Angels With Dirty Faces: Children, Cinema and Censorship in 1930s Britain

A thesis presented by

Sarah J. Smith

for the

Degree of PhD

Department of History

University of Strathclyde

2001

Declaration of Author's Rights

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyrights Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.49. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, many thanks to my funding body, the ESRC.

Secondly, I would like to thank a number of people for their help in gaining access to important primary source material. These include Barbara Hall and the staff of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library, Beverly Hills; Janet McBain, Curator of the Scottish Film Archive; Nick White in Special Collections at the British Film Institute; Andrew Martin, for access to his 'Going to the Pictures' Project in the Scottish Life Archive of the National Museums of Scotland; Mark Glancy for details from the Eddie Mannix Ledger; and particularly, Annette Kuhn, not only for granting very generous access to her oral history collection for the ongoing Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain project, but also for her interest and encouragement throughout. My thanks also to the selected respondents from this project who kindly provided me with further useful information for my chapter on MGM Tarzan movies.

Thirdly, many thanks to University friends and colleagues. Especially to my supervisor Callum Brown who, over the last eight years, has taught me how to learn effectively, how to write effectively and, by example, how to teach effectively. I hope to put all three lessons to good use in the coming years. My gratitude also to the rest of the 'family' at Strathclyde, including the academic and administrative staff and my colleagues in the postgrad community, who all helped to make this a far less isolating experience. Thanks too to my new 'family' in the Department of Continuing Education at the University of Reading, who have helped to carry some of my load, thus enabling me to complete this thesis when the department's workload was already extremely high.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends. You are too many to name, but I hope you all know how important you are to me. Thanks so much for all your support and care and for believing that I could do this.

Abstract

Over the last two centuries, a succession of childhood pursuits has been blamed for deterioration in children's health, morality, education and literacy, as well as increases in juvenile delinquency, yet there has also been a constant voice in opposition to these charges. In Britain this debate reached something of a climax in the 1930s, due to the massive growth of cinema and its huge popularity with young people. This thesis aims to explore all aspects of the controversy surrounding children's cinemagoing in the thirties, with a particular focus on the mechanisms used to try and control or contain children's viewing, together with an assessment of the extent to which these mechanisms were successful.

Its main arguments are that while concerns about child viewers motivated the development of film censorship practices in Britain and elsewhere, the debate is too complex and varied to be seen as a straightforward moral panic. In addition, it argues that, despite the attempts of the BBFC and others, children were essentially the regulators of their own viewing, as they frequently subverted or circumvented the largely ineffectual mechanisms of official cinema regulation. Moreover it suggests that, in a period when school, home and even leisure tended to be strong on discipline, the cinema was colonised by children as an alternative site of recreation. Matinees in particular were the birthplace of a new and somewhat subversive children's culture, which only started to be 'tamed' with the introduction of more formal children's cinema clubs towards the end of the decade. Finally, the productive nature of the debate surrounding children, cinema and censorship is explored in a case study of the 1930s MGM Tarzan films, which assesses the extent to which issues relating to the child audience may have helped to shape a genre.

Contents

		Page
Acknowledgements		*iii*
Abstract		*iv*
Contents		*v*
List of Tables and Figures		*vi*
List of Abbreviations		*vii*
1	**Introduction**	*1*
2	***How Bridget Served the Salad Undressed*: Censorship and the Regulation of Cinema 1895–1929**	*20*
3	***It Ain't No Sin*: Censorship and the Regulation of Cinema 1929–1939**	*54*
4	**Moral Panic or Flapdoodle? Enquiries, Conferences and Reports on Children and the Cinema**	*93*
5	**Children as Censors**	*127*
6	**Matinees, Cinema Clubs and Children's Cinema Culture**	*168*
7	**MGM Tarzan Films: A Case Study**	*201*
8	**Conclusions: Children and Cinema; Control and Resistance**	*259*
Appendix 1	*T. P. O'Connor's 43 Rules of the BBFC, as told to the Cinema Commission of Inquiry, 1917*	*264*
Appendix 2	*Codified Grounds for Censorship in BBFC Annual Report, 1926*	*266*
Appendix 3	*List of "Don'ts and Be Carefuls", adopted by California Association for guidance of producers, 8 June 1927*	*268*
Appendix 4	*Films classified as 'Horrific' or certified 'H' by the BBFC, 1933-1940*	*270*
Appendix 5	*Members of the Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry Committee*	*271*
Appendix 6	*Tarzan Questionnaire*	*273*
Bibliography		*278*

List of Tables and Figures

		Page
Table 2.1	Theatre Fires of the Nineteenth Century	*24*
Table 3.1	Responses to Home Office Questionnaire on Model Conditions, 1931	*74*
Figure 4.1	Relative Sample Sizes of British Cinema Enquiries 1930-33	*98*
Table 7.1	Financial Performance of *Trader Horn* & MGM Tarzan Films (US$)	*204*
Table 7.2	Selected Content of MGM Tarzan Movies, 1932-1939	*215*
Figure 7.1	'Unsuitable' Content in MGM Tarzan Films, 1932-1939	*216*
Figure 7.2	'Suitable' Content in MGM Tarzan Films, 1932-1939	*216*
Table 7.3	Merchandise Related to the MGM Tarzan Films	*240*
Table 7.4	Children's Preferences for Feature Films	*251*

List of Abbreviations

BBFC	British Board of Film Censors
BCEC	Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee
BVC	Birkenhead Vigilance Committee
CEA	Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association
CEF	Children's Educational Films
CFD	Children's Film Department
ECEC	Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry Committee
FCCC	Film Censorship Consultative Committee
GBI	Gaumont British Instructional
LCC	London County Council
MPPDA	Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America
PCA	Production Code Administration ('The Hays Office')
PFS	Payne Fund Studies

Chapter One

Introduction

> **Unless it is cleaned up within this generation, [cinema] will undermine every existing agency for decency and public order.**
>
> *R.G. Burnett & E.D. Martell*
> ***The Devil's Camera** (1932)*

In 1937, a new American movie was passed with an A certificate by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) for distribution in the UK. This A certificate – given the previous year to horror films like *The Walking Dead* (1936) and *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) – informed cinema managers and patrons that the movie was not considered suitable for children under 16 years old, unless they were accompanied by a parent or *bona fide* adult guardian. The new movie in question was Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Thousands of children would flock to see this film on its first release in Britain and, as will be seen in the chapters that follow, it is likely that they were hardly deterred at all by the BBFC's attempts at regulation.

During the 1930s, in both Britain and across the world, numerous authorities struggled with the issue of children's cinemagoing. At one extreme, moral watchdogs prophesied the doom of a generation that was being corrupted by the influence of the silver screen. At the other, champions of the cinema declared its positive educational and social value to young people. Meanwhile, children became one of the largest audience segments in cinemas worldwide.

The debate surrounding children and film did not exist in isolation; it simply represented an important peak in longstanding controversies over children and leisure which have been endemic across Europe and the USA for hundreds of years. Some have even argued that this debate dates back over 2,000 years to Plato, who suggested that poets would be banned from his ideal Republic, so that their stories about the questionable behaviour of the gods would not damage the vulnerable minds of children.[1] Certainly, since at least the eighteenth century, a cavalcade of pastimes have been deemed undesirable, if not dangerous, for children, including penny magazines, playing in the street, fighting, dancing, gambling, sex, radio, cinema, television, comic books, rock music, videos, computer games and now the Internet and virtual reality. All have been cited as threats to children's safety, health, morality and literacy, as well as being blamed for increases in juvenile delinquency.

This thesis does not aim to prove or disprove theories regarding the influence of leisure activities on the young. Rather it seeks to contribute to academic understanding about the nature and impact of recurring debates over children and leisure by exploring, from a number of perspectives, the controversy surrounding children and cinema, which erupted in Europe and the USA during the 1930s.

Literature Review

The linked topics of childhood, youth, media influence and moral panic lie at the intersection of a number of areas of academic interest and this thesis is therefore influenced by a range of scholarship from a number of disciplines. Its main emphasis is on the history of popular culture, including the history of cinema and film and, more specifically, the social and cultural history of censorship and cinemagoing (a field not only of interest to historians but also to film, media and cultural theorists). Secondly, it is located within the growing field of the history of childhood. And thirdly, beyond the discipline of history, it relates to studies into children, media influence and moral panic, within disciplines such as sociology, psychology, pedagogy, and cultural, media and film studies. However, while this range of influences and references will be apparent from time to time throughout the thesis, it is nevertheless fundamentally based in social and cultural history.

Due to the large range of disciplines involved, further historiographical material is included in each chapter and this literature review does not therefore aim to be exhaustive. However, it is still important to consider at this stage the ways in which this thesis relates to current literature on the topic of children and film history.

Although the field of film and cinema history is large and growing, surprisingly little has been written about the debate over children and cinema in 1930s Britain; in fact there are only a few books that explore this topic at any length.[2] The most comprehensive is Terry Staples' *All Pals Together: The Story of Children's Cinema* (1997). The subtitle of this book is a clue to its theoretical standpoint, as Staples provides a narrative and often nostalgic look at 'the story' of children and cinema in Britain, between around 1900 and 1987. Although his account really lacks critical or analytical teeth, Staples nevertheless draws on a remarkable range of material representing a number of perspectives. This includes evidence from governmental sources, from large production companies, cinema chains, cinema managers and staff, from censors, local authorities, pressure groups and the media, and, through oral history and other evidence, from children themselves. A caveat to this, though, is that Staples' book covers the 1930s relatively briefly, in fifty pages. And while he demonstrates a detailed knowledge of the overall debate surrounding children and cinema, he generally maintains an anecdotal and critically indistinct

tone, rather than questioning the assumptions and motivations that lie behind both his story and the debate itself.

A second important book is Jeffrey Richards' *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (1984). This valuable and perceptive exploration of cinemagoing in Britain during the 1930s outlines the development of the media influence debate in chapters entitled 'The Devil's Camera' and 'Our Movie-Made Children'. Again, the approach is largely narrative, although the book does have a clear theoretical objective: 'to explore the ways in which mass culture can be used to generate ideological consensus, promote it where it does not exist and confirm it where it does'.[3] Thus, Richards presents a Gramscian analysis of cinema culture, implying that the debate over cinema and children was part of middle class attempts to control working class leisure and promote hegemony.

In a similar vein, Stephen Humphries provides an overtly class-based analysis of debates over children and leisure (including cinema) in *Hooligans or Rebels: An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (1981). Essentially, Humphries claims that it is class rather than age that is the key factor in perceptions of juvenile delinquency. Thus, he eschews 'generational' or 'youth culture' theories which, he argues, mask issues of class-consciousness and conflict.[4] While class is undoubtedly a significant factor in the cinema influence debate, I will suggest that it is by no means the *only* significant factor. Nevertheless, Humphries' emphasis on resistance, and his insistence that working class children were not simply the passive recipients of social control, are critical issues that will be explored in some detail in the following chapters.

Finally, the most directly related literature to the topic of this thesis can be found in John Springhall's *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics* (1998). In addition to giving a detailed overview of controversies surrounding children and leisure between around 1830 and 1996, the chapters of this book focus on specific 'panics' relating to certain media, including penny theatres, penny dreadfuls and horror comics. Notably, Springhall provides a concise yet detailed study of debates about children and cinema, with specific reference to the 'panic' that arose around gangster films and child viewers in the 1930s, in both Britain and America.[5] This appears to be the only historical study which has attempted to relate debates about

children and film in 1930s Britain to wider issues of youth culture and moral panic. However, as just one chapter focuses on the cinema, and this deals only with concerns surrounding juvenile delinquency and the gangster film genre, it is therefore confined in length and scope.

No other historians appear to have directly tackled the subject of British children and cinema in the 1930s, although earlier periods and older age groups have received a little attention.[6] English language studies of the debate in other nations also appear to be both scarce and limited. For example, Anton Kaes, David Welch and Gary D. Stark have all assessed the general cinema debate of the 1920s and 30s in Germany, but none of these authors are more than marginally interested in issues relating to children.[7] Similarly, Richard Stites' work on the history of Russian popular culture only mentions the subject of children and cinema in passing.[8]

Some work has been done on the subject in America, particularly concerning the major research project that dominated the American debate in the 1930s: the Payne Fund Studies. The key text in this field is the extensive collaboration of Garth Jowett, Ian Jarvie and Kathryn Fuller, *Children and the Movies* (1996).[9] However, even this volume is not directly concerned with the history of childhood, as its principal aim is to research the Payne Fund Studies themselves, in order to 'restore [them] to a place of honor in the history of communications research.'[10] Quite rightly, in his article on children and cinema in the 1910s and 20s in America, Richard deCordova has bemoaned the dearth of literature in this field. 'It seems odd', he suggests, 'that...film history has so completely ignored the obsession with the child audience, particularly if we admit that it was the dominant feature of critical approaches to the cinema at the time'.[11]

A further significant gap in the literature is that there are no studies of this topic as an international phenomenon. It is inescapably true that cinema was genuinely international from the outset, with inventors, financiers, producers, casts, crews, distribution networks and audiences ranging and mixing across the globe. Similarly, there was something of an international consensus regarding concerns over children and cinema in the 1930s. Common anxieties (along with opposing views of the educational potential of cinema) recurred across the board in nations with otherwise starkly different ideologies, from Britain and America to Nazi Germany

and Communist Russia. For example, theories regarding the power of cinema to imbue children with a sense of political and national identity caused Americans to rail against 'fascist and communist influences' in European films of the 1930s, while Europeans of all political persuasions protested at length about the 'Americanising' impact of Hollywood on their children. However, no research has yet been published which considers this international dimension of the debate over children and film. Regrettably, my study will do little to remedy that situation, although an attempt has been made to maintain an international awareness throughout.

Finally, apart from Springhall's brief study, little has been done to investigate the motivation and mechanisms that lay *behind* attempts to control children's viewing in the 1930s. I therefore hope to explore this issue in the chapters that follow, focusing not only on 'what happened', but on how and why it happened.

In this respect, it should be explained, my thesis represents a response to related work in media and communications studies regarding controversies over children and television. For in these fields, although scholars have increasingly come to recognise the cyclical nature of the debate surrounding children and leisure and, therefore, the need for historical research, little has yet been done.[12] As David Buckingham argues, the key to understanding the recurring debate about children and media influence of all kinds may lie not so much in analysing the *results* of the empirical research, but in examining its *context*. Thus, he argues, the research into children and television may

> reveal as much about the tensions and contradictions within society as it does about either children or television. In this respect, it is important to locate the concern about the area historically, in the context both of evolving definitions of childhood and of recurrent responses to the perceived impact of new cultural forms and communications technologies.[13]

This thesis therefore aims to provide some of the historical background needed for an understanding of the debate as a whole. So far, scholars in media studies have done little more than map some of the key historical landmarks of the debate from the air,

with an emphasis on recent scares, such as those concerning horror comics and the Internet.[14] However, this thesis explores perhaps the single most important of the historical landmarks from the ground, by providing an extended, detailed case study of the controversy over children and film in interwar Britain.

Children and the 1930s

Before embarking on this study, two fundamental questions need to be addressed. Firstly, why has the decade of the 1930s been chosen? And secondly, how are 'children' to be defined?

Moving pictures were introduced to the British public in 1896 and the first purpose-built cinema in Britain was erected ten years later. Thereafter, rapid growth occurred; by 1907 there were around 250 picture palaces in Britain, after which the number virtually doubled annually rising to 1,600 by 1910 and nearly 4,000 in 1911.[15] British cinemas continued to expand in both numbers and size, so that by 1939 the country had over 5,000 cinemas attracting an attendance of approximately 20 million per week.[16] Cinema had become the first mass medium to be distributed simultaneously to audiences of millions and it therefore provoked much debate.

From the outset, defenders of cinema insisted that this was a highly promising form of self-improving education; an influential force of socialisation, with powerful potential for good.[17] However, in reality, film quickly became established as an extremely popular form of entertainment rather than education, associated from the beginning with alcohol consumption, as early venues for film included travelling fairs, music halls and vaudevilles, most of which served alcohol.[18] Furthermore, as the medium developed, its content was largely derived from the sensational narratives of melodrama and cheap literature, rather than worthy literary or educational alternatives. It was of great significance, therefore, that film became a cheap and massively attended source of entertainment, rather than improvement. Moreover it was largely frequented by the urban working classes and, despite concerted efforts to the contrary, it was a medium principally driven by commercial interests, rather than religious, educational, or otherwise 'improving' ones.

Consequently, the cinema had numerous critics, mainly from middle class religious, educational and social welfare groups, who insisted that it represented a threat to society. Vulnerable, uneducated or uncontrollable viewers were considered especially at risk – namely, cinema's most frequent patrons: the working classes, women and children.[19] Romantic notions of childhood were invoked and movies were denounced as violent, frightening, sexually corrupt, addictive and therefore fundamentally damaging to the naturally curious, vulnerable, naïve, imitative and emotionally susceptible mind of the child. At the same time, concepts of original sin were evident in declarations that the negative influence of cinema stimulated already degenerate young minds, leading them into even greater depths of corruption, depravity and delinquency.[20] Concerns regarding the possible influences of cinema on children and adults then motivated various bodies to attempt the imposition of a regulatory framework, including the establishment of the BBFC in 1913.

Although debates around cinema were evident from its inception, this thesis focuses on the 1930s because this was arguably the key decade in the history of cinema and its regulation. Jeffrey Richards has described it as probably 'the least known and least appreciated decade in the history of the sound film'.[21] Meanwhile Peter Stead considers it 'the most crucial period in the whole history of cinema in Britain and America'.[22] It is an easily identifiable period, beginning with the introduction of talking pictures and ending with the start of World War Two. Significantly, it also is the period in which the Hays Code was developed and introduced, effecting the rigorous censorship of films. Finally, it was the decade in which cinema was established as the most popular form of communal entertainment across Europe and the USA, with the children of the 1930s being regarded by many as the first generation to be fundamentally influenced by so-called mass culture.

Probably the most important facet of the decade for this thesis, though, is that anxiety about children and cinema rocketed with the introduction of talkies in 1929, triggering a profusion of enquiries into the influence of cinema on the young, from the UK and the USA, to Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. During the 1930s, literally hundreds of surveys and reports were generated worldwide, in an attempt to assess and regulate the influence of cinema on children. Most of the 'players' in the British enquiries represented groups such as church and youth organisations, who

were rapidly losing their virtual monopoly on organised children's leisure. Others came from the establishments of education and government, while the remainder represented the commercial might of the cinema industry. Consequently, many of the projects began with a hidden agenda and the subject quickly became a more or less blatant battle, within and between a range of powerful bodies, for the control of children's culture and the transmission of values.[23]

But what of children themselves? On the face of it, children apparently had little more than a symbolic role to play in what was essentially an adult debate, leading to the organisation, censorship and certification of cinema, as well as the introduction of children's cinema clubs and, eventually, the production of movies for child audiences. However, this thesis will argue that children did in fact take a central role in the development of cinema regulation during the 1930s.

Ultimately then this period has been chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, it was a decade in which cinemagoing had become by far the most popular commercial leisure pursuit in Britain, with children being a very important part of that popularity. Secondly, this was the first decade of talking pictures, which prompted an escalation in anxiety over young people and film and the introduction of new, more stringent forms of censorship. In fact, the 1930s marked the zenith of all concerns regarding children and cinema – and, what is more, when examining the twentieth century as a whole, this zenith actually represented the peak of concern over children and media influence of *all* kinds.[24] It is therefore clearly a key decade.

The other fundamental issue to address is the question of defining 'the child'. Historians of childhood have increasingly sought to tackle this question in recent years, interrogating established definitions of childhood, just as other historians have examined definitions of class and gender. Foremost among these was Philippe Aries, whose book *Centuries of Childhood* (1960) argued that perceptions of the nature of childhood were culturally determined, giving it a flexible, rather than a universally fixed, definition. Essentially, Aries suggests, the experience of a child in any given culture is fundamentally affected by that culture's perceptions of childhood. In other words, different cultures at different times have different ideas about the nature of childhood, which inform their views on how children should behave and be treated and this in turn directly affects children's experiences.[25]

Following Aries, a number of historians, psychologists and sociologists have explored the ways in which definitions and experiences of childhood vary, depending on a range of economic, social and cultural factors. Even the apparently universal biological characteristics of childhood can differ, it is argued, depending on factors such as class, culture and historical period. For example, Michael Mitterauer has suggested that in the nineteenth century, 'unmistakable class-related differences' were apparent in the menarche (first menstruation) rates of girls, so that between 1800 and 1981 the average age of menarche decreased by several years across Europe, as standards of living rose.[26]

The majority of work by scholars in this area has focused on the history of discourses relating to childhood.[27] By 'discourses relating to childhood' I mean the shifting body of shared language and knowledge, which both creates and is created by dominant perceptions of what it means to be a child, in any given time and place. A study of such discourses necessarily draws on Aries' theory that childhood is a socially constructed category rather than a fixed reality, examining the ways in which that category – the 'child' – has been constructed through discourse. I intend to follow a similar theoretical path, in that I will not be considering childhood as a fixed biological and psychological state, but rather as a socially constructed category. My main aim in this respect is to explore the role of this social construction and the discourses supporting it in the debate over children and cinema in 1930s Britain.

Nevertheless, it is necessary at this stage to consider my own definition of childhood in terms of age range. This is a tricky issue for a number of reasons. Firstly, simplistic definitions of children as 'persons aged under 16', for example, belie the fact that 'childhood' can cover a long period of extensive mental and physical change, from infancy and pre-pubescence, through puberty and beyond. As such, childhood might be better seen as a plural rather than a singular experience. Secondly, any age at which one might choose to draw the line is inevitably problematic, not least due to the sheer variety of experiences of different children in terms of their physical, mental and social rates of development. It can therefore be seen that a fixed chronological or biological definition of the child is hard to establish. At what point does a child become an adult? And what is the difference between the two?

Justification for this basic struggle over definition is easily found, as it soon becomes clear when looking at contemporary sources that those dealing with issues relating to children and cinema in the 1930s could not reach agreement over their definitions either. A key illustration comes from a meeting in 1929 of the BBFC's Mr Brooke-Wilkinson and Mr Hessey, with Miss Rosamund Smith, Miss Adler and Mr Greenwood of the London County Council. In discussing the issue of children and A film regulation, conversation turned to the definition of 'children' when they considered a suggested new certificate for films, which Rosamund Smith described as 'suitable for children'. Brooke-Wilkinson took issue with this:

BW: Is that something different from the young person which is mentioned in the [A film] regulation?

RS: Yes, I think it is really children. Technically a child is a child up to 14, isn't that so? I don't think we discussed the age, but I think we all want really childish films...

BW: At the moment we are dealing with films for young persons, and a young person is someone up to the age of 16 years. Is your idea that this film is for some class of person younger than 16?

RS: Younger than *14*.

Miss A: I think we really thought up to 16.

BW: You are using the word children.

RS: The technical age of a child is up to the time that it leaves the elementary school, which at present is 14...

Mr G: It was understood that at present it was the school age of 14, but nothing was decided as to whether it should remain at the school age when it was 15...

RS: ...I personally thought we had 16 in our minds.

BW: In the regulation I think it is specific; it says 'no young person'.

RS: ...My view on the question is this – it might not be the view of others – that a child is a child from 1 to 14 and from 14 to 18 is a young person and then becomes an adult. That is my view. We haven't discussed it as a committee.

Mr H: I think it is perfectly clear that we deal with young persons up to 16.[28]

As this extract demonstrates, the problem of defining childhood is not easily solved by looking at primary source material, which is often equally undecided. This can be further illustrated by a letter to the Home Office in 1934 from a representative of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA), who had been asked to define '*bona fide* adult guardian'. The CEA representative writes: 'As I personally am not aware of any decision having been given as to the meaning of the word "adult" I should be very much obliged if you would kindly let me know what "adult" does in your opinion mean'.[29] The Home Office response is not known. However, when Middlesex County Council had problems with this definition, they took the plunge themselves and stipulated that adults accompanying children had to be over 21. Unfortunately, this caused a mother of three children (who was under 21) to be refused admission to a cinema.[30] The *News Chronicle* investigated the story in an article headed 'What is an Adult?', which suggested that the basic problem of defining childhood was simply one of variety: 'On the railway you must be over 12 and on the trams over 14; to buy cigarettes you must be 16 years old and to enter a public house you are an adult at 18'.[31]

Clearly, therefore, there were considerable problems of definition during the 1930s, yet it is still important to make some firm statement about the ways in which this thesis will define childhood – however fluid that definition may be. As James Walvin has suggested, the historian who explores childhood as a fluid concept does best to adapt flexibly to the definitions present in historical discourses.[32] This is my intention and therefore, for purposes of clarity at this stage, I will nominally take 'children' to mean persons under 16 years of age, as this was the limit set by A film regulations. However, there will be occasions when the primary source material suggests an upper age limit of 14, 18 or 21 years old and my definition will therefore adapt accordingly.

Thesis Overview

The principal aim of this thesis is to explore all aspects of the debate surrounding children and cinema in 1930s Britain, with a particular focus on the mechanisms used to try and control or contain children's viewing, including an assessment of the

extent to which these mechanisms were successful. To this end, a wide range of primary source material of various kinds has been consulted and a different emphasis and framework has been adopted for each of the main chapters.

Chapters Two and Three look at the history of official film censorship in Britain, with the former examining the period before the coming of talking pictures and the latter focusing on the 1930s. Specifically, the introduction of age certification is investigated, with particular reference to the application of A and H certificates. Unlike traditional histories of censorship, which tend to ignore issues relating to children, these chapters argue that the whole evolution of cinema regulation was based on concerns regarding the impact of the medium on young people. The main sources examined are the papers of various bodies involved in official censorship, including the BBFC, the Home Office and local authorities. Attention is also given to the parallel development of cinema regulation in other nations, including America.

Chapter Four examines the many enquiries and conferences concerning children and film which were carried out in Britain and elsewhere during the interwar period. It focuses particularly on the four main British enquiries of the early 1930s, conducted in Birmingham, Birkenhead, London and Edinburgh, looking in detail at the main 'players' and their various preoccupations and strategies. This chapter has two main objectives. First, to examine the terms of the debate as they are presented in the reports of these enquiries, including an analysis of the language used and the ways in which children are represented.[33] Second, to assess the extent to which concerns over children and cinema in the 1930s might be considered a moral panic.

