like *Victim* (1961) contained moments where the homosexual hero admitted that homosexual acts were morally wrong. Because *Victim* was typed as a film that condoned homosexuality, it was



released only to art house theaters without the MPAA's seal of approval. The lingering effect of the production code would continue to influence homosexual representations in Hollywood film until the mid-1980s. It was the gay independent and underground filmmaker who stepped in to fill the void.

Gay underground films were typically short, low budget film, made from the late 1940s to the late 1960s outside of the Hollywood system. They ranged from films filled with colorful obscure symbolism and hectic editing to grainy black and white films with no editing of their banal happenings. They were "underground" because they often depicted many taboo subjects (mainly sexual) that resulted in alternative modes of distribution and exhibition (Suárez 63). Frequently, screenings would be raided by police with the audience being arrested and the films confiscated. Yet because the films operated distinct from Hollywood production and distribution, underground cinema provided an opportunity for gays and lesbians to represent themselves in a way that Hollywood did not. Indeed, many of the best known underground filmmakers were gay and gay subject matter colored much their work (Dyer 109).

The earliest underground films took the filmmaker as their subjects. The films were carefully crafted ruminations that revealed and explored the dreams and inner-self of the filmmakers. Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947), for example, illustrated the dichotomous relationship between one's public and private identities. Gregory Markopoulos' *Twice a Man* (1962) suggested a Freudian examination of the roots of homosexual desire and identity. Then, as gay activism and high profile writers began to make homosexuality more visible, a new wave of gay underground and experimental films began to emerge in the mid-1960s. The troubled, contemplative young men of Anger's *Fireworks* or Markopoulos' *Twice a Man* gave way to the flamboyant drag queens and hyper-sexualized hustlers of Andy Warhol's superstars.

Unlike the films of the previous two decades which explored the inner consciousnesses of the filmmakers, these new films began to depict more exterior forms of gay culture (Dyer 136). The films became more focused on objectifying the male body and cleverly circumventing the restrictions placed on nudity and sexuality. During this period of underground cinema, little separated the underground “art” film from the commercial sexploitation film or the physique film<sup>2</sup>. While censors and moralists continued to restrict distribution, the scandalous allure of sex and nudity began to draw audiences in greater numbers. Along with the commercial successes of films like Warhol’s *My Hustler* and Anger’s *Scorpio Rising* (1963), exhibitors were made aware that there was an audience for theatrically exhibited gay films that went beyond the contemplative and meditative underground films of the past. The 1960s underground art films’ bold treatment of sexual themes generated massive publicity in magazines and literary periodicals, and thusly greater revenue, for the urban theaters exhibiting them. As a result, more theaters began to exhibit films with extensive male nudity and gay themes. Together with the wrestling sailors and leather-jacketed juvenile delinquents, the hustler became a significant figure in the gay soft-core and sexploitation films being made. With titles like *File X for Sex* (1967) or *Tricks of the Trade* (1968), audiences were promised the possibility of sex despite the lack of any explicitly appearing on the screen.

Yet while these new films were appearing in a moment of new cultural and sexual awakening, they continued to construct the homosexual as sick, tortured, or morally corrupt. *File X for Sex*, for instance, featured a young man, along with other sexual “perverts,” who sells

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<sup>2</sup> The physique film contained many hustler archetypes, like the lonely sailor or leather-clad bike boy, who performed for the vicarious pleasure of the male audiences viewing them. In fact, many of the performers were actual hustlers and their various sexual proclivities would be listed in the accompanying physique magazines. However, while the physique film shares some similarities with the hustler film, the physique film is beyond the scope of this project because the characters in these films were only pseudo-representations of homosexual fantasy and never actually identified themselves as hustlers.

his body to other men. Yet the film presents itself as an examination of abnormal sexuality, indicating that the sexualities contained within it are morally objectionable. *Tricks of the Trade* features a young Fred who is picked up by a married couple in New York's Greenwich Village. Unbeknown to Fred, his encounter is secretly photographed. When he refuses to yield to his blackmailer, he is beaten beyond recognition. In each of the cases, the hustler, just as his homosexual counterpart, is burdened by the guilt of having fallen from expected social and moral standards. He is presented as an aimless and lonely young man with no social ties and in a constant struggle with his own sexual identity. Even many of Andy Warhol's films, which passively objectified the male body, seem to fall victim to this depiction of the sad young man.

### *My Hustler*

Andy Warhol was arguably the most well-known figure associated with gay underground cinema. He had already made a name for himself as a graphic artist and illustrator before making hundreds of films between 1963 and 1967. Like much of his art, his films were ripe with irony, humor, and self-parody that forced the spectator to look at their world in critical and atypical ways. His films were typically concerned with taking the "tragic" and "offensive" characters of underground gay culture (swish and drag queens, hustlers, and openly gay men) and positioning them center screen where they could appropriate the glamour of Hollywood. He objectified his subjects, stripping them of their personal identities and inner realities. Yet at the same time, his films seemed to carefully avoid the suggestion that the objectification of the characters was his original purpose. In this way, his characters became unstable simulacra of the matinee idols they were meant to represent. They not only approximated the glamour and sexuality of Hollywood but also forced the viewer to examine the artificiality of Hollywood by

creating identities that were as inauthentic as possible. For Warhol, identity was not the illusion of self-knowledge, but rather a surface that could be transformed into a commodity and exploited.

Despite Warhol's disinterest in inner realities, his films regularly revealed them. This was true even of his more structured films. Warhol's filmic technique was deceptively simple. He positioned the camera in front of his subjects and filmed them with little or no direction in real-time as they performed such banal tasks as applying makeup, making coffee, drinking, eating, kissing, or sleeping. Frequently he would turn the camera on and walk away, allowing the "performers" free reign to act out or talk about whatever scenario came to mind. Yet by allowing this freedom from any scripted scenario, the films often became deeply personal. In both *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* (1964) and *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* (1964) "the camera simply gazes at the subjects as they pose, increasingly uncertain of what to do, embarrassed, turning away, even crying" (Dyer 150). Because the drama relied on the improvisation of the performers to forward the plot, personal experience frequently crept in.

This creeping in of personal experience was particularly so if the "performer" shared a real life identity with the character he or she was "performing." For instance, *My Hustler* centers on the fiscal relationship between Paul America and his catty "john" played by Ed Hood. The two are later joined by the nosy next door neighbor, Genevieve, and an older ex-hustler dubbed the "Sugar Plum Fairy." In real life, both the Sugar Plum Fairy, Joseph Campbell, and Paul America had worked briefly as hustlers before being "discovered" by Warhol (Comenas). Yet while Campbell identified as homosexual, America maintained a more polymorphic sexuality. Edie Sedgwick said of him: "[Paul] was everybody's lover...He was the personification of total sexual satisfaction...He was a wonderful creature. Anybody who wanted anything from Paul

could get it. He was there to satisfy. And he did” (quoted in Comenas). Through the course of the film, the inner struggles that each were facing in real life about their sexual identities came to the fore. These inner struggles were the same as those faced by many men engaged in reasoning out whether their attractions to other men signified opportunist gratification or homosexual identity. They were also struggles that rejected the effeminacy long attributed to homosexuality and attempts to maintain idealized masculine identification.

*My Hustler* is a “gay comedy of manners” (Stevenson 28) that revolves around the commodity status of its protagonist hustler, Paul America. As with many of Warhol’s films, the script for *My Hustler* consists of little more than a scenario dreamt up by Chuck Wein, a member of the Warhol’s Factory and sometimes credited with being the “actual” director of the film. At its release, the film was one of Warhol’s first truly commercially successful films, primarily because it was one of his first to contain a structure that actually resembled a plot. It had a respectable run in underground screening rooms before crossing over to the commercial exploitation market (Stevenson 28). Hustling was the general subject, but the details were left to the improvisations of the actors (Watson 233).

The film is divided into two sections. The first is located on a beach in Fire Island Pines and consists of a conversation between Ed, the catty john, and his two guests, Genevieve and Joe. The three quarrel on the verandah of Ed’s beach house over the “luscious number” away out on the beach. The “number” is Paul America, a hustler Ed coyly reveals he hired for the weekend using a dial-a-hustler service. Although very clumsy, the camera pans back and forth from the party on the veranda to Paul sunning himself on the beach, establishing distance between the party on the verandah and the object of desire on the beach. Given the space between the party and the hustler, the film establishes a distinction between personal identity and

perceived identity. Paul becomes not only an object of desire but also an object for examination. The audience is given no reference to Paul's personal identity, he is only object, yet he is provided an identity by the party on the veranda. The topic of conversation may be about the object of desire on the beach, but the content of the conversation projects onto Paul traits frequently associated to the homosexual by the psychological and religious establishments.

For most of society there was little differentiating the hustler from the male homosexual in the 1960s. Aside from the occasional news report or magazine article, the hustler was the most visible form of homosexuality. As such, public perceptions of homosexuality oscillated between homosexuality as a disease and homosexuality as a moral corruption. This disease model carried into the collective social consciousness through frequent feature articles appearing in national mainstream magazines that warned against the problem of homosexuality (Bieber; David; Lester, among others). His traits were marked by a passive and timid nature, a preoccupation with his own appearance, sadomasochism, self-imposed alienation, effeminacy, impaired awareness of emotions, and low self-esteem (Lewes 129). In the same respect, homosexuality was often associated with a form of addiction. In these instances, it was thought a "normal" heterosexual male would have his first homosexual experience during a period when his moral resistance was very low, such as being drunk or being in prison. Then, having derived pleasure from the act, he would form a dependence on the sensation, not unlike alcoholism (Bryce "V" 18). With his musings on the "luscious number" on the beach, Ed Hood appears to acknowledge these perceptions and draws attention to them. Hood was a literary intellectual who had pursued a doctorate in literature from Harvard and had occupied an editorial position at the literary magazine *Shenandoah* before joining Warhol's Factory. He was also reported to be a frequent recipient of the paid affections of hustlers (Polito). His experience, and sharp wit,

allowed him to make critical observations about the nature of Paul and Sugar Plum Fairy that ironically deconstructs societal proscriptions of homosexuality.

Ed, Genevieve, and Joe are each clearly interested in Paul as they eye him with salacious attention. A bet is made that the two guests cannot seduce the hustler from his rightful “owner” thus establishing the “plot.” However, in the conversation leading to the wager, between fawnings and declarations of desire for the hustler on the beach, the audience is informed by Ed that appearance is the primary concern of a hustler. Ed says, “All they do is sun and preen.” While in this instance Ed is referring directly to Paul (and hustlers in general) sunning himself on the beach, the “they” of his statement can also be understood to mean homosexuals. It is then implied that soon they, the hustler and homosexual, start dying their hair and letting it grow until finally they end up wearing dresses. This follows directly the observation by the populist and psychological community that homosexuals were preoccupied with their appearance because of their narcissistic attraction to other men. The irony here is that Ed is most obviously a homosexual, yet he does not ascribe to any of the traits just applied to Paul. Ed is balding and overweight. He is wearing a badly tattered seersucker robe and appears to have little concern with his appearance. His comments highlight the absurdity of the traits associated with homosexuality and prove them to be incorrect.

Ed’s observation of the importance of appearance to hustlers, however, is followed by Genevieve’s complaint that Ed, a homosexual, always manages to pervert them somehow. Again, “them” is directly referring to hustlers, yet common perception of homosexuality was that it was an acquired affliction, usually through the recruitment by other homosexuals. Homosexuals were seen to “affect society through their attempts to influence children toward a sexually-deviant way of life,” manifested by the adult seduction of children or through children

seducing other children (Bryce "I" 31). Seduction, however, was not limited to children. Priests and psychologists engaged in reparative therapy of homosexuals were often warned not work alone for fear of also becoming infected (Bryce "V" 19; Lewes 137) and numerous testimonials recount young men being "initiated" by faculty members at "liberal" universities (Lester 115; Hadden 114; "Story of a Tragic Marriage" 42; Dolby 29). In suggesting that Ed "perverts" the innately heterosexual hustler, Genevieve is reinforcing Paul's heterosexuality and suggesting that he only "becomes" homosexual through his involvement with Ed. The added irony is that Ed is not only a homosexual, but also a member of the "liberal" academic community thought to corrupt unsuspecting young students and has little contact with Paul aside from being an observer from a distant veranda.

Paradoxically, Ed reinforces the theory of acquired psychopathology by retorting that Genevieve is actually attracted to Paul's "psychological condition" and not his physicality. This pronouncement echoes the era's medical construction of homosexuality as a neurotic disease (Bergler 15). According to this disease model, male homosexuality resulted from arrested childhood development in which the homosexual was unable to sublimate his identification with the mother which left him with feelings of inferiority and guilt. By this very definition then, even if Paul were not forced to "live in falsehood and perjury" (Proust 37), he would still be miserable and unstable. By being attracted to Paul's "condition" rather than his appearance, Genevieve displays a view closely associated with reparative theorists from the era. Being that she is a woman, she wagers that she can seduce Paul away from Ed, that she can "cure" him of his homosexual tendencies. The sequence ends with Genevieve and Paul on the distant beach as she unsuccessfully attempts to rehabilitate the sunning "homosexual."



While the first half of the film represents the distinction between personal and perceived identity, the second half of the film turns inward and reveals many of the uncertainties that come with the claiming of a homosexual identity. The second reel of the film returns to Warhol's characteristic static and unflinching camera as Joe elaborately and mercilessly attempts to cruise Paul. The camera frames Joe and Paul in the beach house bathroom as each showers, shaves, urinates, and preens in front of the other and the mirror wrapped only in a towel. The only direction given to the two "actors" was to read the long list of brand names found in the medicine cabinet (Watson 235). Owing that the film can be seen as a send up of consumer capitalism, the reading off of branded products is a joke that links the hustling to consumerism. By reading off a list of the personal care items found in a bathroom medicine cabinet along with the endless preening, however, the film recalls the comments uttered by Ed in the first half that appearance is of great significance to the hustler (homosexual). The demonstration of that vanity only serves to underscore the narcissism felt to be inherent to the homosexual's psychological makeup. Yet at the same time, the display of perceived narcissistic tendency is contrasted by the personal feelings of the homosexual through the interaction between the younger hustler, Paul, and the older hustler, Joe.

Like many of the cinematic hustlers that would follow, Paul actively clings to a heterosexual self-identification. The conversation between Paul and Joe is seemingly only about hustling as a profession. Paul is interested in hustling because it is something he "just might do." Yet read in the context of homosexual identification, his interest also indicates anxiety with claiming that identification. Joe, older and more experienced, is a voice of authority positioned to answer both Paul's and the audience's questions. Joe states that hustling is "just like olives, you get accustomed to it." While this statement can suggest the widely held belief that

homosexuality is an addiction not unlike alcoholism, it also indicates that fully realizing a homosexual identity is a process.

It is with Paul's next question, however, that reality impedes upon the diegesis collapsing fiction and actuality into a single statement of guilt. Paul asks "Are you happy?" Joe responds, "I guess if I'd be happier doing something else, I'd do it." While prior to Paul's question Joe had been intensely interested with physically connecting with Paul, he now distances himself by becoming occupied with the dirt under his finger nails. He quickly breaks the fourth wall by directly acknowledging the camera's presence with a brief look into the mirror. He then shamefully averts his eyes as he moves behind the door to avoid the gaze of the camera altogether. Joe's response is one of shame and guilt. He is literally the naked, suffering young fallen angel that arises from the conflation of "sex" with "sin" and an inability to conform to specific hegemonic norms.

While the film can be perceived as being about the commodity of sex or about the celebration of homosexual desire through the purchase of a young hustler, with Paul's simple question and Joe's subsequent reaction, the film quietly suggests that homosexual desire and identity are still items to be ashamed of. And while neither of the two hustlers' lives ends in tragedy, they still reveal the emotional torment of their attraction to other men. This display of torment follows closely with the mainstream literature and Hollywood film in which the homosexual male is always ashamed of his sexual identity. It also displays the actual lived experiences of many gay men from the period who were struggling with a homosexual self-identification. Joe claimed a homosexual identity in real life and his sudden abandonment of interest in Paul suggests it is an identity that he was not fully comfortable with. Paul, on the other hand, was still naïve to the problems that accompany a homosexual self-identity and his

questions suggest a process through which he was attempting to understand his sexual attraction to other men. What had been an ironic critique of societal perceptions of homosexuality in the first half of the film gives way to a revelation of personal struggle with homosexual identification. This struggle includes not only the resistance to the many arbitrary characteristics meant to identify homosexuality, but also the difficulty of negotiating an identity that the medical and religious communities labeled as “unstable” and “unhappy.”

### *The Meatrack*

Like *My Hustler*, *The Meatrack* is an odd hybrid of both the underground art film and the exploitation film. It combines drawn out soft-core sex sequences with artfully rendered meditative flashbacks. Scattered throughout is plentiful gratuitous nudity. The director was a young gay film student and theatre manager from San Francisco who is sometimes credited as Richard Stockton, other times Mike Thomas (Stevenson 28). The plot is minimal and amounts to little more than a series of loosely connected vignettes tracing J.C.’s sexual encounters in the bars, baths, and theatre balconies of San Francisco. Amid these sexual encounters are soft-focus flashbacks that recall J.C.’s unhappy childhood, broken home, and mother. While the film appears to objectify the body of J.C. as a model of idealized gay masculinity for a predominately gay viewing audience, the frequent use of flashbacks tends to complicate this depiction by providing a window into J.C.’s psyche. The flashbacks seem to indicate an internal struggle in which J.C. struggles against his childhood memories, which in turn, influences the decisions he makes in life. The flashbacks, which are typically superimposed over only his homosexual sexual conquests, give the impression that J.C. is resisting any overtly homosexual feelings in an attempt to reassert a more normative heterosexuality. As a result, the film provides a window

into the cultural experiences of men who were attracted to other men in a period when the very act of engaging in same-sex relations designated a “homosexual” identity.

On the surface, J.C. is portrayed as a pseudo-homosexual, or rather, not actually a true homosexual. His clientele are both men and women and toward the end of the film he becomes romantically involved with a young girl, Jean. He tends to show little emotion or involvement with any of his male clientele, only performing the role he is paid for. In contrast, his sexual encounters with women seem to be financially uncompensated, indicating that his “natural” heterosexual orientation is only deviated from when monetary exchange is involved. Yet his involvements with women seem to be purely opportunistic and circumstantial. In his first sexual encounter with a woman, J.C. is initially solicited as a hired hand and only second as a sexual partner. With his next encounter, J.C. rescues Jean from being raped by a predatory photographer in the adjacent apartment. Yet when J.C. is not hustling for cash or bedding lonely women, he is frequently to be found haunting a gay bar, bath house, or theater balcony. Despite the film’s suggestion that J.C. is not actually a homosexual, the positioning of him within these gay spaces seems to indicate that this is indeed where he finds the most identification. J.C. attempts to avoid the onus of a homosexual identity by sleeping with women, but it is the homosexual environs that he most readily inhabits.

The many flashbacks of the film seem to recall the period’s predominant psychological model of homosexuality. Many researchers, as well as many homosexuals themselves, believed that male homosexuality was the result of an arrested emotional development brought about by parents who failed to demonstrate suitable gender assignments. The mother was frequently seen to be overbearing, overly protective, and possessive of her son, which in turn would prevent him from developing masculine behavior appropriate to boys. The father was one who spent little

time with his son or was detached or demasculinizing in one way or another (Bieber 104). J.C.'s numerous flashbacks dramatize this model by portraying J.C.'s father as ineffectual against the manipulative control asserted by J.C.'s domineering mother. Yet the flashbacks also tend to code J.C. as homosexual by emphasizing his emotional sensitivity, his love of Hollywood b-movies, and his choice of playmates. In one such case, a young J.C. is laying on the on the floor with his cat. His mother says, "I don't know what's ailin' that kid. It's not natural. He's got no friends: always alone with that cat." Since cats are typically associated with femininity as opposed to a dog's masculinity, the use of the cat as an "unnatural" pet for a young boy indicates an inherent effeminacy to J.C.'s character. Additionally, the flashbacks reveal J.C.'s childhood love of b-horror films—he sees the films multiple times—and appears to recall a practice of gay camp identification. The implication is that J.C. is indeed homosexual despite his repeated attempts to thwart such an identification.

The film opens with J.C. hitchhiking on an empty highway. He is picked up by a middle aged homosexual which leads to one encounter after another (a bored housewife, an aging drag queen, a young man in a bar) until J.C. cruises the attractive Ken in a local bathhouse. For the most part, the film simply objectifies J.C. with long low-angle takes that scan his naked body, providing the scandalous allure inherent to the sexploitation film. It is with Ken, however, that J.C. delivers his first lines that amount to anything other than what seem to be monosyllabic utterances. It is also with Ken that the struggle facing many men in the era with claiming a homosexual identity appears. Ken indicates that he and J.C. have been involved for a number of weeks. Ken says that he has fallen in love with J.C. and would like their relationship to develop beyond the occasional sexual rendezvous in J.C.'s rented hotel room. J.C. rebuffs Ken stating that he has the urge to "move on again." The paradox is that while J.C. is telling Ken to leave

and never return, J.C. firmly grasps Ken's arm with one hand and gently traces Ken's cheek with the other. This appears to signify that Ken's feelings are actually reciprocated. By dramatizing J.C.'s contradictory behavior, the film suggests an uncertainty to J.C.'s homosexual feelings which create a need in him to reclaim his heterosexuality, or "move on." Reinforcing this confused uncertainty, the two then copulate in a final good-bye. J.C. attempts to refuse his attraction to Ken by instructing him to leave yet is unable to deny his desire for Ken and surrenders to it.

Superimposed over the love making is a soft-focus flashback of J.C.'s mother in which she ruminates about how she should have listened to her mother and not married for love. This particular flashback seems oddly placed if the audience is meant to believe J.C. does not reciprocate Ken's feelings. However within the context of J.C.'s internal struggle, the flashback serves to reinforce the reasons for which J.C. feels he must not allow his relationship with Ken to continue. Ostensibly, the mother's monolog is about obtaining and keeping money at all costs. While this could be read as a motivator for J.C.'s involvement in prostitution, by contrasting the need for money and success at any cost with the luxury of marrying for love, it suggests that there is a natural order to relationships and marriage. This natural order is interrupted when we give into our own, principally romantic, selfish desires. For her, the natural arrangement is the bourgeois two parent nuclear family devoid of love but conforming to tradition and wealth. By superimposing this image over the lovemaking of J.C. and Ken, the film compares her remorse to that of J.C.'s. Love will not make him happy, the American pursuit of wealth and the traditional family will.

Yet the interplay between the lovemaking and the flashback also appears to indicate a psychological neurosis that J.C. is attempting to overcome. J.C.'s refusal to accept Ken's as a

romantic partner, coupled with J.C.'s mother's musings over a natural order to love, seems to suggest a distinction between heterosexuality as a "normal" sexual identity and homosexuality as an aberrant and undesired identity. This distinction follows closely the assertion by researchers that homosexuality was a recuperative attempt by human beings to achieve sexual pleasure when the "normal" heterosexual outlets proved too threatening (Bayer 29). Researchers from the period, such as Edmund Bergler, Albert Ellis, and Charles Socarides, frequently tried to reinforce homosexuality as a psychopathology. Ellis observed that "fixed homosexuals in our society are almost invariably neurotic or psychotic... therefore, no so-called normal group of homosexuals is to be found anywhere" (Ellis 242). By capitulating to his sexual desires, J.C. would seemingly fall into this category. By demonstrating J.C.'s internal conflict with this proposal, the film recalls the image of the conflicted, or sad young man common to the era.

However, in spite of the fact that researchers felt that homosexuality was not a normal display of human sexuality, many felt that homosexuality could be cured through aggressive treatment. Bergler stated that "although this change may be more easily accomplished by some than by others, in our judgment a heterosexual shift is a possibility for all homosexuals who are strongly motivated to change" (Bergler 301). And while J.C. does not seek professional assistance in his desire to rid himself of homosexual feelings, he does make an attempt to conform to the ideal "natural arrangement" suggested by his mother's monolog. Just like the many homosexuals who voluntarily sought psychoanalytic treatment for their same-sex feelings throughout the 1940s and 1960s (Drescher 26), J.C. attempts to reassert his heterosexuality by becoming involved with a woman.

After J.C.'s saves Jean from her rapist photographer, the two enter into a whirl-wind romance that ends with a plan to elope. The relationship between J.C. and Jean seems trivial and

forced however. With pecks on the forehead and talk of Saturday matinees, the pre-coital conversation and affection between J.C. and Jean more closely resemble a sibling bond rather than a romantic one. Consequently, the sex scenes between J.C. and Jean are brief and out of focus. The same holds true for the only other female encounter in the film, which is also excessively brief and hazy. Where the lovemaking with Ken had been in sharp focus and lengthy, the sex with Jean tends to resemble the many flashbacks of J.C.'s troubled childhood. If the soft focus of J.C.'s childhood flashbacks can be read as his internal struggle with his troubled past, then it is also possible that the lack of focus in the heterosexual sexual encounters also represents something troubling to him. In other words, the homosexual identity that he is waging against is already clearly defined whereas the heterosexual identity he is attempting to appropriate is artificial and undefined. Additionally, the intercourse with Jean seems mechanically clumsy. It is made even more so with the inclusion of two blackmailing drag queens who literally force J.C. and Jean to have sex by threatening them with a knife. In this way, the film presents the sex between J.C. and Jean as unnatural. It only occurs through the intervention of an outside controlling force.

J.C. is ultimately unable to maintain this idealized relationship. Using his and Jean's planned elopement as an excuse, he returns to the street in search of money. Yet this return to the street also signifies a return to a pattern of behavior that is most natural to him. As represented by the contrast between homo and heterosexual encounters, J.C. seeks out a sexuality that is clear, or in focus, to him. J.C. picks up a tool-box toting masochist and takes him back to his hotel room. Jane, returning early from an afternoon matinee, interrupts J.C. having sex with the man. She immediately flees, runs into traffic, and is struck and presumably killed by a car. Heartbroken, or perhaps horrorstricken that his plans to conform to a "natural" sexuality have



disintegrated, J.C. returns to a space he feels most comfortable: a movie theatre balcony filled with homosexual men. In a convoluted twist reminiscent of the *Living Dead* movies, the zombie-like homosexuals in the theater swarm J.C.—scuffling and arms out-stretched—symbolically pulling J.C. back into their world of sexual depravity, or rather symbolically suggesting that actualized self-identity is inescapable.

Scattered throughout the film, the era's psychological and religious proscriptions against homosexuality appear frequently on the surface of many of the scenes. However these obvious artifacts only underscore the self loathing of J.C. as he struggles to remain free of any definitive homosexual self identity. One of J.C.'s johns, an aging drag queen, contemplates the oxymoronic use of "gay" as an identity because to him being so is anything but gay. Likewise, Jean expresses her utter dislike of homosexuals and describes the hustlers she remembers seeing as a child as lonely creatures with soulless eyes while J.C. meekly defends them. Finally, a bible waving preacher accosts J.C. as he flees the "zombie" homosexuals of the theatre with accusations of sin, sinner, damnation, and hellfire. Ironically, J.C.'s name suggests a possible reference to Jesus Christ and the castigations of the preacher possibly recall those endured by an isolated, naked, and suffering Christ.

The appearance of the bible thumping preacher seems more to recognize the increased intolerance of homosexuals by the religious community however. From the end of World War Two through the early 1960s, American society had begun to shift further and further to the right due to the perceived threat of Godless Communism. As a result, church membership grew from forty-nine percent to sixty-five percent of the population from 1940 to 1970 (Aiello). As homophile groups, such as the Mattechine Society, organized in opposition to the government purges and frequent raids on homosexual meeting places, Christians were called to restore old

Christian “virtues.” Christian fundamentalists thought that moral principles were eroding (Reid) and the homosexual, in trying to abolish restrictions on homosexual practices between consenting adults, was seen to be demanding a change in God’s moral standards. Sexual relations between members of the same sex, regardless of consent, “would make family life a farce; it would destroy familial responsibilities and, in turn, would corrupt the community” (Bryce "I" 31). The family was the “cornerstone of the covenant-community,” as well as the larger society. Heterosexuality was considered to be “the underlying structure of created humanness” (Herberg 1007), the normative pattern.

Yet the inclusion of the preacher coupled with J.C.’s mental break seems to underscore the torment being suffered by J.C.’s inability to rid himself of homosexual feelings. Intercut with the preacher’s tirade against J.C. are brief moments—only a couple frames each—of J.C. in bed and having sex with Ken. The agony being produced in J.C. by the preacher is not caused by having lost Jean, nor is it caused by the swarm of possible sexual encounters suggested by the zombie homosexuals. The agony is having developed feelings for Ken. The film suggests that he is tormented by his attraction to other men when that attraction does not include a paid transaction. It also suggests a parallel to the pain being suffered by many men of the period who were also unable to reconcile their unwanted homosexual desires and were continuously accosted by governmental, psychological, and religious institutions. The film closes where it began without any clear resolution to J.C.’s torment. J.C. is hitchhiking along an empty highway and an older homosexual picks him up.

## Conclusion

As the 1960s came to a close, hard-core porn began to appear that was dramatically

ambitious like the underground art film yet fulfilled its promise to portray explicit sex (Stevenson 28). This resulted in the commercial doom for soft-core art films like *My Hustler* and *The Meatrack* whose most potent draw had been their scandalous allure. As a result fewer and fewer underground art films masquerading as sex films were produced and the cinematic hustler was temporarily forgotten. Instead, gay filmmakers began to record their community in informational documentaries. The Stonewall Riots and the growing strength of the homosexual community had created a need to understand homosexual history and the homosexual's place within the larger society. Yet this absence of gay representation allowed for more conservatively influenced depictions of the hustler to emerge. In the hands of an increasing evangelical Christian movement and an ever more right leaning society, the focus began to shift away from objectifying the body of the hustler and onto the motives of his clientele. And while the sexually objectified cinematic hustler of the 1960s had been frequently characterized as a young man who was either tormented by his sexuality or had yet to fully discover it, by the 1970s he became a troubled runaway who was exploited by older homosexual men. He became an incontestably heterosexual fallen angel while the homosexual male became a predatory and murderous monster.

## CHAPTER 3

### RUNAWAY ANGELS AND DANGEROUS HOMOSEXUALS: ANTI-GAY BACKLASH AND REACTIONARY CINEMA

In the early 1970s, the scandalous allure of the soft-core art film had given way to the more graphic hard-core pornography that emerged in the late 1960s, effectively removing the need for artful and suggestive depictions of homosexual sexuality. As a result, gay underground filmmakers momentarily lost interest in the hustler. Instead, queer filmmakers of the new gay liberation moment began to produce films that “unearth[ed] historic queer communities that had been formerly overlooked” (Benshoff and Griffin 154). Gay avant-garde cinema evolved from the short contemplative and metaphoric pieces into longer feature-length midnight movies and documentaries that allowed for more traditional distribution practices (159). Male prostitution, however, was mostly absent from these films.

However, despite the relative absence of the hustler in queerly produced films, more mainstream voices began to appropriate the image of the hustler and bring him directly into the living rooms of “respectable” Middle America through made-for-television dramas in order to address a growing concern toward runaway youth and supposed homosexual recruitment. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, runaway behavior among a perceived white middle-class youth population was seeing a dramatic increase. With this increase in runaway behavior grew public concern and sympathy toward the street hustler who had been transformed to into a troubled and victimized child by an increasingly powerful evangelical Christian movement. As anti-gay ideologies began to dominate media representations of prostitution and homosexuality, the hustler film suddenly became more reactionary. Because of this, and because of his perceived middle-class status, the cinematic hustler was transformed into a child-like “fallen angel”

deserving of sympathy and support. For the mainstream viewing audiences, the hustler became an ingénue and the homosexual a dangerous predator capable of moral corruptibility and murder.

This chapter documents this cultural shift as it examines the made-for-television film *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* (1977) and the independently produced film *Forty Deuce* (1982). Because *Alexander* was aired on broadcast television as a NBC movie of the week, it refrained from overly sensational sexual depictions but succeeded in demonizing the homosexual nonetheless. Despite half-hearted attempts to defuse negative homosexual stereotypes, the film engages in the same arguments used by sociological researchers of the period who constructed the hustler as irrefutably heterosexual. By maintaining its central hustler character as heterosexual, the film plays into the fears promulgated by the anti-gay establishment that warned of the corruption of innocent middle-class youth by older homosexual men. *Forty Deuce* on the other hand, is harsh depiction of street hustlers/pimps in New York City and makes no pretense of softening its disdain toward “predatory” homosexuals. The film centers on a heroin addicted hustler who tries to get drug money by prostituting the body of a dead runaway boy. The overtly gay hustler/pimps of this film are made into despicable and unsympathetic characters. The film exemplifies the homosexual as victimizer dynamic that defined the era.

#### A New Prostitute Classification: The Runaway

With the rise of the homophile movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the homosexual community vigorously tried to assert its new voice despite social conventions that continued to construct homosexuality as abnormal. The spectacle and publicity provided by the Stonewall Riots in 1969 prompted more and more individuals to step forward and identify themselves as gay or lesbian in the hope of increasing visibility and respectability. For activists

in the gay community, acceptance of homosexuality as a natural variant of human sexuality and the ability of homosexuals to live openly without fear of punishment was paramount. As such, the new gay liberation movement began to focus its attention on the American Psychological Association (APA) who had long rejected the notion of inherent homosexuality. In 1973, the efforts of these activists culminated in the removal of homosexuality from the APA's diagnostic nomenclature (Morgan and Nerison 137).

The battle for the reclassification of homosexuality within the psychological and psychiatric communities, however, was accompanied by an increased scrutiny of traditional modes of gender expression and gender performance. The women's movement played an important role in the cultural context of the early 1970s. By critiquing the rigid, traditional gender roles, the women's movement helped create a socio-political climate in which more positive views of homosexuality could thrive (Morgan and Nerison 136). While feminism unquestionably focused more attention on the issue of lesbianism, the questioning of gender identities significantly altered the roles in which gay men could choose to perform, resulting in often highly exaggerated performances of masculinity. This shift in the gendered norms made it possible for tough looking prostitutes to move from the street corner into the gay bar scene. Where once hustlers would have been ejected because they were too easily identifiable because of their hyper-masculine performances, the increased masculinization of the male gay culture made the bars a more suitable, and safer, venue for hustlers of drinking age (Humphreys 77). This migration and integration of the older male prostitute into the bar scene, however, began to change the dynamic of the street hustler scene. On the streets, the younger hustler no longer fit the description of young "tough" that had characterized him in the past. The sociological and

popular descriptions of the “delinquent” hustler were replaced with a new social category: the runaway.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a dramatic increase in runaway behavior (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 39). This was due in part to fallout from a counter culture of the 1960s whose participants took to the road seeking adventure and new experiences. Yet because of the increased visibility of runaway youth, depictions of the street prostitute began to reflect this new social reality. In his semi-autobiographic *Sexual Outlaw* (1977), John Rechy described the new hustler as a prostitute before his boyhood had played out, “some still exhibiting the vestiges of innocence, ... an increasing breed of the young, with no options but the street” (Rechy 154). Journalists and academic researchers tended to agree with him. Journalist Robin Lloyd reported in *For Money or Love: Boy Prostitution in America* that in fact most street hustlers were runaways (Lloyd 212). Despite finding that prostitutes varied from delinquent school dropouts to well-educated college students, academic studies generally concluded that the majority of full time hustlers were runaways (Allen 418). However, despite ages ranging well into the late twenties, the popular press focused almost exclusively on only those prostitutes who were twelve, thirteen, and fourteen-years-old (Stevens; "Boy Sex Rings"; Kessler).

This new group of runaway hustlers differed from previous depictions in significant ways. Most notably, these new runaways were no longer characterized as delinquents, but instead were described as coming from white, middle-class families (Anson 216). While the prior generations of hustlers were treated as delinquents in need of either imprisonment or psychological control, in the 1970s they were viewed in more sympathetic terms. As this new representation continued to grow, and the perceived threat to the white middle-class intensified, public concern and support began to increase. Social service agencies were quickly established

to assist runaway youth and remove them from the street. Programs, such as Peace of Mind, established nationwide hotlines to provide a “desperately needed communications link between youngsters on the run and their antagonized families” (Keiffer 85). Others provided shelter and offered crisis-intervention and counseling (Saling 76). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created the Division of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program after the enactment of the Runaway Youth Act of 1974. The purpose of the act was to provide grants to communities and nonprofit organizations to develop facilities for dealing with the immediate needs of runaways (Weisberg 4). Even the acknowledgement of an increase in drug use among young street prostitutes did not suppress this new concern for the runaway, indeed it only served to heighten the anxiety ascribed to the runaway (Hansen, Forester and Bird 12). Street hustlers were runaways, and thus, children in need of assistance.

The new heightened social status of the young male prostitute made him an effective political tool against the “radical homosexual agenda.” This new discourse on the teenage runaway transformed him into socially needy “victim” and relied on depictions of worst-case scenarios to generate sympathy and mobilize public support. The young prostitute was an “angel” by both secular and ecclesiastical definitions: a child, an innocent, the beloved of God. As such, the disproportionate concern attributed to the bourgeois status of the runaway allowed the focus to shift from the victim onto the victimizer. Movements such as “Save Our Children” launched by Anita Bryant recast the homosexual as a predatory child molester. By underscoring the prostitution of the runaway, these movements were able to emphasize the hustler as an innocent victim of homosexual “recruitment.” No longer was the male prostitute assumed to be already essentially homosexual, rather he was only *at risk* for being seduced into homosexuality. Because he was “seduced,” he was allowed to retain his innocence rather than be automatically



condemned. Given the middle-class status in which the male prostitute was now cast, the term “prostitute” was no longer determinative of anything other than innocent “victim” (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 43). It is not surprising, then, that filmic depictions of the male prostitute were: first, minors from “respectable” middle-class homes (or in the least from areas that connote a middle-class family), second, exploited by an older homosexual, and lastly prostitutes.