It is important to question the term 'moral panic' here, as it is extremely problematic, having no agreed definition even among those who routinely use it. It was first coined by British sociologist Jock Young in 1971, when he described growing public concern over apparently rapid increases in drug abuse. It was then explored more thoroughly as an analytical concept by Young's colleague Stanley Cohen, in his study *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers* (1972). Since then, it has been used by various sociologists, psychologists, historians and journalists, who have employed a variety of definitions and approaches to the subject, creating a range of theoretical models for the study of

specific incidents.[34] This has therefore spawned an array of isolated studies, but little in terms of a systematic approach.

The meaning of the term 'moral panic' is often considered self-evident, yet it is a highly equivocal and loaded expression. Essentially, the word 'panic' suggests an irrational and negative response – if not an overreaction – by a naïve or ignorant subject, often being manipulated by the media and others for a variety of reasons. Meanwhile, the word 'moral' implies that those 'panicking' consider themselves morally superior in terms of the problem. The ambiguity of the expression is also evident in its broad application, encompassing areas which may not directly involve morality, but which relate, for example, to food, health and the environment, such as recent 'panics' over BSE, GM crops and foot and mouth disease.

Moreover, as Peter Horsfield has argued, the term 'moral panic' can itself be used as a tool of social control, being 'invoked by those in positions of power...in order to discount and defuse legitimate challenges'.[35] This alone renders it highly questionable. However, I would suggest that the major underlying weakness of the term is that it emphasises issues of manipulation and irrational concern, while obscuring the fact that those involved in 'panics' are usually responding in what they consider a rational way to a genuine threat. Moreover (as will be shown in the case of cinema), these players may be ambivalent rather than dogmatic in their views; they may be media-aware, rather than the blind subjects of press manipulation; and they may even be aware of the history of moral panics and their place within it. For this reason, I will use the term moral panic advisedly when discussing anxieties relating to children and cinema in the 1930s.

One good reason for using the term moral panic, however, is that it identifies this thesis with other studies of a similar nature, including Springhall's work, as already described. In terms of approach, this thesis also has much in common with Kenneth Thompson's *Moral Panics* (1998), which provides a long-awaited, carefully integrated overview of moral panic studies, tracing their history and (like Springhall) treating panics 'not simply as separate episodes but in relation to systems of representation and regulation, and as possible symptoms of wider social and cultural tensions'.[36] Following Thompson, this thesis will adopt a 'contextual constructivist' approach, which involves examining not only the construction of a moral panic, but

also the sociocultural context of that construction. That is to say, it will look carefully at the perceived threat posed by cinema to children in 1930s Britain, but it will also consider the ways in which this threat was amplified by interest groups, institutions and sections of the media.

While some of the material in the first four chapters has been examined by historians before, Chapter Five represents a radical departure from the literature. For where traditional histories of censorship detail the mechanisms of cinema regulation, this chapter questions whether these mechanisms were effective in real terms at all. Although attempts were certainly made to control children's viewing in the 1930s, we cannot assume that these attempts were always completely successful. And in assessing the effectiveness of adult strategies, in addition to examining the documents of official censorship bodies, it is essential to engage with the child's perspective and sense of autonomy in order to explore a number of questions. To what extent did children resist adult attempts to control their viewing? How successful were they? Were children able to exercise power as consumers, including collective power as audiences? And what were the strategies used by children to regulate their *own* viewing?

In an attempt to address these questions, in addition to published primary source material, Chapter Five uses oral history interviews and correspondence. As Paul Thompson has argued, 'in some contexts, oral evidence is the best; in others it is supplementary, or complementary, to that of other sources'.[37] I would argue that in this case, oral evidence is essential, in that it provides an invaluable opportunity for assessing the perspective of young cinemagoers of the period, which can then be used to test the claims of the official documents.

As with all kinds of primary source material, there are problems associated with oral evidence. Not least, the whole question of memory, which has been the subject of much psychological research in recent decades. The findings of this research suggest that memory is largely constructed rather than simply recalled and is therefore never entirely objective nor wholly reliable. Nevertheless, it has been found that anecdotal memories generally 'do not violate the meaning of the recalled episode; in fact, if anything they seem to emphasize the meaning'.[38]

In the case of this thesis, one of the main potential pitfalls is that of nostalgia, as the topic under consideration is one which often evokes fond memories. However oral evidence regarding cinemagoing also has two important strengths. Firstly, as Chapter Six will demonstrate, recollections of cinemagoing are often extremely vivid, reinforcing the suggestion that anecdotal memories 'emphasize the meaning' of recalled episodes. And secondly, many of the statements are relatively easy to verify as the films themselves provide something of a timeline. Thus, if a respondent born in 1932 recalls that at the age of 5 they went to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* on its first release, the fact that this occurred in 1937 helps to verify their statement. Similarly, in addition to the release dates of films (which sometimes vary depending on location) many other known dates help to verify information, such as the coming of sound pictures in 1927 or the introduction of the H certificate in 1937.

Original oral history research was not conducted for this thesis. Instead, existing sources were used from three main locations: The Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain oral history project, housed at the Institute for Cultural Research at Lancaster University; the Oral History Collection at the Scottish Film Archive in Glasgow; and the Going to the Pictures correspondence project, housed at the Scottish Life Archive in Edinburgh. This approach had obvious limitations, in that I was not able to frame questions or witness the interviews at first hand. However, the benefits were that hundreds of responses from numerous geographical locations could be accessed in a relatively short space of time and, as all three projects used an open style of questioning (rather than preset questions), there was a great deal of opportunity for respondents to mention issues directly related to this study (which they did).

Chapter Six also utilises a range of primary source material (including oral evidence and correspondence) to explore the linked topics of children's matinees and cinema clubs and children's cinema culture. Importantly, this chapter considers the extent to which debates surrounding children and cinema were *productive*, as well as *prohibitive* in nature. It argues that although historians have tended to portray the audience as a relatively homogeneous entity (split only by class or gender), many children in 1930s Britain had a distinct cinema culture of their own, involving various activities and rituals, both inside and outside the cinema. In a period when school, home and even leisure activities (such as uniformed youth movements)

tended to be strong on discipline, the cinema may have been colonised by children as an alternative site, offering liberating escapism and allowing 'wild' behaviour. This chapter therefore explores the extent to which the cinema was the birthplace of a new and somewhat subversive children's culture in interwar Britain. It also examines attempts to 'tame' this culture in the late 1930s, when raucous children's matinees were increasingly replaced by more formal children's cinema clubs.

Finally, the productive nature of the debate surrounding children, cinema and censorship is explored again in Chapter Seven, which draws on approaches from film studies to provide a case study of four MGM Tarzan films produced between 1932 and 1939. Over the decade, these films changed in character from violent, sexually-charged adventure pictures to mild family movies and this chapter examines the extent to which the evolution of this genre was shaped by issues relating to the child audience. A wide range of primary sources are used, including the original MGM scripts and production files, the censorship files of the BBFC and the Production Code Administration (Hays Office), details of press releases and merchandising and oral evidence and correspondence, including a specially formulated questionnaire.

Conclusion

As previously stated, the principal aim of this thesis is to explore all aspects of the debate surrounding children and cinema in 1930s Britain. To this end, a wide range of primary source material has been utilised, together with approaches from a number of disciplines, in order to assemble as comprehensive a picture as possible of the ways in which children interacted with attempts to control their viewing. This therefore involves examining the debate from the perspective of moral watchdogs, the home office, cinema managers, filmmakers and, perhaps most importantly, children themselves.

Overall, the children and cinema debate will be represented as an arena of complex power play, with the key 'players' including children, parents, educators, clergy, cinema managers and staff, social and youth organisations, the film industry, the press, the censors and the state.

Ultimately, it is important to consider the ways in which this debate may illustrate something of the nature of power relations between children and adults. For, as this introduction has shown, the controversy surrounding children and the cinema in the 1930s was only one phase of a wider debate which has evolved over the course of the twentieth century to include other media such as television, videos and the Internet. And, as Cary Bazalgette and David Buckingham have argued, 'the threat which has been posed by each successive technological development...has derived from the fact that they seem to offer less and less control for adults'.[39] Consequently, although this debate is often couched in terms of a desire to protect young people, it is important to bear in mind when reading the chapters that follow that, as Catherine Lumby has suggested, there may well be a complex relationship at work between the desire to protect children and the desire to control them.[40]

Endnotes

1 David Buckingham, *Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy* (London, 1993), p. 7. See also Ellen Wartella and Byron Reeves, 'Historical Trends in Research on Children and the Media: 1900-1960', *Journal of Communication*, 35, 2 (Spring 1985), pp. 119-20.

2 At the time of writing, Annette Kuhn was also about to publish work relating to this topic.

3 Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema & Society in Britain 1930-1939* (London, 1984), p. 5.

4 Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (1st edn 1981; Oxford, 1995), pp. 1-27.

5 John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996* (London, 1998), pp. 98-120.

6 See Dean Rapp, 'The British Salvation Army, the Early Film Industry and Working Class Adolescents, 1897-1918', *Twentieth Century British History*, 7, 2 (1996), pp. 157-88; David Fowler, 'Teenage Consumers? Young wage earners and leisure in Manchester, 1919-1939', in A. Davies & S. Fielding (eds.), *Workers' Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 133-155.

7 Anton Kaes, 'The Debate About Cinema: Charting a Controversy 1909-1929', *New German Critique*, 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 7-33. David Welch, *Propaganda & the German Cinema 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1985). Gary D. Stark, 'Cinema, Society and the State: Policing the Film Industry in Imperial Germany', in Gary D. Stark and Bede Karl Lackner (eds) *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany* (Arlington, 1982), pp. 122-66.

8 Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 54-63, 85-7 & 124-6, *passim*.

[9] See also Garth Jowett & James Linton, *Movies As Mass Communication* (London, 1980); Daniel J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (1982); Carmen Luke, *Constructing the Child Viewer: A History of the American Discourse on Television and Children 1950-1980* (New York, 1990), pp. 35-42. These books are from film, media and communications studies, rather than the work of historians *per se.*

[10] Garth Jowett, Ian Jarvie and Kathryn Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge, 1996), p. i.

[11] Richard deCordova, 'Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees, *Camera Obscura* (May 1990), p. 103. One useful text which has since looked at issues relating to youth and cinema during the silent period in America is Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (London, 1996), especially pp. 169-193.

[12] See Wartella & Reeves, 'Historical Trends', pp. 118-33; Buckingham, *Children Talking Television*; David Buckingham, *Children and Television: An Overview of the Research* (BFI Mimeo, London, 1987); Cary Bazalgette & David Buckingham (eds), *In Front of the Children: Screen Entertainment and Young Audiences* (London, 1995).

[13] Buckingham, *Children and Television*, p. 2.

[14] For example, see Martin Barker and Julian Petley (eds), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, 2e (London, 2001) and Martin Barker, *A Haunt of Fears: The Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign* (London, 1984).

[15] Tom Dewe Mathews, *Censored: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain* (London, 1994), p. 14; James C. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action, 1913-1972* (London, 1989), p. 1.

[16] Simon Rowson, 'Statistical Survey of the Cinema Industry in Great Britain in 1934', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 99 (1936), p. 70.

[17] See, for example, National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema: Its Present Position and Future Possibilities* (1917).

[18] Andy Medhurst, 'Music Hall and British Cinema', in Charles Barr (ed), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986), pp. 168-188.

[19] See Richards, *Dream Palace*, pp. 46-66.

[20] For a thorough overview of the growth and popularity of cinema in the inter-war period, see Richards, *Dream Palace* and Mathews, *Censored.*

[21] Richards, *Dream Palace*, p. 3.

[22] Peter Stead, *Film and the Working Class: The feature film in British and American Society* (London, 1989), p. 46.

[23] See Chapter Four.

[24] Wartella & Reeves, 'Historical Trends', pp. 124-5.

[25] Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth, 1960), *passim.*

[26] Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 1-4. See also William Kessen, 'The Child and Other Cultural Inventions', in Frank S. Kessel and Alexander W. Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions* (New York, 1983), pp. 26-47

[27] Examples include: Harry Hendrick 'Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An Interpretive Survey, 1800 to the Present' and Allison James and Allan

Prout, 'A new paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood', both in Allison James and Allan Prout (eds), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, 2e (London, 1997); John Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin, 1986); James Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Harmondsworth, 1982); Kessel & Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions*; Mitterauer, *History of Youth.*

[28] British Film Institute Special Collections (hereafter BFI) – London County Council (LCC) Verbatim Reports 1929-1930: Proceedings of conference between the LCC Theatres and Music Halls Committee and the BBFC, on the Attendance of Unaccompanied Children at Exhibitions of A Films, 6 November 1929.

[29] Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) – HO45/17036: Films for children 1932-1937, letter from CEA to Home Office, 30 January 1934.

[30] *News Chronicle*, 2 and 3 February 1934.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Walvin, *Child's World*, p. 4.?

[33] This approach is similar to that used by Carmen Luke in her study of children and television, which examines 'how the child was conceptualized in relation to the cinema, radio, and comics'. Luke, *Constructing the Child Viewer*, p. vii.

[34] For a detailed appraisal of these approaches, see Kenneth Thompson, *Moral Panics* (London, 1998).

[35] Peter Horsfield, 'Moral panic or moral action? The appropriation of moral panics in the exercise of social control' (http://vic.uca.org.au/ecrp/panics.html).

[36] Thompson, *Moral Panics*, p. ix.

[37] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 2e (Oxford, 1988), p. 132.

[38] Martin A. Conway, *Autobiographical Memory: An Introduction* (Milton Keynes, 1990), pp. 11-14.

[39] Bazalgette & Buckingham (eds), *In Front of the Children*, p. 3.

[40] Catherine Lumby, 'No Kidding: Paedophilia and Popular Culture', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 12, 1 (1998), p. 52.

Chapter Two

How Bridget Served the Salad Undressed: Censorship and the Regulation of Cinema 1895–1929

The classification of films suitable for young persons bristles with difficulties, for it is not easy to know where to draw the line.

British Board of Film Censors
Annual Report, 1930

INTRODUCTION

As Jeffrey Richards has clearly argued, 'it is impossible to understand the development and nature of the British cinema without a full appreciation of the work and influence of censors'.[1] This chapter takes Richards' statement a stage further, by arguing that it is equally impossible to understand the development of censorship (and therefore cinema) without first recognising the central importance of debates surrounding children and film in the evolution of cinema regulation.

Although much has been written concerning the history of film censorship in Britain, many if not most of these studies are avowedly political – constructing the cinema as a cultural battlefield drawn up along class lines, with censorship being identified as a key aspect of 'social control' or 'cultural control'. Such arguments may be well-founded, but they only represent one aspect of the history of film censorship. While it is certainly valid to focus on questions of class and national and international political relations, much of the historiography essentially ignores the factor of age distinction or simply omits children from its analysis. For example, Nicholas Pronay and Peter Stead focus almost exclusively on working class adults as the targets of official censorship.[2] Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street also ignore children when exploring the relationship between the state and the film industry.[3] And while Jeffrey Richards is generally well aware of the child audience, his work on censorship concentrates on the fundamentally 'adult' arenas of class conflict, British politics and international relations, as he assesses the role of censors in maintaining the *status quo* and protecting the British Establishment.[4]

Historians seeking to provide a detailed narrative history of censorship bodies, rather than an overtly political interpretation of their activities, mention the question of children and official censorship more often, although deep analysis of this question is not really within their remit and is therefore generally absent. Examples include Rachael Low's volumes on *The History of the British Film* and James Robertson's *The British Board of Film Censors*.[5] Neville Hunnings' definitive work, *Film Censors and the Law*, is particularly thorough, containing sixty-five index references to 'Children' and many more to the age-related features of censorship, including film classification. Yet somewhat paradoxically, Hunnings does not often cite issues related to children as a primary force behind such regulatory practices and

he notes in his conclusion that 'the question of censorship of films for children has not been dealt with in this study'.[6]

There is a significant gap in the literature, therefore, concerning issues related to children and official censorship and this may be considered a serious oversight. For not only did children form one of the largest audience segments in Britain's interwar cinemas, but it was youthful passion for the pictures which arguably caused most concern among censors and watchdogs, leading directly to developments in the regulation of cinema in Britain and elsewhere. Consequently, in this chapter I intend to provide an alternative overview of the history of film censorship in order to demonstrate that, along with issues of social class, concerns regarding children and the cinema were one of the main engines driving the development of cinema regulation, both in Britain and beyond.

First, I will draw on the thorough groundwork of a number of other historians to give a fairly conventional introduction to censorship legislation and organisation in Britain before 1930, including the passage of the Cinematograph Act of 1909 and the foundation of the British Board of Film Censors in 1912.[7] Having considered the background to these key developments, the central importance of anxieties relating to children will then be demonstrated, with particular reference to issues including age certification and concerns regarding the impact of film on juvenile delinquency. Parallels will then be drawn between developments in Britain and those in other countries, particularly America, showing that this relationship (between the growth of cinema regulation and debates relating to children and film) was in fact an international phenomenon.

THE REGULATION OF BRITISH CINEMA BEFORE 1930

The first film to be banned in Britain contained neither sex nor violence, but cheese. Charles Urban's 1898 film, shot through a microscope, revealed the movement of bacteria on a slice of stilton. And although Urban would later persuade the British High Command to allow filming at the Battle of the Somme in 1917, he was sadly unable to withstand the vociferous protests of the cheese industry in 1898, when his ninety-second stilton film was unceremoniously withdrawn from circulation.[8]

This incident was something of an exception, however, as early cinema attracted almost no official censorship, despite its potentially offensive content. For example, many early cinematic attractions at fairgrounds and amusement arcades were saucy celluloid animations, such as *How Bridget Served the Salad Undressed* (1897). However, more overtly erotic films – the most hardcore being produced in South America – were confined to private screenings in 'smoking rooms' and brothels, thus attracting little public concern. Nevertheless, kinematographs did regularly screen short, violent documentary films. Executions were particularly popular and although such films could not be made in Britain, several early 'snuff movies' were imported, including footage of six beheadings by Chinese soldiers in Manchuria and the hanging of a cattle rustler in Missouri. Other rather gruesome mini-documentaries at the turn of the century included operations (especially on women), animal fights and violent attacks on animals. One French director even forced a horse over a cliff, so that he could film it plummeting onto the rocks below.

Essentially, these early films were a new medium outside the legal control of local authorities. However, as cinema became increasingly popular and moved from the fairgrounds to penny gaffs and music halls and, from 1906, into purpose-built cinemas, pressure to control film content became increasingly apparent.

Early Entertainment Legislation and the Cinematograph Act 1909

The beginnings of film censorship legislation in Britain can be traced back to laws established in eighteenth-century London for the control of theatres and other places of public entertainment. Two types of establishment were recognised in this respect. First, the patent theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, which were the only theatres permitted to stage 'legitimate' plays. These were censored by the Lord Chamberlain under the Playhouse Act of 1737 (superseded by the Theatres Act of 1843, which ended the patent theatres' monopoly and extended the Lord Chamberlain's powers of censorship to include other theatre plays). Secondly, London boasted many minor theatres and places of entertainment, which could only legally stage operettas, burlettas, mime, singing and dancing. These were controlled through the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751.

The 1751 Act was expressly designed to control the leisure activities of 'the lower Sort of People'. It applied to 'any house, room, garden or other place kept for public dancing, music, or other public entertainment of the like kind' and required such places to be licensed. Under this Act, unlicensed premises could be declared 'disorderly' and raided by the police, who could 'seize every person' within and arrest the keepers of the establishment. Importantly, this Act also set a significant precedent for the indirect control of the *content* of public entertainment, as licensing bodies had the power to refuse licences or to withdraw them from establishments whose entertainment was considered unsuitable. Thus, by 1870, music hall proprietors often censored the material of their performers, in order to protect their own licences under the Disorderly Houses Act.[9]

As many entertainment providers wished to practise outside the control of licensing authorities, there was some debate in court as to the scope of the 1751 Act. The crux of the Act was held to be whether music or dancing were an integral part of the entertainment and this was usually a discretionary matter. Thus in 1868, a court found that music played during a religious meeting did not fall under the Act, but in 1877, it was deemed that roller-skating to music did.[10] There was some question as to whether film images of activities like dancing might also come under the Act. But while this was discussed in the cinema trade press, it was not really tested in court.[11]

In 1888, England's organisational and legislative structure was transformed by the creation of local county councils. Although the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751 had only initially applied to places within twenty miles of the cities of London and Westminster, the 1890 Public Health Acts Amendment Act extended the provisions of the 1751 Act to any local council that chose to adopt it. Many did. But fairgrounds, penny gaffs and early purpose-built cinemas still did not come under the licensing powers of the authorities, apart from a few building and safety regulations, which were seldom carefully enforced.

Calls for the control of cinema grew with the new industry's rapid expansion from the turn of the century. The issues cited by those demanding stricter controls were mainly concerned with safety – particularly fire safety – and, to a lesser extent, with the content of the films themselves.

Fire was a very serious concern in theatres across Europe and America in the nineteenth century, as many were burned to the ground with considerable loss of life. Table 2.1 details a selection of these incidents. London's patent theatres were both destroyed by fire – Drury Lane in 1809 and Covent Garden, once in 1808, when twenty people died and again in 1856. The Theatre Royal, Exeter, was razed to the ground in 1885 and although it was rebuilt and reopened in October 1886, it burned down again in September 1887, with 186 fatalities. The issue of fire safety in places of public entertainment was raised repeatedly in the House of Commons from 1865, as a result of these and other fires.

Table 2.1 – Theatre Fires of the Nineteenth Century

Year of Fire	Location of Theatre	Fatalities
1808	Covent Garden	20
1809	Drury Lane	
1836	Lehmen Theatre, St. Petersburg	800
1846	Theatre Royal, Quebec	100
1856	Covent Garden	
1876	Consays Theatre, New York	283
1878	Coliseum, Liverpool	37
1881	Ring Theatre, Vienna	450
1885	Theatre Royal, Exeter	
1887	(Rebuilt) Theatre Royal Exeter	186

Source: Hunnings, *Film Censors*, pp. 35-6.

Probably the first serious fire involving film also involved children and occurred in 1897, at the annual *Bazar de la Charité* in Paris. One of the exhibition's attractions was a small cinema show for children, during which the projectionist accidentally started a fire. This spread rapidly, causing general panic and many fatalities, including '140 eminent people'.[12] From the very outset, therefore, anxiety regarding theatre fires was extended to include cinema shows. Indeed, cinema posed

a much greater threat for two reasons. First, nearly all commercial film footage (until the late 1940s) was on highly inflammable nitrate stock. Secondly, the very popularity of cinema contributed to the hazard, as venues were often rapidly built, overcrowded and ill equipped to deal with fire. Furthermore, most penny gaffs and purpose-built cinemas fell outside the existing licensing requirements (and, therefore, the safety regulations) of local councils. For example, in 1898, London County Council (LCC) issued safety regulations dealing specifically with cinematograph performances in licensed places of public entertainment, but by 1909, the city had over 300 unlicensed music halls and picture palaces, which could simply ignore these regulations.[13] Other local authorities, such as those in Middlesex and Newcastle, also introduced new regulations, while in 1898 the major insurance companies jointly issued safety requirements for cinematograph use in buildings they had insured against fire.[14] However, such efforts were considered piecemeal and ineffective, and by 1909, local councils were demanding that the Home Office extend their powers to impose safety regulations on all cinema venues.

The other major concern associated with early cinema related to the content of the pictures themselves. From the turn of the century, showmen attracted more and more custom by increasing the sizes of their screens, the number of their shows and the variety of their films. They were aided in this respect as the industry became more organised from the mid-1900s so that films could be rented rather than bought, facilitating far more performances to satisfy the apparently insatiable public demand. However, highly popular films of executions, animal fights and operations were immediately attacked by the press and in the House of Commons.[15] Fictional films also drew criticism, including *The Black Hand* (1908), in which two intruders take a sleeping child from its bed, put a rope around its neck and string it up over the door, leaving the child's feet swinging two or three feet from the floor.[16]

As the vast majority of film audiences at this time were from the working classes, it is hardly surprising that denigration came mainly from the well-to-do. Criticism generally related to issues of class, taste and respectability, with major targets being film images of vulgarity, crime, drunkenness and licentiousness. But from the early years of cinema, films were also commonly blamed for causing juvenile delinquency. For example, in 1908 an article in the *Sheffield Telegraph*

argued that juvenile crime was caused by the cinema, while in 1905 the *Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* reported that three boys caught breaking into a shop had explained that they learned their technique from films.[17] This issue will be explored in more detail later.

Despite the undesirable content of many films, local authorities again found themselves largely powerless to intervene, although some council control was attempted. For example, in 1904, the LCC granted a music and dancing licence to the Earl's Court Exhibition, on the understanding that the pictures and titles in their Mutascope machines would be carefully supervised.[18] Successful attempts were also made to place cinema performances under the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751, as musical accompaniment was argued to be an integral part of the entertainment.[19] However, considering the rapid escalation of the cinema industry, such individual measures were felt to be insufficient and, again, local authorities petitioned the Home Office for some kind of central control. In February 1909, the Metropolitan Police also put significant pressure on the Home Office to control film content, as they expressed grave concern over the glorification of crime in cinema shows.[20]

The culmination of repeated calls for government intervention was the passage of the Cinematograph Act of 1909, which became effective from 1 January 1910. This Act required the licensing of all premises used for the 'exhibition of pictures or other optical effects by means of a cinematograph' and as such, it covered penny gaffs, peepshow arcades and purpose-built cinemas. Although the legislation applied only to England and Wales, James Robertson has suggested that 'exhibitors in Scotland observed the same conditions voluntarily'.[21]

The detail of the Act was ostensibly concerned with imposing safety regulations on premises licensed to show films, particularly with regard to fire hazards. However the Act was also used to impose control on other aspects of cinema performances, including film content, and historians differ over the extent to which this may have been a calculated outcome. Annette Kuhn argues that the Bill was proposed 'solely for securing safety in premises where films were shown', whereas Tom Mathews claims that 'public safety became the Trojan Horse' through which other controls were imposed – particularly film censorship.[22] Mathews may have chosen a slightly inappropriate metaphor, however, because although the safety

legislation did provide loopholes, these were not necessarily as premeditated as he suggests. And while Kuhn's argument is defensible, both in terms of the Act's wording and in the light of the evidence already presented on nineteenth-century theatre fires, there is other evidence which suggests that at least some of those pushing for the Bill's passage were aware of its other implications. Certainly, fire safety was a genuine concern and this forms the sum and substance of the Act. However, the LCC's Walter Reynolds – the man primarily responsible for the Bill – betrayed a different agenda when he asserted, almost a year before it came into force, that the Act would enable licensing bodies to control film content:

> Will the power given to the Council enable it to control the nature of the entertainments given? It is the duty of the police to stop any entertainments of a doubtful character, but certainly the Council would have the power...to refuse to license places which had presented undesirable shows. The knowledge that they possessed that power would be another powerful factor in securing a high class of entertainment, to the general good of the trade.[23]

Thus, it was clearly intended, at least by Reynolds, that the power to license would also imply the power to censor, just as it had under the Act of 1751.