Ironically, the depictions of young male runaway prostitutes in popular society as white middle-class victims, tended to ignore the reasons why many may ran in the first place (such as family abuse, homosexuality, sexism, racism) (Brock 108). Prostitution was viewed as the primary problem facing street youth rather than being an adaptation to other problems confronted by the hustler. The difficulties these “children” faced were in terms of bourgeois family values and were argued by social conservatives to “demonstrate a desperate *need* for family life, for structure in their environment, and for the kind of support found in a faith or in some kind of intellectual discipline” (emphasis in the original; Sereny 250). Overemphasizing the involvement of exploitative adults in the introduction of runaways to street prostitution, the threat to these children came from an outside “other” and not from problems within the family structure.

#### *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn*

Just as actual street hustlers were transformed from the “delinquent” to the “bourgeois child” in the mind of the public, the protagonist in *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* was transformed on the television. *Alexander* was the sequel to NBC’s made-for-television drama *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* (1976), a film about a fifteen-year-old runaway girl who escapes to the streets of L.A. and away from her alcoholic mother. Once in L.A., she befriends

and moves in with a young hustler named Alex. The film chronicles her experience in L.A. as a desperate runaway who makes the decision to turn to prostitution in order to survive. As is common with many depictions of the fallen woman, Dawn takes an active role in her own downfall. The following year, *Alexander*, explored street life from Alex's perspective, yet all responsibility is removed from Alex's involvement in prostitution. Echoing the prevailing sociological model of young male prostitution, Alex is presented as a young middle-class heterosexual boy who is unwittingly lured into prostitution by unscrupulous older men. He is portrayed as having little control over the events that befall him. His lack of responsibility in his own downfall and the threat to his heterosexuality would have served as a point of identification with middle-class viewing audiences anxious over the involvement of homosexual men in the corruption of runaway boys and the breakdown of the traditional family.

The emphasis the film places on Alex's "corruption" mirrored the narrative of risk created in the mind of society that implicitly supported the reestablishment of the "traditional" family unit (Kaye "Male Prostitution" 42). His involvement in prostitution would have acted as a representation of the moral breakdown and threat to family thought by Evangelicals to be caused by the sexual "permissiveness" of prior decades. Inflation, threats to U.S. global power, and a series of "church versus the state" challenges brought before the Supreme Court, had caused a dramatic resurgence in Christian right-wing populism and refocusing of political efforts on the "moral confusion of contemporary America" (Ahlstrom 1100). As a consequence, the homosexual and his sexual liberalism became a scapegoat for economic uncertainty and social change. The young street hustler became a sympathetic symbol that emphasized the cost of tolerance toward homosexuals. A nationwide backlash against "gay rights" began to gain momentum because of fears that the rights laws "would give homosexuals free rein to espouse

their views in jobs that bring them in contact with children” (“Why Tide Is Turning” 29). As such, media representations of homosexual men were often unflattering and focused on the most negative aspects of homosexual identity.

When *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* and *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* appeared on prime-time television, the only other television depictions of homosexuality had been a handful network news reports, one made-for-television movie, and several one-shot episodes on primetime television programs. Many of these, primarily police dramas, constructed the homosexual as a murderous monster. Yet even the more liberal sitcoms, such as *All in the Family* (1971-79), *Rhoda* (1974-78), or *Maude* (1972-78), were lambasted by the gay community as being overly homophobic. In 1972, *That Certain Summer* was the first television film to take a mature and non-remonstrative approach to the subject of homosexuality, yet the directors still seemed compelled to include short self-deprecating speeches describing gay life as something of a sickness. While *Dawn* and *Alexander* clearly attempted to take a politically neutral stance on the subject of homosexuality by making Alex’s social worker and champion a homosexual, other gay characters in the films are enmeshed in the socio-political rubric of the unhappy and unstable homosexual. In a largely unnecessary scene from *Alexander*, a group of homosexual men challenge the psychological models of homosexual identity formation. The irony of the scene is that while these men are rejecting the psychological model of homosexuality, they are doing so within the context of therapy. Through their self-deprecating and melancholic dialogue, the film attempts to articulate that most homosexuals are not to be feared but rather pitied for their miserable existences.

Despite this attempt to neutralize the image of the homosexual, the film seems to continually insist on Alex’s heterosexuality. The film presents the problem of his prostitution

not as a condition of homosexual identity but rather as a consequence of running away and homosexual recruitment. Alex is not a deviant homosexual but rather a young boy put upon by the breakdown of society's morals. This is a markedly different depiction than the one that appeared in *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway*. In *Dawn*, Alex's sexuality had remained suspect until the third act. The audience was fully aware that Alex was a male prostitute because he was shown being picked up by a male john. No other references were made of his sexual preference or desires, however, and for the most part, his relationship with Dawn was portrayed as purely non-sexual. Yet when he is given his own narrative, a background is revealed that removes the specter of homosexual identity that was present in *Dawn*. In *Alexander*, Alex is in love with Dawn and the two plan to marry. To make him more sympathetic, and to draw upon the anxieties felt by a viewing audience captivated the problems facing runaway youth, Alex is revealed to be a sixteen-year-old middle-class Christian child.

*Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* continues where *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* concluded. In *Dawn*, Alex is stabbed by Dawn's Pimp, Swan, having only moments before rescued her from Swan's brothel. The ensuing struggle between Alex and Swan rouses the attention of a passing police officer. The officer frightens Swan away, but Alex is left injured and unconscious in the alleyway. *Alexander* begins with a brief recap of the last moments of *Dawn* and Alex being transported to the hospital. Once in the safety of the hospital room and with Dawn at his bedside, the first act becomes an extended flashback sequence that reveals the circumstance that led to Alex becoming a hustler on the streets of Hollywood.

In the first scene of the flashback, Alex is shown sketching the family barn. Next, Alex's father, complaining that Alex is not contributing his fair share to the household chores, tells Alex to pack his bags and leave. The film does not make it clear why Alex is kicked out of his home.

It could be because of a presumed effeminacy associated with Alex's artistic ability. It is also possible that Alex's father was simply exhausted with Alex's apparent laziness. Yet with the inclusion of Alex's doting mother who reluctantly helps Alex pack, the film introduces the possibility of Alex's homosexuality which had not been explicitly explored in *Dawn*. Like the prevailing psychological model of homosexual development which relied on the assumption of an overly protective and possessive mother and a detached or demasculinizing father, the film presents markers that appear to indicate that Alex is in a developmentally precarious place.

Although the film takes great care to not explicitly state that Alex is homosexual, his background seems to suggest that he would be more susceptible to forming a homosexual identity given the right circumstances. In doing so, the film heightens the tension felt when Alex finally encounters the "predatory" homosexuals.

Having been thrown out of his family home, the flashback continues as Alex heads to Hollywood with wide eyed amazement. Upon exiting the bus, he proceeds directly to a pay phone and begins to flip through the yellow pages. Recognizing in Alex the expression of a boy inexperienced with the big city, Buddy approaches him to offer assistance. Buddy is an obviously streetwise and dangerous reprobate, signified by his tough Brooklyn colloquialism and tight fitting jeans and a satin jacket. Without the clothing and accent as signifiers, the audience could easily believe that Buddy was genuinely altruistic. It is soon revealed, however, that Buddy is not actually interested in helping but rather only interested in making a quick dollar. He leads Alex away from the phone with the promise of a hot meal, checking newspaper carrels for abandoned change along the way. Alex tells Buddy he only wants to find the nearest YMCA. "If you want to do this on your own, that's fine with me. Only I remember when I first came to this town. I was lost. I was hungry" replies Buddy. The deliberate diversion by Buddy of Alex's

task to locate lodging for the evening plays like the quintessential seduction of a small child by a pedophile with candy. Yet instead of candy, the seduction is the promise of a meal and a sympathetic ear.

It is not long before Buddy is revealed to be a male prostitute. Alex, who has since taken up residency with Buddy, returns early from a day of being refused work. He is unable to secure a legitimate job because he is underage. Alex interrupts Buddy just as one of Buddy's johns is leaving and Buddy is getting dressed. Because Buddy has already reached adulthood and thus much older than Alex, the film seems to suggest that he is beyond the social assistance. Buddy is no longer a child; he is responsible for his own actions and therefore the corruption of Alex. Obviously uncomfortable with the situation, Alex begins to pack his things. Buddy rebukes him for it. He says, "I don't know why you put yourself through these numbers for. How many times do you gotta hear the man say no before you get the picture Alex? There ain't no work around here for a kid. But there's money to be made if you're cool." As the camera focuses on Alex's feet climbing a long flight of stairs, Buddy further explains in voiceover how he knows a lonely "girl." Alex only has to "ring her doorbell" to earn \$50.

Unlike what had been presented in *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway*, Alex's initial hustling experiences in *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* are with women. By allowing Alex to initially cater only to women, the problems he encounters are not those of a deviant homosexual but rather those of an impressionable, and heterosexual, runaway child. This affirmation of Alex's sexuality is further reinforced when Buddy invites Alexander to a "B & B" (booze and broads) party. Alexander politely refuses. Buddy counters with, "What's the problem? You like girls don't you?" After a pregnant pause Alexander responds, "Well, of

course.” By reinforcing his heterosexuality, Alex becomes a naïve child deserving of assistance and sympathy. Without it, Alex is simply another homosexual.

Once Alex’s background in prostitution has been established through the flashback of his family and involvement with Buddy, the film returns to the present. Alex is released from the hospital. Determined to turn his and Dawn’s lives around, he convinces Dawn to return to her mother and wait for him. He is going to find legitimate work and save money so he and Dawn can be married. Yet because he is a minor, he continues to have difficulty procuring a new job. Unable to pay the rent as well as being discovered as an underage hustler, Alex’s loses his apartment and takes to sleeping in public parks. Broke, homeless and hungry, Alex is approached and offered food by a famous closeted football quarterback, Charles “Chuck” Selby. Alexander gratefully accepts.

Like Alex’s relationship with Buddy, Alex’s “seduction” by Chuck seems wholly apparent to everyone but Alex. Chuck attempts to gain Alex’s trust by lavishing upon him expensive meals, letting Alex drive his expensive sports car, and taking Alex back to his beach front home. It is only after Chuck refuses to drive Alex back to the city with the excuse of heavy traffic that Alex becomes wary of Chuck’s intentions. “What do you want from me?” Alex asks. Chuck replies: “Only to be your friend. I think you know what that means.” The common perception of the period was that homosexuals must “freshen their ranks” through the recruitment of young impressionable young men (Bryant 62). The inclusion of “I think you know what that means” seems to indicate an unambiguous example of that recruitment. Unlike the Good Samaritan who might be found working with an outreach program such as Peace of Mind who would only be interested in assisting Alex off the street, Chuck has something more nefarious in mind. Chuck finishes with “There’s a bed in the guest room, and uh, mine’s

upstairs,” indicating the terms of the relationship. Despite his reservations, Alex agrees to stay with Chuck.

Because the film is a primetime made-for-television movie, it refrains from any explicit sexual references. Yet despite being informed that the relationship is not sexual by other ancillary characters, the film provides clues that the relationship is indeed sexual. Chuck and Alex perform as “Daddy” and “Kept Boy.” Chuck furnishes Alex with new clothing, takes him to gay parties, and sports him as a trophy to his many gay friends. Alex also ceases sleeping on the couch; although the film never indicates where his new bed is located. Nonetheless, Alexander remains emotionally distant and steals phone calls to Dawn whenever the opportunity presents itself. Through the secret calls to Dawn, the film allows for the possibility of Alex’s continued heterosexuality. Alex is not *actually* homosexual; he is only made to *behave* like one because of his involvement with Chuck.

To reinforce the view that young street hustlers are subjected to outside influences and thus not responsible for their own actions, the film quickly intercedes to prevent Alex from taking the final decisive step toward homosexual identity when Alex becomes jealous of a blond young surfer who becomes the new recipient of Chuck’s affection. Chuck, who is now enamored with the blond surfer, sends Alex on an errand to pick up a package from one of Chuck’s friends. As it turns out, the friend is a drug dealer under surveillance and Alex is arrested. He is unaware that the errand he has been asked to perform is illegal. He is innocent of deliberately committing the crime just as he was innocent of being abandoned by his father, loosing his job and apartment, or being coerced into prostitution. However, his last “no-fault” (no choice) action lands him before the juvenile court. Thus, the film allows Alex to demonstrate that his difficulties lie outside himself and outside any conscious decision.



At the same time, however, the film seems to indicate that the most effective tool in preventing homosexual identification is through the intercession of social agencies. In an overly sentimental speech to the judge Alex laments, “People are always making decisions for me. People are always planning my life. People are telling me what to do...I would just like to do what I want to do for once.” When judge finally asks what Alex wants, Alex responds by saying that he wants to leave L.A., “get his girl,” and get married. Satisfied that the institutionalized intervention has been met with adequate results, the judge dismisses the charges and tells Alex to leave the city lest he appear before the court again. Ultimately, it takes the involvement of the court before Alex is able to vocalize his desires and gain the ability to act on them. Through the participation of the court and the eventual arrest of Chuck, the film lends credibility to Christian outreach programs that contend that homosexual identity can be prevented. With the dismissal of Alex’s case and his stated desire to start a family with Dawn, Alex’s heterosexuality is preserved. Alex remains a young middle-class heterosexual boy who is only conditionally homosexual because of the influence by unscrupulous older men.

### *Forty Deuce*

In an era when few gay-positive hustler films were made, *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* was followed by the mainstream film *American Gigolo* (1980) in which the title hustler makes a living as an escort to older women and is framed for the murder of one of his clients. This film carefully avoids any allusions to the reality that most male prostitutes catered to an almost exclusively male client base. It was not until Paul Morrissey’s *Forty Deuce* (1982) that homosexuality was reinserted as a character trait of either the hustler or his client. In the film, adapted from Alan Browne’s dark and layered play of the same name, a twelve-year-old boy dies

in a hotel bed after a lethal overdose of contaminated heroin. Ricky, a male prostitute, uses the boy's body in an attempt to frame an affluent customer for murder. In doing so, Ricky hopes to blackmail the customer for money to pay for a pending drug deal.

Paul Morrissey is best known for his Andy Warhol produced *Flesh* trilogy, *Flesh* (1968), *Trash* (1970) and *Heat* (1972), and the Warhol produced *Flesh for Frankenstein* (1973) and *Blood for Dracula* (1974). After leaving Warhol's Factory, Morrissey continued to make films, but these were not widely seen. Claiming to be "independent of the independents" (Yacowar 5), he stayed outside the politics of most queer films movements. Instead, he infused his films with reactionary conservatism that painted the drug addicts, drag queens and other queers in an often unflattering light. His morality was rooted in his Catholic upbringing and felt that "without institutional religion as the basis, a society can't exist...All the sensible values of a solid education and moral foundation have been flushed down the liberal toilet in order to sell sex, drugs, and rock and roll" (quoted in Yacowar 13). While *Forty Deuce* is characteristic of Morrissey's unflattering portrayal of drug addicts and queers, it was the play's metaphor of life in a toilet that Morrissey was reportedly to have been first interested in (97). It was attractive to Morrissey because it exposed "the great liberal lie of the last thirty to forty years: Do whatever you want" (96). However with its depiction of older hustlers and sadomasochistic homosexual clients, *Forty Deuce* manages to do more than expose "life in a toilet." It appears to reaffirm Christian moralist views that young children are prey for murderous homosexual predators. It does this by being a horrific account of an innocent young runaway whose dead body is opportunistically used by deviant homosexuals.

Despite being based on a play, the film plays like an amalgamation of the many alarming new reports of murdered runaways that appeared between 1977 and 1980. While sociological

studies tended to treat the prostitute as a distinct group thought to suffer from serious psychological maladjustments (Hagan and McCarthy 7), news media in the late 1970s and early 1980s tended to emphasize the vulnerability of the prostitutes. These news reports frequently calling them children despite the fact that they were reporting on individuals of up to twenty-five years of age (Brock 120), effectively solidified the popular belief that “all queers fool around with kids” (Lloyd 43). Newspaper accounts reported frightening stories of teenage hustlers being raped and sodomized and then sold in “runaway auctions” (Barrett and Fincher 128). Several national news magazines ran stories on mass murders of teenage boys, each time stressing the homosexuality of the offenders and the youth of the victims (“Twenty-Eight, and Counting”; Williams, Huck and Huck; “Behind Growing Worry”). Robin Lloyd described in *For Money or Love* the brutal mass murder by three homosexual men of at least twenty-seven young boys in Houston, suggesting that the “unholy trio” who committed the act had “actually had sexual contact with [the] young boys” (Lloyd 44).

*Forty Deuce* opens with a nameless twelve-year-old boy stepping off a bus in a New York City terminal. As the opening credits role, he side-steps strangers as he aimlessly wanders the streets of the city. He eventually passes Blow, a fairly attractive older street hustler. Like Buddy in *Alexander*, the obvious difference in ages between the boy and Blow seem to indicate that Blow has already passed beyond the point where social assistance would have been effective. Because of this, he immediately reads as a predator. In a sequence that plays like a parent’s worst nightmare, Blow trails after the boy. Blow waits until he has determined that the boy is indeed lost then stealthily approaches. Blow wraps his arm around the boy’s shoulders and directs him down the street to a communal hotel room. Although Blow later becomes (arguably) the “moral compass” of the film by revealing the eventual blackmail to both the

police and an often discussed and unseen pimp, with this introduction he is coded as a sexual predator of children.

Moments later, Ricky is introduced. He is passed out in a pool of his own vomit in a public toilet stall. Augie pulls Ricky from the bathroom stall and assaults him with expletives and accusations of ruination. Augie had just come from the hotel where he had discovered the naked and presumed sleeping boy Blow had picked up earlier. While the altercation continues, a well dressed commuter, obviously sexually interested in Ricky, lingers in the bathroom. His sole concern seems to be to wait for an opportunity to engage Ricky in sex. The commuter seems oblivious, or does not seem to care that Ricky is covered in vomit and is fighting with Augie. In light of the rhetoric by anti-gay champions and Morrissey's own conservative views, the commuter's failure to be deterred sexually by Ricky's vomit, obvious drug usage, and possible diseases suggests that he would also not be dissuaded by the social proscriptions against sex with minors. While the scene has been described by critics as an illustration of Morrissey's argument that modern life is a toilet (Yacowar 98), the addition of the commuter seems to code the homosexual male as a degenerate opportunist who demonstrates an overall apathy toward social decency. In doing so, the film deemphasizes the role the young runaway plays in his own demise and strengthens concept of the predatory homosexual.

Ricky, Augie and two ancillary characters, Mitchell and Crank, return to the hotel room with a plan to buy into a considerable drug deal which would free them from the "ownership" of their pimp. Along the way, Blow joins the group. Yet having no money to pay for the drugs, Ricky develops a plan to use the runaway boy to his advantage. He plans to sell the boy to a wealthy john, Mr. Roper. They plan to entice the Mr. Roper with the promise of a fresh young runaway, then "roll" (beat up and rob) him to pay for the drugs. Once back in the hotel room,

and while the others orchestrate the plan, Blow suggestively caresses the runaway's back and tousles the boy's hair only to discover that the runaway is dead. Through conversation, the audience learns that Ricky had fed the boy the tainted heroin that killed him the night before. Yet despite the immediate confusion and hurling of accusations caused by the discovery of the boy's death, the plans to sell the boy continue. Instead of rolling Mr. Roper, Ricky plans to blackmail Mr. Roper with the murder of the boy. As was the case when the group thought the boy to be alive, the boy's only value is the selfish ends to which he can be used. It makes little difference that the boy is now dead.

The remainder of the film is a clutter of colorful and often undecipherable argot that is solely devoted to puzzling out how to capitalize on the dead runaway's body. Yet after establishing this premise, the film stalls. There is no further plot development other than the arrival of Mr. Roper and the subsequent con and betrayal, nor is there any further character development. The scenery changes, but the conversation does not. The group of hustlers simply meets in various locations to discuss how best to sell the boy's body. This lack of depth was one of the primary complaints of the original stage play. Reviewers felt that the story did not "go anywhere" (Rich).

But it is precisely through this lack of plot and character development that the film suggests that all homosexuals are deviant reprobates. The film informs the audience that Ricky, Blow, and the others are hustlers. Yet by also being concerned with the sale of the young runaway, the film transforms them into pimps engaged in the exploitation of a minor. Through this transformation, the film recalls the idea put forth by anti-gay activists that homosexuals can only replenish their numbers through the recruitment of young boys. So for instance when Blow collects the young boy off the street, he is doing so not only for some nefarious sexual purpose

but also to refresh homosexual ranks. Additionally, unlike the cinematic street hustlers in the decade prior who obscured their sexual orientation, each of the characters in *Forty Deuce* are made explicitly homosexual through their dialogue and mannerisms. The commuter in the first scene lingers too long in the public restroom. Ricky boasts of his sexual conquest to Mr. Roper while trying to entice him into sleeping with the boy. Blow gently caresses the boys back and expresses sexual interest in him before being made aware the boy is dead. Mitchell and Crank bumble and flit as stereotypes of urban fairies while they discuss sex reassignment surgery. Mr. Roper, complete with sadomasochistic toys and restraints, is an effeminate dandy. While the film can easily be read as a deconstruction of consumer capitalism—everything is for sale including dead children—the lack of penitence displayed by any of the characters underscores a depravity thought by the anti-gay establishment to be inherent to the homosexual male. The film links homosexuality to predatory victimization. At the same time, the film graphically depicts the horrors reported to befall runaway youth by the period’s national news magazines, thus heightening the anxiety over the murderous homosexual and the influence of the outside “other.”

### Conclusion

Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, Christian right-wing populism had begun to use the homosexual as a scapegoat for economic uncertainty and social change resulting in a nationwide backlash against “gay rights” while an ever growing concern for runaway youth began to redefine street prostitutes as socially needy middle-class children: suffering “fallen angels.” The few hustler films that were made in this period reflected this new social conceptualization. The shift in focus from the hustler onto his clientele by mainstream filmmakers recast the hustler as a young runaway who was an innocent bystander and incapable

of asserting any control in his own ruin. The control belonged exclusively to the homosexual, reinforcing the fear that runaway children were seduced into prostitution, and thus homosexuality. It would not be until the late 1980s that any significant alteration would occur to this representation. As the gay community struggled to survive the devastation brought about by the AIDS epidemic, gay filmmakers would once again take the hustler as a representative figure. This time, however, the hustler would not simply be a naïve angel searching for an identity or exploited by older homosexual men. Frustrated with governmental and social inaction, queer filmmakers will use the hustler's his subversive characteristics to transform him into a sympathetic suffering angel who is martyred by society because of his sexual difference.

## CHAPTER 4

### DYING ANGELS AND DESPERATE HOMOSEXUALS: AIDS AND NEW QUEER CINEMA

By the mid-1980s a surge of gay-centered films were beginning to flood art house theaters and film festivals, culminating in the birth of what became known as the New Queer Cinema movement in the early 1990s. Frustrated by the mainstream media's continued reinforcement of traditional conservative moralist agendas and depictions of confused and tortured AIDS victims, queer filmmakers were motivated to provide alternative images. These films presented AIDS victims as whole people who were living with, rather than dying from AIDS. And while many of the films of the period did not always overtly use AIDS as its subject, they all tended to have what Monica Pearl calls an "AIDS aesthetic" (Pearl). At the same time, the films from this period also tended to comment on and argue with dominant cultural ideologies, principally restrictive Christian ideologies. In doing so, the cinematic hustler rose in popularity. Not only was he a sexually liberated figure in a period terrified by sex and sexuality, his subversive qualities more easily aligned with mainstream assumptions that society's outcasts were responsible for AIDS and were vectors for disease transmission into heterosexual culture.

While the cinematic hustler of the late 1960s had been characterized as a timid angel flirting with homosexual identity and the hustler of the late 1970s and early 1980s was characterized as an innocent child preyed upon by murderer homosexuals, the hustler of the early 1990s was transformed into a sympathetic figure. He became a martyr who suffered at the hands of a complacent society and a Christian Right-wing morality. This chapter demonstrates this paradigmatic shift by looking at the films *Postcards from America* (1994) and *Johns* (1996). It also demonstrates that while many of the New Queer Cinema films were concerned with providing alternative images to AIDS infected persons, the hustler film was engaged with



countering Christian depictions of homosexuality. *Postcards* documents the life of a street hustler who was abused by his father as a child and spends the later part of his life searching some meaning to the disease crawling through his veins. Through interwoven narratives, the film seems to rail against not only Christianity's exclusion of AIDS infected homosexuals from public support but also against a seemingly complacent gay community. *Johns*, on the other hand, is a more narrowly focused critique of Christian Right-Wing morality.

### The Prostitute's Progress

AIDS was first identified in 1981 in the United States among a small group of otherwise healthy homosexual men in California and New York who had begun to show symptoms of relatively rare forms of cancer and lung infections. The Reagan administration had just taken office and the New Right was in ascendancy. Because the early medical reports from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggested that there was no risk of contagion by non-homosexuals (Altman), and because of the assumed "immorality" of the groups in which the new disease was first appearing, it was not long before the New Right began to encode the disease with highly charged political rhetoric (Adam 155). Indeed, the syndrome had been originally provisionally labeled as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID); making AIDS a disease of "them," or the "other." Later hemophiliacs, heroin addicts, and Haitians were added to the list of high-risk groups (Gilman 245), but this only reinforced the notion that only the "other" was susceptible to the disease. For the general public, AIDS was only a disease of homosexuals, degenerates, and non-Western people (Treichler 47).

As such, the literature on the male prostitution shifted noticeably from being interested in the hustler as a *person* to the hustler as belonging to a high-risk *group* associated with the spread

of HIV/AIDS. Whereas earlier research had only been slightly interested in the sexual practices of the male prostitute, new research began to collect increasingly more detailed data on these practices and was informed by agendas unequivocally focused on HIV/AIDS transmission (Bimbi 25). This shift was most apparent in the influential article titled “The Male Street Prostitute: A Vector for Transmission of HIV Infection into the Heterosexual World” (Morse, Simon, Osofsky et al.). The study singled out male prostitutes as a group worthy of study only because the associated risk of HIV/AIDS transmission into heterosexual society via their “normal” clients. Paradoxically, male prostitutes were not seen as a risk to homosexual society (Browne and Minichiello "Research Directions" 34). Morse et al. clarified their argument about vectors of transmission in a later article as follows:

Customers of male prostitutes most of whom describe themselves as heterosexual and bisexual and who also report not using condoms with their female partners, potentially function as vector[s] of HIV transmission from male prostitutes to their female partners and into the more mainstream heterosexual population. (Morse, Simon, Balson et al. 356)

Despite having been made clear by other researchers that the “vector” of HIV/AIDS transmission was multifaceted (female partners of heterosexual hustlers, needle sharing, and clients), and despite numerous publications that demonstrated that male prostitutes were actually well educated about HIV/AIDS transmission and safer-sex practices (Prestage), hustlers became stigmatized as “Typhoid Harrys” (Parsons, Koken and Bimbi 1022). This stigmatization was derived primarily from, and was inextricably tied to, the perception by heteronormative society that AIDS was a moral problem and not merely a medical one. Prostitution, drug use, and promiscuous homosexual lifestyles were associated with groups considered to be isolated from mainstream society and were therefore considered indulgent and perverse. People who chose such lifestyles were believed to be undeserving of social support and frequently held responsible for their own hardships (Nisbet and McQueen 896).

Underpinning the majority of this rhetoric, however, was the Christian Right's belief that homosexuality was not only sinful, but as Dr. Edward Rowe stated in his book *Homosexual Politics: Road to Ruin for America* (1984), a "moral cancer eating at the fabric of America." For the Christian Right, homosexuality was, first, an incontrovertible sin, and second, a chosen behavior. Within the conservative Christian worldview, it was impossible for God to have created homosexuals. Biblical prohibition of homosexual behavior informed them as such. Therefore homosexual conduct was more akin to adultery because individuals were no more "born gay" than were they born adulterers. Furthermore, since God did not usually intervene in the personal day-to-day behaviors of individuals, homosexuality was seen as a sinful choice, influenced by Satan himself, meant to disrupt God's divine plan for His followers.

Stopping just short of proclaiming AIDS as a judgment from God, it was instead, as Jimmy Swaggert proclaimed, the "result of the evil, wicked, profligate lifestyle of the homosexual community" (quoted in Palmer 134). As such, the Christian Rights discussions of homosexuality were replete with graphic imagery of diseased-ridden men. For them, homosexual practices not only lead to debilitating and degenerative disease, but they were also intrinsically filthy and unnatural. Indeed, most Christian Right activists thought gay sex to be so distasteful that the Concerned Women for America assigned a male vice president to the issue so as not to offend the "ladies" (Herman 77). Yet despite any claim to the contrary, the gay community was still made to feel that they were responsible for the disease because they had sinned against God and AIDS was His punishment.

Depictions of AIDS victims were almost universally images of "innocent" transfusion victims surrounded by their loving families, of third-world prostitutes, or of isolated and emaciated homosexual men, usually with the tell tale signs of Kaposi's sarcoma (Gilman 258).

Occasionally, the depictions would reflect the twisted and confused faces of patients suffering from AIDS related dementia. Counter-examples to these images were systematically excluded from media reports. Indeed, photographers rejected some AIDS victims because they did not look sick enough (Treichler 133). It was precisely through this iconographic imagery that AIDS was linked to those who violated the moral order. With the exception of the “innocent” hemophiliac, AIDS was “viewed as a fateful link between social deviance and the morally correct” (Brandt 428). Mainstream media reinforced the fears that “normal” families would come in contact with a disease that had been otherwise isolated to society’s outcasts and that homosexuals were responsible for the illness (Cook and Colby 93).

In response, queer filmmakers and AIDS service organizations were motivated to provide alternative images of persons with AIDS (PWAs). They realized the need to “humanize” PWAs instead of collapsing them into their illness in order to offset the publicly perceived threat to the “general population.” Many of these first alternative videos to be produced were concerned with providing much-needed information for the care of PWAs or were in response to inaccurate information. They represented PWAs as whole people who led relatively normal lives, unashamed of their HIV status. Most importantly, they presented PWAs as people who were living with, rather than dying from AIDS (Grover 12).

While mainstream media continued its punitive reporting into the late 1980 and early 1990s, the numbers of alternative AIDS videos increased. Videos began to be produced by the many diverse communities profoundly affected by AIDS that reflected the wide range of issues experienced by those communities (Juhasz 49). Some of these videos were made by individuals to document their own struggles with the disease or to address the fears and biases they experience from health-care workers, but most were created by short-lived collectives that

formed to address specific goals and audiences. For instance, The Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) released *Chance of a Lifetime* (1985) aimed at sexually active gay men that dramatized safer sex practices. Other groups formed to document AIDS protests, which could be used in court should law enforcement agencies breach acceptable arrest and crowd control procedures (Pearl 26). Most, however, were activist in nature meant to engage and enrage viewers and served as recruitment tools for their respective organizations. A few of these activist videographers, including Tom Kalin and John Greyson among others, would later give birth to what would become known as "New Queer Cinema" (Benshoff and Griffin 213). While New Queer Cinema films were not necessarily always about the subject of AIDS, they were informed by an experience of AIDS. José Arroyo, in his article on AIDS and New Queer Cinema, "Death, Desire, and Identity," argues that "AIDS is why there is New Queer Cinema and it is what New Queer Cinema is about" (Arroyo 92).

New Queer Cinema describes a movement of gay independent cinema in the early 1990s that gained critical acclaim on the festival circuit. Coined by the film theorist B. Ruby Rich, these films defied traditional narrative forms by utilizing irony and pastiche, fragmented subjectivity, and anachronistic elements in their frank and often defiant depictions of sexuality. Often, the films tended to avoid "positive images" and "happy endings" in favor of more complex depictions of gender and sexuality. Many of the New Queer Cinema films were attempts to counter prior cinematic and historical depictions of sexuality by reappropriating the historical record in a way that legitimized the existence of homosexuality within it. Just as frequently, however, many of the New Queer Cinema films assumed the qualities of the traditional Hollywood road movie. This was particularly true of the hustler film. The character

or characters in the New Queer road movie travel from place to place searching for some meaning to the irrevocable ways AIDS has affected their lives.

For critics, the New Queer road movie represented a perpetual quest for desire both in the romanticized promiscuity of the past and the need to suspend diurnal concerns of paying the bills or getting sick. Robert Lang points out that there are a number of similarities between the road movie and New Queer Cinema:

The symbolism of “the road” as the freedom from constraints (the freedom to travel, discover, forget, experiment, escape, *move*...) has a correspondence...in the gay affirmation of sexuality...[The road movie] provides characters who choose to live and love outside the institution of the monogamous heterosexual partnership and the conventional nuclear family. (Lang 332)

By acknowledging the centrality of this desire for freedom, the figure of the hustler became a typical feature of the New Queer road movie because of his subversive and sexually freeing qualities. The hustler threatened the foundational underpinnings of the Christian and Right-wing mandated patriarchal order by making his body and sexuality available as a commodity. More importantly, however, he operated and resided in the outermost strolls that respectable persons dare not travel.

Yet the hustler serves as more than the literal interpretation of a (gay) man cruising for sex. He is a sympathetic figure whose travels allowed him to explore his unconscious desires. For example, films like Gus Van Sant’s *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) or Gregg Araki’s *The Living End* (1992) were more concerned with the ways in which gay men relate to each other, their bodies, and their social positioning within a context of AIDS than they were with erotic titillation. Others films focused on the desire to leave the past behind and forge ahead with new identities. For instance, *Tattoo Boy* (Larry Cramer, 1995) follows the lives of Sam and Arizona as they look to leave hustling, their hometown and family behind. In *The Toilers and the*

*Wayfarers* (Keith Froelich, 1996) the handsome Dieter runs from his harsh disciplinarian childhood home and sick best friend in search of a place to be himself without persecution or the fear of disease.

At the same time, however, many of the New Queer road/hustler films were preoccupied with death and how to escape death. In being so, they attempted to politicize the cultural environment by either taking aim at the gay community itself or by criticizing the ideological structures that stand in opposition to the gay culture. Frequently, these films used Christian iconography framed against dystopian set pieces and open, empty roads in an attempt to visualize the turmoil of AIDS and the abandonment of social institutions. Typically, the roads in these films travel through open, unpopulated desert landscapes that evoke a sense of the shriveling and lifelessness of a land that had once been green and healthy. However, the roads never seem to lead anywhere but into more deserts. Conversely, the city roads travel through rows of vacant and boarded-up buildings on the edges of thriving metropolises. As such, the characters in these films never seem to be able to escape these harsh wastelands. In their constant movement along the borders of society, their sexual and social relationships are forged and maintained in these hostile landscapes. Any engagement with the populated cities is immediately followed by a retreat to the road, symbolizing a return to the isolation and destitution brought about by Christian proscriptions against homosexuality.

#### *Postcards from America*

Written and directed by Steve Mclean from the autobiographical writings of the late gay author and artist David Wojnarowicz, *Postcards from America* is a road movie that is structured as a series of painful vignettes that play out as summoned memories. As well as being a

meditation on how AIDS affects the lives of those it infects and how they struggle to cope with the desperation and isolation that occurs after such a diagnosis, *Postcards* documents the journey of a hustler in his struggle to uncover the cause of his felt isolation. The film is separated into three interweaving stories that do not follow any logical chronology but instead encircle and inform one another in a system that feels like a mind desperate to locate a single point from which everything turned. The film jumps from David as a young boy victimized by his dysfunctional father, to David as a teenager working the streets of New York, to David as a thirty-something drifter who finds release in quick sex, fast cars and the open road. The vignettes begin frequently with “I remember...” and the intermingling stories are segmented by seemingly unrelated soliloquies by indiscriminate characters that occasionally inform the larger story, but more often read as a line of thought jumping tracks as the whistle of a departing train punctuates the soundtrack. Yet throughout, there is a rage underlining the melancholy as the film seems to rail against Christianity’s abandonment of AIDS infected persons as well as the gay community’s growing indifference to the epidemic.

*Postcards* opens with an out-of-breath thirty-something David standing along an empty open stretch of highway surrounded by the withering vegetation of the desert landscape. It is revealed later in the film that David is cruising for sex, that he is searching for an intimate connection to end his loneliness. The film then cuts to David in a mildewed and unkempt kitchen as he tries desperately to wash the dirt from his face and hands. The withering decay of each of these scenes immediately position David within a symbolic environment of death and disease so commonly depicted in the New Queer Cinema road movie. They are then followed by a brief scene that informs the audience that David has AIDS: “there’s something in my body that’s trying to kill me.” It is here that the film retreats into David’s scattered memories, filtering



through them seemingly searching for the one that will explain the chaos David is forced to suffer. The film leaps backward to David as a young child, victimized by his brutish and alcoholic father in the early 1960s.

David and a young friend are exploring a wooded lake shore and stumble across a dying bird. David's friend warns him not to touch it, insisting that the bird is dead. David disagrees and picks it up to take it home with him despite knowing that his father will ultimately kill it. This seemingly innocuous scene appears upon first viewing as only an introduction to young David. Not yet having been hardened by the abuse of his father, life on the streets, or his ultimate AIDS diagnosis, David is still young and compassionate. The bird is sick and needs care. By including this simple act of compassion, the film humanizes David. Yet none of the scenes within the film ever stand alone. In a later scene, the audience learns that David has taken in another ill ward: a friend newly diagnosed with HIV. David's rescue of the bird foreshadows the care he will give to his dying friend.