A postscript to this, however, is provided by Hunnings, who notes that in 1908 and 1909, four court cases tested the claim that cinema performances might be controlled under the licensing requirements of the Disorderly Houses Act, due to their integral musical accompaniment. As three of these four cases went in favour of the licensing authority, this suggests that cinemas may well have become subject to licensing laws, and therefore censorship, even *without* the passage of the 1909 Act.[24] In other words, the 1909 Act was not apparently needed for the purposes of content control. This in turn implies that although there may have been a number of ulterior motives, the central motivation behind the 1909 Act would seem to be, as Kuhn suggests, the provision of safety regulations for cinemas.

Whatever the primary agenda of the Bill – hidden or otherwise – the Cinematograph Act certainly was manipulated by local authorities, who immediately

exploited its loopholes to various ends. Before the Act had even come into force, the LCC announced that they would require premises licensed for cinema shows to remain closed on Sundays. Other councils followed suit and by August 1910, a 'six-day licence' was the norm across Britain. The LCC was legally challenged on this issue in December of the same year, but the court found in their favour, stressing that councils should be allowed to impose specific conditions on licensees at their own discretion, 'so long as those conditions are not unreasonable'.[25] This was a critical precedent and immediately other councils started to impose a variety of 'reasonable' conditions on cinemas before they would grant licences. In some regions 'barkers' were banned from cinema doors and in others fixed hours of opening were required. Elsewhere children could not gain admittance to cinemas after 9.00pm, while other councils refused licences simply because they considered the district unsuitable, or felt that there were enough cinemas in that area already.[26]

In July 1910, the LCC became the first local authority to use its licensing powers to officially censor a film, as they effectively banned cinemas from showing the world heavyweight championship boxing match in which black boxer 'Big' Jack Johnson defeated his white opponent James J. Jeffries in over forty bloody rounds.[27] Soon after, Fulham Borough Council made more subtle overtures regarding the indirect censorship of films when they decreed to would-be licensees in 1911 that 'the character of all picture exhibitions should be carefully supervised' because of the large number of children in attendance.[28] It is important to note that on nearly every occasion when conditions imposed on cinemas were challenged in court the results went in favour of the local authority. Thus, it soon became apparent that under the Cinematograph Act of 1909, local councils would have significant powers to control and censor cinema performances across Britain.

The British Board of Film Censors

The reaction of the British film trade to the Act of 1909 was somewhat mixed. Initially, exhibitors protested that the danger of fire had been exaggerated; that projectionists were increasingly skilful in their handling of nitrate stock and that no serious conflagration had ever occurred in a British cinema. Nevertheless, the trade finally decided to support the Bill. As Hunnings argues, from the turn of the century

exhibitors were 'desperately seeking a higher class of patronage' and they therefore hoped that the 1909 Act would promote an image of picture palaces as places of 'clean' entertainment and safety, as well as comfort, thus attracting the highly lucrative middle class market which had so far been elusive.[29]

Once the 1909 Act was in force, however, cinema owners and filmmakers were appalled by the powers given to local authorities over the exhibition of films. Furthermore, this local, *ad hoc*, indirect system of censorship was still considered insufficient by the councils, who called on the Home Office to establish a central, state-run film censorship system. In an attempt to pre-empt such a move, a deputation of thirteen film manufacturers and exhibitors went to Home Secretary Reginald McKenna, on 22 February 1912, in order to propose a self-governing censorship system to be run by the film trade and industry itself. The delegation suggested that this new Board of Censors be led by a Home Office-appointed president, who would act as mediator between the board and the film industry. Three to five censors could then be employed to view films and give (or refuse) them a certificate, similar to the mark of approval used by the National Board of Censors in New York. The board would then be financed by charging a fee to producers seeking certification for their films. Although not immediately successful, the details of this proposal were thrashed out during 1912 and in November of that year it was announced that the industry-run British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) had been founded. Significantly, its first president, George Redford, had recently retired from the Lord Chamberlain's Office as Examiner of Plays.

The BBFC started work on 1 January 1913, beginning with only two rules – no nudity and no personification of Christ. It announced that all films released in Britain after 1 March would be subject to a system of certification, whereby each film would either be rejected or would receive one of two certificates – Universal (U) or Public (A). Both A and U films were considered suitable for children as well as adults, but the latter were 'especially recommended for Children's Matinees'.[30]

Crucially, this system was directly motivated by concerns over children and cinema, as a BBFC document sent to the Home Office in November 1912 stated: 'The object of these two certificates is to meet, as far as possible, the complaints that have been made by licensing authorities in respect of the non-suitability of certain

films for children's entertainments'.[31] This system will be discussed in more detail below; suffice it to say for now that there was initially some confusion over the precise meanings of U and A certificates, which changed over time and varied in their local interpretation.

Despite its apparently thorough approach, the early years of the BBFC were dogged with problems, including the nature of films, staffing difficulties and, not least, the board's relationships with the Home Office, local authorities, the church and other moral watchdogs.[32] Although it had been hoped that local councils would recognise the authority of the BBFC, the board had no legal imperative and therefore relied completely on the will of local authorities to demand that cinemas show only BBFC-certified films. However, most councils found the BBFC to be a self-serving organ of the film industry that was far too liberal in its decisions. They therefore ignored the board's advice and continued to appoint their own local censors, who would ban, re-cut or pass films that had already been passed, cut or banned by the BBFC. In fact, at the end of 1914, only 23 of the 688 licensing authorities specifically required cinemas to adhere to BBFC certification guidelines. This number rose to 35 by the end of 1915 and by 1919, just 20 counties and county boroughs stipulated that cinemas must only screen BBFC-approved films.[33]

Neither was any support forthcoming from the Home Office after December 1915, when a cabinet reshuffle instituted Sir Herbert Samuel as the new Home Secretary. Samuel considered the BBFC too lenient and he responded to calls for an official film censorship system by holding a conference to discuss the matter in April 1916. By the end of November, all but two of the licensing authorities in England and Wales had agreed to surrender their local autonomy in order to establish a unified state system of film censorship. Neither Ireland nor Scotland was properly consulted (Scotland refused on the grounds that the plan was illegal) and the cinema trade – led by Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association (CEA) Chairman Anthony Newbould – was adamantly opposed to the scheme. Nevertheless, it looked as though Samuel's plan would go ahead, until a number of incidents led to an abrupt turnaround in the fortunes of the BBFC from 1916.

Probably most important among these was the election of a new government at the end of 1916, and the appointment of a new Home Secretary, Sir George Cave,

who chose to shelve Samuel's censorship scheme. Under Cave, Home Office support for the BBFC improved immeasurably. Although this support was unofficial and did not offer, for example, legislative backing for the board, the Home Office did take a strong advisory role, sending numerous circulars to local councils, encouraging them to support the board's decisions. By the mid-1920s, therefore, the BBFC had become independent of its trade links and, as many historians have noted, it was now, if anything, an unofficial arm of the Home Office.[34]

The second key event was that the BBFC finally found a strong leader in 1916. The first president, George Redford, had fallen sick within weeks of his appointment in 1912 and he never really recovered. On his death in November 1916, Redford was replaced by the dynamic Thomas Power O'Connor – a Catholic, Liberal MP, with a background in journalism and a knowledge of the film industry (having been president of the CEA from 1913 to 1916). In place of a sick, absent leader, therefore, the BBFC gained a man Tom Mathews has described as 'a robust and relentless expert in the art of bureaucratic conciliation'.[35] O'Connor's powerful friends included Ramsay MacDonald, Winston Churchill and the leader of the new coalition government, David Lloyd George and his links with the CEA were a great strength, as the BBFC had previously been considered an organisation that favoured film *manufacturers* rather than exhibitors. Now, under O'Connor, bodies such as the CEA and the Kinematograph Renter's Society felt confident enough to add their crucial support to the board.

Another important development of 1916 saw the BBFC demonstrating its usefulness, by defusing the potentially incendiary increase in controversial films made during and after World War One. War films themselves were initially banned by the British government and although this ruling was soon relaxed to allow for films supporting Britain and its allies, this whole area was still very sensitive indeed. Meanwhile, a range of 'propaganda' pictures emerged, which aimed to heighten public awareness regarding delicate social issues, including the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, prostitution and contraception.[36] Finally, radical political issues were raised by Russian films of the 1920s, such as Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1926), which was banned in Britain until 1954, and Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926), which was also banned.[37] This increase in

controversial films, together with a massive growth in the popularity of cinema during the war, created something of a headache for the BBFC. However, it also served to underline the need for a censorship body and thus, it justified the BBFC's existence.

Importantly, T. P. O'Connor showed that the board was capable of dealing with controversial films, by announcing a new set of censorship rules in 1917. While the BBFC claimed that it still had not adopted a rigid code of censorship, it did add to its criteria for exclusion as films came along. The resulting set of rules, known as O'Connor's 43, aimed to deal with all kinds of controversial film content (see Appendix 1). Although this list was only originally intended to be in force until the end of World War One, it had expanded to number sixty-seven rules by 1919.[38] O'Connor presented his forty-three rules to the Cinema Commission of Inquiry, which was conducted by the National Council of Public Morals in 1917 and the favourable report of this enquiry proved helpful in stabilising and enhancing the reputations of both the BBFC and cinema in general (see Chapter Four).

A final critical development was the enormous improvement in the relationship between the BBFC and local authorities at the beginning of the 1920s. The LCC had long been considered the key to the other councils and in 1923, after two years' deliberation, they issued a new set of licensing regulations, stipulating that 'no film ...which has not been passed...by the British Board of Film Censors shall be exhibited without the express consent of the council'.[39] The Home Office then circulated a new set of model conditions to local authorities in July 1923, which fully endorsed the work of the BBFC and called on councils to follow the LCC's lead in supporting the board's certification decisions. And over the next year, most local authorities agreed to do so.

By the mid-1920s, the position of the BBFC was therefore firmly established. Although its guidelines were still advisory and not legally enforceable, O'Connor's skill in public and political relations had gained the board far more support from the government, local authorities and the film trade. The BBFC finally listed its criteria for bans and cuts as a systematic code in 1926 (see Appendix 2), but O'Connor was still careful to take the middle ground regarding censorship, explaining: 'I feel I have a great duty to safeguard not merely the decency of the film, but also its liberty'.[40]

CHILDREN, CENSORSHIP AND CERTIFICATION

Having given an overview of the development of British cinema regulation from 1895 to the 1920s, the remainder of this chapter will now focus on the one key factor generally neglected by historians: the pivotal importance of debates surrounding children's viewing on the evolution of cinema regulation, in Britain and elsewhere.

Children and Cinema Regulation in Britain

Issues relating to children were a central force in the early years of official cinema regulation in Britain and of these issues, probably the two most significant were the perceived impact of films on juvenile delinquency and the need for age-restrictions on children's cinema viewing. These will both now be explored in some detail.

Claims that the cinema promoted youth crime emerged from the early 1900s and became increasingly vociferous as cinema grew in scope and popularity. In 1913 Accrington magistrates 'urged that licensees should take care not to select films ...likely to incite young people to crime – pictures of bandits and the like'.[41] While in Oldham the Chief Constable warned cinema managers about films 'calculated to prove harmful to the morals of the public, especially those of young persons'.[42] Critics of the nascent BBFC also referred to this issue in calls for stricter, official censorship. In 1916, for example, the Chief Constables' Annual Report asserted that 'the establishment of a central Government censor of cinematograph films is essential and *will conduce to the reduction of juvenile crime* in the country'.[43] Similarly, new Home Secretary Herbert Samuel told local authorities in April 1916:

> I have lately obtained the opinion of a number of Chief Constables, who declare with almost complete unanimity that the recent great increase in juvenile delinquency is, to a considerable extent, due to demoralizing cinematograph films.[44]

This opinion was reiterated by Samuel in a Home Office circular of May 1916, which argued for a state-run censorship system on the grounds that the 'recent increase in juvenile delinquency' was due directly to the influence of 'demoralising cinematograph films'.[45]

Some local authorities disagreed with such assertions, yet they paradoxically supported the sentiments behind them. For example, the Town Clerk of Leicester wrote to the Home Office in June 1916:

> I am requested to point out that in Leicester there has been a decrease in the number of youthful delinquents since the War, and that it is the opinion of the Chief Constable that the Cinematograph exhibitions in Leicester have not been the cause of more than one or two prosecutions since they have been licensed. At the same time, he and the Watch Committee are of the opinion that there is need of a centralized control of films...which might induce mischief, if not crime, in the minds of the younger part of the audience.[46]

Such concerns were so pronounced that even the influential Cinema Commission of 1917 failed to draw a line under the issue, when they took a positive view and recommended neither the banning of crime films nor the exclusion of children from cinemas (see Chapter Four).

By 1919 the BBFC Annual Report listed several subjects considered unsuitable for film content, with crime and juvenile delinquency high on the agenda:

> One of the most difficult subjects with which Board has had to deal is the question of crime... Stories of crime make a strong appeal to the imagination of the Public, especially to the less educated sections. When a story of crime is accompanied with the further elements of daring adventure, or romance, and of mystery, there are the elements of a popular success. It is also true that to young people, especially boys, with their ingrained instinct for adventure, uncorrected by experience of life, such 'crime' films make a special appeal, and it may be added, a dangerous appeal.[47]

Evident here are issues of class and gender, as well as age, with those considered most at risk being identified as 'the less educated' and 'young people, especially

boys'. Moreover, this argument rests on many unquestioned assumptions, such as those regarding the 'ingrained instinct' of children and the 'dangerous appeal' of films. Such arguments will be examined in more detail in Chapters Three and Four.

In addition to issues of class, age and gender, the BBFC displayed a cultural bias in their definition of crime. Specifically, the 1919 Annual Report carefully distinguishes between the dangerous influence of 'stories calculated to familiarize young people with theft, robberies and violence, leaving them to conclude that such are normal incidents' and innocuous content, including '"costume" crime, such as cowboy films, Mexican robberies, etc.'. The Report continues, 'it is felt that the latter incidents are regarded simply as...adventures with no connection whatever in the lives, or probable experiences, of young people in this country'.[48] Thus, it was considered that films of crime in a historical, non-British context were less likely to corrupt the morality of children than depictions of contemporary British crime.

The BBFC were particularly concerned about crime content in serials as these were hugely popular with young people and they therefore stipulated in their 1919 Report that 'no serial in which crime is the dominant feature, and not merely an episode in the story, will be passed by the Censor'. They also required that all serials involving crime be submitted for censorship in their entirety and that *all* crime films avoid emphasising 'the methods of crime', treating crime as comedy and making 'the detective element...subordinate to the criminal interest'.[49]

Throughout the 1920s, the BBFC continued to express concern about the impact of crime films on children. President T. P. O'Connor was said to have made this issue a priority, as he 'considered most carefully the question of "crime" films, and the effect such films had, particularly on the child mind'.[50] In 1921 the board cut scenes from films which were thought to be 'teaching children methods of crime'.[51] In 1923 even a classic adaptation suffered the censors' scissors when the board required cuts to the American production of *Oliver Twist* (1923), involving scenes in which Fagin (Lon Chaney) teaches Oliver (Jackie Coogan) to pick pockets.[52] And while all grounds for censorship listed by the BBFC in 1926 were established with 'vulnerable' audience members – particularly children – in mind, specific reference was made to the unacceptable nature of scenes depicting 'dangerous mischief easily imitated by children' (see Appendix 2).

In addition to censorship, the main means by which the BBFC sought to regulate children's cinema viewing was through the certification system, instituted in 1912 to address 'the complaints that have been made by licensing authorities in respect of the non-suitability of certain films for children's entertainments'.[53] It is very important to remember, however, that both A and U films were initially intended to be suitable for child viewers, as it was felt that any film not suitable for them would also be unsuitable for adults.[54] Thus, an official BBFC leaflet of 1913 stated that while U films were 'especially recommended for Children's Matinees', only films that were 'clean and wholesome and absolutely above suspicion' would receive a certificate of any kind.[55] In its first year, the board examined 7,510 films. Twenty-two were rejected, 6,861 were passed with a U certificate and 627 with an A. Of those passed, 144 had sections that needed cutting before they were certified.[56]

The meaning of these certificates was to change over time, however, and certification became a mechanism whereby children were excluded from films, purely on the grounds of their age. Some attempts were even made to ban children from cinemas altogether. Notably, in 1916, a Home Office circular took what Tom Mathews has called 'the short step from censoring films to censoring film-goers', by advising local councils to adopt a clause excluding all children under 14 from cinemas.[57] However, CEA Chairman Anthony Newbould wrote immediately to the Home Office to protest and, although the specific contents of this letter are not now known, the Home Secretary commented: 'This letter suggests war'.[58]

Less extreme attempts to exclude children involved adapting the A certificate to mean 'adults only'. Thus in 1921 the Theatres and Music Halls Committee of the LCC recommended that only adults be admitted to A films. The BBFC disagreed and in December of that year, a conference was held by the LCC with members of the cinema trade, the BBFC, the Home Office and the Lord Chamberlain's Office. At this meeting it was decided that children under 16 should only be admitted to A films in the LCC area if they were accompanied by a parent or *bona fide* adult guardian.[59] (The age limit of 16 was actually a compromise between the Home Office suggestion of 18 and the trade's preference of 14).[60] Further important steps taken at this conference included the decision that only BBFC-certified films would be exhibited in LCC-licensed cinemas (except for newsreels or films with specific

permission) and that the BBFC certificate would be prominently displayed at the beginning of each performance.

Although other local councils followed the LCC example, the Home Office still felt it necessary to call a wider conference of licensing authorities in June 1923 to discuss the lack of uniformity in licensing rules across the country. As a result the Home Office circulated a new set of model conditions to local authorities in July 1923 and in 1924 a Home Office survey reported 'fairly satisfactory progress in the direction of greater uniformity'.[61] Soon after, a test case appeared at Lambeth Police Court, where magistrates found it reasonable for the LCC to require cinema licensees to exclude unaccompanied children under 16 from A films. An appeal in 1925 upheld and endorsed the first decision, giving legal support to any local authority to that chose to follow the LCC example.[62]

Confusion and contention over the certification of films continued throughout the mid-1920s. For example, Dr Humbert's report to the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations in 1926 erroneously suggested that in Britain A certificate films were 'adjudged to be satisfactory for display to adults only and not to children'.[63] Meanwhile, in 1924 the National Council of Women called for stricter censorship of films shown to children under 16 and in 1926 several groups approached the BBFC to express concern over this issue, including representatives from the National Association of Head Teachers, the London Public Morality Council and the LCC.[64] By 1928, the issue had still not been resolved, as agitation continued and some local councils argued that children under 16 should be banned from cinemas altogether.[65] This situation was only to be exacerbated by the introduction of talking pictures in the late 1920s, as will be shown in the next chapter. But before discussing the further developments of censorship in 1930s Britain, it is important to recognise the parallel experience of other nations – particularly America – in the development of cinema regulation and issues of childhood and censorship, in the years before the coming of sound.

Children and Cinema Regulation in America

The USA was not the world's most significant film-producing nation in the early years of cinema. However, it soon grew to be so and it is therefore important to

consider the development of censorship in this context for three reasons.[66] Firstly, its evolution broadly paralleled that of Britain and it therefore provides an interesting comparison. Secondly, as American films grew to dominate the market from the interwar period it was these, rather than British films, which would become the favourites of many children in 1930s Britain. Thirdly, the relationship between the BBFC and the American Production Code Administration (PCA) was an important feature of censorship in both Britain and America after 1930 and it is therefore useful to provide some explanation as to the growth and development of the PCA.

The regulation and censorship of cinema in America followed a similar time frame and was often motivated by similar concerns to those already described for Britain. Foremost among these was a perceived need to protect 'the impressionable classes' from the potentially harmful influence of cinema. This particularly meant children, but also included the illiterate and immigrants. Interestingly, however, America did not adopt an age-classification system for films until 1968 and even then this was purely voluntary, enforced at the complete discretion of cinema managers and local communities. Yet it would be inaccurate to interpret this as an indication that there was little concern regarding children and cinema in America, as the main reason behind the lack of an age-classification system was economic, with filmmakers strongly resisting any narrowing of their potential audience. Therefore, as Ruth Vasey has argued, 'Hollywood movies were broadly designed to be consumed by people of both sexes, all ages, and all levels of experience... so children, their parents, and their grandparents regularly consumed the same entertainments'.[67] Consequently, it was the very *openness* of access which made calls for censorship in America particularly vociferous. In this sense, Gregory Black's argument regarding a 1915 Supreme Court decision might describe much of the early history of film censorship in America:

> Had filmmakers been willing to produce films for specialized audiences (adults only, family, children), the impact [of reformers] might have been lessened; but the movers and shakers of the movie industry wanted or needed the largest possible market.[68]

Progressive reformers expressed serious concern over the impact of film on American children from the first few years of the twentieth century.[69] And as in Britain a causal relationship between the cinema and juvenile delinquency was readily assumed. In 1908, for example, one minister referred to cinemas as 'schools for degenerates and criminals', while another asserted in 1910 that movies were 'schools of vice and crime... offering trips to hell for [a] nickle'.[70] Yet many argued in favour of the cinema and against censorship, suggesting that children were robust enough to withstand its impact, including the Mayor of Topeka, Kansas who contentiously advised: 'if you have a boy who can be corrupted by the ordinary run of moving picture films you might as well kill him now and save trouble'.[71] Nevertheless, many reformers called repeatedly for the institution of a film censorship system and their campaign, based primarily on the need to protect children, was ultimately successful.

In 1907, after a decade of the cinematograph, Chicago was the first community to attempt film censorship and they did so under the auspices of their Police Department. Two years later this system was challenged in court over the legality of banning biographical films about outlaws. Children were seen as centrally important to this case, when the court found in favour of the censors, surmising that such films 'would necessarily be attended with evil effects on youthful spectators'.[72] Despite the pioneering nature of censorship in Chicago, this system was still criticised as inadequate. Reformer Jane Addams wrote in 1909 that she found it 'astounding that a city allows thousands of its youth to fill their impressionable minds with [movie] absurdities which certainly will become the foundation for their working moral codes'.[73] Meanwhile, Chicago's censor Sergeant Charles O'Donnell reassured his critics that films would only be passed by him for exhibition if they were 'proper for women and children'.[74]

While censors and reformers were battling in Chicago, issues relating to children and the cinema were also being hotly debated in New York – the centre of the American film industry in the years before Hollywood. This escalated in late 1908 when pro-censorship agitators virtually forced Mayor George B. McClellan to call a pivotal debate at New York City Hall. Again, the major cause for concern was the impact of movies on children. Filmmakers were castigated as amoral

opportunists that 'profit from the corruption of the minds of children', while the city was criticised for spending millions of dollars on education, while allowing cinemas to 'contaminate and corrupt' the children of New York.[75] In a shocking climax to the debate, on Christmas Eve 1908, all 550 of the city's cinema licences were revoked and every movie theatre in New York City was closed down. Although a legal appeal enabled most to reopen within a few days, it was clear that the pressure to regulate cinema (based on arguments of child protection) had become critical.

As in Britain, key figures in the American film industry realised that they needed to act quickly and institute their own censorship system, in order to avert the imposition of external constraints. Thus, just as the BBFC was established in 1913, the New York Board of Motion Picture Censorship was created as an industry-run self-censorship system in 1909. This board made the fundamental mistake, however, of not directly addressing concerns regarding children and film. They asserted that they would pass any film that did not undermine 'fundamental morality', but refused to become a body that defined 'good taste' or protected 'children, or delicate women'.[76] Almost immediately the board was vetoed by several states and cities, who established their own censorship boards instead, including Pennsylvania (1911), Ohio (1913) and Kansas (1913).[77] In each case, issues relating to children and media influence were paramount. For example, in Kansas City, Black suggests that a censorship board was created principally 'to protect children from the corrupting influence of movies'.[78]

In 1915, when a Supreme Court decision supported the right of Ohio censors to cut and ban films, the New York Board of Motion Picture Censorship sought to halt this trend of local film regulation. They tried to improve their image, changing their name to the National Board of Review (NBR), reviewing nearly all films exhibited in America and stamping those which were acceptable with a seal of approval: 'Passed by the National Board of Review'. By 1917, the NBR employed 225 volunteer workers, notably including members of child welfare organisations.[79] They reviewed films according to published standards, cutting 'vulgarity...prolonged and passionate love scenes, insufficient clothing, unnecessary and detailed showing of opium joints or dance halls, improper dancing, unnecessary brutality...and detailed exposition of crime'. They also addressed the issue of juvenile delinquency, insisting 'on the

punishment of the criminal when his crime might be considered by the young and impressionable spectator as an excusable act'.[80]

The centrality of issues surrounding children to the work of censors was highlighted in 1916, when the NBR established a National Committee on Films for Young People, 'to further the discovery, production, selection, distribution and use of selected motion pictures and programmes for young people'. They referred to this committee as the 'most important department of the Board's work' and claimed to be proactive in trying 'to develop a demand for special programmes for children; to increase the manufacture of films for children; and to further the now rapid growth of special performances for them'.[81]

Despite these attempts however the NBR, like the BBFC, reached a crisis point in the early 1920s when their ability to censor was slammed by critics as ineffective, self-serving and far too liberal. In 1921, over 100 anti-movie bills were introduced across America and various states and cities continued to establish independent censorship systems. Most importantly, New York State set up its own local censorship board in 1921. Meanwhile, those pushing for federal censorship claimed that movies were increasingly immoral – an argument fuelled in the 1920s by a spate of scandals in the filmmaking community itself (now based in Hollywood, two days' train journey away from the gaze of New York film executives), involving extramarital sex, drugs, rape, murder, suicide and general debauchery.

In order to try and regain control over censorship and to allay public concerns, the leading Hollywood producers joined forces in January 1922 and established the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) as a united front for the industry in public relations. They appointed politician Will H. Hays to oversee this organisation, which then became known as the Hays Office. In 1927, Hays established a new, industry-run censorship body within the MPPDA: the Studio Relations Department (SRD). He then circulated filmmakers with a document detailing all forms of unacceptable film content, called the list of 'Don'ts and Be Carefuls' (Appendix 3).