However before Davis's dying friend is introduced, David recalls in voiceover a memory of the first person he knew that had died of AIDS. He compares it to the image of a weak man trying to stop a "slow train carrying sixteen tons of pressure," unable to wake up and shut out the disease of "small birds and mammals." Within a narrative structure in which even the most mundane symbols are loaded with meaning, the suggestion that the weak man is unable to shut out a disease caused by "small birds and mammals" seems to recall the early hysteria surrounding AIDS which maintained that the disease could be "accidentally" contracted through insect bites or casual contact with infected persons (Rueda and Schwartz 17). The film has already established that older David has AIDS, yet it never explained how David was infected. Instead of focusing on the many possible personal choices David may have made to contribute to

his infection, the film appears to engage with the idea that his infection may not have been his fault. By referencing the possibility that his infection could have occurred from something as innocuous as handling an ill bird, the film seems to draw attention to the disparity between the compassion shown toward “innocently” infected individuals and that shown toward homosexuals who are “responsible” for their infection. This argument seems to carry greater weight with the inclusion of a scene in which David is raped as a teenager. Until this point, the only hustling activities David has been involved in have been devoid of any sexual contact. Teen-aged David is simply a juvenile delinquent. It is only after David is brutally raped by a brutish truck driver—who slowly fades into darkness after the deed—that David is depicted as having sex for money. Again, the film suggests the possibility that David could have contracted the virus through no fault of his own. When David’s symbolic “bird” (his dying friend) is finally introduced in the last few minutes of the film, the question of how the transmission has occurred has already been posed and dismissed. The film implies that it does not matter. Then, through the care that David delivers to his friend, the film demonstrates the compassion not being provided by society.

Yet the train imagery recalled by David as he is remembering the first person he knew that had died of AIDS plays into an anger directed at society’s seeming indifference toward AIDS infected homosexuals. The sound symbolizes the crushing pressure from the organizational and societal structures that bear down upon them. At moments of extreme stress, or rather at moments within the film which are meant to be stressed, the noise from a distant train fills the soundtrack. The sound first appears moments after the sequence with young David and the bird. It next appears as older David is walking across an open expanse of desert sand toward

a battered and isolated church. As David approaches, the rumbling of the train grows more pronounced. The church is closed.

Again, falling within the first ten minutes of the film, the scene feels unimportant. It seems only to convey the sense of loneliness and isolation that was made apparent by David's pronouncement of something in his body trying to kill him. Yet as David leans against the church wall and gazes at the passing train, the audience is led back to a moment when young David is being taunted to masturbate a naked young thug tied prone to a tree. The film never makes clear why or how the thug became tied to the tree yet the image of the young man bears a striking resemblance to the iconographic imagery of St. Sebastian. Indeed, for a brief moment he is St. Sebastian in a staged reenactment of his execution—incidentally a stylistic element that occurs nowhere else in the film—as the crushing sound of something heavy in motion fills the soundtrack. St. Sebastian had long been considered the patron saint of homosexuals due primarily to the mythology surrounding him that claims he was put to death by a spurned male lover after Sebastian “came out” as a Christian. The film seems to compare the homosexual with martyred Sebastian who was murdered and left to die by his loved ones just as the church, a symbol of compassion and charity, closed its doors to the dying martyrs of the epidemic.

It is with the inclusion of this image that the closed church in the prior scene takes on greater meaning and links back to the selective sympathy given to AIDS victims. David is a gay man with AIDS and therefore the church is unavailable to him. Its doors are locked and its windows closed. The doors remained closed because the anti-permissive contempt held by the church toward “perverse” lifestyles and the effects of such lifestyles. It made little difference that those fallen to AIDS are beloved sons and brothers. It was the disease itself that excluded them from the church. Yet this scene is accompanied by another that when played against the

closed church and the image of St Sebastian seems to suggest that the Christian church is not alone in its desertion of PWAs.

Immediately following the “St. Sebastian” scene is one that seems to articulate a frustration directed at not only the social institutions that largely abandoned and ignored those suffering from AIDS, but also of any homosexual who did the same. As the young thug is tied to the tree, David tells the audience that he grew bored and left him there. Having already established the link between the St. Sebastian thug and the homosexual community, David’s boredom and subsequent abandonment of the thug appears to indicate a perceived neglect by the gay community itself. The audience is then next shown young David with his father sitting before the television as the announcer details President Kennedy’s widow arriving in Washington with her martyred husband. David has little interest in the news, and this infuriates his father. “What. You’re not crying? You don’t think our President is important enough? The whole fucking country is in mourning and you look like you don’t give a fucking shit.”

The inclusion of Kennedy’s funeral seems to draw attention to a felt shift toward acquiescence by a gay community that suddenly appeared not to “give a fucking shit.” By the mid 1990s a state of complacency began to blanket the gay community, causing Bruce Mirken to write “It’s as if we’ve come to feel that having our friends and lovers die every day is normal” (12). This sentiment echoed Jeffrey Schmalz’s posthumously published cover story in *The New York Times*: “12 years after it was first recognized as new disease, AIDS has become normalized, part of the landscape...The world is moving on, uncaring, frustrated and bored, leaving by the roadside those of us who are infected” (58). AIDS had come to be seen as a characteristic feature of contemporary gay life in which AIDS was a “normal” or “usual” state of being. The inclusion of this scene seems to acknowledge this and demand action against it.

Despite the claim by critic Stephen Holden that the film “makes a heavy-handed Freudian equation between the vicious beatings Wojnarowicz endured at the hands of his father and his cruising for rough trade at truck stops and on the road” (14), the film seems more engaged with discovering small moments and how those moments connect with others. It also seems to challenge the belief that prayer or institutionalized charity will come to any rescue. Rather, the film criticizes the church for abandoning its dying sons and brothers while at the same time reprimanding the gay community for doing the same. Just as PWAs across the world found themselves contemplating the same, David is left on his own wandering a decimated landscape and attempting to comprehend the meaning of his life in the face of death.

### *Johns*

By the time *Johns* appeared in 1996, the New Queer Cinema moment had all but passed. However this did not make the film any less confrontational. Like *Postcards*, the film engages with Christian prohibitions toward homosexuality. In doing so, it creates an allegorical Passion of Christ to draw parallels between the martyrdom of Christ and the persecution of homosexuals by Christian and Right-wing pundits. Written and directed by first time director Scott Silver, the film follows two street hustlers, John and Donner, during the Christmas holidays as they try to earn enough money to leave the streets. Their goal is to take refuge in a romanticized far off place called Camelot. The film is a rather straight forward narrative; however it uses heavy-handed symbolism to address the issues of Christian charity and persecution.

With the arrival of AIDS into the mainstream consciousness, ultraconservative “New Right” political groups were granted a new tool with which to wage a Culture War against homosexuals. This Culture War was an intricately crafted campaign that crossed multiple

political boundaries and was the rhetorical invention of the Christian Right, who formed the bulk of the New Right's political base. As one New Right minister declared at an early Heritage Foundation strategy session, its aim was to combat modern liberalism in an attempt to "turn the clock back to 1954" (quoted in Faludi 230). The Culture War was especially concerned with defending "family values" and placed both family structure and sexuality at the center of its campaign. It presented its "pro-family" crusade as a religious imperative that would solve the perceived social breakdown (Berlet and Lyons 231). It sought to reestablish the patriarchal nuclear family as the foundation of American society by campaigning against the feminist movement, reproductive rights, and rolling back gay-positive legislation. Outlawing abortion and suppressing homosexuality, however, seemed to be the primary focus. And as more and more gay men and lesbian women began to move out of the closet, sensational rhetoric against homosexuals began to escalate. This resulted in an increase in the severity and numbers of hate crimes enacted upon gays and lesbians (Walters 340). *Johns* seems to acknowledge this violence by laying blame for it squarely on the Christian Right-Wing's prohibitions against homosexuality.

*Johns* opens on the day before Christmas with the title character, John, waking up outdoors to discover that his lucky sneakers, which also serve as his bank, have been stolen. Since he had been planning to spend his savings on a night in a posh hotel as a special treat for his twenty-first birthday, he takes the loss particularly hard and immediately sets out to replenish his funds. There is the added problem that the same money was also owed to an angry drug dealer who pursues John throughout the narrative. Yet the holiday makes regenerating the money difficult so John enlists the help of his pal Donner, a teen hustler who is clearly in love with his older friend. Despite his feelings being unreciprocated, Donner dreams of solidifying

his and John's relationship by persuading John to leave L.A. and join him in Branson, Missouri. Donner's extended family has offered them both jobs at a Renaissance theme park named Camelot. In the meantime, however, Donner is content to turn tricks in order to fulfill John's birthday wish and pay off John's drug debt. The two spend the remainder of the day working the streets. But after a brutal encounter with John's drug dealer, John decides it is time to leave L.A. and agrees to leave with Donner to Camelot. There is one problem, however. They are still short of the money needed to make the journey so John leaves with one last customer: his very last.

The Christian symbolism is established early in the film. The audience learns within only the first moments that John's birthday is on Christmas Day. Yet while many of the more overt symbols seem to signify Christ's birth, the film more closely follows the Passion of Christ narrative with the Christmas references serving only to establish a link between John and Christ. The Passion narrative describes the turmoil and suffering of Jesus in the hours before his martyrdom. It begins with the conspiracy against Jesus by Judas, one of Christ's most trusted disciples, which results in Jesus' arrest. This is followed by Christ's sentencing to death by an angry mob and the crowning of thorns. The narrative ends with Christ dragging his cross to Calvary.

While *Johns* inverts the order a bit and oftentimes rather obscures them, each element of the Passion is present. Donner, John's most trusted and only friend is ultimately revealed to be the one who had taken John's shoes in the first place. He is linked in this respect to Judas in that he sets in motion the events that will eventually lead to John's death. John receives the "crown of thorns" after being beaten by his drug dealer, equating the brutal beating Christ received after his arrest. John's turbulent quest to replace his stolen money symbolizes his cross to bear. After

deciding to leave with Donner, John's need for money is no longer purely selfish. Most striking however is John's death at the hands of a closeted homosexual proselyte (born again Christian). And while in many Christ allegories the Christ figure ultimately dies because of his own sins rather than for someone else's, John's engagement with the Christian zealot comes only because he is trying to help Donner off the streets. John tells Donner "I gotta do this. For the both of us." In essence, John seems to be unconsciously aware of the sacrifice he must make in order to save Donner from the fate of Christian persecution and allow Donner to live the utopian dream of Camelot.

The film holds Christian ideology responsible for John's death and demonstrates this through the inclusion of the closeted Christian character, David. It also condemns Christian ideology for being so restrictive as to create individuals so tormented by their sexuality that they have no remorse in killing in the name of God. David is foreshadowed multiple times throughout the film before ever actually being given a face. Each time, liturgical choral music swells as a disembodied point-of-view (POV) slowly tracks (stalks) John through an open car window. By remaining faceless, the David's POV then comes to represent any number of "Christian" peoples who would condemn the acts of prostitution. Yet within a context that appears to take great efforts to build parallels between Christian ideology and John's narrative, the film also establishes a parallel between the figure of the prostitute and that of the homosexual. Arguably, any film that takes male prostitution as its subject is less about prostitution than it is about something else: namely the exploration of any number of facets of male homosexuality. What the deliberate pursuit by the antiphonal choir seems to then indicate is the continued assault on homosexuals by the Church. This is made even more apparent as David repeatedly and methodically recites "faggot" as he beats John to death.



This analogy is countered, however, by yet another canonical Christian parable: that of the Good Samaritan. Periodically a silent “angel” character appears. He is an ahistoric character that turns up, quite literally, to offer a helping hand. He appears for the first time after John’s money has been stolen. The angel extends his hand to an obviously distraught John who mistakes the gesture as asking for a hand out. The angel appears a second time with an outstretched hand as Donner lies defeated in an alley after an altercation with John. He helps Donner stand, then peacefully and without a word moves on. The angel appears a third time after John is beaten by his drug dealer. He offers the bloodied John a sandwich. Then, after little more than exchanging names, the angel stands, says “merry Christmas,” and leaves. The angel’s name is also John. The final time the angel appears is after John has been murdered and Donner is on the bus to Missouri. The angel is standing on the side of the road as he watches Donner leave. He begins to sing the Negro spiritual “Sweet Little Jesus Boy.”

By including this angel character, the film seems to suggest a “right” and a “wrong” Christian ideology: an ideology that values love and compassion over judgment and condemnation. The selfless charity of the angel, in opposition to the proselyte, reinforces the martyrdom of John by providing a victim to the senseless and violent persecution of homosexuals. John is singled out as a representative of the larger gay community and made to suffer for it. This analogy is given greater weight by the clever naming of the characters: John the prostitute and perceived homosexual, John the Good Samaritan, and, of course, all of a hustler’s clients are referred to as “johns.” The simple repetition of character names seems to indicate that little separates queer individuals from their persecutors and suggests that everyone is the same and of the same God. The naming of the multiple Johns creates a kinship between

them as the angel sings “The world treat you mean, Lord; treat me mean, too. But that's how things is down here, we didn't know t'was You.”

### Conclusion

The New Queer films of the 1990s frequently commented on, and argued with, dominant cultural ideologies, principally restrictive Christian ideologies. As a result, the cinematic hustler rose in popularity because his subversive qualities easily aligned with mainstream assumptions about promiscuous homosexuality. Queer filmmakers then used him to create a sympathetic martyr who represented the pain and anguish of a community battling with AIDS and demonized by Christian morality. Yet by the mid 1990s the political priorities of the gay community began to change dramatically. Early reports on the effectiveness of new drug combinations began to offer hope to a community that had been braced to die. Men infected with HIV began to return to life and began embracing the new identity of “AIDS survivor.” At the same time the polarizing issues of gays-in-the-military and gay-marriage were being battled in the courts and legislature. Gay characters began to appear regularly on primetime television programs. There was an explosion of new media aimed directly at gay audiences and a growing need to produce product to meet the demand. By the end of the decade, gays and lesbians seemed to be everywhere. However, with this rise in visibility also came a rise in antigay backlash. Queer cultural politics slowly began to move from identity based politics that favored difference and individualism back to more essentializing views of identity. As a result, the gay community began to police its boundaries and draw distinctions between “good” gays and “bad” gays. The sympathetic hustler of the early 1990s who had suffered at the hands a Christian Right-wing morality and was martyred for his sexual difference once again became a flawed character falling

away from socially accepted norms. This time, however, the norms were those dictated by the gay community itself and not those of the larger heteronormative society. The hustler would become the fallen angel who represented all the negative characteristics of a gay community engaged in the objective of cultural assimilation.

## CHAPTER 5

### DOMESTIC ANGELS AND ASSIMILATED HOMOSEXUALS: POST-AIDS HUSTLERS AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF GAY IDENTITY

In the early part of the 1990s, the gay community struggled for visibility which would provide much needed money for research and treatment of AIDS. AIDS films drew attention to the needs of the community and lambasted society's inaction with edgy political and cultural critiques. By the end of the 1990s, gays and lesbians seemed to be visible everywhere. They were on movie screens, on network television programming, and on the nightly news. They influenced style trends and national politics. They had been "discovered" as a new niche market with millions of dollars of disposable income that resulted in the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities aimed directly at them. However with this rise in visibility also came a rise in anti-gay backlash. The "in-your-face" tactics employed by the militant activists and independent filmmakers were losing favor because they arguably fostered hard-edged homophobia.

As a result, the edgy political critiques that had characterized New Queer Cinema became less and less popular. This was due in part to the shifts in the modes of production and distribution throughout the 1990s which saw the "independent" feature become increasingly more difficult to define. Increased government cutbacks were providing fewer opportunities for independent producers to secure grant-funding, forcing them to seek commercial investors. At the same time, independent production houses were being regularly purchased and absorbed into major studios. The new "independent" features being made could still be edgy, but they needed to appease the market. They needed to appeal to diverse mass audiences that include not only homosexuals but heterosexuals as well. Many of the new films began to emulate more traditional Hollywood narrative genre structures and deal progressively less with subversive

social issues. They sought to provide “positive images” of homosexuality and often included themes of acceptance and assimilation. As such, the hustler was figured as a fallen angel whose sexuality ran counter to assimilationist ideals.

This chapter examines the films *In the Flesh* (1998) and *Sugar* (2004) to show that within these new films the hustler was no longer depicted as teetering between opposing sexual identities; he is almost always exclusively gay. This is not to say an inherent need to rescue the “fallen angel” was no longer present, rather the central focus of these films was to provide appropriate behavioral templates and demonstrate assimilationist values. This often entailed having the hustler leave his profession and enter into a monogamous domestic union. For example, the film *In the Flesh* (1998) uses the central prostitute character to illustrate a distinction between homosexual practice and homosexual identity that was a significant tenet of the assimilationist movement. At the same time, the film also seems to engage with the guilt of many AIDS “survivors” by giving them permission to leave the trauma of the past behind and continue forward with their lives. *Sugar* (2004), on the other hand, is one of the few films that address the link between drugs and drug addiction with prostitution. Yet instead of being an extended anti-drug oration, the film uses drugs and the culture surrounding them to contrast assimilationist values. The film uses the image of the hustler to illustrate the distinction between “good” gays and “bad” gays for a community newly interested in policing its boundaries to make it more acceptable to the larger heteronormative society.

#### From Post-AIDS to Assimilation

Prompted by the AIDS crisis, the early 1990s witnessed a phenomenal rise in the numbers of texts examining gay and lesbian culture and practices. The growth in academic

scholarship was so profound that a recognizable field took the shape under the rubric of “queer theory.” This new academic field influenced everything from theorizing how gender and sexuality were socially constructed, to ideas that any identity is a performative act, to the deconstruction of the binary frameworks that govern the traditional notions of gender and sexuality. And while much of this research focused on Marxist-derived notions of hegemonic negotiation and poststructuralist ideas of identity formation, this new field of study also had a subtle, but profound, effect on the research being presented on male prostitution.

Like queer theory, which was born from a desire to dismantle common classification categories and provide inclusiveness, studies on the male prostitute also revised their taxonomy to include a broader range of practices. With the publication of *Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia* (Perkins et al., 1994), a new research paradigm would take hold that adjusted its focus away from the moralizing approaches of the past onto the prostitutes’ actual and present situations. A number of studies began to appear in the early 1990s that took the view that prostitution was legitimate work that had a socially enforceable professional code of conduct (Robinson and Davies; Visano; Van der Poel; Scott et al.). As the paradigm was expanded to incorporate the element of rational choice and report on the costs and benefits of engaging in prostitution, authors began to abandon the term “prostitution” altogether. Instead, researchers began to employ the more inclusive expression “sex work” to describe “any practice that involves the exchange of money for human sexual behavior” (Bimbi 9). The new paradigm also allowed researchers to focus on more identity-centered lines of inquiry such as the influence of personal relationships on sex work (Browne and Minichiello "Research Directions"; Leary and Minichiello) or how sex workers combat the negative stigma surrounding sex work (Browne and Minichiello "Social Meanings"; Morrison and Whitehead). The hustler films from the second

half of the 1990s frequently depicted a negotiation with this stigma. The hustlers struggled against the stigma associated to sexual promiscuity that was disfavored by an increasingly assimilationist gay community.