The Hays Office was not taken seriously by filmmakers until the mid-1930s however, and in the meantime local authorities continued to pass their own regulations regarding children and cinema attendance. Notably, several cities

prohibited the cinema attendance of children unless accompanied by an adult, either at all times, during the school day, or in the late evening. By 1926, the Chicago censors were labelling certain films for exhibition to over-21s only, while in Maryland, New York and Virginia, boards of censors were legally required 'to prepare lists of pictures suitable for children, to be available on request' for parents.[82] Meanwhile, the Hays Office were 'advocating special performances of specially chosen programmes for children' and they prepared 'a collection of 52 such programmes, including educational and historical films, dramas and comedies of a wholesome type, chosen for their attractiveness and value to youthful audiences'.[83]

Reformers were still not convinced by such measures, which seemed to be driven by pragmatism rather than genuine principles. As Ruth Vasey has suggested, the main aim of the Hays Office was not to act as a moral watchdog, but was 'to ensure that the movies could be distributed domestically and abroad with a minimum of disruption through censorship action or consumer resistance'.[84] Calls for a federal censorship system therefore continued throughout the 1920s, becoming particularly significant in the American Catholic community. Two Catholics then hit on the idea of setting a single censorship standard for films in America by creating a formal Production Code. Martin Quigley (publisher of the trade paper *Motion Picture Herald*) and public relations officer Joseph 'Joe' Breen presented their idea to the Catholic hierarchy and corporate film executives in 1929, who both welcomed it. The code was then drafted by Father Daniel Lord, S.J. – a priest, professor of dramatics and editor of a popular Catholic youth publication, who also worked as technical advisor on Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927). When Lord's code was presented to Will Hays at the MPPDA, he declared it exactly what he had been looking for. By February 1930, it had been approved and adopted by all the major film studios as an advisory standard and, much to the annoyance of the others involved, it was immediately dubbed The Hays Code.

Interestingly, Gregory Black has suggested that in writing the code, Lord himself was particularly influenced by issues relating to children and cinema. In 1929 he had attended a matinee performance of *The Very Idea* – a film which addresses the thorny subject of surrogate parenthood. Although he found the film basically responsible, Lord was shocked to note that children responded in an

apparently inappropriate and 'less sophisticated' way to the material.[85] He therefore considered children to be in particular need of the protection afforded by a code of censorship, especially with new sound films which he felt 'would be irresistible to the impressionable minds of children, the uneducated, the immature, and the unsophisticated'.[86].

Ruth Vasey agrees that the adoption of the Hays Code was directly related to concerns surrounding children and cinema:

> The industry's main public relations problem in the 1920s and 1930s was the widespread conviction that children would learn 'sophisticated', violent, or antisocial behaviour from watching motion pictures. The Production Code was largely designed to assuage these anxieties, which had been exacerbated by the introduction of sound.[87]

As in Britain, issues regarding children and the cinema were therefore one of the main driving forces behind the development of censorship in America. Moreover, as the next section shows, similar trends were apparent in many other countries.

Children and Cinema Regulation: An International Perspective

Although this thesis focuses on Britain, cinema was and is a global medium. It is therefore important to recognise the impact of concerns regarding children and cinema on regulatory practices not only in Britain and America, but worldwide. For by 1914, all countries with cinema as a form of popular entertainment had adopted some system of censorship, be it locally organised or state-run and, as in Britain and America, issues surrounding children were nearly always central to this process. By 1930, special regulations regarding the exhibition of films to children had been passed all over the world, from the Netherlands and New Zealand to Switzerland and South Africa; from Uruguay and Salvador to Burma and Bombay. This section will briefly explore these international regulatory practices, looking at film censorship and classification as well as other legislation related to children's cinema attendance, in order to demonstrate the global nature of this phenomenon. The main sources for this information are an appendix to the Report of the Cinema Commission of Inquiry

of 1917, entitled 'Cinematograph Censorship Regulations in Other Countries', and a report on children and international cinema legislation, given by Dr Humbert to the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations in 1926.[88]

By the 1920s, many countries had passed regulations regarding minimum ages and times of cinemagoing for children. Those under 6 years old, for example, were legally prohibited from cinema attendance in Germany, Latvia and Danzig, while under-5s were excluded in Hungary and under-3s in Salvador.[89] Some countries had far stricter legislation, including Roumania where all children under 18 were banned from cinemas unless films were 'of an instructive and educative nature'.[90] Many countries also either forbade the attendance of children at evening performances or required that they be accompanied by adults. Thus, children under 8 were not legally admitted to cinemas in Salvador in the evening, while in Spain children under 10 were 'absolutely forbidden' at evening shows and could not attend unaccompanied at *any* time unless it was a performance intended solely for children.[91] Meanwhile in Sweden under-15s had to be accompanied by an adult to performances ending after 8pm and in several Canadian provinces unaccompanied children were banned from cinemas both during school hours and after 6pm.[92]

In some Japanese provinces children under 14 were only admitted to cinemas if accompanied by an adult and even then they were prohibited from admission after 9pm. Moreover, any child already in the cinema at this time would receive a ten-minute warning before being asked to leave.[93] Italian legislation passed in 1925 went further by providing a means of enforcement for cinema regulations. The 1925 law stipulated that on occasions when children had to be 15 to attend the cinema they must pass a height test, with those under 150cm tall being 'presumed to be under fifteen...unless proof to the contrary [was] furnished'.[94]

The majority of legislation, however, concerned film *content*, including both broad standards of censorship and the age-related classification of films. In some countries the content of children's matinees was heavily restricted. For example, in Roumania children's films all had to be 'educative or instructive'. Similarly in Salvador 'only instructive and moral films' could be shown at matinees and in Spain matinee films were required to be 'of an instructive and educative character'.[95] Elsewhere, children were given a wider range of films, albeit a limited one. In

Uruguay a 1921 decree specified the genres acceptable for exhibition to children: 'popular scientific films', 'panoramic films', newsreels, comedies and generally, 'films providing simple and harmless amusement'. Those considered unsuitable included anything 'likely to injure the child's development...detective films, intensely dramatic films, films which have a painful effect on the child's imagination [and] films which encourage feelings of hostility towards other countries'.[96]

Such themes recurred worldwide in interwar legislation pertaining to children and the cinema and in nearly every case regulations stressed the need to protect the mind, morality and imagination of the child from the powerful influence of films. In Latvia children were prohibited from viewing 'films likely to produce a harmful effect on the *moral development* of youth or capable of *over-stimulating youthful fancies*'.[97] In Germany no films could be shown to children that were 'liable to have a detrimental effect on their *moral, mental or physical development* or unduly to *excite their imagination*'.[98] Such themes are also evident in the official cinema regulations of Czechoslovakia, Danzig, Norway, Austria, Sweden and the Orange Free State of the Union of South Africa, to name a few.[99]

In a number of cases legislation drew on religious rhetoric by referring to the potentially 'evil' influence of cinema over children. For example, in Saskatchewan, Canada any film 'which may offer evil suggestions to the minds of young people or children' was prohibited, while on the Island of Formosa local authorities censored films prior to public exhibition and banned any that might 'exercise an evil influence on the minds and morals of children'.[100] Similarly in Salvador no film was permitted which was considered 'liable to implant evil sentiments in the minds of the young or encourage vicious propensities'.[101]

As in Britain and America a particular concern frequently mentioned in foreign legislation was the potential impact of crime films on the behaviour of young people. Thus, in Italy a 1926 decree reinforced regulations from 1923 that 'children and young persons' should be 'excluded from all cinematograph performances with a love or crime interest' which might 'corrupt their morals by force of suggestion'.[102] Similarly in New South Wales, Australia censors specified four types of scene that would not be passed for exhibition in cinemas, including 'successful crime, such as bushranging, robberies, or other acts of lawlessness which might reasonably be

considered as having an injurious influence on youthful minds'.[103]

In Imperial Germany an apparently rapid increase in juvenile crime was attributed directly to the influence of the cinema; an attribution expressed through a range of censorship and cinema regulations.[104] In 1911 the leading authority on German cinema law, Albert Hellwig, conducted an extensive investigation into the issue and concluded that 'popular crime films have a decided effect on juvenile criminality'. He continued, with unashamed presumption, 'although it is not possible to demonstrate this link with any certainty in even a single specific case, the correctness of this view can undoubtedly be deduced from general psychological principles'.[105] Such views were endorsed by police chiefs, judges and state legislatures. For example in 1913 the state government of Württemberg restricted children's viewing on the grounds that 'the cinema can push a child into actually imitating the crimes and misdeeds that he sees portrayed'.[106]

Neville Hunnings has also argued that in interwar France the major concern regarding film content was 'criminality and the effect of the cinema on juvenile crime', which led to prolonged litigation and municipal bans on certain types of film.[107] In 1921 the Prefect of the Var issued a ban on realistic crime films, reasoning that as 'cinemas are much frequented by young people...public order and tranquility cannot be maintained, any more than can morality, with this continual instigation of young people to unhealthy exploits'.[108] Meanwhile, the Procureur de la République at Roanne wrote to the Prefect of the Loire regarding a number of incidents in which young people arrested for theft had named themselves after gangs and criminals from films. He concluded, 'it is unquestionable that most young delinquents...have their moral sense obliterated by the sight of crime films'.[109] Similarly, in 1926 a French delegate reported to the League of Nations that 'the magistrates who sat on the children's courts in Paris had always realized the pernicious influence of certain films on a large number of crimes'. He then cited a 'band of young thieves who called themselves "*La Main qui etreint*",' explaining that this was 'a name taken from a film'.[110] Such concerns were also expressed in local cinema regulations across France, such as the ban at Sablé-sur-Sarthe on '*tous les films policiers, les films tirés des feuilletons et, d'une maniere générale, tous ceux susceptibiles de fausser l'imagination des enfants*'.[111]

In several countries one proposed solution to the problem of media influence on children was the classification of films as either suitable or unsuitable for child viewers. In Denmark, as in Britain, early cinema legislation was adapted from existing theatre laws and by 1914 a Board of Censors was established which passed films in two categories – suitable for all audiences, and for over-16s only. Children were banned from the latter, although this only involved around 5 per cent of all films passed, according to a report of 1926.[112] But while BBFC certification was merely advisory, the Danish film classification system was established under law in 1913 and was legally reinforced in 1933. They then introduced a second age limit and a classification band for films especially suitable for children, which were also exempt from taxation.[113] Certification was also popular in other countries, including India which used A certificates; in Bombay, films considered unsuitable for children were 'certified on the condition that their exhibition is restricted to adults'.[114] A similar certification system was adopted by Hungary, while in Poland, children under 17 were only permitted to see films passed by the Board of Censors and an advisory committee 'of experts composed of school teachers'.[115]

The above examples demonstrate that both concerns over children and cinema, and the consequent legislation of the medium, were essentially global phenomena. Indeed, several international committees were established to discuss these issues and their interaction continued well into the 1930s (see Chapter Three). In many countries across the world, it can be argued that the issue of children and cinema was not only one factor, but was the main force behind the development of censorship and cinema regulation. A key example is Japan, which had the world's second largest film industry by 1939. Here, the entire censorship system revolved around children, as a decree of 1925 stipulated that (except under special conditions) *no* films would be passed for exhibition in Japan that were 'likely to be harmful to the mental and moral development of the young and to their good education', or that might 'suggest unhealthy ideas to children or weaken the authority of teachers'.[116] Consequently, *all* films were passed with a view to the vulnerability of child audiences and there was therefore no need to restrict the access of children to films in Japanese cinemas.

The centrality of children to the development of cinema regulation can also be identified in Denmark, where Hunnings suggests that 'a major consideration in the development of film censorship...has always been a concern for the protection of young people'.[117] He argues that such concern motivated the vast majority of Danish censorship legislation from 1907, while from 1933 '*all* the changes in the [Danish] censorship system...have been concerned with children'.[118]

The key importance of issues surrounding children in the development of censorship was also evident in post-revolutionary Russia, where all film censorship came under the People's Commissariat of Education from its foundation in 1917 and initially, within that Commissariat, under the School Extension Department.[119]

However, perhaps the most telling example is Belgium, where the only official form of film censorship related to children. In this liberal nation there has never been any official censorship of films for adults at all, yet it was considered necessary to institute severe restrictions on the cinema attendance of children. Thus, in 1920 a new Belgian law stipulated that 'minors of either sex who have not reached the age of sixteen shall not be allowed to be present at any public cinema performance', except in cinemas which showed *only* films licensed for exhibition to children by a special commission.[120] An almost identical law was passed in Luxembourg in 1922, with an age limit of 17 years.[121]

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. Firstly, the regulation of children's film viewing in Britain should not be viewed in isolation, but within the wider context of regulatory practices across the world. A range of countries considered the impact of film on children's morality, education, imagination and health to be potentially dangerous, if not 'evil'. Moreover, while most of the above examples were taken from legislation, many other nations adopted similarly robust systems of regulation regarding children's cinemagoing without a legislative mandate, as occurred in Britain under the BBFC.

Secondly, this chapter has demonstrated the critical significance of issues regarding children to the early development of cinema regulation. This interpretation stands in fairly stark contrast to the bulk of existing material in film historiography. For historians of cinema and censorship have focused almost exclusively on issues of social class and politics, when it would appear from the evidence presented here that

the primary driving force behind the early regulation of cinema was actually concern regarding its influence on children. As the next chapter will show, such concern would continue to drive the development of cinema regulation in Britain and America with the arrival of talking pictures in the late 1920s.

Endnotes

[1] Richards, *Dream Palace*, p. 89.

[2] Peter Stead, *Film and the Working Class: The Feature Film in British and American Society* (London, 1989); Nicholas Pronay, 'The First Reality: Film Censorship in Liberal England', in K.R.M. Short (ed.), *Feature Films as History* (London, 1981), pp. 113-137; see also Nicholas Pronay, 'The Political Censorship of Films in Britain', in N. Pronay and D. Spring (eds), *Propaganda, Politics and Film*, 1918-45 (London, 1982).

[3] Dickinson & Street, *Cinema and State.*

[4] Richards, *Dream Palace*, pp. 89-152; Jeffrey Richards, 'The British Board of Film Censors and Content Control in the 1930s: Images of Britain', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 1, 2 (1981), pp. 95-116; Jeffrey Richards, 'The British Board of Film Censors and Content Control in the 1930s: Foreign Affairs', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 2, 1 (1982), pp. 39-48. See also James C. Robertson, 'British Film Censorship Goes to War', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 2, 1 (1982), pp. 49-64; and Don McPherson (ed.), *Traditions of Independence: British Cinema in the Thirties* (London, 1980).

[5] Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, 1918-1929* (London, 1971) and *The History of the British Film, 1929-1939: Film Making in 1930s Britain* (London, 1985); James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* (London, 1985).

[6] Neville March Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law* (London, 1967), p. 395.

[7] In addition to those publications already mentioned, see Tom Dewe Mathews, *Censored: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain* (London, 1994); James C. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action, 1913-1972* (London, 1989); and Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925* (London, 1988).

[8] Mathews, *Censored*, pp. 7 & 32.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[10] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 31.

[11] W.S.M. Knight, 'Kinematograph Shows: Do They Require Licences?', *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 2 (25 February 1909), 1143, cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 33.

[12] Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 2; Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 37.

[13] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 16.

[14] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 38.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42.

[16] Mathews, *Censored*, pp. 10-11.

[17] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 41n.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[20] Robertson, *Hidden Cinema*, p. 1.

[21] Robertson, 'British Film Censorship Goes to War', p. 54.

[22] Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, p.16; Mathews, *Censorship*, p. 8.

[23] Walter Reynolds, *Kinematograph Lantern Weekly* (11 February 1909), cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 45 and Mathews, *Censored*, p. 17.

[24] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p.35.

[25] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 49 and Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, p. 18.

[26] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, pp. 49-51.

[27] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 18.

[28] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 51.

[29] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 46.

[30] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 55n.

[31] Cited in Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, p. 22.

[32] Robertson, *BBFC*, pp. 12-32; Hunnings, *Film Censors*, pp. 56-68.

[33] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 24; Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p.57; Low, *British Film 1918-1929*, p.56; Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 7; Kuhn, *Cinemas, Censorship*, p. 25.

[34] Jeffrey Richards, ''The cinema and cinema-going in Birmingham in the 1930s', in J. Walton and J. Walvin (eds), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester, 1983), p. 48; Robertson, *Hidden Cinema*, p. 155; Julian Petley, 'Cinema and State', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986), pp. 31-46.

[35] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 27.

[36] See Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship.*

[37] Mathews, *Censored*, pp. 32-47.

[38] Robertson, *BBFC*, pp. 20-21.

[39] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 78.

[40] T. P. O'Connor, *The Principles of Film Censorship* (London, 1923), cited in Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 31.

[41] *Bioscope*, 13 March 1913, p. 780.

[42] *Bioscope*, 27 March 1913, p. 995.

[43] Cited in Mathews, *Censored*, p. 25 (emphasis mine).

[44] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 61.

[45] Cited in Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, p. 121.

[46] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 63.

[47] BBFC Annual Report 1919, pp. 3-4.

[48] *Ibid*

[49] *Ibid*

[50] BBFC Annual Report 1929, p. 1.

[51] BBFC Annual Report 1921, p. 9.

[52] Low, *British Film 1918-1929*, p.60.

[53] Cited in Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, p. 22.

[54] Nevertheless, confusion surrounded this issue from the outset. See Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 55n.

[55] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 55n.

[56] Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 8; Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, p. 22.

[57] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 26.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[59] Low, *British Film 1918-1929*, p.57.

[60] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 140.

[61] PRO-HO45/22906: Censorship: powers of BBFC and local authorities 1923-1929. However, the Home Office files suggest that this 'progress' still represented widely varying opinions and levels of compliance across the country.

[62] Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship*, pp. 21, 27, 121, 133, 152.

[63] Dr Humbert, 'Effect of Cinematograph on the Mental and Moral Well-Being of Children: A Report to the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations, Geneva, May 1926', reprinted in W.M. Seabury, *Motion Picture Problems: The Cinema and the League of Nations* (New York, 1929), pp. 324-5.

[64] BBFC Annual Report 1926.

[65] Low, *British Film 1918-1929*, p. 58.

[66] Much has been written on the history of film censorship in America. For a thorough treatment, see Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (Cambridge, 1994). For briefer overviews, see Anthony Slide, *'Banned in the USA': British Films in the United States and Their Censorship, 1933-1960* (London, 1998) and Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939* (Exeter, 1997).

[67] Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p.4.

[68] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 18.

[69] For many examples, see Black, *Hollywood Censored*, pp. 8-18.

[70] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 10.

[71] *Ibid*, p. 12.

[72] *Ibid*, p. 11.

[73] *Ibid*, p. 9.

[74] *Ibid*, p. 11.

[75] *Ibid*, pp. 12-13; Daniel J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (1982), p. 47.

[76] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p.15.

[77] See *Ibid.*

[78] *Ibid*, p. 12.

[79] NCPM, *The Cinema*, p. 323.

[80] *Ibid*, p. 324.

[81] *Ibid*,

[82] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 304-5.

[83] *Ibid*, pp. 326-7.

[84] Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p.5.

[85] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 38.

[86] *Ibid*, p. 40.

[87] Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, p.5.

[88] NCPM, *The Cinema*, pp. 313-331; Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 265-335.

[89] Gary D. Stark, 'Cinema, Society and the State: Policing the Film Industry in Imperial Germany', in Gary D. Stark and Bede Karl Lackner (eds) *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany* (Arlington, 1982), p. 137; Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 305-6.

[90] Cited in Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', p. 302.

[91] *Ibid*, pp. 302-3.

[92] NCPM, *The Cinema*, pp. 328-9; Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 292-4 & 303.

[93] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 298-9.

[94] Cited in Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', p. 298.

[95] *Ibid*, 315-16.

[96] *Ibid*, p. 317.

[97] *Ibid*, p. 314. Emphasis mine.

[98] *Ibid*, p. 312. Emphasis mine.

[99] *Ibid*, p. 303-16; NCPM, *The Cinema*, pp. 328-9.

[100] Cited in Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 315 and 322.

[101] *Ibid*, p. 315.

[102] *Ibid*, p. 313.

[103] NCPM, *The Cinema*, p. 331.

[104] For more detail, see Stark, 'Cinema, Society', pp. 133-9.

[105] Cited in Stark, 'Cinema, Society', p. 134.

[106] *Ibid*, p. 133.

[107] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, pp. 338-44.

[108] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 340.

[109] *Ibid*, p. 340n.

[110] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 278-9. Translation: 'The Grabbing Hand'.

[111] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 338. Translation: 'all police [gangster] films, all films based on cheap/serial stories and, in a general sense, any films likely to warp/mislead the imagination of children'.

[112] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', p. 274.

[113] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, pp. 316-17.

[114] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', p. 297.

[115] *Ibid*, p. 276 and 296-7.

[116] Cited in Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 321-2.

[117] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 316.

[118] *Ibid*, p. 316-7. Emphasis mine.

[119] *Ibid*, p. 363.

[120] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', p. 292; Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 394.

[121] Humbert, 'Geneva 1926', pp. 299-300.

Chapter Three

It Ain't No Sin: Censorship and the Regulation of Cinema 1929 –1939

Will Hays is my shepard,
I shall not want,
He maketh me to lie down
in clean postures.

Gene Fowler
1930s/40s screenwriter

This chapter will build on the argument of Chapter Two, by showing that concerns regarding children and film continued to be a primary force in the development of cinema regulation throughout the key decade of the 1930s. Again, while the history of the cinema in this decade has been well documented, there is strong tendency in the literature to focus on themes of social class and politics rather than the fundamentally important issue of debates surrounding children. This chapter will therefore seek to redress the balance by examining the ways in which problems associated with child viewing directly impacted the regulation of cinema from 1929. To this end, it will use evidence from the records of the Home Office, the LCC, the BBFC and the PCA, plus official reports, newspapers and oral history interviews, to demonstrate that during this decade, an escalation in the apparent threat posed by films to young people led to key changes in the regulation of cinema, in both Britain and America.

In the late 1920s, the controversy surrounding children and cinema intensified. This was due to several factors, but a particularly significant catalyst was the coincidence of two major events: the introduction of talking pictures and the Wall Street Crash. Talkies were first produced in 1927 and proved immediately successful so that by 1928 the BBFC could report that 'synchronised films' had 'taken deep root'.[1] Indeed, by 1930 the major Hollywood studios had all decided to stop making silent films.[2] With talkies as the industry standard, studios and cinemas rapidly poured money into sound conversion.[3] But just two years after the introduction of sound, with mass conversion well underway, the film business was rocked by the Wall Street Crash and the ensuing Depression, which crippled the strongest studios and exhibitors and ruined many others. Debts due to sound conversion and loss of financial holdings were compounded by competition from radio (an increasingly popular source of mass entertainment) and a slump in box office revenue (particularly in America), as audiences felt the bite of the Depression and stayed home. The *Film Daily Year Book* of 1934 estimated that weekly cinema attendance in America fell from 'a boom high' of over one hundred million in the 1920s to 'a Depression low' of under forty million – a figure which recovered to plateau at sixty million.[4] Meanwhile, in 1930 alone, at least fifty corporations related to the film industry were liquidated in Britain.[5]

By 1930 the industry was therefore committed to, and utterly dependent on, the continued popularity of sound films and, struggling to weather the financial storm of the Depression, studios started producing reliable, crowd-pulling talkies of various kinds, aiming to fill cinemas with patrons, regardless of the feelings of censors, reformers, or moral watchdogs. As this chapter will demonstrate, films that drew crowds were often sensational in nature and several hugely popular genres emerged (notably gangster, sex and horror pictures) provoking heightened levels of protest about the potential impact of films on children. By the mid-1930s, such protest would culminate in extensive changes in cinema regulation, an irrevocable shift in (power) relationships between filmmakers, reformers, censors, licensing authorities, exhibitors and audiences, and ultimately a massive sea change in film content itself.

THE PROBLEM OF TALKIES

Overall, sound pictures posed two main problems for censors. First was the sheer technical difficulty of editing films where sound and picture had to be synchronised. In silent movies, offensive intertitles or suspect visual sequences could be removed cleanly and with relative ease, but this was extremely difficult to accomplish with sound-on-film and virtually impossible with sound-on-disc.[6] Therefore, censors had to use a blanket approach with early talkies, passing or banning them *in toto* (although sometimes a silent film was passed and its sound version banned, or sound and silent versions of a film could be given different certificates).[7] A solution to technical censorship difficulties was soon found however, as censors asked producers of 'synchronised pictures' to submit scenarios and/or scripts *before* production commenced, rather than simply presenting *finished* films for censorship. This then became increasingly common practice for most British producers and a handful of American studios submitting films to the BBFC during the 1930s.[8]

Above and beyond technical problems, sound films posed a serious challenge to censors in terms of their content. As novelist Compton MacKenzie remarked in 1931: 'it was bad enough before Talkies became the rule, and when only the *eyes* of children were offended. It is worse now'.[9] Swearing and lewdness were already censored in silent film intertitles. For example, in 1919, 1921, 1923 and 1925 the

BBFC reported cuts to 'suggestive sub-titles' and 'sub-titles in the nature of swearing'.[10] Slang was also considered a problem, as in 1925 when the board objected to American filmmakers 'constantly producing alien idiomatic phrases'.[11] But such transgressions in silent pictures made up relatively little of the finished film. Talkies, meanwhile, could deliver far more offensive language and innuendo per reel and could be both subtle and racy, using combinations of quick-fire dialogue, meaningful pauses, colourful language, slang, wisecracks, *double entendres* and sexual innuendo. When sound effects were added to hot dialogue, screen sex suddenly became more sexy and screen violence more violent. As early as 1929, the BBFC declared: '

> The introduction of sound films has unquestionably raised new problems from the point of view of censorship. Generally speaking, it is found that the dialogue far more emphasises the situation than is the case with titling.[12]

Meanwhile, one newspaper wittily suggested in 1932 that 'the increase in innuendo in talkies' was due to the fact that British censors were 'too old and innocent to understand the meaning of many of the lines they pass', having an average age of about 60 years.[13]

Although the Hays Code was introduced in 1930, it was relatively ineffective for the first few years due to film industry intransigence and popular public demand. So until 1934, Hollywood filmmakers took advantage of their position, deliberately spicing productions with the most popular aspects of film content in order to fill seats. Consequently, over the five years from 1930 to 1934 (usually dubbed the pre-code period) they produced a steady stream of the most subversive and salacious films that had ever been seen, or that would be seen for another quarter of a century, and cinemagoers witnessed a rush of fast-talking, hard-hitting movies, crammed with thrills, sex and violence, which flouted the social order and defied Hays and his largely impotent colleagues.

It should be noted that although most historians recognise 1934 as a watershed, there is some debate regarding the balance of continuity and change around this date.

For example, Richard Maltby argues that the subversive trend of pre-code cinema has been exaggerated and Ruth Vasey claims that the Hays Office did actually have teeth in the pre-code period.[14] However, Gregory Black, Thomas Doherty and Tom Mathews have argued that 1934 saw an abrupt transformation in American film censorship practices.[15] Notably, Doherty has recently investigated a considerable number of pre-code films, demonstrating that 'code commandments were violated with impunity' before 1934, in film content which repeatedly included

> sexual liaisons unsanctified by the laws of God or man...; marriage ridiculed and redefined...; ethnic lines crossed and racial barriers ignored...; economic injustice exposed and political corruption assumed...; vice unpunished and virtue unrewarded.[16]

This thesis tends to agree that 1934 did indeed represent a distinct watershed in film content, as will be shown in the case study of MGM Tarzan films in Chapter Seven.

Unsurprisingly, the sudden rash of sensational pre-code talkies caused great concern to reformers, not least because such films tended to occur in groups or 'cycles', as studios sought to repeat their most successful film formulae. Thus, one offensive film might be followed by several more of the same kind, each seeking to out-do their predecessor. Among the most popular, prolific and controversial were the pre-code gangster, sex and horror cycles. These were not only numerous and subversive but they attracted large numbers of children and were thought by many to be the biggest threat to child viewers to date. The next three sections will therefore consider each of these key cycles in some detail, examining their silent predecessors, their controversial content, their popularity with young people and the initial responses that they elicited from reformers and censors in America and Britain.

The gangster cycle

As previously mentioned, crime films were denounced from the early days of cinema due to their perceived impact on juvenile delinquency, but they nevertheless continued to be popular with both adults and children, especially after the coming of sound. The BBFC noted with regret at the end of 1928 'a marked revival in the

production of films dealing with crime in a way which is considered detrimental to the public interest'.[17] Such concern escalated in the early 1930s, as filmmakers expanded the already popular genre to include gangster movies. Drawing on sensational contemporary reports of organised crime and underworld vice in Prohibition America, gangster films rapidly capitalised on the huge public fascination in Britain and the USA with shocking events such as the St Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929 and the notorious exploits of figures like Al Capone, Baby Face Nelson and bank robber John Dillinger.

Importantly, the protagonists of early gangster movies were generally hoodlums rather than law enforcement officers (a trend which was reversed after 1934). Key examples were Edward G. Robinson as Caesar Enrico Bandello in *Little Caesar* (1930), James Cagney as Tom Powers (based on Capone's Irish rival, Dion O'Bannion) in *The Public Enemy* (1931) and Paul Muni as Tony Camonte (based on Capone himself) in *Scarface* (1932). Other early examples, released within a few months of each other, were *Doorway to Hell* (1930) and in 1931, *The Finger Points*, *City Streets*, *The Secret Six*, *The Vice Squad*, *Quick Millions* and *Star Witness*. In all, Hollywood produced nine gangster movies in 1930, twenty-six in 1931, twenty-eight in 1932 and fifteen in 1933, when Prohibition ended and the cycle's popularity began to wane.[18] The success of gangster films also spawned related pre-code cycles, including prison and chain gang movies, which questioned the justice system and encouraged audiences to sympathise with criminals rather than the brutal establishment.

Pre-code gangster movies were fast and furious, full of sharp, slangy dialogue, dark humour, sexual impropriety, flashy cars and violent gun battles. They were not just talkies; they were aggressively noisy extravaganzas. The main characters were antisocial, insubordinate, selfish and immoral, yet they often enjoyed glamorous, successful lifestyles, in stark contrast to the harsh Depression experience of most cinemagoers. As a small concession to the censors, the protagonist generally died in the last reel, giving scant lip service to the view that crime ultimately does not pay.

American gangster films were immediately popular with British youngsters, particularly boys, and many copied the speech and mannerisms of their swaggering, smart-mouthed heroes. Jim Godbold recalls that he and his friend went regularly to

see gangster films in Stowmarket when he was around 14 years old, including *Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy* and *Scarface.*

> When we went to gangsters [my friend] would really come out, you know, he was aping the gangsters. He'd strike a match on the wall, and that... You see, gangster films were glorifying the gangster... And that was having an effect on people... My friend and me, we bought a black shirt and a white tie because one of the gangsters had this.[19]

Despite the generally poor characterisation and treatment of women in most gangster films, they could also be popular with girls, albeit to a lesser extent.[20]

The popularity of American gangster films with British children was also reported in cinema enquiries of the early thirties (see Chapter 4). For example, the Birmingham enquiry of 1930-31 asked thirty-eight boys aged 11 which kind of films they preferred and nineteen chose 'murder, war and Chicago gangster' films, due to their 'thrilling' content.[21] Birmingham children also suggested that films had taught them about 'life in Chicago and the underworlds of London and Paris', 'a lot about American gangsters and raketteers' and, one child claimed, 'how to shoot people through my pocket'.[22] Meanwhile, children in the 1931 Birkenhead enquiry said that films had taught them 'the history of the gangster wars' and 'how the gangsters rob the big banks of America'.[23] In the 1932 Edinburgh enquiry 12.5% of boys in the chose 'Underworld or Gangster' movies as their favourite film type, ranking it third most popular out of fifteen genres (after War and Westerns). Interestingly, it was ranked as the best genre by subgroup Senior B (working class boys aged 13-14) 24% of whom chose it as their favourite film type.[24] But gangster movies were less popular with girls. Only 2.6% rated it as a favourite film type and 11.5% said it was the category they disliked the most.[25] However, as this questionnaire asked children to select just one favourite film type, excluding all others, gangster films were probably more popular with boys and girls than the results suggest. More importantly, as the Edinburgh figures show, gangster movies were highly popular in that demographic 'danger zone': working class male youth.

As with other genres, reformers complained about various aspects of the gangster cycle, but the fact that children enjoyed these movies and were imitating their speech and mannerisms was usually the main cause for concern.[26] Thus, the *Kansas City Times* argued in 1931 that although gangster movies were not harmful to adults, they were 'misleading, contaminating and often demoralizing to children and youth'.[27] Similarly, at the opening of *Little Caesar* on New York's Broadway in January 1931 (when 3000 people smashed two glass doors raiding the box offices for tickets) young people were immediately considered at risk from the film's moral tone.[28] James Wingate (head of the New York censorship board and later of the PCA) told Will Hays that he had been inundated with complaints from people who were horrified to see the children at *Little Caesar* 'applaud the gang leader as a hero'.[29] Wingate himself also prioritised children, complaining to Hays that the gangster's eventual death in this film was an ineffective lesson, as 'the child unconsciously forms the idea that he will be smarter and will get away with it'.[30] Even Al Capone claimed to be concerned about the impact of gangster movies on children. In an interview with *Motion Picture Herald* in 1931, he apparently said:

> These gang pictures – that's terrible kid stuff... They're doing nothing but harm to the younger element of the country. I don't blame the censors for trying to bar them. Now you take all these youngsters who go to the movies. Well, those gang movies are making a lot of kids want to be tough guys.[31]

In April 1931, Will Hays responded to these critics by appointing former police chief August Vollmer to investigate the impact of gangster films on children. In his report (which was used by the Hays Office to defend the gangster cycle) Vollmer argued that such films were essentially harmless and realistic. If anything, he suggested, they were rather too favourable in their depiction of police efficiency.[32] Reformers were not easily pacified, however. Particularly when two young boys were involved in a tragic accident in New Jersey, playing cops and robbers after watching the gangster film *The Secret Six* (1931). One killed the other, shooting him with a gun he thought was empty and there was an immediate outcry blaming the

film for this incident. Meanwhile, as Black notes, 'only a few pointed the blame toward the parents who kept a loaded gun in the house'.[33]

Although much questionable material got through, censors were by no means silent regarding early gangster films. In New York State alone they cut over 2,200 crime scenes in movies between 1930 and 1932, and by mid-1931 gangster films were banned in a number of American cities due to the actions of pressure groups, many of which argued that such films posed a threat to children.[34] There were particularly energetic battles over the last major film in the cycle, Howard Hughes' *Scarface* (1932). The Hays Office demanded extensive cuts and required Hughes to give the film the subtitle *Shame of the Nation*. Even then, local American censors initially refused the cut version, allowing it only when Jason Joy of the Hays Office visited them personally and assured them that the cycle was coming to an end.[35]

In Britain, the BBFC took their lead from the Hays Office and were relatively relaxed about gangster pictures, as long as they were set in America.[36] In 1932, BBFC senior script examiner Colonel J. C. Hanna rejected a proposed film *When the Gangs Came to London*, explaining that the board had 'had a good deal of trouble with "gangster films" in recent years and it was only because they were obviously American that they finally passed'.[37] He continued: 'wholesale machine gun murders in the streets of Chicago possibly are deemed to come under the head of "topicals", but in London would be quite prohibitive'. Thus, most Hollywood gangster movies were passed as A films in Britain with minor cuts or delays, including *Little Caesar*. *The Public Enemy* was initially refused a certificate, but was eventually passed in June 1932, a month after the heavily cut *Scarface* was given BBFC approval.[38]

In general terms, therefore, despite the complaints of moral watchdogs and censors in America and elsewhere, the pre-code gangster cycle ran a fairly natural course, with popular demand and the drive of filmmakers to meet that demand prevailing over the wishes of reformers. Over seventy-eight Hollywood gangster films were made and exhibited between 1930 and 1933 and although many were censored, most still contained scenes of violence, sexual impropriety and glamorous immorality.

The sex cycle

As the gangster cycle waned, it made way for another controversial series of films, this time involving the popular theme of sexual relationships. In December 1931, Jason Joy wrote a frustrated letter to the Hays Office, noting that while the MPPDA was discouraging the production of gangster pictures, many filmmakers had simply turned to sex pictures instead:

> With crime practically denied them, with box-office figures down, with high pressure methods being employed... it was almost inevitable that sex, as the nearest thing at hand and pretty generally sure-fire, would be seized upon. It was.[39]

Although these films were not popular with young children, the impact on youth was again perceived to be of primary concern among cinema watchdogs and censors.

Like crime, sexual content was already heavily censored before talkies came along. Together with saucy intertitles, the BBFC cut 'suggestive amorous advances', 'suggestive...shadowgraphs' and inadequate clothing.[40] They had also dealt with a procession of seductive, predatory, sexually aware silent female characters, from Helen Gardner's *Cleopatra* (1912) and the 'vamp' roles of Theda Bara, to the sultry heroines of the 1920s played by Clara Bow, Gloria Swanson, Pola Negri and Greta Garbo. These films were generally passed by the BBFC although, as Robertson notes, 'the openly erotic content was often toned down'.[41] Of this list, only Garbo was really successful in transferring her sexy image to talking pictures, but she was soon joined by a fresh batch of hot *femmes* in the early 1930s, including Hedy Lamarr, Marlene Dietrich, Jean Harlow and Mae West.

If silent sex pictures had been inflammatory, the talkie cycle was positively incendiary, as dialogue and sound effects were fully employed in a proliferation of films exploring themes of adultery, divorce, promiscuity and prostitution. Many tackled the thorny subject of the Depression and the way in which financial hardship forced people into morally dubious decisions. Women were sympathetically portrayed using sexual favours or prostitution to save themselves or their families from penury, including Marlene Dietrich in *Blonde Venus* (1932), Tallulah Bankhead

in *Faithless* (1932) and Clara Bow in *Call Her Savage* (1932). By the end of 1932, Joy was also complaining about a sub-cycle of 'kept woman' films, which portrayed adultery as a viable alternative for the unhappily married.[42]

Other troublesome sub-cycles were backstage dramas (often just an excuse for costume-change sequences) and raunchy sex comedies, notably the hits written by and starring Mae West. Homosexuality also featured in a number of pre-code films, including *Sailor's Luck* (1932), *Our Betters* (1932) and *Cavalcade* (1933), with taboo content colloquially described in the trade press as 'queer flashes', 'pansy comedy', 'mauve characters' and 'male magnolia'.[43] This represented a serious challenge to the censors and by 1932 *Variety* predicted that while producers were 'going heavy on the panz stuff in current pix', the Hays Office would probably not tolerate 'more than a dash of lavender', as they were 'attempting to keep the dual-sex boys and lesbos out of films'.[44]

As with gangster movies, censors objected less to individual sex films than they did to the constant barrage of an entire sex cycle. By 1929, the BBFC reported that it was handling a 'large number [of] Back Stage Drama' films, which were considered 'sordid' and 'unmoral in practice and principle'. While 'one such film by itself may not be prohibitive', the board argued, 'a continuous succession of them is subversive, tending to inculcate a lower outlook, and to invest a life of irregularity with a spurious glamour'.[45] Within two years the board was inundated with films based on 'lust or the development of erotic passions', many of which seemed, 'on every conceivable occasion, to drag in scenes of undressing, bathroom scenes and the exhibition of feminine underclothing ...solely ...for the purpose of giving the film what is termed in the trade "a spicy flavour"'.[46] By late 1931 they could report (with no apparent sense of irony) that the sex cycle had 'increased [the board's] work... enormously', for such films 'had to be viewed over and over again' by censors, to ensure compliance with BBFC standards.[47]

Still, it seems filmmakers were more disposed to hearing the sound of cash in tills than the complaints of censors and watchdogs, and the sex cycle continued.[48] By September 1932, the Hays Office found that twenty-four of the 111 American films in production contained illicit sexual content.[49] And *Variety* estimated that in 1932-3 'over 80% of the world's chief picture output was...flavored with the bedroom

essence', as 352 of the 440 films released that year contained 'some sex slant', 145 had 'questionable sequences' and forty-four were 'critically sexual'.[50]

Although young children generally poured scorn on 'sloppy stuff' (see Chapter Five) sex films were popular with older children. The oral testimonies used in this thesis include only male fans of the cycle, but it is reasonable to assume there were girl fans too, as Doherty and Black have both shown that women were not only the most vociferous critics of 'vice movies', but they were also the core adult audience for such films.[51]

In interview, Denis Houlston recalled that from the age of about 13 he and his friends considered Jean Harlow 'a favourite'.[52] Harlow plagued censors as a sultry man-eater in gangster and sex films including *Hell's Angels* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), *The Secret Six* (1931), *Red Dust* (1932) and *Red-Headed Woman* (1932). Tom Mathews describes her screen style as one 'that had only previously been seen under a red light beside a kerb'.[53] Denis and friends also enjoyed Marlene Dietrich's *Blue Angel* (1930). In one memorable scene, Dietrich strips to her underwear and the camera follows her stockinged legs as she ascends an open spiral staircase. When just her legs are visible at the top of the stairs, she carefully removes her french knickers and drops them onto a man waiting below. Denis recalls:

> *Blue Angel*! *Blue Angel*! Oh those frilly knickers in *Blue Angel*! They sent us, you know! As you can *imagine*. Well, of course, we liked the legs of course. Legs Dietrich.[54]

The erotic charge of sex pictures for adolescent boys is also evident in Denis's enthusiastic recollection of the entire pre-code era:

> In the *early* thirties, anything went...they showed you virtually anything... As a schoolboy [with my friends]...we loved it because you got plenty of leg shots and the *décolletage* was quite generous, more generous than later on. Eh, so we would see bits of those female bodies which, you know, we'd only dreamed about [laughs]. And there were shots of stocking tops was a favourite thing and *always* in pictures the

> leading lady would *have* to adjust her stockings some time. So up would come her skirt and we'd all be *goggle-eyed*.[55]

Concern regarding the impact of sex pictures on the young was two-fold and heavily gendered. Essentially, reformers thought that such films might prematurely inflame the unhealthy passions of boys with unsuitable erotic images of women, but more seriously, it was felt that sex pictures would corrupt the innocence of girls and lead them into inappropriate sexual behaviour. Therefore, whereas gangster films were primarily considered a danger to boys, sex pictures were mainly believed to threaten the virtue of girls.

One of the principal targets for reformers in this regard was Mae West, who was dogged by 'child-protecting' censors from the outset of her writing career. In 1926 her first Broadway play *Sex* was closed down by New York authorities who argued that it was 'corrupting the morals of youths'.[56] She was fined $500 and sentenced to ten days in prison for indecency, but proved unrepentant, soon writing and staging two more controversial plays: *The Drag* about homosexuality and the vice-laden *Diamond Lil*. She then adapted the latter to create her first starring role in a movie, the instant box-office hit *She Done Him Wrong* (1933).[57]

West's wisecracking, sexually rampant screen persona – highly popular with women – was immediately perceived as a threat to girls.[58] Beatrice Cooper recalls that she was forbidden to see Mae West films during her teenage years:

> Mae West. My mother would never allow me to see Mae West...
> She was a SEX SYMBOL, you see. So they thought I might be
> spoiled if I saw her.[59]

The apparent double vulnerability of young women (not to mention the double-double standards of adult men) was demonstrated in a MPPDA memo to Will Hays in 1933, which argued:

> The very man who will guffaw at Mae West's performance as a reminder of the ribald days of his past will resent her effect upon the young, when

> his daughter imitates the Mae West wiggle before her boyfriends and mouths 'come up and see me sometime'.[60]

'Serious' sex pictures were also considered dangerous viewing for girls. For example, one local American censor reviewed the romantic drama *Possessed* (1931), in which bored factory worker Joan Crawford becomes the kept mistress of Park Avenue lawyer Clark Gable. The censor complained to Hays that there were many young people in the audience and she was particularly appalled to hear a girl whisper to her friend: 'I would live with him too, under any conditions'.[61]

In addition to age and gender, concerns regarding sex pictures were informed by perceptions of class. Just as working class adolescent boys were considered at most risk from gangster movies, so working class adolescent girls were seen as especially susceptible to the temptations provoked by sex pictures. In 'Children and the Cinema' (written around 1930), author Marianne Hoffmann describes several reformatory school girls who have been led astray by films. She argues that working class girls are particularly unable to withstand the lure of the cinema, citing the story of a 'country girl of 15', left to mind her employer's baby one evening, whose 'desire [for films] was so strong that...she ended up by strangling the child and rushing off to the cinema'.[62] In the specific case of sex pictures, Hoffmann is again convinced that working class girls are a particularly vulnerable group.

> The danger to *poor girls* is immense... The love of luxury which is gaining a hold on our towns starts at the pictures. The sensual film, even if not pornographic, poisons the moral sense of *young girls*. By awakening their sensual instincts it is...a training ground for the streets.[63]

The sex cycle created a headache for the censors to equal if not exceed that caused by gangster movies. This was exacerbated by the practice of 'pinking': labelling certain sex pictures as suitable for 'adults only' to increase their box office appeal. For while such a 'warning' might be seen to mollify critics, it was also widely recognised as a cynical way of emphasising the sexual content of a film, so as to attract large numbers of both adults and young people. Pinking was credited with

helping make a smash hit of Mae West's *She Done Him Wrong*.[64] It was also used to great effect on *Baby Face* (1933), in which Barbara Stanwyck played a speakeasy bartender who sleeps her way to the top. *Variety* declared 'anything hotter than this for public showing would call for an asbestos audience blanket'.[65] Yet they also reported that the film utilised pinking, with 'an ad campaign that's bringing in the kids by warning them to stay away; also the grown ups in paying numbers. It's the same old gag and it's working again'.[66]

The horror cycle

Unlike silent crime and sex movies, silent horror films aroused surprisingly little concern, despite the fact that hundreds were made, including *Frankenstein* (1910), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922).[67] Nevertheless, when the new cycle of popular talkie horror films hit the cinema in the early 1930s, they were almost immediately controversial. This probably related in part to a general increase in concern regarding the cinema. But it was also due to the enhanced quality of talkie horror, as atmospheric music and sound effects, much creepy-voiced macabre dialogue and a liberal dose of blood-curdling screams, combined to make these films far more thrilling than their silent counterparts.

The pre-code horror cycle was the result of yet another studio seeking to avoid insolvency through box office success. Mae West kept Paramount afloat, gangsters put a fortune in the bank for Warner Brothers, RKO was rescued by King Kong and it was Universal that first hit pay-dirt through the horror cycle, with instant hits *Dracula* (1930) and *Frankenstein* (1931). Universal immediately built on this success in 1932, producing *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mummy* and *The Old Dark House*. Other studios followed suit with films including the Oscar-winning *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931) and in 1932, *Freaks*, *Doctor X*, *White Zombie* and *The Hounds of Zaroff*. The horror cycle continued to peak well into the mid-1930s. Key films of 1933 included *The Invisible Man*, *Island of Lost Souls*, *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, *King Kong*, *Murders in the Zoo* and *The Ghoul*. By 1935, Universal were still successfully harnessing the pulling power of their two horror stars, Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, with *Mark of the Vampire*, *The Raven* and the critically acclaimed *Bride of Frankenstein*, together with another horror film, *Werewolf of London*. The

cycle became less prolific by the late 1930s, but continued to be popular until at least the end of the decade.

The innate threat of horror films was their combination of sex, violence and the supernatural, which broke taboos, challenged Christian values and subverted the social order. For example, in Universal's *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) Bela Lugosi plays the evil Dr Mirakle, a mad scientist trying to prove his own theory of evolution. He abducts prostitutes and injects them with gorilla blood in search of a match and when the women die, he throws their bodies in the Seine. The film's content includes a monster, sexual/scientific experimentation, prostitution and murder, along with sexual innuendo, the implied rape of a woman by a gorilla and strongly sacrilegious imagery. In one scene, Mirakle takes his latest subject and lashes her to a wooden crucifix. He checks her blood, declares it to be 'rotten – black as your sins' and, being disappointed yet again, he falls to his knees before her, apparently praying to the crucified whore. Interestingly, although some films were delayed in 1932 pending the introduction of the new H category, *Rue Morgue* was certified A by the BBFC with only minor cuts required.[68]

The pre-code horror cycle was extremely popular with children, as shown by the wealth of oral testimony in Chapter Five. For example, Tom Walsh enjoyed watching a number of horror films in 1931-2, when he was 9 or 10 years old, including *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. When asked whether he went to see all kinds of films as a child, he recalls exercising discretion and notes the mixed feelings of fear and enjoyment that seem to have made horror films attractive to many young people.

> No, I chose as carefully as I could, because, eh, gangster films I loved as a boy. James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, that sort of thing. Eh, horror films [too]. Children have a strange fascination for horror films. They're afraid of them but they like them.[69]

Neither was this mixed attraction gender-specific, as horror films were extremely popular with girls as well as boys. Joan Donaghue recalls a similar mixture of fear

and fun when watching pre-code horror films with her female friends, aged between 7 and 9 years old, in the early 1930s.

> We went especially to be frightened by Boris Karloff in *The Old Dark House* or *Frankenstein* and we would cling to each other and squeal or shut our eyes. It didn't take much to set us off in those days![70]

It is perhaps to be expected, given the highly questionable content of pre-code horror films and their popularity with children, that this cycle provoked most anxiety among reformers in Britain. Such concern led directly to the introduction of a special H certificate, which ostensibly prevented children from seeing horror films at all and this important development will be examined in more detail below.

RESPONSES TO THE PRE-CODE THREAT

The previous chapter demonstrates that the regulation of silent cinema was essentially a global phenomenon. This trend continued into the talkie era, when concern intensified and became increasingly focused on the output of the world's leading film producer: Hollywood. Therefore, as Hollywood was generally considered the main source of the 'problem', it is important to examine the situation in America before assessing changes in British cinema regulation during the 1930s.

America and the Hays Code

As already mentioned, while the Hays Code was introduced in 1930, it was initially far from successful in curbing film content – hence the term 'pre-code period', used by historians of cinema to describe the five years from the code's introduction to its effective application in 1934. For the duration of that period, while studio heads agreed in principle to abide by the code, filmmakers, motivated by financial pressures and popular demand, largely ignored it, generously lacing their films with subversion and 'spice', not only in the three cycles just described, but in many other genres, including comedies and musicals.[71]

American critics and reformers, already up in arms about silent films, were incensed by what they perceived to be an uncontrolled upsurge in the power and immorality of screen images. Once more, local censorship was deemed inadequate and there were renewed demands for a federal censorship system, fuelled by the findings of the Payne Fund Studies into the impact of cinema on children (see Chapter Four). This groundswell culminated in the formation of a dedicated movement known as the Legion of Decency – a campaign by the Catholic Church of America to boycott both offensive films and the cinemas that screened them.[72]

The Legion campaign posed a serious threat to both the film industry and the Hays Office, for Catholics represented 20% of the American population (largely in urban areas, where cinema was most lucrative). Moreover, the Legion was backed by American Jewish and Protestant groups and by Catholics in key foreign markets such as Italy and Spain.[73] Issues surrounding children were central to the campaign. The Legion Pledge (taken by over seven million Americans by mid-1934) denounced 'vile and unwholesome moving pictures' as 'a grave menace to youth'.[74] Meanwhile, Dr A. H. Giannini (the Catholic president of the Bank of America in Los Angeles) warned Hollywood producers that he was prepared to withdraw finance from offensive films, which he felt were 'prostituting the youth of America'.[75] Finally, films were classified by age for the first time in America, as the Legion adopted a four-category rating system, identifying movies as either suitable or unsuitable for children.[76] Thus, the Legion's call for tighter film regulation in America was driven partly, if not principally, by concerns regarding children and the cinema.

By 1933 the major studios and the Hays Office were buckling under pressure from reformers in general and the Legion in particular and steps had to be taken. They were. In December 1933 the head of Hays' Studio Relations (censorship) office, James Wingate, was replaced by new, Catholic director, Joseph Breen and in June 1934 Breen's department was renamed the Production Code Administration (PCA), with the remit to oversee the strict application of a new, binding Production Code, to replace the previous advisory one. All Hollywood studios were then required to appoint representatives to work with Breen at the PCA. The MPPDA agreed that their members would not begin production on a film until the PCA had approved the script. Completed films would also be resubmitted for a PCA 'purity

seal', without which they could not be distributed or exhibited. Studios that failed to comply would be fined $25,000.[77] For the first time, the Hays Code had the genuine backing of filmmakers who agreed, under severe pressure from the Legion of Decency and others, to clean up their act.