This shift in the cinematic representation of the hustler was also influenced by a variety of medical developments and cultural shifts that had dramatically begun to alter the communal mindset of the gay community. Early reports of the success of the new protease inhibitors and combination therapies began to offer hope that an effective treatment had finally arrived. Subtle changes began to take hold in urban gay ghettos. No longer were the streets filled with young men using canes or wheelchairs. Obituary pages that had once filled multiple pages in gay publications dwindled to half a page, if they appeared at all. Men infected with HIV began to return to work and resume careers they had been forced to abandon because of exhaustion. They embraced the new identity of “survivor” and declared their AIDS diagnoses as relics of the past. In many cities, AIDS hospices began to close their doors or accept non-AIDS patients in order to remain in operation (Rofes 4). To many, AIDS seemed to have run its course. The gay community began to get on with the task of living. Added to this were the occurrences of young gay men for whom AIDS had always been part of their memory. These young men had “come out” after the epidemic had started. They were well-informed about HIV/AIDS and applied this knowledge to their romantic relationships and sexual experiences. For them, sex had always been “safe sex.” Dowsett and McInnes (1996) explain that “While the epidemic was very present for them, they were not waiting desperately for it to end. They were already ‘over it.’ In one sense they were living ‘post-AIDS.’”

With the designation of a “post-AIDS” reality, coupled with an increased hopefulness in the gay community, the AIDS narratives of the New Queer movement began to decline. In a

period where so many who had been confronted with their own mortality were suddenly given a new opportunity to live, the morbidity of the AIDS film seemed a relic of the past best forgotten. Instead, more and more films began to eschew the irreverent politicking of the New Queer films altogether in favor of more palatable “feel good” films modeled after the Hollywood melodrama. Bob Nowlan explains that the films of the late 1990s into the early 2000s “proceed[ed] largely indifferent if not altogether oblivious to even the possibility of devising and promoting a dissident queer aesthetic; they, in short, evince little if any interest in problematizing, let alone deconstructing, gay identity” (Nowlan 175). The result was an explosion of new films made by openly queer filmmakers that favored positivist representations and reflected the optimism promised by the new post-AIDS era.

The increase in “feel good” films was also prompted by the decline of the militant activism that had characterized the earlier part of the decade. Replacing the radical activist groups were organizations that had begun to work cooperatively with health care providers and government research agencies (Epstein 344). While the radicalism of groups like ACT UP or Queer Nation had reinvigorated the gay and lesbian movement, the AIDS organizations they started were now finding themselves at odds with the larger gay and lesbian community, despite frequent overlap in personnel and organizational structures. These tensions were most visible in the ongoing project to secure legal recognitions of same-sex marriage (Flanagan 206).

Many gay and lesbian organizations had originally been reluctant to focus on the issue of same-sex marriage fearing that the impossibility of victory would hinder successes on more “winnable” initiatives (Walters 346). However, when three same-sexed couples sued the state of Hawaii in 1993 for the right to marry and it appeared their case might actually win, gay marriage was thrust into the political spotlight and helped solidify a unified gay and lesbian identity.



Fearing that gay and lesbian couples would flock to Hawaii only to return to their home states and demand recognition of their marriages, the Religious Right began to flood state legislatures with anti-same-sex marriage ballot measures. Gay activists around the country quickly mobilized around gay marriage and worked to defeat these anti-marriage referenda. In some cases, these ballot measures were designed to legalize antigay discrimination and remove protections based on sexual orientation (Newcombe 3; Goldberg 21).

As a response to the Hawaii lawsuit, the Republican controlled U.S. Congress fast-tracked the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). The bill sought to amend Federal law to make explicit that marriage was the legal union of two people of the opposite sex. The House and Senate hearings on DOMA recycled old arguments on morality, mental instability, promiscuity, disease responsibility, and appealed to “family-values” rhetoric (U.S. House of Representatives; U.S. Senate). Testimony by gay and lesbian activists argued that it was the restrictions posed by DOMA that *forced* homosexuals to behave in ways incongruent with a “pro-family” agenda. Gay and lesbians *wanted* to be like their heterosexual counterparts but were prevented from doing so. By allowing gay marriage, the worst excesses of gay culture would be eliminated and “stability, responsibility, [and] the disciplines of family life” would be promoted (U.S. House of Representatives 119). In other words, marriage would force homosexuals to behave and reduce promiscuity and the transmission of disease. These arguments held no sway over lawmakers who overwhelmingly approved the bill in both houses. On September 21, 1996, the bill was signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

Yet despite the overwhelming setback DOMA posed to the securing of marriage rights, the language used in testimony by gay activists against DOMA highlighted the shift in strategy that had begun with the decline of the more radical forms of gay activism. The gay rights

movement began to take a more assimilationist approach to their activism. For gay and lesbians leaders, assimilation was not only the process of creating identities that were acceptable to dominant society, it was a process of absorption into that society (Chasin 46). Instead of accentuating the differences between homosexuality and heterosexuality, movement leaders had begun to avoid distinctions altogether. This resulted in the exclusion of so-called “fringe elements” of the gay community from political discussions. These “fringe elements included drag queens, leather men, butch dykes, and butch-femme couples” (Piontek 82). Gays who patterned themselves after heteronormative models of gender and behavior were not only more acceptable to the larger society but were also thought to foster tolerance and inclusion. This distinction led to a new division within the gay community. Those who subscribed to more traditional concepts of gender, monogamy, and family were labeled “good” and those who flaunted their indifference to those values were labeled “bad.” These labels were then perpetuated through the media as opposing models of gay identity. Thus, many of the era’s gay films portrayed gays and lesbians as a social group with an assimilationist drive that showed them to be “just like everyone else,” meaning heteronormative society. For example, director Tommy O’Haver explains that he wanted his protagonist in *Billy’s Hollywood Screen Kiss* to represent Everyman. “I wanted people to forget that this is a gay man—it could be anyone” (Levy 491).

The hustler films of the late 1990s and early 2000s were not immune from this sanitization and political sermonizing. While the increase in gay film production provided for an abundance of queer representation that reflected disparate racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, representations of the hustler remained very narrowly focused on the common street prostitute. He became a tool to demonstrate the goals of gay assimilation. The image of

the street prostitute was more useful than that of the more “high class” call boy because his low hierarchal position on the sex worker spectrum integrated more closely with deviant, sex-obsessed homosexual. Hustlers paraded their sexuality out in the open and on street corners while call boys were discreet and near invisible. By presenting the hustler as a street prostitute, the films could then demonstrate more effectively his redeeming transformation from a deviant sexuality into a more sanctioned one.

Indeed, many of the films utilized the Cinderella transformation formula found in mainstream films like *Pretty Woman* (1990). In these hustler films, a lowly urchin struggles against the abuses of living on the street only to meet a “prince” who whisks him away to live happily-ever-after in wedded bliss. For example, in *200 America* (2003), Conrad is a CEO of a large ad agency who has just found himself at the end of a three year relationship. Not feeling ready to begin a new one, he hires a young hustler named Ian. First, it is only for a night, but then Conrad hires Ian as a photographer’s assistant at his company; not only to keep Ian off the streets but also to keep him close for sex. Meanwhile, Ian falls for his new supervisor, Michael, who does not know Ian had worked as a street prostitute. The story become predictably complicated when Conrad jealously informs Michael about Ian’s past. The film finds a pleasant, and happy, resolution when Michael finds it in his heart to forgive Ian for the “fucked up things” he’s done in the past and asks Ian out on a date. Even when these films did not end with the fairy tale “walk into the sunset,” they still managed to reinforce the goals of assimilation by presenting one form of homosexual practice as more favorable than another.

### *In the Flesh*

Written and directed by Ben Taylor, *In the Flesh* is a noir police drama set in Atlanta that

centers on the unlikely relationship between a young male hustler and a ruggedly handsome vice cop. Closeted Detective Philip Kirsch is reluctantly assigned to go undercover and infiltrate a drug ring operating out of a gay cruising bar. While staking out the seedy Blue Boy bar, he meets and is instantly attracted to Oliver, a handsome yet detached prostitute. Unable to resist Oliver's incessant come-ons, Philip hires Oliver for one night of sex. Philip quickly becomes obsessed with Oliver and begins to use his status as a police officer to uncover as much information on Oliver as he can. In the process, he learns that Oliver leads a double life. By day Oliver is a college student who works at a local record store. By night, he helps his sister make ends meet by hustling. Their growing relationship becomes strained, however, when Oliver is implicated as the prime suspect in a murder investigation. It is through this turn of events that Philip and Oliver must learn to trust one another and expose their secrets. As a result, Philip grows strong enough to reveal his sexual identity and his relationship with Oliver to his fellow cops, and Oliver learns to dismantle his defensive barriers and allow himself to fall in love with Philip. Despite wooden acting and many clichéd "woe is me" contrivances, the film seems to be interested in positively defining homosexuals by more than their sexual practices. Homosexuals are first students, employees, brothers or sisters, and lastly gay or lesbian. Underscoring this need to define the homosexual by traits other than sexual object choice, the film highlights a desire to leave the anguish of the past behind by giving the characters permission to love again.

Much of *In the Flesh* is concerned with defining the character of Oliver. As such, *In the Flesh* uses Oliver to deconstruct the attributes of homosexual identity. His status as a male prostitute is not the end-all be-all of his existence, indicating to straight and gay audiences alike that homosexuality should be viewed in the same light. In fact, Oliver's status as a hustler seems to have little to do with his narrative other than as a plot device that positions Oliver in the right

place at the right time. The film establishes early that Oliver is only working a “job.” Upon arriving at the Blue Boy, Oliver checks in with the bartender. The bartender is, in essence, a manager-like figure who monitors the hustlers’ work and provides accommodations when needed. When Oliver leaves with the client that will eventually be murdered, he is simply providing a service. In this particular case, it is a taxi service because the client is too drunk to drive. The film carefully avoids depicting Oliver as a promiscuous homosexual endlessly cruising for his next “hook up.” Instead the film seems to create a legitimate profession with recognizable codes of conduct, however disparaged, that Oliver is able to assume or not at his leisure.

Providing further complexity to Oliver’s character, Oliver is also shown to be compassionate and selfless. Early in the film the audience is introduced to Mikey, a mentally challenged homeless boy who has taken up residency outside the Blue Boy bar. He shows little interest in anything but a hand-held video game that he plays endlessly. Yet a special bond between Oliver and Mikey is made obvious as Oliver is leaving the Blue Boy and discovers a john persistently trying to engage the inattentive Mikey. “Hey! That one’s not for sale!” shouts Oliver as he chases the john away. He then sits next to Mikey and attempts to bundle Mikey more closely into his sweater. Mikey smiles and oafishly insists that Oliver play his video game. Oliver reluctantly takes the game insisting that he must leave and immediately ends the game. Mike childishly takes the game back, grins widely, and turns his attention onto a new game, now oblivious to Oliver’s presence. Oliver tousles Mikey’s hair and quietly inserts a twenty dollar bill into Mikey’s sleeve. Through Oliver’s interaction with Mikey, the audience is shown a character that is a protective caregiver to a member of his own community.

While much of the first half of the film is concerned with establishing the multifaceted

nature of homosexual identity, the later part of the film is marked by a desire to overcome the hardships of the past and the fear to love. *In the Flesh* belongs to one of the more popular film genres to appear in the post-AIDS period: the coming out/young love genre. Having been burdened by the realities of AIDS and its resultant homophobia for so many years, most general gay audiences no longer wanted to see the emotionally taxing films of the New Queer movement. The coming out film presented a fantasy world in which revealing one's sexual identity only had minor negative repercussions, was not terribly difficult, and caused little personal or familial pain. Coming out was a positive and healthy action that resisted homophobia and was overcome, usually with the aid of family and friends, through good will and better intentions. In his article "The Politics of Love in Three Recent U.S. and U.K. Films of Young Gay Romance," Bob Nowlan explains further that the young men in these films struggled through a period of painful self-discovery only to find "sympathetic and supportive allies as well as substantial communities and positive role models to aid the in this process" (143). The coming out film, to a large degree, was inseparable from a pro-gay propaganda which reinforced the idea that it was "O.K. to be gay" and acceptable to once again move forward and embrace a homosexual identity. They sought to remove the stigma associated with a homosexual identity by providing positive representations and role models for a community still struggling against a repressive society. Like many of the post-AIDS hustler films, *In the Flesh* is not significantly different from its "coming out" counterparts. Detective Philip is confronted with the possibility of an unintended romance and must struggle against societal homophobia in order to find acceptance in his newly realized sexual identity. Where the film differs is that Oliver replaces Philip's friends and family and serves as the as the main source of sympathetic support.

Inextricably tied to the coming out narrative, however, was the "young love" story. In

any of the coming out films, romantic attraction serves as the catalyst for the coming out process. And while the majority of the young love films featured the struggles of boys and young men, the hustler films usually dealt with the problems faced by older men. As such, the signification of the “young love” more frequently ran tantamount to “new love,” which was a frightening prospect for many gay men after a long period in which romantic relationships were burdened with the specter of disease and loss. Because “new love” is easily equated with “freshness” and endless possibility, these films seemed to gesture toward the promises proffered by a post-AIDS reality—the promises of new life and the freedom to become romantically involved without guilt. Through the young/new romance formula, the hustler films suggested a refocusing away from the desolation of the past onto the hopefulness of tomorrow.

It is through the lens of “new love” that *In the Flesh* seems to focus more attention on Oliver’s hesitancy to the developing relationship than it does on Philip’s. The film links Oliver’s response to that of a gay community also hesitant to develop new intimate relationships. Throughout the film, brief flashback sequences establish that Oliver is concealing a dark secret. Presumably before he became a hustler, he had covered up his responsibility in the death of a former lover. He had been driving drunk and crashed his car into a tree killing his lover who was in the passenger seat. While this series of flashbacks attempts to explain why Oliver prevents himself from falling in love with Philip, it also seems to make reference to the survivor’s guilt felt by many in the gay community who had lost lovers to AIDS. Whereas the majority of the young love films were unburdened from the specter of morbidity, Oliver struggles against the feelings of loss and guilt.

After Oliver is implicated in the murder of a john, he loses his apartment. Having earlier created an alibi for Oliver, Philip invites him to move in. Despite Philip’s claim to the contrary,

Oliver feels Philip is “owed” a night with him and remains leery of Philip’s affection. Oliver insists on “repaying” Philip, and Philip insists that Oliver sleep on the couch until Oliver can accept his affection freely. Only gradually does Oliver begin to open up and reveal he was responsible for his lover’s death. This gradual relaxation of defensive barriers is prompted by a tender scene between Oliver and his sister, Sadie, in which Sadie apologizes for her past sibling abuses. Sadie is slowly dying from a heroin addiction. When asked why she is fixated on the past she solemnly replies: “I can’t feel anything anymore. Can you?” To which Oliver answers: “I wish I couldn’t.” The film’s theme song swells “Now I have to let you go, I just have to let you go...” creating a pivotal point in which Oliver relinquishes his past and embraces an uncertain future.

The AIDS crisis had fatigued the gay community and drew it into an inescapable depression. By drawing attention to Oliver’s relinquishment of his past and his decision to continue forward in his relationship with Philip, the film suggests a similar solution for the gay community struggling with its own past. The transition from mourning to acquiescence to the future is underscored when Oliver crawls defeated into Philip’s bed asking only to be held. He symbolically surrenders himself to Philip, exposes his secrets, and leaves his past behind. He forgives himself for the death of his lover. More importantly, he allows himself to feel again by abandoning hustling and beginning a relationship with Philip. In the same respect, *In the Flesh* seems to also give that gay community permission to feel again. Yet by also having Oliver renounce prostitution in favor of a “happily ever after” ending in which Oliver and Philip proceed hand in hand into the future, the film reinforces a preferred pattern of monogamous domesticity that will dominate the hustler film for the remainder of the decade and into the twenty-first century.



## *Sugar*

While *In the Flesh* was more focused on defining the hustler by more than his sexual behavior and gesturing toward the release of survivor guilt, *Sugar* seems to use the promiscuous nature of the hustler to further the goals of the gay assimilationist movement. Directed by John Palmer and based on semi-autobiographical short stories by Bruce LaBruce, *Sugar* chronicles the story of a middle-class suburban boy, Cliff, and a teenage hustler, Butch. The film details Cliff's crush on Butch as the two embark on a journey through the streets of Toronto that resembles the conventional teen coming-of-age story. Cliff's tumultuous relationship with Butch allows him to explore his sexuality, but ultimately the sexuality presented is a frightening example of homosexuality that leads to hopelessness and despair. One reviewer stated that "A screening of *Sugar* should become compulsory for all young men contemplating the transition from school-yard beat-offs to full-service drug and hustling lifestyles" (Wegg). As the film effectively depicts the harshness associated with drug and street life, it also clearly defines deviant sexuality not sanctioned by an assimilationist perspective. Even more than presenting a no-holds-barred examination of Toronto's street life, the film demonizes the seedier aspects of urban gay life by depicting them as repellent and dangerous. For the most part, Cliff is an observer to a world that is starkly different from his suburban one. However, he serves as a point of identification through which the audience is able to learn to identify the deviant sexualities rejected by assimilationist culture.

Cliff is a prototypical angst-ridden gay teenager from an unconventional home that is mildly tolerant of marijuana use and perfectly at ease with Cliff's homosexuality. On his eighteenth birthday, Cliff's Ritalin-popping younger sister hands him a small bottle of vodka, a joint, and a wad of cash with the admonishment to "go get sex." Cliff takes the money and heads

downtown. Though his quest for sex proves unsuccessful, Cliff does manage to befriend the hardened drug-addled Butch. The two quickly become close as Cliff naïvely follows Butch through a night of sordid encounters that introduce Cliff to an unsavory collection of drug users, johns, and drag queens. Although the romantic attraction appears mutual, Butch has trouble with separating emotional intimacy from a “cash-for-sex” transaction. Nonetheless, the two spend the morning after sleeping together, albeit platonically, in Butch’s bed.

Enamored with Butch, Cliff invites Butch home to meet his family. Cliff’s home is inviting and eclectic. The color palette is warm, as are Cliff’s mother and sister. As the foursome share a pleasant dinner together and Cliff’s mother, Madge, and sister, Cookie, take an instant liking to Butch. Aware that Cliff has feelings for Butch, Madge begins to question Butch about his work and future. Butch lies and says he works at K-mart as a stock boy but insists that he will “go far” with the job and someday “make” store manager. It is important to him that he succeeds because he wants a “cool house” like Madge’s. He wants the “white picket fence” and children as well.

If Butch’s wishes are to be believed, the inclusion of “children” in his fantasy is significant because it signals that he does not simply want the success and comfort afforded by owning a home, but rather that also wants a family. Butch makes no mention that he wishes his family were *like* Cliff’s or that he wants to be a part of a family; he wants his *own* family with his *own* children. If a house with a white picket fence and children can be seen as the ultimate ideal of the gay community fighting for marriage equality, then Butch’s fantasy exhibits a desire to participate in that ideal.