Joe Breen was by all accounts stricter and more stubborn than his predecessors. He soon became known as the 'supreme pontiff of motion picture morals'; indeed, Doherty suggests Breen's impact was such that it would be more accurate to call the pre-code period the 'pre-Breen' period and the Hays Office, the 'Breen Office'.[78] Almost immediately, Breen was able to test-drive the now-enforceable Hays Code, proving his own mettle as chief censor and PCA director with his first test case: Mae West's new production, *It Ain't No Sin.*

Whereas Wingate compromised in censoring West's previous films (to keep Paramount from bankruptcy), Breen allowed no such concessions.[79] He rejected the entire first script for *It Ain't No Sin* as 'a glorification of prostitution and violent crime without any compensating moral values of any kind'.[80] He rejected two further drafts and, when Paramount defied him and made the film anyway, he refused it a certificate. Paramount then tested the Legion of Decency and advertised the film on Broadway with massive billboards announcing '*It Ain't No Sin*'. They were picketed by Catholic priests with placards declaring 'IT IS'.[81] Eventually, the studio realised that defiance was futile. The climate of film production and exhibition was changing to such an extent that they would have to comply. To West's dismay, Paramount implemented the dialogue changes and cuts demanded by Breen and changed the movie's title from *It Ain't No Sin*, to *Belle of the Nineties* (1934). This saucy but sanitised film was then approved for public exhibition by the PCA.

Whether or not the Legion of Decency caused the actual mass boycotting of movies, this was a very effective threat which, combined with other protests and pressures, led to a new level of PCA censorship and studio compliance in America.[82] Children remained central to the debate throughout. As late as July 1934, for example, the *New York Herald Tribune* argued that the Legion should 'find some more serious matter to fight against than Mae West's terrible influence over the ten-year-old mind'.[83] Meanwhile, others opposed to the censorship crackdown argued that it could all be averted if children's viewing was restricted – this being the main

bone of contention.[84] However, such opposition was in vain. By the midsummer of 1934 the Hays Code was firmly in place and Breen was established as the ultimate arbiter of Hollywood film content. This then became a genuine watershed, with pre- and post-1934 movies being easily distinguishable by their difference in moral tone. As box office figures started to rise from 1934 (alongside general financial recovery from the Depression) the PCA chose to interpret this as confirmation that there was indeed public demand for morally clean movies, suitable for both children and adults to see.

Britain and the A Certificate Problem

It was predictable that the debate surrounding children and cinema in pre-code America should focus primarily on the content of movies, as Hollywood was by and large the source of the 'problem'. In Britain, however, the BBFC had already established fairly effective control over domestic film production by the early 1930s, so the threat posed to British children by the cinema was often seen as essentially alien – namely, the multitude of popular yet 'unsuitable' movies imported from America. Cinemas wanted to screen these lucrative films and audiences wanted to see them; nevertheless, British reformers launched a bi-frontal attack on the transatlantic invasion of monsters, gangsters and harlots. First, there were renewed calls for stricter censorship and second, for more effective restrictions on the access of children to cinemas. In particular, the debate continued to revolve around one issue: the admission of children to A films.

By the early 1930s the BBFC had seen a number of significant changes, particularly in personnel. In 1929 president T. P. O'Connor was replaced by former Home Secretary the Rt. Hon. Edward Shortt and in 1930 chief censor Husey was replaced by retired artillery officer Colonel J. C. Hanna. Hanna became the BBFC's vice-president and senior script examiner, assisted from 1934 by Shortt's daughter, Miss N. Shortt. This pair, accurately described by Jeffrey Richards as 'a rather tetchy retired army officer and a sheltered upper-class spinster', were primarily responsible for vetting film scenarios submitted in advance by producers (about one third of British film projects were processed in this way during the 1930s), passing judgements that often seemed rather fastidious, prudish and naïve.[85]

As previously explained, from the outset in 1913 the board had given all approved films one of two certificates – Universal (U) or Public (A). Both were said to be suitable for children but the former were 'especially recommended for Children's Matinees'.[86] Importantly, the BBFC insisted that decisions regarding children's A film attendance rested with parents. Thus, they recommended that only children accompanied by parents or *bona fide* guardians should be admitted to A films.

This stance was maintained by the BBFC into the 1930s, despite the fact that A film regulations were ignored in Scotland, and in England and Wales unaccompanied children habitually circumvented them, either by sneaking into the cinema without paying or, more commonly, by asking adult strangers to accompany them past the box office (see Chapter Five). Here was the main problem associated with children and A film attendance: the ineffectual nature of current regulations. When under fire on the issue, the BBFC invariably reiterated their position and placed the onus back on parental responsibility, but this did nothing to placate reformers, concerned that children were achieving more or less unrestricted access to films of all kinds.

There were two other controversial issues related to the A film category. First, some argued that there was no need for two certificates; films were either suitable for all audiences, or they were unsuitable. Secondly, some critics argued that A film regulations did nothing to protect working class children, who were often taken to the cinema by their parents, regardless of the nature of the films, because there was no alternative childcare. However, although this led to calls for an outright ban on under-16s from A films, this was opposed by the CEA, on the grounds that such restrictions would fatally impact cinemas in working class areas.[87]

As in America, the stakes were raised by the coming of talkies and the onset of controversial pre-code film cycles, particularly as gangster and horror pictures, hugely popular with children, were generally given A certificates. The remainder of this chapter will therefore provide a detailed examination of the problems associated with children's A film attendance in 1930s Britain, including the specific problems relating to children and horror films.

In 1931 Sir Herbert Samuel returned to the Home Office as Home Secretary, still maintaining a great interest in the influence of cinema, but apparently more kindly disposed towards the medium than he had been in 1916. By now there was

considerable demand for action on issues surrounding children and A films. The BBFC and the Home Office both received frequent deputations on the matter from interest groups and licensing authorities and there was growing pressure from local boards of enquiry in places like Birmingham and Birkenhead (see Chapter 4).[88]

In an attempt to examine the extent of the A film problem, the Home Office sent out a questionnaire in February 1931 to all 764 licensing authorities in England and Wales.[89] The questionnaire enquired about the extent to which local authorities were complying with the 1923 model conditions regarding cinema licensing – in particular, conditions concerning the admission of children to A films. Incidentally, while many historians refer to this questionnaire, few if any recognise that debates surrounding children and cinema were undoubtedly its driving force, for government records confirm that the entire investigation was being conducted for a report on the Home Office Children's Branch.[90]

Table 3.1 – Responses to Home Office Questionnaire on Model Conditions, 1931

Percentages relate to the 603 responding licensing authorities with cinemas in their jurisdiction.

Model condition	Authorities complying	
	No.	%
1) That no films injurious to morality or inciting crime should be shown	511	84.7
2) That no film which the BBFC had not passed should be shown	445	73.8
3) That children should not be admitted to A films unless accompanied by a *bona fide* parent or guardian	**396**	**65.7**
4) That the BBFC certificate should be shown on the screen for at least 10 seconds before the beginning of the film	267	44.3
5) That the certificate as indicated by A or U should be shown at least 1½ inches high in advertising outside cinemas	246	40.8
6) That there should be no immoral advertising outside cinemas	479	79.4
7) That there should be complete lighting in cinemas at all times when open to the public	484	80.3

Source: PRO-HO45/14731: Children and the cinema 1929-1932.

Of the 764 authorities contacted, 723 replied, including every County and Municipal Borough in England and Wales. Most of the forty-one that did not reply had no cinema within their jurisdiction, while of those that did respond, 120 had no cinema and ninety-seven had just one. Table 3.1 shows the extent to which the 603 responding authorities with cinemas claimed to comply with the seven model conditions of 1923 regarding cinema licensing and management.

As Table 3.1 suggests, 65.7% of responding licensing authorities with cinemas in their jurisdiction in 1931 claimed to comply with Model Condition 3 (MC3) – that is, 'that children should not be admitted to A films unless accompanied by a *bona fide* parent or guardian'. There was also a rural/urban difference in these figures, as 83.3% of authorities reported compliance in rural areas, compared to just 60% in urban areas. Thus, children in towns and cities were apparently more likely to gain unaccompanied access to A film performances. A few authorities noted that they had introduced tougher conditions (Liverpool and Newbury both banned under-16s from A films altogether) or more lenient ones (two cut the age of unaccompanied attendance from 16 to 14).

However, although over 65% of authorities claimed to adhere to MC3, further questioning revealed a range of practical problems regarding the effectiveness and enforcement of this condition. When asked about the *application* of MC3, eighty-four licensing bodies claimed, rather cagily, to have 'no evidence that the condition has not been effective'. Meanwhile, twenty-eight authorities admitted that MC3 was 'difficult to enforce', thirteen confessed that 'children ask strangers to act as their guardian', eight explained that programmes including a mixture of U and A films caused problems of enforcement and six protested that it was 'difficult to determine a child's age'. One authority also complained that parents took their children into the cinema and left them there. And a remarkable fifteen authorities suggested that all under-16s should be banned from A films.

Consequently, of the 396 authorities claiming to have adopted MC3, only 244 reported that they actively enforced it. Most of these used inspections (commonly, police inspectors or visits by the authority), while others sent reminders to cinema managers regarding children and A films. However, fifty-seven authorities reported that compliance relied solely upon the co-operation of licensees, 152 said that they

took no special action to enforce conditions regarding the admission of children and, despite the common practice of sneaking in with strangers, only two authorities had successfully pursued prosecutions in this regard.

In 1931, therefore, while the BBFC argued that unaccompanied children should not be admitted to A films, only two thirds of local authorities in England and Wales claimed to comply with this regulation and just 40% actively enforced it (probably less in urban areas). Furthermore, as will be shown, even if MC3 *was* adopted and enforced, many children still efficiently evaded this attempt to control their viewing. The Home Office therefore concluded that the current regulations were ineffective and in November 1931 Samuel established a new Film Censorship Consultative Committee (FCCC) to tackle the problem of 'the admission of children to exhibitions of A films'.[91]

At its first meeting on 26 November 1931 the FCCC comprised Samuel himself, Shortt and Brooke Wilkinson from the BBFC, two representatives from the LCC, four from other county councils and four from municipal corporations (including two chief constables).[92] This soon expanded to include representatives from other licensing authorities and, on their own insistence, at least one woman. They met frequently over the next two years, aiming to get a firm grip on the problem of children and A films – primarily because a lack of central control was spawning wild variations in licensing across Britain, which threatened the fragile position of the BBFC. For while most local authorities claimed to comply with BBFC/Home Office advice in the early 1930s, the 1931 questionnaire had confirmed that this was by no means unanimous.

Neither did the nominal assent of authorities necessarily signify their genuine compliance or unquestioning loyalty. Local bodies still had power of veto over all BBFC decisions and they often used it.[93] Many authorities considered the BBFC too liberal, including Beckenham Council, who created their own board of censors in 1933. Beckenham not only banned films passed by the BBFC, they also reclassified U films as As, including the horror comedy *The Gorilla* (1938), which they famously described as 'too full of growls' for children.[94] Meanwhile, one Cornwall borough persistently banned BBFC-approved films throughout the 1930s, despite the fact that there were no cinemas at all within its jurisdiction.[95] Conversely, other authorities

found the BBFC too conservative and they allowed banned films to be shown. As Hunnings explains, 'films…banned by the Board frequently stood a good chance of being shown in a significant number of jurisdictions'.[96] Johnson concurs, 'it was not unusual to see film posters in the early thirties screaming, "Banned by the Censors – Passed by __________ County Council!"'[97]

Unsurprisingly, British local authorities also displayed a variety of responses to the problem of children and A film attendance. Policies ranged from a total ban on children at A films in Liverpool and Newbury, to a complete disregard for A certificate regulations in Scotland, where unaccompanied children could attend freely and A films were frequently shown at children's matinees.[98] Authorities prohibiting under-16s from attending A films did so on the grounds that such films were unsuitable for all children, whether accompanied or not. However, they usually added the concession that exhibitors could apply to the licensing board for 'suitable' A films to be reclassified as Us, so that they could be shown to children. But this strategy invariably backfired, as in Portsmouth where exhibitors deliberately overloaded the system in order to render it unworkable.[99]

Probably the best known ban on under-16s from A films occurred in Liverpool in 1930, when a boy asked a stranger to take him into the cinema, unaware that the stranger in question was magistrate Mrs Steuart Brown. The outraged magistrate persuaded Liverpool justices to impose a ban on under-16s from A films, whether accompanied or not.[100] Explaining their decision, in defiance of the BBFC, the justices argued that A films were potentially harmful to children and that parents were 'not always the best judges of what a child should see'.[101] As in Portsmouth, a provision was made that 'suitable' A films could be reclassified as Us on appeal.

Other areas adopting a similar approach included Newcastle, Leicester, Hove, Sheffield and Birmingham. The FCCC managed to dissuade some authorities bent on banning children; for example, Dorset County Council postponed their decision to ban under-16s from A films in March 1932 pending FCCC deliberations.[102] However in May, nearby Bridgewater informed the CEA that they were banning under-16s from A films and that they would not be placated as Dorset had been.[103]

Just as the compensatory reclassification system backfired in Portsmouth, so it was found to be unworkable elsewhere.[104] In Beckenham, examiners 'found

themselves forced to allow almost 90% of the A films to be shown as U films, with no restriction whatever upon the admission of children'. Similarly, Liverpool examiners left it to the 'honour' of exhibitors which A films to exclude children from, only to find that around 130 A films were then shown with no restrictions on child admissions in the licensing year 1931-2.[105] Meanwhile, dissenting authorities were assailed by the persuasive arguments of the CEA and FCCC, who reiterated that A films were not necessarily 'Adult' films. They were simply those for which the BBFC *advised adult guidance*; a system devised to allow parents to make individual decisions, based on the nature of a given film and the age and personality of their own children. The BBFC Annual Report of 1930 made their reasoning clear:

> The classification of films suitable for young persons bristles with difficulties, for it is not easy to know where to draw the line... Such well-known pantomime stories as Red Riding Hood have had a terrifying effect upon some few neurotic children. A few mothers have also complained that their children have wakened up with fright...after seeing a beautiful and educative natural history film.[106]

As children varied considerably, the BBFC, FCCC and CEA argued, the solution was not to ban them, but to inform parents more clearly as to the suitability of A films. By December 1932, all of the dissenting authorities had conceded defeat, reinstating the proviso in their regulations that children should not be admitted to A films, 'unless accompanied by a *bona fide* parent or guardian'.[107]

After meeting for one year, the FCCC made a number of recommendations regarding children and A films to the Home Office. These were then embodied in a Home Office circular, sent to all licensing authorities in England and Wales on 6 March 1933, together with a new set of model conditions.[108] The emphasis was on improving parental awareness, not least because the February questionnaire had revealed that film certification categories were displayed outside cinemas and before performances in only a minority of jurisdictions (see Table 3.1). Moreover, many cinemas only displayed this information briefly, in tiny lettering or in obscure places. Therefore, the 1933 circular recommended that authorities require cinemas to display

'easily legible' category notices, 'in a prominent position at each entrance to the premises' and 'over every pay box', as well as clearly projecting the film's certificate on the screen before each performance. The BBFC also arranged that movie posters and other publicity would now display certification details of all films.

Lastly, the circular recognised that 'children are able to persuade adults whom they meet outside the cinema to take them...in'. Yet it did not really propose a viable solution, merely suggesting that cinemas should post notices outlining the regulation vis-à-vis *bona fide* guardians and 'expressing the wish of the management that patrons will not encourage children to evade this regulation'.[109] The Home Office also recommended that cinema staff and managers condoning such practices 'should be reminded that any such action... imperils [their] licence'. There were additional suggestions regarding 'horrific' films, which will be outlined later.

Interestingly, a copy of this circular was requested by a Stormont official, as the issue of children and A film attendance was also being hotly debated in Northern Ireland.[110] The official betrayed a rather cynical attitude to the problem, however. 'I do not think we have the least intention of doing anything about the matter here', he wrote, 'but we are constantly being badgered about it, and would like to seem bright and enthusiastic when receiving deputations of old ladies on the subject'.[111]

Finally, the FCCC advised the Home Office that the meanings of BBFC certificates should be more widely publicised, so that people would understand them. This had previously been raised at a BBFC/LCC meeting in 1929 where frustration with the system was very apparent. The board's Mr Hessey complained that nearly all the letters they received involved 'a misunderstanding about the [A] certificate'; his colleague Brooke Wilkinson mused 'whether it might not be wise to exclude children altogether from the cinema'; and Rosamund Smith of the LCC (later of the FCCC) asserted: 'We want to drum it into them; the public are so stupid... I know that thousands of them don't want to know. They haven't got the brains.'[112]

One method of publicising the meanings of certificates quickly presented itself in 1933, when the Joint Committee of the Mother's Union, The National Council of Women, The National Federation of Women's Institutes and The Public Morality Council decided to support the Home Office circular on Children and A Films. They publicised the circular widely and arranged 'The Influence of the Cinema', an event

at Caxton Hall on 29 May 1933, to promote the new model conditions and 'to press upon all Licensing Authorities the vital necessity of adopting [them] *in toto*'.[113] This represented the first real consensus between the Home Office, the BBFC, local licensing authorities, the CEA and moral watchdogs, in dealing with the issue of children and A film attendance. However it was, of course, neither the end of the problem, nor of the debate.

Throughout the early 1930s, arguments concerning children and A film attendance had repeatedly come to a head over one pre-code cycle in particular: horror. Reformers were exercised by this genre which was not only highly offensive, but massively popular with children. The resultant dispute led to key changes in British cinema regulation and these will now be examined in more detail.

A flash point was reached early in the cycle, when *Dracula* (1930) was rapidly followed by the release of *Frankenstein* (1931). Both films received only minor cuts before being passed with A certificates, feeding existing anxieties regarding the access of children to A films. These were spectacular thrillers, highly popular with audiences of all ages and, as one quickly followed another, it became apparent that a new cycle was being born. Reformers sought to nip this in the bud.

The launch of *Frankenstein* in Britain was a great cinematic affair. Lobbies boasted massive cut-outs of the monster with flashing eyes and teaser slogans including 'The monster is loose!' and 'Beware the hand of the monster!' Publicity stunts were also arranged. Cinemas stationed ambulances outside their buildings or nursing staff within and at least one administered joke 'nerve tonic' medication (sugar capsules) to potential patrons.[114] The film was a smash hit and adults queued for hours to see it. Of course, many children were also fascinated by its appeal and attended in droves.[115]

Almost immediately, complaints came from the NSPCC, the LCC and Surrey County Council and children were banned from *Frankenstein* in Manchester, London and elsewhere.[116] Probably the most concerted campaign was by The Order of the Child, who opposed the admission of children to previews of *Frankenstein* at the Tivoli Theatre in London, in January 1932. The Order then campaigned for the exclusion of all children from this film on its general release in May. They argued that it was 'too thrilling for children to see' and sent letters to the Home Office, the

BBFC, CEA, LCC, the Tivoli Theatre and Gaumont British (the renters for the film). Gaumont British consequently agreed to include in their advertising the statement: 'in our opinion, this film is unsuitable for children'.[117]

Frankenstein was arguably a watershed movie in the children and cinema debate. It was by far the most frequently mentioned film in correspondence to the FCCC and was repeatedly discussed at length in their meetings.[118] After consultation with the FCCC, the CEA then set a precedent by contacting its members just before the film's general release, to recommend 'in very strong terms that all exhibitors showing this film should make an announcement [that] *Frankenstein* is...not suitable for children'.[119] This recommendation was repeated on the release of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931) and *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932), after which the pattern was set and the CEA agreed to inform exhibitors whenever a horror film was released.[120]

The new approach to horror was formalised in May 1933 with the introduction of a special BBFC category. If appropriate, particularly strong horror films could now be passed with both an A certificate and the label 'Horrific', signifying that they were unsuitable for children. The procedure was supported by the 1933 Home Office circular mentioned above, which announced that a list of horror films would be kept at the Home Office for the information of licensing authorities.[121] The first Horrific label was applied to *Vampyr* (1931), which had been delayed pending the new category and was passed uncut for release as a Horrific A film in May 1933. At the Caxton Hall meeting that same month, FCCC chair Sir Cecil Levita declared: 'We have for the first time definitely nailed to the counter that the Censor – and...the Local Authority... – can define at any time a film to be horrific or terrifying, and order notices to be put up that it is unsuitable for children'.[122]

The Horrific label was seen as a step in the right direction by those who had long sought the introduction of a 'third BBFC certificate' for the protection of children. In 1921, for example, an NC or Not for Children certificate was proposed, while in 1929 the LCC argued that A should mean Adults only, with a C certificate being introduced for films 'especially suitable for children'.[123] A similar suggestion was made to the BBFC by the Public Morality Council in 1930 and to the FCCC by Middlesex County Council in 1932.[124] Such ideas were invariably blocked by the BBFC who argued that the existing system, if adhered to, provided adequate

protection and that a C certificate might ruin a film's potential for adult audiences.[125] Finally, with the release of *Frankenstein* in 1932, the Order of the Child called on the BBFC to introduce a third certificate for films that 'cannot in any circumstances be shown to children'.[126] Thus, the Horrific label was a compromise; it signified that some films were unsuitable for children, but it did not prohibit their attendance.

Crucially, however, the Horrific label was not a *certificate* and it did nothing to stop unaccompanied A film attendance by young people. Indeed, it could also be considered a variation on 'pinking', simply attracting children to the forbidden fruit of unsuitable films. So reformers persisted in campaigns for tighter restrictions on children's viewing and local authorities continued to take independent action. In June 1933 the LCC backed the new label, stipulating that Horrific films should be advertised outside cinemas with the phrase 'This Film is Unsuitable for Children'.[127] However, St Helens and Birmingham banned children outright from the Horrific *King Kong* in September 1933 and in December 1935, Middlesex banned children from all films *they* deemed horrific, regardless of their BBFC category.[128] By January 1937 Middlesex was joined by Surrey and Essex, the LCC were considering a similar move and Finchley and Hendon Education Committees had resolved that 'under no circumstances should children under 16 years of age be permitted to attend performances of A films'.[129] The ideal of central BBFC control was starting to slide once again.

The situation was aggravated in 1936 when newly-appointed BBFC President Lord Tyrrell declared that the horror cycle was over and that the Horrific label could be scrapped.[130] While well informed (the cycle was indeed starting to wane), Tyrell's comments did nothing to appease those concerned that existing regulations were already woefully ineffective in excluding children from unsuitable films. When protests were lodged by the Joint London, Middlesex and Surrey County Councils Viewing Committee, Tyrell was forced to retract his suggestion.[131] If anything, his comments had strengthened the resolve of those seeking an effective third certificate.

Increasingly, calls for this third certificate came to focus on horror. In July 1935 the LCC proposed to the FCCC and the Home Office that the only solution was to officially exclude all children from Horrific films.[132] Between October 1936 and March 1937, they then tried to convince the BBFC that 'in addition to the two

existing categories of films...there should be a third category "H" (passed as "horrific", i.e., for public presentations when no children under 16 are present)'.[133] Further pressure was applied in February 1937, when Odeon boss Oscar Deutsch announced that, due to persistent problems with child attendance, he would no longer show Horrific films in his cinemas.[134]

Finally, in April 1937 the LCC requested once again that the advisory H label be made a formal certificate in its own right, to exclude children from horror films. This time the BBFC complied and in June 1937 the first H certificate was given to MGM thriller *The Thirteenth Chair* (although this film was not particularly horrific and, as *Today's Cinema* suggested, 'the usual adult certificate would have suited it equally as well').[135] Children were now officially banned from horror films and could only gain access to them by illicit means. However, it should be recognised that the Horrific label and the H certificate were applied to only a handful of films (see Appendix 4). Just eighteen were labelled Horrific between 1932 and 1936 and from 1937 to 1950 only thirty-seven were given an H certificate (less than three per year), twenty-one of which were certified in just two of these years, 1946 and 1939.[136] Nevertheless, the H certificate was a significant development, being the first official ruling to exclude all children in England and Wales from certain films, regardless of their own wishes or those of their parents.

CONCLUSIONS

With the introduction of sound pictures in the late 1920s and the growth of controversial pre-code film cycles in the early 1930s, concern surrounding children and the cinema escalated. This culminated in the increased regulation of film content and, in Britain, new limitations on children's cinema attendance. A watershed was reached in the summer of 1934 when the campaigns of the Legion of Decency and others spawned a new, enforceable Hays Code, which effectively sanitised Hollywood and went a long way towards solving the problems associated with children and film. What is of central importance to this thesis is that in both Britain and America, the fundamental changes in film content and cinema regulations were principally driven by ongoing concerns regarding children. As Vasey suggests, 'the

Production Code was largely designed to assuage these anxieties, which had been exacerbated by the coming of sound'.[137]

After many years of protest, the sanitisation of Hollywood actually took place almost overnight, so that (as Black argues) from July 1934, 'making a film "as Breen as possible" became good business policy'.[138] The alternative was a lengthy and expensive process of rewriting, reshooting and reediting to gain PCA approval. As a result, from 1934 Hollywood movies eschewed nudity and suggestive humour; divorce and extramarital sex were portrayed as unacceptable; and crime no longer paid, with law enforcers rather than gangsters being the heroes of films like *G-Men* (1935) and *Special Agent* (1935). Also from mid-1934, in stark contrast to previous styles, a new, respectable cycle emerged of literary adaptations, eminently suitable for both children and adults, including *Treasure Island* (1934) and, in 1935, *Alice Adams*, *Becky Sharp*, *David Copperfield*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. Significant changes were also evident in series that spanned the decade, notably the MGM *Tarzan* movies, which will be described in a later chapter.

The watershed of 1934 can also be seen in the contrasting fortunes of two stars: one considered a highly inappropriate role model for children; the other, a paragon of wholesome childhood. As already shown, 1934 marked the beginning of the end for Mae West, who only made six more films before returning to the stage. Stripped of their saucy edge, these movies lacked the sparkle and therefore the box-office appeal of West's earlier work. Meanwhile, Shirley Temple became a star in 1934 (aged 6), appearing in no less than seven films that year and earning a Special Oscar, 'in grateful recognition of her outstanding contribution to screen entertainment'. While there were clearly other factors at play, the divergent career paths of West and Temple really epitomised the pivotal changes that occurred in Hollywood in 1934.