Yet Butch’s desire for family and the concealment of his actual profession also indicates recognition of both desirable and undesirable identities being defined by a gay assimilationist

movement. Butch is aware of the stigma associated with his lifestyle, and demonstrates this awareness by lying about it. By hiding his objectionable profession and expressing a desire for family, he is aligning himself with the goals of assimilation and demonstrating a longing to participate in the larger hegemonic society. Butch never realizes this ideal however. He is already too far gone for the instructions of assimilation to be of any use. Instead, he travels further and further away from it and, in doing so, drags Cliff along with him. His and Cliff's friendship remains blissful only until Cliff is reluctantly, and humiliatingly, raped by Butch in front of a paying client. This downward spiral continues as Butch begins calling Cliff in desperate, stoned stupors, finally ending in disaster when the now speed-addicted Butch attempts to force Cliff into giving him fellatio. In an inebriated state, Butch puts his arm through a plate-glass window then bleeds to death from the resulting wounds.

Even with these graphic depictions of gay promiscuity and drug abuse, what is most immediately striking about the film is the stark distinction made between the pleasant "family" spaces and the distasteful "gay" spaces. Butch's apartment is drab and empty. His bed is nothing more than a bare mattress on the floor. Not only does Butch's empty apartment represent the desolation of the street, it also signals to the emptiness and loneliness associated with a promiscuous sexuality. Whereas Cliff's family home is comfortable and warm, Butch's apartment is empty and lacking anything that would resemble family contentment or fulfillment.

Further highlighting this distinction, the downtown streets of Toronto are cold and awash in grime and filth, as is the nightclub that Cliff and Butch frequent. The nightclub is smoky and filled with soulless and faceless figures in various states of undress. Historically, the gay nightclub has long been central to the gay "lifestyle." Throughout history it has served as a designated "safe place" in which homosexuals could meet and associate freely with other "like-

minded” individuals without fear of retribution. At the same time, however, the nightclub has also been derided as nothing more than a space in which homosexual men actively cruise for anonymous sex with other men. The patrons of the nightclub Cliff and Butch visit appear to be conspicuous representations of this later view. There is no camaraderie in their despondent drifting from person to person, only misery, indicating an association with “bad” homosexuality. Additionally, the drag queens and transsexuals that inhabit the street corners and bars are both violent and grotesque. They are a far stretch from the colorful campy female impersonators who amuse with witty rejoinders. They provoke physical brawls with their johns and freely display their augmented breasts to passers by. They are crude and unpleasant. Their offensive behavior seems to suggest that because their gender inversion runs counter to traditional standards of gender display, it thusly runs counter to the aims of gay assimilation.

While the film is almost certainly attempting to recreate a realist and bleak representation of street life as opposed to the comforts of home and family, it succeeds more in highlighting the distinctions between “good gay” and “bad gay” being made by the assimilationist gay movement. *Sugar* presents promiscuous sexuality as empty and emotionally damaging while also presenting “gay subculture” as grotesque and devoid of substance. The film suggests that promiscuous sex promotes the idea that homosexuals are only “about lust” and is therefore “bad.” “Good” sex, on the other hand, is monogamous and “about love” (Bawer 172). Building on Gayle Rubin’s essay, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” (1984), Thomas Piontek explains that “good” sexuality was one that was conjugal, monogamous, noncommercial, coupled, and domestic. Sex that violated these rules was abnormal, or unnatural (Piontek 82). These “bad” sexualities were considered sick, sinful, and beyond pale by not only the heterosexual society but also a homosexual community involved in the policing and

sanitizing of its image from the deviant, sex-obsessed “subculture-oriented gays” (34).

Yet despite the hope that Cliff would learn to recognize the destructiveness of promiscuous homosexuality and other “bad” sexualities, the ending of the film appears to indicate that Cliff has learned nothing from his experience. However, by allowing Cliff to ignore all the apparent lessons, the film is able to provide a final warning to an audience who may also have learned nothing. After being raped, then turning down a quintessentially innocent prom invitation by a loveable school boy, Cliff abandons his sister in a coffee shop to have bathroom sex with the attractive man sitting at another table. The man’s name is “Killer.” This ending seems remarkably out of place considering the torment Cliff has both been witness to and participated in. Yet the clever christening of the “Mr. Right Now” in the coffee shop as “Killer” allows the film to make one final comment on assimilationist values. “Killer” is not merely the character’s name; it is who he is, or rather, what he represents. From the viewpoint of the assimilationist, a “bad” sexual identity is demarcated by unmarried, promiscuous, or commercial sex that leads to disease and emotional discontent. Cliff’s tolerance and active participation in this type of sex can only lead to one definitive conclusion: death. This death could be either an emotional hopelessness or actual physical death caused by disease or violence. In either case, each runs counter to the goals set by the gay assimilationist movement.

### Conclusion

As queer cinema evolved rapidly from the edgy political critiques of the early 1990s to the more mainstream replicas of traditional Hollywood formulas in the mid 1990s, the subversive qualities associated with the hustler were no longer seen as positive attributes. By the mid 1990s, the cinematic hustler became a symbol of “bad” sexuality for a gay community eager to

sanitize its image and make it more acceptable to a mainstream society. Despite an explosion of queer media that promised a wide variation of both plot and theme, representations of the hustler remained very narrowly focused on the common street prostitute. As more traditional genres allowed the protagonist to assume any number of romanticized identities, the hustler continued to be an ideological construction that demonstrated the goals of gay assimilation. He became a fallen angel whose sexuality aligned him with the image of the deviant, sex-obsessed homosexual the assimilationist movement was desperately trying to shed. And while in previous decades the hustler often represented a character that had fallen from acceptable *heteronormative* principles, by the late 1990s he was chastised by his *own community* for not subscribing to assimilationist ideals.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: ANGELS AND HOMOSEXUALS

Upon learning what the topic of this current project was about, gay historian and author Alexander Doty once said, “We all have a little hustler in us.” This simple declaration has been the rhetorical thrust that has driven this project. Despite frequently being objectified as simply “a whole lot of hot,” like Jesse on OUT’s “Hot Guy of the Day,” the cinematic hustler has been more than just a pretty image that promised to fulfill the fantasies of same-sex desire. Through the struggles that he faced in the any number of films depicting him, he has provided insight to the many social problems experienced by the very homosexual men looking at and desiring him. He became a metaphor for homosexual identity. In being so, it may have been more appropriate for Doty to have said “We are all hustlers.”

This project has attempted to demonstrate that the hustler genre proceeded along the same ideological evolutionary path that the homosexual followed throughout the last half of the twentieth and early part of the twenty-first centuries. The challenges the male prostitute faced in these films were often the same as homosexual men who struggled against an anti-permissive society which condemned homosexuality to the outer boundaries of mental health and social tolerance. Because of this, the “hustler film” allowed for a glimpse at the hegemonic negotiation processes in which male homosexuals attempted to construct unique sexual identities and define themselves against a larger heteronormative society. Like the homosexual in each of the decades that followed the first appearance of the cinematic hustler, the hustler was characterized as a naïve pseudo-homosexual, as a victim of the pedophile, as a “vector of disease,” and as promiscuous deviant who opposed assimilationist values. Yet simultaneously throughout his many incarnations, these characterizations also tended to reflect a desire to rehabilitate the

hustler into some more acceptable mode of behavior. In doing so, the street hustler was continuously depicted as a “fallen angel” who not only found himself ostracized and demonized by society but also struggled to negotiate his space within it. And while the term “fallen angel” signifies a decidedly Judeo-Christian perspective, it also connoted a ruin due to vice, promiscuity, or some other unsanctioned self-identity.

Framed in such a way, the street hustlers in these films became fallen angels because they sinned against “appropriate” ideological Christian forms of gender expression, sexual morality, and social conformity. The very act of engaging in same-sex relations placed their sexual identities at odds with “normal” Christian sexual expression. Thus, what was seen in many of these films was a negotiation by homosexual men with Christian ideology in an attempt to define their own personal identities. So for instance, as society in the 1960s had begun to question the “straightness” of any man who had sex with another man, the films that appeared in this era appropriated the fallen angel to indicate an individual who was naïvely falling from this “normal” expression. While the films *My Hustler* and *The Meatrack* seemed to be fascinated with the sexual objectification of the hustler, the characters within them appeared to actively question whether same-sex relations indicated a deep-seated personal identity or if it simply meant sex. The characters seemed to be troubled by the ideological indication that homosexual behavior signified homosexual identity. This questioning of identity linked back to the real life experiences of many homosexual men who were also struggling with these questions.

To a lesser degree, the same held true for the 1970s and early 1980s films *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* and *Forty Deuce*. Although the young men in these films did not themselves question their sexual identities, in a period that saw a resurgence of anti-gay backlash, the filmmakers referenced Christian morality to suggest that homosexual behavior *led*



to homosexual identity. As gay men of the period were being demonized in the press and by Christian Right political organizations bent on abolishing government protections of homosexuality, so too were the gay men in the hustler films. These films relied on defamatory images of male homosexual immorality to paint the young hustler as a victimized middle-class child. However, because of America's self-image as a Christian nation, middle-class also signified Christian. By emphasizing the child-like qualities of the street hustler, the films presented the young prostitute as a Christian "angel" and the older homosexual man as an agent of moral corruption.

The hustler films of the early 1990s, like *Postcards from America* and *Johns*, used the concept of the angel to argue against the belief by Christian conservatives that homosexuality was a sinful choice that led to debilitating and degenerative diseases. While many gay men in this period were dying from AIDS, many of the hustlers were also suffering from the devastating effects of the disease. Queer filmmakers re-appropriated the image of the angel and turned it against Christian ideology to combat the assertion that AIDS was a judgment from God. These filmmakers created their hustlers as sympathetic martyred angels who were left to die by the very institutions that had historically been associated with compassion and charity.

Even the more recent hustler films which utilized a more secular definition of the fallen angel did so in relation to moralities derived from Christian ideology. In the later part of the 1990s, the gay rights movement began to downplay the differences between homosexual and heterosexual identities hoping to more closely align itself with the Christian Right's "pro-family" agenda. The films *In the Flesh* and *Sugar* used the street prostitute to visualize sexual identities that were opposed to gay assimilationist values. Thus despite very few mentions of Christianity, the films from this period, as well as the homosexual community, attempted to demonstrate the

preferability of sexualities that were conjugal, monogamous, and noncommercial. The hustlers in these films symbolized the very so-called “fringe elements” being expunged from homosexual identity in an effort to fostered tolerance and inclusion.

Yet as the gay community arrives closer to its goal of tolerance and inclusion, the hustler genre is set to make yet another transformation. Many states either legally recognize same-sex marriage or provide the same rights and responsibilities of marriage under state law to same-sex couples—as do many European countries. Religious pluralism is becoming more prevalent as openly Islamic, Jewish, and alternative Christian (like Mormonism) individuals run for and are elected to political offices. In this period of homosexual marriage and religious pluralism, the films are becoming less concerned with negotiating spaces within a strictly Christian ideology. Now that society has begun to provide spaces for a diverse set of peoples and a diverse set of beliefs, the focus is turning toward how to redefine the meaning of family and create new alternative identities.

For example, in the recent film *Boy Culture* (2006), the hustler, named X, is no longer subjected to subscribing to an either/or binary that would force him to select one sexual identity over another. The film never problematizes X’s prostitution, nor does it make any effort to reform him by having him leave the profession. Instead, the film normalizes prostitution to provide for an identity in which X is allowed to be both a prostitute *and* a fully realized and successful homosexual man. Indeed, by the end of the film not only is X still a high dollar escort but he also has a romantic partner who accepts his prostitution as legitimate work. Unlike many of the hustlers that came before him, X is a high dollar callboy that serves only a very narrow repeat clientele. Through his prostitution, he has amassed a small fortune and is able to own an expensive loft apartment. While two other men live with X, they are there only for

companionship and are not required to pay X rent. One is an attractive and newly out man that will eventually become X's love interest. The other is an energetic teenager trying to decide what to do with the rest of his life. None of the characters are unsympathetic or unlikable. As such, the primary focus of the film becomes not a negotiation with the stigma attached to promiscuous sexual behavior, but rather the defining of the three men's relationship that allows for prostitution and homosexuality to be natural, and normal, expressions of personal identity. In this case, the trio becomes an alternative family unit in which the two older homosexual men serve as the guardians and providers to the teenage child.

Although the cinematic image of the male prostitute began as the sexual objectification of homosexual masculinity, as the genre persisted through the decades the hustler came to represent the ideological evolution of homosexual identity. The challenges the hustler faced were the same as those faced by the gay community that created him. He became the "fallen angel" who not only found himself demonized by a repressive society but also struggled to negotiate his space within it. As the genre continues into the future, it will be interesting to see how the hustler is redefined now that prostitution no longer signifies an individual who has fallen from some prescribed sexual identity.

APPENDIX  
HUSTLER FILMOGRAPHY

This is a listing of films that contain a male prostitute as a central character. The listing is alphabetical by title. After the title the following information is given: country of production, date, and director. Although the aim of this list is to be inclusive, there were several problems in compiling it. First, because many of the hustler films were independently produced and not preserved properly, many titles are lost. However, prints are constantly being “discovered.” Additionally, new titles continue to be produced. Second, the author’s unfamiliarity with non-Western cinemas provides for the possibility that there may still be many titles that are not included in this list. The non-Western titles that do appear have been drawn primarily from movie databases such as IMDB.com and *Variety Film Reviews*. Finally, because pornographic titles are exceptionally difficult to keep track of and were not part of this study, they do not appear in this list.

*9 Dead Gay Guys*; UK, 2002; Dir. Lab Ky Mo.

*10 Attitudes*; USA, 2001; Dir. Michael O. Gallant.

*20 Centimeters [20 centímetros]*; Spain 2005; Dir. Ramón Salazar.

*101 Rent Boys*; USA, 2000; Dir. Fenton Bailey, and Randy Barbato.

*103 Degrees*; USA, 1993; Dir. Ki Marcolina.

*200 American*; USA, 2003; Dir. Richard LeMay.

*Agoria Stin Porneia*; Greece, 1985; Dir. Omiros Efstratiadis.

*Aka*; UK, 2002; Dir. Duncan Roy.

*Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn*; USA, 1977; Dir. John Erman.

*American Fabulous*; USA, 1991; Dir. Reno Dakota.

*American Gigolo*; USA, 1980; Dir. Paul Schrader.

"Among Others." *Park City: The Sundance Collection*; USA, 2001; Dir. Trac Vu.

*Angel* [*Angelos*]; Greece, 1982; Dir. Yorgos Katakouzinis.

*Bangkok Time*; Thailand, 2007; Dir. Santi Taepanich.

*The Basketball Diaries*; USA, 1995; Dir. Scott Kalvert.

*Beefcake*; Canada, 1998; Dir. Thom Fitzgerald.

*Being at Home with Claude*; Canada, 1992; Dir. Jean Beaudin.

*Beloved Friend* [*Amic/Amat*]; Spain 1999; Dir. Ventura Pons.

*Beloved Lover* [*Amor bandido*]; Brazil, 1979; Dir. Bruno Barreto.

*Beyond Passion* [*Além da Paixão*]; Brazil, 1985; Dir. Bruno Barreto.

*Big Shar* [*Wielki szu*]; Poland, 1983; Dir. Sylwester Checinski.

*Bishonen* [*Mei shao nian zhi lian*]; Hong Kong, 1998; Dir. Yonfan.

*The Blonde at the Bar* [*La Rossa del bar*]; Spain, 1986; Dir. Ventura Pons.

*The Blue Boy*; USA, 1997; Dir. Ray Vecchiola.

*The Blue Hour* [*Die Blaue Stunde*]; Switzerland, 1992; Dir. Marcel Gisler.

*Body without Soul*; Czech Republic, 1996; Dir. Wiktor Grodecki.

*Boogie Boy*; USA, 1998; Dir. Craig Hamann.

*Boogie Nights*; USA, 1997; Dir. Paul Thomas Anderson.

*Born into Exile*; USA, 1997; Dir. Eric Laneuville.

*Boy*; New Zealand, 2004; Dir. Welby Ings.

*Boy Culture*; USA, 2006; Dir. Q. Allan Brocka.

*A Boy Like Many Others* [*Un ragazzo come tanti*]; Italy, 2000; Dir. Gianni Minello.

*Boys for Rent*; Ireland, 1993; Dir. Liam McGrath.

*Boys from Brazil*; UK, 1993; Dir. John-Paul Davidson.

*The Boys in the Band*; USA, 1970; Dir. William Friedkin.

*Boys on the Outside* [*Ragazzi fuori*]; Italy, 1990; Dir. Marco Risi.

*Breath*; USA, 1998; Dir. Christos Dimas.

*Brighter Days*; USA, 2003; Dir. Godofredo Astudillo.

*Build*; Canada, 2004; Dir. Greg Atkins.

*Bukak Api*; Malaysia, 2000; Dir. Osman Ali.

*Bulgarian Lovers* [*Los Novios búlgaros*]; Spain, 2003; Dir. Eloy de la Iglesia.

*Burlesk King*; Philippines, 1999; Dir. Mel Chionglo.

*Business* [*Bezness*]; France, 1992; Dir. Nouri Bouzid.

*...But Johnny!* [*...aber Jonny!*]; West Germany, 1973; Dir. Alfred Weidenmann.

*Cabiria, Priscilla E Le Altre*; Italy, 1997; Dir. Fabrizio Celestini.

*Californie*; France, 2007; Dir. Sébastien Martinez Barat.

*Callboys*; New Zealand, 2004; Dir. Karen MacKenzie.

*Callboys - Jede Lust Hat Ihren Preis*; Germany, 1999; Dir. Christiane Balthasar.

*Caresses* [*Caricias*]; Spain 1998; Dir. Ventura Pons.

*Cause of Death: Homophobia*; Israel, 2004; Dir. Ran Kozer.

*The Cheat* [*La Triche*]; France, 1984; Dir. Yannick Bellon.

*Children of the Regime*; Philippines, 1985; Dir. Nick Deocampo.

*Chill Out*; Canada, 1999; Dir. Andreas Struck.

*Chronically Unfeasable* [*Cronicamente Inviável*]; Brazil, 2000; Dir. Sergio Bianchi.

*Chronika Ktzara Shel Mahala*; Israel, 2006; Dir. Eran Koblík Kedar.

*Circuit*; USA, 2001; Dir. Dirk Shafer.

*Coming Out*; Germany, 1989; Dir. Heiner Carow.

*Conversation Piece* [*Gruppo di famiglia in un interno*]; Italy, 1974; Dir. Luchino Visconti.

*Dafydd*; UK, 1993; Dir. Ceri Sherlock.

*Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway*; USA, 1976; Dir. Randal Kleiser.

*The Deputy* [*El Diputado*]; Spain, 1978; Dir. Eloy de la Iglesia.