Once the Hays Code became established and film content came under far stricter controls, reformers and critics were quickly appeased. In July 1936, Pope Pius XI issued a Papal Encyclical on movies, blessing Breen, praising the work of the PCA and the Legion of Decency and noting the changes wrought by just two years of the new Hays Code: 'crime and vice are portrayed less frequently; sin no longer is so openly approved or acclaimed; false ideals of life no longer are presented in so flagrant a manner to the impressionable minds of youth.'[139] In Britain, an

additional calming factor was the growing alliance between the Hays Office and the BBFC from the mid-1930s. This collaboration aimed to smooth the path of exhibition for both British and American films, setting uniformly high moral standards and discussing particular national sensibilities, such as the British aversion to animal cruelty (see Chapter Seven). As in America, therefore, concern over film content rapidly declined in Britain and by the end of 1935, the BBFC could report 'a marked diminution of hostile criticism'.[140] Meanwhile, the FCCC became largely redundant, meeting only once between 1934 and 1938 and again in 1946 when they disbanded.[141]

It is important, however, to note that censorship control was by no means absolute after 1934, for there were still significant areas of compromise in the regulation of cinema, as filmmakers sought to create within and beyond limits set by censors. Consequently, although Doherty suggests that from July 1934 'cinematic space was a patrolled landscape with secure perimeters and well-defined borders', I would argue that these borders were in fact negotiable and unstable.[142] One notable example is *Dead End* (1937), a film which portrays a street gang of sharp-talking delinquents, who spend their time in perpetual truancy, swimming in a filthy downtown river, playing cards, fighting and stealing.

Several changes were made to the original *Dead End* stage play, including the removal of references to syphilis and the replacement of the outspoken, crippled protagonist, Gimpty, with a clean-cut, democratic, social pioneer, played by Joel McCrea.[143] Still, the final film did overstep censors' boundaries. Socioeconomic inequality was highlighted and heavily criticised. There were references to prostitution, police brutality against women strikers and criticisms of the reform school system. Not least, juvenile delinquents were sympathetically portrayed as victims of circumstance; some riddled with tuberculosis, some carrying knives, all living by the law of the concrete jungle. Yet despite these irregularities, both the PCA and the BBFC passed *Dead End* for exhibition, due to careful negotiation (before, during and after production) between the censors and the producers at MGM.[144] This then illustrates the flexible nature of film regulation, even after 1934. In fact, the success of this movie led to a popular series of 'Dead End Kids' films in 1938 and 1939, including *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938), with such actors as James

Cagney and Humphrey Bogart, followed by various offshoots (the East Side Kids, the Little Tough Guys and the Bowery Boys), going right through to 1958.[145]

After 1934, the sanitisation of Hollywood allowed British reformers and censors to gradually shift their focus away from concerns relating to the corrupting moral influence of cinema on young people and onto another, related issue: the ability of films to cause fear or psychological trauma in children. In 1937 a former member of the LCC Education Committee described this new difference in approach: 'the interest has altogether changed. We are concerned not with the morals of the children but with their fear, of wolves foaming at the mouth and that sort of thing'.[146] Interestingly, this shift apparently represented a privileging of the romantic view of the vulnerable child in need of protection, over the original sin model of the dangerous child with a natural tendency to moral corruption.

This shift in emphasis towards a concern regarding fear led directly to the creation of the H label in 1933 and the H certificate in 1937. However, neither strategy was really successful. As Chapter Five will show, children continued to circumvent attempts to control their viewing and persisted in using adult strangers to gain unaccompanied entrance to A films throughout the 1930s and 1940s.[147] And the H certificate, while more restrictive, applied to only a handful of films in one genre. This limitation was not lost on some reformers, who continued to campaign for the complete exclusion of children from all unsuitable films (not only horror movies). In November 1938, for example, the Order of the Child complained to the Home Office that children were still regularly gaining entrance to see A films with strangers and they called for 'a Third and more restrictive certificate for certain types of films, as in the case of horrific films', which could be applied to other genres.[148] But it would not be until 1951 and the introduction of the X certificate that most children would be effectively excluded from apparently unsuitable films of all kinds.

Overall, despite the emphasis in the literature on issues relating to social class and politics, it would appear that the key developments in the regulation of cinema in Britain and America, before and during the 1930s, were directly related to specific concerns regarding the impact of film on young people. Certainly, since the birth of the BBFC in 1913, film certification categories in Britain have *always* related to the protection of children. From the initial A and U certificates to the H label and H

certificate in the 1930s, and on to the X (16) certificate in 1951, the AA and X (18) in 1970, and the PG, 15, 18 and R18 in 1982, British cinema regulation has consistently been driven by issues relating to children and the cinema.

Endnotes

[1] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1928, p. 9.

[2] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 5.

[3] Dickinson and Street estimate that the average cost of film production rose from between £5,000 and £12,000 for silent films, to between £12, 000 and £20,000 for talkies, not including significant expenditure on sound recording equipment and cinema conversion. Dickinson & Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 42.

[4] Cited in Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 28.

[5] Dickinson & Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 40.

[6] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Reports 1928, pp. 9-10 and 1931, p. 10

[7] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1928, p. 10. By 1931, the BBFC noted 'most of the cinemas...have now been wired for auditory films' and there was no need for filmmakers, 'as was the case last year, to issue a silent and auditory version of the majority of their feature films'. PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1931, p. 5.

[8] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Reports 1929, p. 8 and 1932, p. 8.

[9] *Evening Standard*, 22 October 1931. (Emphasis mine).

[10] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Reports 1921, pp. 9-10; 1923, p. 6; and 1925; see also Low, *British Film 1918-1929*, p. 58.

[11] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1925, p. 8.

[12] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1929, p. 9.

[13] *Evening News*, 18 November 1932.

[14] Richard Maltby, '*Baby Face*, or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash', in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (eds), *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader* (Oxford, 1998), p. 166; Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, pp. 100-31.

[15] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 191; Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, pp. 8-11; Mathews, *Censored*, p. 73.

[16] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 2.

[17] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1928, p. 8.

[18] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 110.

[19] CCINTB 95-214: Jim Godbold, interview, 6 July 1995.

[20] For examples of girls enjoying gangster films, see CCINTB 92-1: Margaret Young; 92-2: Molly Stevenson; and 95-182: Ellen Casey. Also a 1945 sociological survey included the report of a young woman who had a 'vivid recollection...of gangster films' that she had enjoyed watching as a girl in the 1930s; she added, 'in my early teens I would see any

and every crime picture, however inferior, and often found myself longing to be a part of these stories'. J. P. Mayer, *British Cinemas and Their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London, 1948), p. 83; this text also contains other examples on pp. 35 and 109.

[21] Birmingham Cinema Enquiry, p. 8.

[22] Ibid, pp. 14 & 17.

[23] Birkenhead, *The Cinema and the Child*, p. 15.

[24] Mackie, *Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry*, p.15-16.

[25] Ibid., p. 17.

[26] For a case study of the 'Gangster Film Panic', see Springhall, *Moral Panics*, pp. 98-120.

[27] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 109.

[28] Ibid., p. 110.

[29] Letter from James Wingate to Will Hays, cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 115.

[30] Ibid.

[31] *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 August 1931, cited in Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 157.

[32] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 123; Springhall, *Moral Panics*, p. 109.

[33] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 129.

[34] Ibid., p. 121; Springhall, *Moral Panics*, p. 108.

[35] Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, p. 114; Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 131.

[36] For more details, see Richards, 'Images of Britain', pp. 106-7.

[37] BFI: BBFC Scenarios, 1932, No.94 – *When the Gangs Came to London.*

[38] Robertson, *BBFC*, pp. 78-9.

[39] Cited in Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, p. 114 and Maltby, '*Baby Face*', p. 166.

[40] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Reports 1921, p. 10 and 1923, p. 6; 1925, p. 9.

[41] Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 61.

[42] See Maltby, '*Baby Face*', pp. 164-83.

[43] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 121.

[44] *Variety*, 2 February 1932, 6, cited in Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 121. For more on this issue, see Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, pp. 120-25

[45] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1929, p. 10. See also 1932, p. 17.

[46] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1931, pp. 9-10.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.; and 1932, p. 17.

[49] Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, p. 124.

[50] 'Deadline for Film Dirt', *Variety*, 13 June 1933, I, 36, cited in Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 104.

[51] The lack of oral evidence from young female fans of sex pictures may simply be due to interviewer expectations, as women respondents were not specifically asked about such films. Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, pp. 125-6; Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 80.

[52] CCINTB 95-34: Denis Houlston, interview, 26 April 95.

[53] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 73.

[54] CCINTB 95-34: Denis Houlston, interview, 26 April 95.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 72.

[57] The movie made over $2 million in under three months and within six months it had broken box-office records set by Garbo and Dietrich. Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 78.

[58] Gregory D. Black, , 'Hollywood Censored: The Production Code Administration and the Hollywood Film Industry, 1930-1940', *Film History*, 3, 3 (1989), pp. 173-4.

[59] CCINTB 95-208: Beatrice Cooper, interview, 27 November 1995.

[60] MPPDA memorandum from Ray Norr to Will Hays, 18 October 1933, cited in Maltby, '*Baby Face*', p. 183.

[61] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 61.

[62] Mariann Hoffmann, 'Children and the Cinema', in International Educational Cinematographic Institute, *The Social Aspects of the Cinema* (Rome, c.1930), p. 123.

[63] Ibid. (Emphasis mine).

[64] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 184.

[65] Cited in John Walker (ed.), *Halliwell's Film and Video Guide*, 13 edn (London, 1997), p. 47.

[66] *Variety*, 18 July 1933, 3, cited in Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 109.

[67] Roy Kinnard notes that some 1,130 silent films (including shorts) contained elements of the macabre, monstrous or supernatural, but the term 'horror film' was not actually coined until *Frankenstein* (1931). Roy Kinnard, *Horror in Silent Films: A Filmography, 1896-1929* (London, 1995), pp. 1-5. See also S. S. Prawer, *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* (Oxford, 1980), p. 9.

[68] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 78.

[69] CCINTB92-11a: Tom Walsh, interview, 27 January 95.

[70] CCINTB 95-87: Joan F. Donoghue, correspondence, 11 February 1995.

[71] Examples include the subversive anarchy of Marx Brothers comedies, *Cocoanuts* (1929), *Animal Crackers* (1930), *Horse Feathers* (1932) and *Duck Soup* (1933), and the voyeuristic eroticism of Busby Berkeley musicals, *The Kid From Spain* (1932), *Night World* (1932) and *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933).

[72] For a detailed account of this movement, see Black, *Hollywood Censored* and Frank Walsh, *Sin & Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry* (Cambridge, 1994).

[73] Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 151.

[74] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, pp. 167-8.

[75] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 159.

[76] Slide, *'Banned in the USA'*, p. 4.

[77] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 181.

[78] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, pp. 10-11. For both sides of the debate on the 1934 watershed, see endnotes 14 and 15.

[79] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 73.

[80] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 175.

[81] Ibid., pp. 178-180.

[82] There is convincing evidence that many of those who took the pledge may not have boycotted the cinemas in practice. Ibid, pp. 187-9.

[83] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 190.

[84] Ibid., p. 191.

[85] Richards, *Dream Palace*, p. 109; Robertson, *BBFC*, p. 53; BFI: BBFC Scenarios 1930-1939.

[86] Cited in Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 55n.

[87] Low, *British Film, 1929-1939*, p. 58.

[88] PRO-HO45/15206: Film Censorship in the UK 18 September 1931-30 April 1932.

[89] PRO-HO45/14731: Children and the cinema 1929-1932. This file includes the original questionnaire and circular, the compiled results and many of the individual responses.

[90] Ibid.; PRO-HO45/15207: Film Censorship in the UK 19 May 1932-26 May 1933.

[91] It's secondary function was to address issues relating to 'non-commercial films and private cinema performances' PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[92] PRO-HO45/15208: FCCC, 1931-1933.

[93] Independent local authorities rulings are still permissible, as outlined by the BBFC in 1995: 'Statutory powers remain with the local councils, who may overrule any of the Board's decisions on appeal, passing films we reject, banning films we have passed, and even waiving cuts, instituting new ones, or altering categories for films exhibited under their own licensing jurisdiction'. (Cited in Johnson, *Censored Screams*, p.10). Such action is rare today; a recent example involved David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996).

[94] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 56.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 103.

[97] Johnson, *Censored Screams*, p. 18.

[98] PRO-HO45/15207: Film Censorship in the UK 19 May 1932-26 May 1933; PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[99] *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 April 1934, p. 18; *Today's Cinema*, 5 February 1937.

[100] PRO-HO45/15206: Film Censorship in the UK 18 September 1931-30 April 1932.

[101] Cited in Low, *British Film, 1929-1939*, p. 59.

[102] PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[103] Ibid.

[104] See also PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1932.

[105] PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[106] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1930, p. 11.

[107] PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[108] Under Secretary of State, Home Office, *Children and 'A' Films: [A letter to] the Clerk to the Licensing Authority, under the Cinematograph Act 1909, 6 March 1933* (HMSO, London, 1934).

[109] This had already been tried in Birmingham. See PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937; PRO-HO45/15208: FCCC, 1931-1933.

[110] See PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937; *Today's Cinema*, 23 December 1932; *Daily Film Renter*, 24 December 1932; *Belfast News-Letter*, 29 December 1932.

[111] PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937 – letter from Ministry of Home Affairs, Stormont, dated 24 February 1933.

[112] BFI - LCC Verbatim Reports 1929-1930: Proceedings of conference between LCC Theatres and Music Halls Committee and BBFC, on the Attendance of Unaccompanied Children at Exhibitions of A Films, 6 November 1929.

[113] BFI - BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935; PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[114] BFI - Press Books & Clippings Files: *Frankenstein* (1931).

[115] For examples, see Chapter 5.

[116] PRO-HO45/15208: FCCC, 1931-1933; Mathews, *Censored*, p. 78.

[117] BFI Special Collections - BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935: Proceedings of the National Conference on Problems Connected with the Cinema, convened by the Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee, 27 February 1932; *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 January 1932, p. 21.

[118] PRO-HO45/15208: FCCC, 1931-1933.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Home Office, *Children and 'A' Films*.

[122] BFI - BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935; PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[123] BFI - LCC Verbatim Reports 1929-1930.

[124] BFI - BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931; PRO-HO45/15208: FCCC, 1931-1933.

[125] BFI - LCC Verbatim Reports 1929-1930.

[126] BFI Special Collections - BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935; *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 January 1932, p. 21.

[127] BFI Special Collections – BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935.

[128] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 142.

[129] *Today's Cinema*, 22 November & 20 December 1935; 2 November 1936; 12 January 1937; *The Cinema*, 6 January 1937.

[130] *Today's Cinema*, 2 November 1936.

[131] Hunnings, *Film Censors*, p. 142.

[132] PRO-HO45/17036: Films for children, 1932-1937.

[133] *Today's Cinema*, 26 April 1937.

[134] BFI Special Collections - Censorship Folder, Verbatim Reports 1930-1938. This was widely reported – see *The Times*, 17 February 1937; *Morning Post*, 17 February 1937; *Manchester Guardian*, 18 February 1937.

[135] *Today's Cinema*, 9 June 1937. The decision as to whether a film was passed A or H continued to be rather arbitrary and inconsistent for the rest of the decade.

[136] Robertson, *BBFC*, pp. 185-6.

[137] Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, pp. 5-6.

[138] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 199.

[139] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 238.

[140] PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Reports 1935, p. 1.

[141] PRO-HO45/24945: FCCC 1934-1951.

[142] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, p. 1. Similarly, Dickinson and Street distinguish between the rather deterministic 'content control' model of censorship applied by historians including Richards and Pronay, and the more flexible argument of Tony Aldgate (and I might add, James Robertson), who suggests that filmmakers often circumvented censors' rules. Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and the State*, p. 249.

[143] Mathews, *Censored*, p. 81.

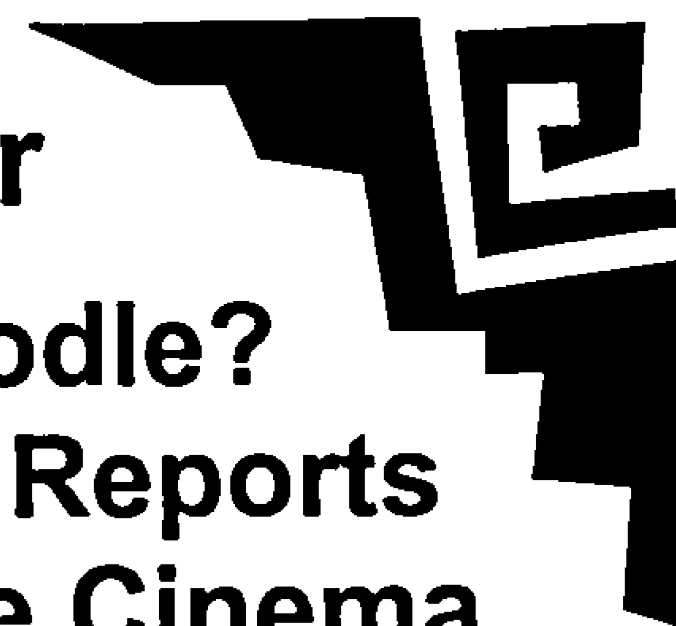
[144] For more details, see Black, *Hollywood Censored*, pp. 275-280; Springhall, *Moral Panics*, pp. 105-7; Robertson, *Hidden Cinema*, pp. 68-70 and *BBFC*, pp. 81-2; Mathews, *Censored*, pp. 79-81.

[145] The initial MGM series was *Dead End* (1937), *Crime School* (1938), *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938), *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939), *Hell's Kitchen* (1939) and *The Angels Wash Their Faces* (1939).

[146] BFI Special Collections - Censorship Folder, Verbatim Reports 1930-1938.

[147] PRO-HO45/21118: Admission of children to cinemas 1937-1947.

[148] Ibid.



Chapter Four

Moral Panic or Flapdoodle? Enquiries, Conferences and Reports on Children and the Cinema

> There is probably more 'flapdoodle' in regard to the type of film which should or should not be exhibited to children than almost anything else.
>
> *Daily Film Renter*
> *15 July 1936*

As the preceding chapters have indicated, during the first four decades of moving pictures, the regulation of cinema was largely driven by concerns regarding child viewing. This chapter will look at these concerns in a little more depth, by focusing on the numerous investigations carried out into the impact of cinema on the young. In particular, the 1930s saw a proliferation of enquiries, conferences and reports, generated by various interest groups, local councils and committees, who then met with the Home Office and/or the BBFC to discuss their findings. Such investigations are of particular interest to this thesis inasmuch as they highlight the preoccupations and tactics of those trying to influence the regulation of children's cinemagoing. In addition, detailed examination of these studies may shed some light on what has been described as the 'moral panic' surrounding children and film.[1]

The key local British enquiries of the 1930s were conducted in Birmingham, Birkenhead, London and Edinburgh and although they have been explored to some extent by historians (briefly by Terry Staples and more thoroughly by Jeffrey Richards) this work has tended to be descriptive rather than analytical in nature.[2] This chapter will provide a similar narrative overview of 1930s cinema enquiries, but, in contrast to the work of Staples and Richards, it will also attempt a more detailed analysis of the Birmingham, Birkenhead, London and Edinburgh projects. Specifically, it will identify the main players and their chief concerns and will examine their methodologies and rhetorical strategies, in order to consider the extent to which these may have contributed to a moral panic regarding children and film. Thus, the sources will be used to explore both the context of a possible moral panic and the means of its construction (see Chapter One).

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the term moral panic will be used with caution and its problematic nature should be considered implicit throughout. Use will be made of various moral panic theories, rather than adopting any one model for, as Kenneth Thompson suggests, the field has spawned numerous idiosyncratic approaches and it is therefore probably best to 'adopt insights from each...in an eclectic manner or to combine them where appropriate'.[3] Notably, this chapter draws on 'interest group' theories, such as that of Philip Jenkins, who argues that moral panics involve 'individuals, pressure groups and bureaucratic agencies, each with a complex and often shifting pattern of alliances between them'.[4] Indeed,

as will be shown, cinema enquiries of the 1930s relied on networks of individuals, groups and organisations with overlapping interests, including religious, educational and political allegiances. In addition, analysis of the language of the debate will draw on theories of 'convergence' and 'signification spirals', which suggest that moral panics may escalate when pre-existing, apparently dangerous discursive formations are combined.[5] In this way, it will be argued, anxieties about childhood, juvenile delinquency, social class and mass culture may have combined to intensify the apparent social threat regarding children and cinema in 1930s Britain.

Cinema Enquiries: An Overview

The first major British investigation into the social impact of cinema took place in 1917 when the Cinema Trade Council asked the National Council of Public Morals to 'institute an independent inquiry into the physical, social, moral and educational influence of the cinema, *with special reference to young people*'.[6] The resulting Commission of Inquiry had twenty-five members representing a broad range of interests, including the National Union of Teachers, the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association, religious organisations, youth organisations and local councils, plus writers and composers (notably controversial author and birth control campaigner Dr Marie Stopes) and BBFC President T. P. O'Connor. Their investigation was wide-ranging, taking evidence over six months from filmmakers, exhibitors, censors, educationalists, chief constables, ministers of religion, doctors and, importantly, children. Sub-committees were also appointed to visit cinemas and sub-enquiries were conducted canvassing the opinions of chief constables, clerks to the justices of the peace and school and youth workers, plus a specially commissioned sub-enquiry into the impact of film on juvenile delinquency in America.[7]

In 1917 the Cinema Commission of Inquiry published an extensive report of almost 400 pages. Its findings were comprehensive, detailed and well-balanced, concluding that the social impact of cinema in Britain was largely positive, despite the allegations being levelled against it. Thus, the report declared, although they had been 'compelled...to give special attention to the alleged *defects* in the picture house', the commission had been 'convinced by the amount of testimony offered in [cinema's] favour of its value as a cheap amusement for the masses, for parents as

well as children, especially as regards its influence in decreasing hooliganism and as a counter-attraction to the public-house'.[8]

A key focus of the enquiry was the question of whether films effected high levels of juvenile delinquency and in this respect too the conclusions were carefully considered and generally commendatory.

> The problem [of juvenile crime] is far too complex to be solved by laying stress on only one factor and that probably a subordinate one, among all the contributing conditions... While a connection between the cinema and crime has to a limited extent in special cases been shown, yet it certainly has not been proved that the increase in juvenile crime generally has been consequent on the cinema, or has been independent of other factors more conducive to wrongdoing.[9]

However, despite the thorough, authoritative conclusions of the 1917 enquiry, concern continued to surround the medium of cinema, particularly as it related to young people, and this was only exacerbated with the introduction of talkies from 1927 (see Chapter Three).[10] Consequently, the 1930s saw a massive rise in enquiries regarding the social impact of cinema on children, both in Britain and overseas.

Several international projects were initiated, including League of Nations conferences in 1926, 1936 and 1938.[11] But probably the most extensive research into the issue of children and cinema took place in America between 1929 and 1933, when leading psychologists, sociologists and educationalists conducted a large collection of enquiries known as the Payne Fund Studies (PFS).[12] The findings of this broad investigation into the impact of cinema on children were published in twelve detailed volumes.[13] Nevertheless, public awareness of the PFS came primarily from the controversial summary volume by Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (1933), which selected the studies' more sensational findings (including those not yet published) in order to denounce cinema as a scapegoat for a variety of social ills. Even the PFS directors (who were by no means enamoured of the cinema) considered the tone of this anti-movie polemic to be extreme, yet the media cited it extensively and it rapidly became a best-seller.[14]

While the PFS were underway in America, several local enquiries into the

impact of cinema on children were launched in Britain. Many were small-scale projects or dealt with particular issues, such as the educational use of film or the impact of war films on children.[15] Others looked specifically at the subject of children's matinees (see Chapter Six).[16] But the four key British cinema enquiries of the early 1930s were those conducted in Birmingham, Birkenhead, London and Edinburgh. These are of great interest and will now be examined in some depth, including details of their backgrounds, main players and methodologies.