*Deuce Bigalow: European Gigolo*; USA, 2005; Dir. Mike Bigelow.

*Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo*; USA, 1999; Dir. Mike Mitchell.

*Diary of a Male Whore*; Palestine 2001; Dir. Tawfik Abu Wael.

*Double Cross: Ek Dhoka*; India, 2005; Dir. Vicky Tejwani.

*Dr Rey! [Merci Docteur Rey]*; France, 2002; Dir. Andrew Litvack.

*Drifter*; USA, 1975; Dir. Pat Rocco.

*Dry Cleaning [Nettoyage à sec]*; Spain, 1997; Dir. Anne Fontaine.

*Echoes of Silence*; USA, 1965; Dir. Peter Emanuel Goldman.

*Eighteen*; USA, 2004; Dir. Richard Bell.

*El Mar*; Spain, 2000; Dir. Agustí Villaronga.

*Empire State*; UK, 1987; Dir. Ron Peck.

*The End of the Rainbow [Das Ende des Regenbogens]*; West Germany, 1979; Dir. Uwe Frießner.

*Endgame*; UK, 2001; Dir. Gary Wicks.

*Equê De Vuitton*; Brazil, 2003; Dir. Dácio Pinheiro.

*Ethan Mao*; USA, 2004; Dir. Quentin Lee.

*The Everlasting Secret Family*; Australia, 1988; Dir. Michael Thornhill.

*Farewell My Concubine [Ba wang bie ji]*; China, 1993; Dir. Kaige Chen.

*Feeding Boys, Ayaya*; China, 2005; Dir. Zi'en Cui.

*File X for Sex*; USA, 1967; Dir. Sam Lake.

*Film*; Canada 1992; Dir. Sky Gilbert.

*The First Time [La Primera vez]*; Spain, 2001; Dir. Borja Cobeaga.

*Flesh*; USA, 1968; Dir. Paul Morrissey.

*The Flesh Hustler*; USA, 1970; Dir. Limp Irving.

*Fleshpot on 42nd Street*; USA, 1973; Dir. Andy Milligan.

*Flirting with Anthony*; USA, 2005; Dir. Christian Calson.

*Fögi Is a Bastard [Fögi est un salaud]*; Switzerland, 1998; Dir. Marcel Gisler.



*Forever Mary* [*Mery per sempre*]; Italy, 1989; Dir. Marco Risi.

*Forty Deuce*; USA, 1982; Dir. Paul Morrissey.

*Four Rent Boys and a Sangoma*; South Africa, 2004; Dir. Catherine Muller.

*Frankfurt: The Face of a City* [*Frankfurt Kaiserstraße*]; West Germany, 1981; Dir. Roger Fritz.

*Frisk*; USA, 1995; Dir. Todd Verow.

*From the Edge of the City* [*Apo tin akri tis polis*]; Greece, 1998; Dir. Constantine Giannaris.

*The Fruit Machine*; UK, 1988; Dir. Philip Saville.

*Funeral Procession of Roses* [*Bara no soretsu*]; Japan, 1969; Dir. Toshio Matsumoto.

*The Garden* [*Gan*]; Israel, 2003; Dir. Adi Barash, and Ruth Shatz.

*Gato Pardo*; Brazil, 2001; Dir. Felipe Berlim.

*Gigolo*; Germany, 2005; Dir. Bastian Schweitzer.

*The Gilded Six Bits*; USA, 2001; Dir. Booker T. Mattison.

*Girush Le Gan Eden*; Israel, 2003; Dir. Eran Koblík Kedar.

*Gold*; Canada, 2005; Dir. Armen Kazazian.

*Good Boys* [*Yeladim Tovim*]; Israel, 2005; Dir. Yair Hochner.

*Gossenkind*; Germany, 1992; Dir. Peter Kern.

*Guess What We Learned in School Today?* ; USA, 1973; Dir. John G. Avildsen.

*Hang Loose*; USA, 1970; Dir. Unknown.

*Happy Together* [*Chun gwong cha sit*]; Hong Kong, 1997; Dir. Kar Wai Wong.

*Hard*; USA, 1998; Dir. John Huckert.

*Hayseed*; Canada, 1997; Dir. Andrew Hayes, and Josh Levy.

*Heading South* [*Vers le sud*]; France, 2005; Dir. Laurent Cantet.

*Hidden Pleasures* [*Los Placeres ocultos*]; Spain, 1977; Dir. Eloy de la Iglesia.

*Hot Dog Und Bananeis* [*Junge Mädchen mögen's heiß, Hausfrauen noch heißer*]; West Germany, 1973; Dir. Eberhard Schröder.

*Hotel Y Domicilio*; Spain, 1995; Dir. Ernesto Del Río.

*House of 1000 Sins* [*Ein Echter Hausfrauenfreund*]; Germany, 1975; Dir. Kurt Nachmann.

*Hubo Un Tiempo En Que Los Sueños Dieron Paso a Largas Noches De Insomnio...* Mexico, 2000; Dir. Julián Hernández.

*Hustler White*; Canada, 1996; Dir. Rick Castro, and Bruce La Bruce.

*Hustler Wp*; USA, 2006; Dir. Craig Cobb.

*I Don't Kiss* [*J'embrasse pas*]; France, 1991; Dir. André Téchiné.

*In the Flesh*; USA, 1998; Dir. Ben Taylor.

*In Your Eyes*; USA, 1999; Dir. Freddy Rodríguez.

*Into the Night*; Australia, 2002; Dir. Tony Krawitz.

*Jackal Love* [*Amor chacal*]; Mexico, 2001; Dir. Juan Carlos Bautista.

*Jakten På En Mördare*; Sweden, 1999; Dir. Alexander Moberg, and Michael Hjorth.

*Jet Boy*; Canada, 2001; Dir. Dave Schultz.

*Johns*; USA, 1996; Dir. Scott Silver.

*The Journey of Jared Price*; USA, 2000; Dir. Dustin Lance Black.

*Junked*; USA, 1999; Dir. Lance Lane.

*Kathoy*; Israel, 2004; Dir. Moti Haiby.

*A Kind of Family*; Canada, 1992; Dir. Robert Lower.

*L' Escorte*; France, 1996; Dir. Denis Langlois.

*L' Ultima Notte*; Canada, 2003; Dir. Mathieu Guez.

*L.I.E.*; USA, 2001; Dir. Michael Cuesta.

*La Triche* [*The Cheat*]; France, 2005; Dir. Yannick Bellon.

"Lady Heather's Box." *Csi: Crime Scene Investigation*; USA, 2003; Dir. Richard J. Lewis.

*Lan Yu*; Hong Kong, 2001; Dir. Stanley Kwan.

"Lemmings Will Fly." *Cracker*; USA, 1997; Dir. Stephen Cragg.

*Less Than Zero*; USA, 1987; Dir. Marek Kanievski.

*Licking Our Wounds*; USA, 2005; Dir. Wendy Dallas.

*Life as a House*; USA, 2001; Dir. Irwin Winkler.

*Live Show [Toro]*; Philippines, 2000; Dir. Jose Javier Reyes.

*The Living End*; USA, 1992; Dir. Gregg Araki.

*Lola + Billy the Kid [Lola + Bilidikid]*; Germany, 1999; Dir. E. Kutlug Ataman.

*Los Gatos (Prostitución De Alto Nivel)*; Argentina, 1985; Dir. Carlos Borcosque Jr.

*Lost in the Pershing Point Hotel*; USA, 2000; Dir. Julia Jay Pierrepont III.

"Tapin du soir." *Love Reinvented [L'@mour est à réinventer]*; France, 1996; Dir. Anne Fontaine.

*M.O. Of M.I.*; USA, 2002; Dir. Susan Turley.

*Macho Dancer*; Philippines, 1988; Dir. Lino Brocka.

*Madame Satã*; Brazil, 2002; Dir. Karim Ainouz.

*The Male Escorts of San Francisco*; USA, 1992; Dir. Matthew Link.

*Mandragora*; Czech Republic, 1997; Dir. Wiktor Grodecki.

*A Man's Work [Miehen työ]*; Finland, 2007; Dir. Aleksi Salmenperä.

*Man-Tute*; USA, 2006; Dir. Ken Axmaker Jr.

*Marble Ass [Dupe od mramora]*; Yugoslavia, 1995; Dir. Zelimir Zilnik.

*The Masseur [Masahista]*; Philippines, 2005; Dir. Brillante Mendoza.

*Maybe I Can Give You Sex?*; Germany, 1993; Dir. Jürgen Brüning, and Rune Layumas.

"Me and My Slaves." *The Dark Side of Porn*; UK, 2006; Dir. David Barrie.

*The Meatrack*; USA, 1969; Dir. Richard Stockton.

*Mery Per Sempre [Forever Mary]*; Italy, 1989; Dir. Marco Risi.

*Midnight Cowboy*; USA, 2000; Dir. John Schlesinger.

*Midnight Dancers [Sibak]*; Philippines, 1994; Dir. Mel Chionglo.

*Mirror, Mirror*; France, 1996; Dir. Baillie Walsh.

"Money." *Blackadder II*; UK, 1986; Dir. Mandie Fletcher.

"The Mountain King." *Boys to Men*; USA, 2000; Dir. Duncan Tucker.

*Mr. Smith Gets a Hustler*; USA, 2003; Dir. Ian McCrudden.

*Mr. Suave Hoy! Hoy! Hoy! Hoy! Hoy! Hoy!* ; Philippines, 2003; Dir. Joyce E. Bernal.

*My Hustler*; USA, 1965; Dir. Andy Warhol, and Chuck Wein.

*My Hustler Boyfriend*; USA, 2004; Dir. Peter Pizzi.

*My Own Private Idaho*; USA, 1991; Dir. Gus Van Sant.

*Mysterious Skin*; USA, 2004; Dir. Gregg Araki.

*The Nail of Brightness [Maynila: Sa mga kuko ng liwanag]*; Philippines, 1975; Dir. Lino Brocka.

*Naked Highway*; USA, 1997; Dir. Wash Westmoreland.

*Nerves of Steel [Nervos de Aço]*; Brazil, 2003; Dir. Ed Andrade.

*Night Trade*; Australia, 2001; Dir. Barbara Karpinski.

*Night Watch [Ronda nocturna]*; Argentina, 2005; Dir. Edgardo Cozarinsky.

*The Nights of Blue [Noci smutku]*; Czech Republic, 2004; Dir. Daniel Cerny.

*Nine Lives*; USA, 2004; Dir. Dean Howell.

*Not Angels but Angels*; Czech Republic, 1994; Dir. Wiktor Grodecki.

*Oliver*; Philippines, 1983; Dir. Nick Deocampo.

*Olivier, Olivier*; France, 1992; Dir. Agnieszka Holland.

"One Day a Lemming Will Fly." *Cracker*; UK, 1993; Dir. Simon Cellan Jones.

*Ostia*; UK, 1991; Dir. Julian Cole.

*Out in the Cold*; USA, 2002; Dir. Martin Bedogne, and Eric Criswell.

*Outcall*; USA, 2006; Dir. Thomas R. Smyth.

*Outlaw Lover [Amor Bandido]*; Brazil, 1979; Dir. Bruno Barreto.

*Parade of Roses [Bara no soretsu]*; Japan, 1969; Dir. Toshio Matsumoto.

*Pigalle*; France, 1994; Dir. Karim Dridi.

*The Place without Limits [El Lugar sin límites]*; Mexico, 1978; Dir. Arturo Ripstein.

*Portrait of Jason*; USA, 1967; Dir. Shirley Clarke.

*Post Cards from America*; USA, 1994; Dir. Steve McLean.

*Pretty Boy [Smukke dreng]*; Denmark, 1993; Dir. Carsten Sønder.

*Pretty Li'l Fuck*; Canada, 2004; Dir. Dan Lavoie.

*The Price of Love*; USA, 1995; Dir. David Burton Morris.

*Prime Suspect 3: The Keeper of Souls*; UK, 1993; Dir. David Drury.

*Princesa*; Spain, 2001; Dir. Henrique Goldman.

*Private Shows*; USA, 1997; Dir. Stephen Winter.

*The Prodigal Son*; Netherlands, 1995; Dir. Chris W. Mitchell.

*Red Light August*; USA, 1999; Dir. Jeff Gomez.

*Redefining Normal*; USA, 2008; Dir. Todd Wade.

*Revolutions Happen Like Refrains in a Song*; Philippines, 1987; Dir. Nick Deocampo.

*A River Made to Drown In*; USA, 1997; Dir. James Merendino, and Alan Smithee.

*Roberta Loved*; USA, 2002; Dir. Q. Allan Brocka.

*Rock Bottom*; USA, 2001; Dir. Mary Feuer.

*Room Service*; USA, 2005; Dir. Daniel Reitz.

*Safe Journey*; UK, 1999; Dir. S. Leo Chiang.

*Salaam Bombay!* ; India, 1988; Dir. Mira Nair.

*The School of Flesh [L' École de la chair]*; France, 1998; Dir. Benoît Jacquot.

*Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*; USA, 2005; Dir. Victor Silverman, and Susan Stryker.

*Send Me an Angel*; Israel, 2003; Dir. Nir Ne'eman.

*Sex Is Sex*; USA, 1995; Dir. Jennifer Milici, and Brian Bergen.

*Sex Warriors and the Samurai*; USA, 1995; Dir. Nick Deocampo.

*Sex/Life in L.A.*; USA, 1998; Dir. Jochen Hick.

*Shadow of Angels [Schatten der Engel]*; Switzerland, 1976; Dir. Daniel Schmid.

*Shelter*; USA, 2003; Dir. Benno Schoberth.

*Shooting Script: A Transatlantic Love Story*; Denmark, 1992; Dir. Ulrik Al Brask, Lynn Hershman-Leeson, and Knud Vesterskov.

*Sideline Secrets*; USA, 2004; Dir. Steven Vasquez.

*The Sidewalk Cowboy*; USA, 1968; Dir. Robert Sumner.

*Sightlines*; USA, 2002; Dir. Richard Gehron.

*Sin Destino*; Mexico, 2002; Dir. Leopoldo Laborde.

"The Trip." *Six Feet Under*; USA, 2001; Dir. Michael Engler.

*Skin and Bone*; USA, 1996; Dir. Everett Lewis.

*The Slight Fever of a 20-Year-Old [Hatachi no binetsu]*; Japan, 1993; Dir. Ryosuke Hashiguchi.

*Smokers Only [Vagón fumador]*; Argentina 2001; Dir. Verónica Chen.

*Some of My Best Friends Are*; USA, 1971; Dir. Mervyn Nelson.

*Someone*; US, 1968; Dir. Pat Rocco.

*A Son [Un fils]*; France, 2003; Dir. Amal Bedjaoui.

*Sonny*; USA, 2002; Dir. Nicolas Cage.

*The Soul of Youth*; USA, 1920; Dir. William Desmond Taylor.

*Speaking Parts*; Canada, 1989; Dir. Atom Egoyan.

*Speed Bump*; USA, 2000; Dir. Sean Michael.

*Speedway Junky*; USA, 1999; Dir. Nickolas Perry.

*Squeeze*; New Zealand, 1980; Dir. Richard Turner.

*Star*; Australia, 2004; Dir. Jack Feldstein.

*Star Maps*; USA, 1997; Dir. Miguel Arteta.

*Street Kids*; Canada, 1985; Dir. Peg Campbell.

*The Stud Farm*; USA, 1969; Dir. Jac Zacha.

*Stupid Boy [Garçon stupide]*; France, 2004; Dir. Lionel Baier.

*Sugar*; Canada, 2004; Dir. John Palmer.

*Suite 16*; Netherlands, 1994; Dir. Dominique Deruddere.

*Super 8½*; Canada, 1993; Dir. Bruce La Bruce.

"Liebe am Nachmittag." *Tatort*; Germany, 2006; Dir. Manuel Flurin Hendry.

*Tattoo Boy*; USA, 1995; Dir. Larry Turner.

*Taxi Nach Kairo*; West Germany, 1987; Dir. Frank Ripploh.

*Tender*; Greece, 1997; Dir. Christos Dimas.

*There's No Pain in Paradise* [*En el paraíso no existe el dolor*]; Mexico, 1995; Dir. Víctor Saca.

*This I Wish and Nothing More* [*Nincsen nekem vágyam semmi*]; Hungary, 2000; Dir. Kornél Mundruczó.

*A Thousand Clouds of Peace* [*Mil nubes de paz cercan el cielo, amor, jamás acabarás de ser amor*]; Mexico, 2003; Dir. Julián Hernández.

*Three of Hearts*; USA, 1993; Dir. Yurek Bogayevicz.

*To Die (or Not)* [*Morir (o no)*]; Spain, 2000; Dir. Ventura Pons.

*To the Extreme* [*In extremis*]; France, 2000; Dir. Etienne Faure.

*The Toilers and the Wayfarers*; USA, 1996; Dir. Keith Froelich.

*Transamerica*; USA, 2005; Dir. Duncan Tucker.

*Trash*; USA, 2006; Dir. Paul Morrissey.

*Tremor*; USA, 2003; Dir. Eldar Rapaport.

*Tricks of the Trade*; USA, 1968; Dir. Andy Milligan.

*Tuhlaajapoika*; Finland, 1992; Dir. Veikko Aaltonen.

*Twilight Dancers*; Philippines, 2006; Dir. Mel Chionglo.

*Twist*; Canada, 2003; Dir. Jacob Tierney.

*Twisted*; USA, 1996; Dir. Seth Michael Donsky.

*The Unveiling*; USA, 1996; Dir. Rodney Evans.

*The Velocity of Gary*; USA, 1998; Dir. Dan Ireland.

*The Versace Murder*; USA, 1998; Dir. Menahem Golan.

*Via Appia*; Germany, 1990; Dir. Jochen Hick.

*Vito and the Others* [*Vito e gli altri*]; Italy, 1991; Dir. Antonio Capuano.

*Webcam Boys*; USA, 2001; Dir. Bob Read, and Ant.

*West Fickt Ost*; Germany, 2001; Dir. Jürgen Brüning.

*When Love Comes*; New Zealand, 1998; Dir. Garth Maxwell.

*Where the Day Takes You*; USA, 1992; Dir. Marc Rocco.

*The Whores* [*Le Buttane*]; Italy, 1994; Dir. Aurelio Grimaldi.

*Wild Blade*; USA, 1991; Dir. David Geffner.

*Wild Side*; France, 2004; Dir. Sébastien Lifshitz.

*A Woman in Flames* [*Die Flambierte Frau*]; West Germany, 1983; Dir. Robert van Ackeren.

*The Wounded Man* [*L' Homme blessé*]; France, 1983; Dir. Patrice Chéreau.

*The Yellow House in Pinnasburg* [*Das Gelbe Haus am Pinnasberg*]; West Germany, 1970; Dir. Alfred Vohrer.

*Zipper and Tits* [*Fasuna to Chibusa*]; Japan 2001; Dir. Koji Shirakawa, and Stephen Tyler.

*Zona Rosa*; Mexico, 2005; Dir. Dan Castle.



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