Background to the Four Main British Cinema Enquiries

In 1930, the National Council of Women held a conference in Birmingham to discuss the problem of film content. Overall, they found many films morally suspect if not dangerous and they therefore requested that the Home Office hold a public enquiry into the need for stricter censorship and cinema regulation.[17] When this request was denied, however, the Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee (BCEC) was formed to investigate the impact of cinemagoing on Birmingham children.[18] Their enquiry (conducted between April 1930 and May 1931) was based on a clear prejudice against the cinema and was specifically designed to uncover sufficient evidence of the medium's shortcomings to persuade the Home Secretary to change his mind. This bias is openly acknowledged in the foreword to their published report:

> Amongst ourselves there was widespread 'dissatisfaction' (to use a mild expression) with the prevalent type of film, and particularly the baneful effect of that type on children and adolescents... Our object was to endeavour to persuade the Home Secretary to institute an impartial inquiry...the results of which we were confident would lead to drastic and beneficial changes in the regulations at present governing the exercise of the 'Censorship'.[19]

The BCEC enquiry was therefore principally concerned with the negative effect of cinema on 'children and adolescents'. The main thrust of its investigation involved the distribution of questionnaires to around 2,300 children from twenty-four schools and youth groups in and around Birmingham, asking about their frequency of cinema attendance, film preferences and the effects of cinemagoing. A few youths

and adults were also questioned. In addition, BCEC representatives visited cinemas (including children's matinees), producing 430 visitors' reports. The enquiry's findings were published in 1931 and throughout the first half of the 1930s the BCEC continued to hold public meetings and conferences, assemble petitions and send deputations to the Home Office, in an attempt to improve the moral climate of the cinema, particularly for young people.[20]

Following the Birmingham enquiry, the Birkenhead Vigilance Committee (BVC) was inspired to conduct a cinema enquiry of its own, based closely on the BCEC model, between June and October of 1931. The link to Birmingham is clear from their report in which the BVC 'strongly endorse the appeal of the Birmingham Cinema Inquiry Committee...for "an impartial and comprehensive public inquiry into the production, classification and exhibition of films"'.[21] They go on to applaud

> with fullest sympathy the determination of the Birmingham Inquiry Committee to persist... 'until...the abuses and dangers – intellectual, physical and moral – particularly for children and adolescents, which at present make what might be an instrument of untold good into an instrument of incalculable harm, have been extirpated'.[22]

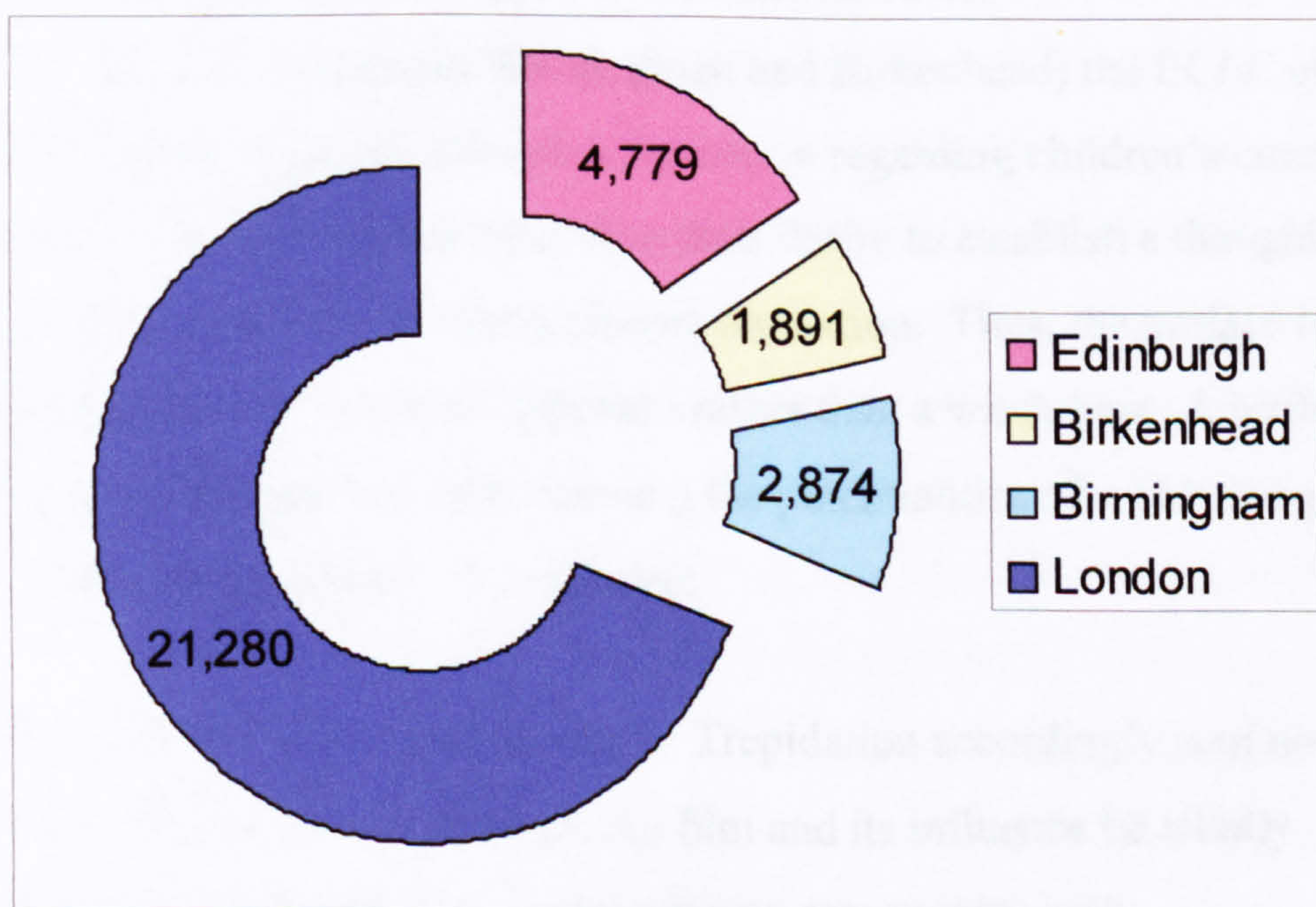
In addition to shared motivation, the Birkenhead enquiry employed a very similar methodology to that of the BCEC, including an almost identical questionnaire, completed by around 1,845 local children.[23] BVC representatives also submitted forty-six cinema visitors' reports (twenty involving Saturday matinees). The findings of the Birkenhead Committee were published in December 1931 and the BVC continued to campaign by writing to the Birkenhead Justices, requesting amendments to cinema licensing regulations. Notably they called for the banning of all children under 16 from A film performances. This correspondence was published in Birkenhead newspapers, but licensing regulations were not changed at that time.[24]

Cinema enquiries then followed in London and Edinburgh, but these differed from the Birmingham and Birkenhead studies in many important respects. The London Enquiry was carried out by the LCC Education Committee who published their report in March 1932.[25] As Chapters Two and Three have shown the LCC was centrally concerned with cinema regulation from the turn of the century and was

instrumental in the shaping of regulations regarding children's cinema attendance throughout the 1920s and 1930s, having numerous meetings on the subject with (amongst others) the BBFC, the London Public Morality Council, the Juvenile Organisations Association, the London Head Teachers' Association and the National Union of Women Teachers.[26] However, in meetings during the summer of 1929 the LCC admitted with some concern and frustration that, despite their efforts, there was still 'no effective method…for preventing unaccompanied children from attaching themselves to adults for the purpose of gaining admission to exhibitions of A films'.[27]

After a year of wrestling with the subject yet again, Theatres and Music Halls Committee chairman Miss Rosamund Smith finally declared: 'we are almost sick of it'.[28] The baton was then passed to the LCC Education Committee, which was commissioned to produce a comprehensive report regarding children and cinema attendance. They would obtain the information for this report from an enquiry, which became by far the largest of the four under consideration, involving 21,280 children aged between 4 and 14, from twenty-nine London schools (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 – Relative Sample Sizes of British Cinema Enquiries 1930-33



Sources: Published reports of the four enquiries (see earlier references). Sample sizes have been calculated from approximate number of persons (children and adults) consulted and cinema visitors' reports submitted.

Unlike the Birmingham and Birkenhead enquiries, the LCC enquiry was not apparently calculated to promote any particular action and neither was its agenda derived from purely negative assumptions regarding the impact of cinema. Instead, it seems to have been a genuine attempt to understand a complex social issue, namely 'the effect of the attendance at cinema performances on the minds of children'.[29] To this end, using interviews and questionnaires, the London enquiry sought information regarding the frequency of cinema attendance and viewing preferences of children, while also aiming to pin down the ambiguous 'intellectual and moral consequences' of cinemagoing among young people.

The last of the four main British enquiries of the early 1930s was conducted in Edinburgh between June 1931 and February 1933. The city's Juvenile Organisations Committee had been debating issues surrounding children and cinema regulation for over a decade and, as in London, they finally concluded that 'no real progress could be made until an enquiry had been carried out', as 'until full information ...had been obtained there was and could be no sufficient answer' to the problems associated with children's cinemagoing.[30] An enquiry was therefore instituted to investigate the matter further, with representatives from twenty-two organisations being invited to form the Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry Committee (ECEC).[31]

Like the LCC (and unlike Birmingham and Birkenhead) the ECEC claimed to be genuinely seeking useful, reliable information regarding children's cinemagoing, with no particular axe to grind other than their desire to establish a thought-through basis for future decisions regarding cinema regulation. Thus, the preface to their report recommends an impartial approach rather than a witch-hunt, describing film as 'a vehicle of instruction and entertainment the potentialities of which for good or for evil are almost incalculable'. It continues:

> The 'pictures' have come to stay... Trepidation accordingly is of no avail. Nor need the outlook on the film and its influence be wholly suffused with foreboding. To have begun any enquiry with prepossessions against the cinema would have been merely futile.[32]

As in the other cities, the central form of investigation used by the ECEC was a questionnaire for children. Twenty-one Edinburgh schools co-operated in the

project, with 2,580 questionnaires being completed by pupils aged from 9 to 18.[33] Similar questionnaires were distributed to 350 working young people aged between 14 and 21 (mainly via youth organisations) and of these 250 were completed and returned.[34] Questionnaires were also distributed to parents (1030 replies) and school teachers (649 replies).[35] Finally, ECEC representatives visited a selection of cinemas regularly over an eight-week period, completing a total of 270 visitors' reports.[36] This therefore constituted the second largest enquiry of the four (see Figure 4.1).

The Main Players

While they differed in many ways, the committees of all four enquiries contained a similar demographic mix of well-to-do people, including large numbers of women, with the majority representing religious groups, youth organisations, educational establishments, women's groups and social/moral campaign organisations. This confirms Jeffrey Richards' assertion that 'the cinema's influence on children greatly preoccupied society's traditional cultural elites and groups concerned with child training and welfare'.[37] Edinburgh was the only enquiry to publish a full list of committee members (reproduced as Appendix 5) but records from the other three enquiries indicate that their committees were very similar in composition and therefore the Edinburgh list can be seen as broadly representative.

The main ECEC had fifty-seven members including thirty-five women and twenty-two men (over 61% women). This included twenty-two representatives from youth organisations, eleven from women's groups, nine from churches and religious organisations and seven each from educational organisations and social/moral campaigns such as the Scottish Temperance Alliance and the National Vigilance Association. Of the fifty-seven main committee members twenty-five formed an executive committee consisting of ten women and fifteen men (40% women). Graduates, educationalists and clergymen were most likely to serve on the executive, while single women and members of campaign groups were far less likely to do so.

It is particularly interesting to examine the involvement of women in these committees. While they were extremely active in the early stages of enquiries and at general committee level, men held nearly all of the executive positions. Thus,

although the Birmingham enquiry arose from a conference held by the National Council of Women, five of the committee's seven office holders were men.

A second point of interest is the higher status of *married* women and, in particular, the way in which these women stressed their maternal role as a mark of authority when speaking about children and the cinema. In a meeting between the Public Morality Council and the BBFC in 1930, for example, Mrs H. W. Boustead of the Mothers' Union explained: 'as mothers we are so largely concerned with the... daily effect of [films] upon young people we know very well indeed the allurement of the "spurious glamour" [depicted in them]'.[38] Meanwhile, at an open meeting convened by the BCEC in 1930, Alderman Mrs Sands J. P. cited her maternal authority over and above her status as an alderman or a magistrate, asserting: 'That is what I am speaking about, the influence of the cinema on the children, *and I speak as a mother*'.[39]

Although symbols of female morality and motherhood were employed to support arguments for increased cinema regulation, they could also be used to undermine them. For example, Birmingham magistrate W. A. Dalley dismissed the BCEC as 'an interfering lot of old women of both sexes'.[40] Meanwhile, positive and negative connotations of motherhood were both apparent in the argument of Captain G. D. Griffith (President of the London Head Teachers' Association) when calling for an improvement in the quality of films in 1936. He explained: 'We don't want Mother Grundy's dictating what children shall see, but we do want to supply programmes to which the most careful parents can send their children'.[41] Here, Griffith evokes the eighteenth century dramatic character Mrs Grundy – the personification of prudish disapproval and social propriety – and, interestingly, he renames her *Mother* Grundy. Yet although he seeks to undermine cinema's detractors by depicting them as meddling mothers, he goes on to cite 'careful parents' as the ultimate arbiters of film content – perhaps the important distinction here being that 'careful parents' might be men or women.

Finally, the key issue regarding the composition of cinema enquiry committees is that their members were nearly all from religious, educational, youth and women's organisations. For example 89% of those ECEC members with specific affiliations represented such organisations and this figure rose to 100% in the executive.[42]

Although this may not be surprising in itself, the reasons for such a composition deserve consideration, as they may help explain some of the motivations and methodologies underpinning cinema enquiries. Why did the majority of committee members come from these organisations? And what did they seek to gain?

Of course, individuals and individual organisations each had their own anxieties relating to the cinema. Churches were directly challenged by Sunday film shows and the physical conversion of church buildings into film theatres.[43] Youth organisations struggled to compete with the entertainment value of the cinema.[44] And, as will be shown, teachers complained that schoolwork suffered due to truancy and evening cinemagoing. Above all, however, cinema enquiries claimed to have one common motivation: the protection of children. And it was apparently this motivation that lay behind the composition of committees, for the church, the family, schools and youth groups were all associated with the protection of the young.

There is a fundamental flaw in this reasoning, however, because if the primary concern was the protection of children, this should surely have been assuaged to some extent by the authoritative, reassuring findings of the 1917 Commission of Inquiry. While this investigation did not render later enquiries redundant, it certainly could have formed a useful basis for them, as it provided a sophisticated appraisal of issues relating to the protection of children. However, not one of the four main enquiries of the 1930s even refers to the Commission of Inquiry, which had been conducted less than fifteen years before. This suggests that although protection may have been an issue, there was apparently an additional motivation – something that had been unresolved in 1917. And I would argue that this additional driving force related to unspoken issues of social control.

Essentially, cinema was considered a massive potential influence on the behaviour and development of the young and as such it represented a direct threat to those structures traditionally considered responsible for socialisation: families, schools, churches and youth movements. Arguably, therefore, the bodies involved in enquiries had a vested interest in the regulation of cinema, as the medium challenged their apparent monopoly on the socialisation and control of young people.

There are two caveats to this argument though. Firstly, motivations of protection and control need not be mutually exclusive and both may well have been

important factors in these enquiries. But it is important to highlight the issue of social control before looking at the rhetoric of the enquiries, as they do tend to privilege aspects of protection and generally leave issues of authority and control unstated. Secondly, these organisations were by no means united in their opinions regarding the cinema. As will be seen, there was often great disparity of opinion between educationalists, church ministers and others concerning the relative merits and dangers of the cinema. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the main players in these and other cinema enquiries were nearly all from organisations traditionally associated with the socialisation of the young – organisations which stood to lose significantly if cinema were as powerful a force as they feared.

Content of the Four Main Enquiries

Having given some background to the four main cinema enquiries and the players involved, the following sections will examine the content of the reports in more detail, paying particular attention to the approaches and rhetorical strategies used. While these four enquiries ostensibly had a common purpose (the protection of children), it will be shown that they adopted very different methodologies, came to very different conclusions and presented their findings in very different ways.

The London Enquiry

The LCC took great pains to be 'scientific' in their attempt to 'obtain the facts' about children's cinemagoing, as is evident from their report's repeated references to issues of objectivity, reliability and validity.[45] The 21,280 children involved came from twenty-nine London schools, 'chosen as representative of each of the inspectorial areas', creating a sample which the committee felt was 'probably large enough, and...sufficiently varied, to ensure the validity of the results'. And although the report suggested that this sample was 'representative not only of London conditions, but also of those obtaining in most very large English towns', it was careful to acknowledge that conditions might vary in rural areas or cities elsewhere in Britain.[46]

The report, written by LCC Chief Examiner Dr F. H. Spencer, also refers at length to problems of reliability. For example, the introduction notes that although answers were obtained 'by the careful (and so far as possible objective) questioning of the children', there were inevitably various levels of accuracy. Older children,

frequent cinemagoers and those that did not attend at all were thought to have provided more reliable information than had younger respondents or those that attended the cinema sporadically. Statistical information was thought to be generally reliable, 'for in statement of fact the tendency of children to give the answer they believe to be expected is not very great, and can, with fair certainty, be discounted or checked'. However answers relating to subjective opinion were considered less reliable, especially when given orally and particularly if inexperienced investigators were used. It is perhaps worth quoting this section at length, to illustrate the amount of scrutiny given to the subject in the report.

> Where children are asked oral questions, and matters of opinion are involved, their answers are not to be taken at face value. The experienced questioner knows this, and in most cases he is not deceived. But this makes it no easier to get to the truth. Children are very quick to see that the questioner is going to form a judgement. They will frequently do two things: (1) give the answer they think is expected, (2) give the answer which they think will cause the questioner to think well of the individual and the class... Consequently, different people will get different answers to a given set of questions; or the same person will get different answers on different occasions from the same set of pupils. The fashion set by the first answer may affect the whole series of answers, and answers will sometimes be given "without thinking". For these reasons the oral answers of a single class or a single school may be misleading. Consequently it was arranged that a good many answers should be given in writing... Moreover the oral information was obtained by teachers and inspectors who are able to eliminate fairly well the element of suggestion.[47]

So it can be seen that Spencer does not present his report as an unproblematic statement of fact, but rather he goes into some detail regarding the limited reliability and validity of the enquiry's findings. Moreover, he acknowledges that the findings may not necessarily be applicable throughout Britain and he also stresses on several occasions that the report refers only to elementary school children, with potentially very different conditions applying to 'young people over fourteen'.[48]

After providing statistics of children's frequency of cinema attendance and film preferences (categorised by age and gender), the report addresses its main theme: the 'effects of attendance' on children, including physical effects, impact on speech (Americanisms), moral influence and potentially harmful effects. Nearly all of the findings are qualified but positive, in a style reminiscent of the 1917 enquiry.

The physical effects of cinemagoing on children are found to include tiredness and 'aching eyes', but the report's conclusion in this respect is that 'the present evidence on the point of health is not sufficient to justify...a commonsense lay conclusion, still less a "scientific" one'.[49]

Concerning Americanisation, Spencer concludes that 'the speech of the children is not much affected', with only a few phrases having entered the vernacular, 'such as "Yeah" or "Yep" for "Yes", or "O.K. Chief", signifying "Yes, sir", to a superior'. He even notes that 'one head master prefers this American slang to his local variety'.[50]

Regarding the sexual content of films, Spencer is unequivocal. 'All the inspectors who mention it...are convinced that the morally questionable element in films (i.e., that reserved for adults) is ignored by children of school age... [It] does, in fact, bore them.'[51] Five years later, a committee member wittily recalled that when they were asked to investigate the 'sex evil that was supposed to be rife in the films', investigators often 'came back disappointed', with one lady inspector asking: 'when are we really going to see something indecent?'[52]

The report also tackles concerns about children imitating behaviour in films, particularly regarding the controversial issue of juvenile delinquency. It concludes:

> The younger children for a time imitate in their play what they have seen on the films. For example, children under seven who have seen a fighting adventure film come to school with rulers or pencils stuck in their belts, after the manner of weapons. But these external evidences of film influence are usually fugitive, and at least are confined to play... Film influence seems not to affect conduct outside play, and the worst delinquent in a school is sometimes a child who never goes to the pictures... Instances of children having stolen in order to get money to

> go to the films are negligible in number. Nor is there any evidence of imitative misconduct on the part of these school children.[53]

The report therefore concludes that cinemagoing does not generally compromise the morality of children in terms of imitative behaviour. Moreover, it commends the fact that many children are 'running errands and doing odd jobs for parents' to earn cinema money. It also uncovers the unforeseen educational benefit of cinemagoing for some children who, when asked about films, revealed an aptitude for learning that had not previously been apparent in the classroom. Examples include a 'backward girl of nine, who had never before been known to volunteer a remark in class'; during the investigation it transpired that she went to the cinema twice a week and when questioned in class about the pictures, she 'became voluble on the subject'.[54]

Overall, therefore, the LCC report had very little to say against the cinema. The exception to this was 'one distinct evil...that children are often frightened at the films, and that the fear remains with them and causes dreams'.[55] Spencer singled out war films and 'mysteries' (horror/thrillers) in this regard, arguing that 'terrifying incidents have undesirable, and possibly permanent, effects upon children.' Using the rhetorical tool of assumed consensus he concludes that '*most sensible people would agree* that children ought not to be shown such pictures' and later recommends that 'if it is practicable, war films should be prohibited for children'.[56]

Apart from the single issue of frightening film content, Spencer reported that 'the enquiry brought out no other point upon which there was definite evidence of harm'. He therefore concluded that 'in spite of the strong opinions of some able and devoted head teachers to the contrary, the preponderance of evidence is that the actual effect of the pictures on the children is not substantially harmful.'[57] In closing, Spencer refers with relaxed humour to the similarities between the cinema and popular children's fiction, with neither being considered a threat to young people:

> The film is no worse that [sic] the old time 'blood', universally read by the boys only a few years ago. It is no more falsely sentimental than many of the feminine equivalents of the 'blood'. What man of fifty has not been a pirate in his youth?[58]

According to the LCC enquiry, therefore, the cinema posed no real threat to children. Interestingly, this report did not express any concern whatsoever regarding the behaviour or control of children – perhaps due to the fact that the majority of the investigators represented the council rather than organisations associated with the socialisation of the young. It is important to remember that this enquiry was by far the biggest and therefore arguably the most authoritative of the four. Overall, its findings are encapsulated in the first sentence of Spencer's closing remarks: 'My general impression after reading a fairly large mass of evidence carefully, is that there is no need for serious alarm'.[59] Hardly evidence, therefore, of a moral panic.

The Edinburgh Enquiry

A sense of panic is equally hard to find in the report of the ECEC. As in London, this enquiry had an avowed aim to carry out an open-minded, scientific, objective study of children and the cinema, rather than simply searching for ammunition against the medium, as was the case in Birmingham and Birkenhead. Thus, the report asserts that the primary objective of the enquiry was to elicit 'full information; scientifically compiled and presented without prejudice'.[60] Specifically, it cites the need to approach the subject positively and to glean honest opinions from children themselves, thereby producing a report with 'value of a constructive nature...giving in considerable detail the opinions of the children on the pictures as they are'.[61]

As in London, problems of methodology and reliability were addressed from the outset. The report explains:

> When...the questionnaires came to be composed, every effort was taken to ensure that, as far as possible, the answers to the questions would reveal what those who filled up the papers actually thought and felt and not what they considered they ought to think and feel.[62]

Moreover, it is important to note that the Edinburgh report does not utilise the words of children in order to present a particular argument. Rather, the results are simply tabulated and then briefly discussed in a measured way. Findings, for example, about the frequency of children's cinema attendance indicate that 'the average

attendance at the cinema per child is almost exactly once a week'.[63] If anything, the report endows this information with positive connotations, noting that 'a weekly visit to the cinema has become a stable feature in the lives of the children' and suggesting that 'cinema-going is looked on as a legitimate amusement, which is nevertheless kept in its place', as homework and household chores are also accomplished.[64]

Where responses to questionnaires are inconclusive, the report acknowledges this without much further comment. For example, adolescents' responses to a question regarding the 'influence of the pictures on speech or actions' were found to be 'disappointing'. The report notes that while some adolescents believed that films affected their speech, 'as for their actions, they do not seem to know what causes them'. But rather than going on to speculate, the report simply concludes: 'this question seemed too difficult and has elicited no definite information'.[65]

The report's analysis of teachers' questionnaire responses is also interesting inasmuch as it recognises the importance of factors influencing children *other than* cinema. In response to questions regarding the potential impact of cinemagoing on children's concentration and eyesight, for example, the report notes 'a considerable number of Non-commital answers' and a tendency among teachers to refer to a range of factors causing poor concentration. Thus, one respondent suggests that '"general city conditions, noise, traffic, and lack of sleep, may cause it"'.[66] Similarly, when asked whether frequent cinemagoing tends to 'destroy the Child's originality and creative impulse', one teacher frankly replies: 'Yes, to a limited extent, but the school as we know it seems to do that too'.[67] Finally, regarding direct impact on school work, the report notes that teachers in infant and junior school departments 'are in fairly general agreement that in their case the pictures are without effect'.[68]

Although many of the findings of this report are positive or inconclusive, there are areas where the impact of cinema is portrayed in a more negative light. One example involves the response of parents to the question of whether there are 'kinds of pictures which quite definitely...children ought not to see'. Here, key problem genres (as identified in Chapter Three) are singled out for criticism, namely: 'those dealing with Sex, Gangsters, War, Murder and Crime', plus 'weird and mysterious [horror] pictures'.[69] These genres were reportedly criticised by the majority of parents from all social backgrounds.

Nevertheless, where the report discusses apparently negative aspects of cinemagoing for children, it still does so in a balanced and thoughtful way. Notably, it is careful to indicate where negative views have only been expressed by a minority of respondents. For example, the report states that some parents wanted children to be excluded from adult or evening performances, but notes: 'it is to be observed that [such] replies...were comparatively few, and must not be taken as coming from the majority of the parents'.[70] This approach stands in direct contrast to the rhetorical manipulation evident in the Birmingham and Birkenhead reports, as will be seen.

Overall, the findings of the Edinburgh enquiry are generally positive, but somewhat mixed, providing an overview of cinema 'alike in its cheerful aspects and those that are menacing'.[71] Its recommendations are largely constructive in nature; for example, it calls for 'special pictures for children as there are special books'.[72] It also asserts that the BBFC has 'done remarkable work in maintaining screen standards', but suggests that the apparently 'immense and dominating importance of the film in the lives of children' justifies the appointment of a 'Commission in Film Censorship' by the government, to look into the issue more fully (as would occur with the FCCC).[73] Above all, the ECEC argues that cinema represents 'an influence of first importance' among children.[74] However, far from using its findings to foment a moral panic, the Edinburgh enquiry's report takes care to paint a detailed and balanced picture of the issues under consideration.

The Birmingham and Birkenhead Enquiries

The remaining two enquiries of Birmingham and Birkenhead may most usefully be addressed together, as they shared the same aims and methodology and reached very similar conclusions to each other. As already outlined, these were the first two of the four key enquiries to be conducted and they were also the smallest in terms of sample size. More importantly, they differed significantly from the enquiries conducted in London and Edinburgh, in that they adopted an overtly negative stance towards cinema's impact on children from the outset. Both the Birmingham and Birkenhead enquiries were strongly based on the premise that while cinema had potential for good, it was currently damaging and dangerous for children. This negative premise would inform both the methodology of the investigations and the rhetorical strategies

used in their reports. In this sense, as will be demonstrated, the BCEC and BVC might be considered to have promoted a potential moral panic.

As in London and Edinburgh, the enquiries in Birmingham and Birkenhead purported to be 'scientific'.[75] However, where the later reports were cautious in their conclusions and made clear the limited reliability and validity of their data, the reports of the BCEC and BVC asserted that their findings were beyond question. They also employed the rhetorical tool of claiming to represent a consensus of 'public opinion'. As the Birmingham report states:

> We instituted a scientific and comprehensive enquiry...and public opinion is steadily consolidating itself behind our movement... We have, therefore, decided to print our report and present our evidence – which is both comprehensive and conclusive. Comment is unnecessary. But confirmation of our results from magistrates, the clergy, parents of every class, business men, working lads and girls, and teachers of every grade is daily reaching us.[76]

The tone of the Birmingham report in particular is that of a call to arms, confident in its fundamentalist assertions regarding the dangers of cinema and the need for action. BCEC president Sir Charles Grant Robinson's foreword declares: 'The...public enquiry for which we ask will come, because an organized public opinion will insist upon it; and when it does it will confirm up to the hilt what the reader will find set out in these pages'.[77]

Another interesting feature in the presentation of both the BCEC and BVC reports, is the use of quotes from young questionnaire respondents. Where the London and Edinburgh enquiries use quotes sparingly and stress the difficulties of obtaining information in this way, the two earlier enquiries utilise many quotes, carefully selecting and editing the words of children, while asserting that the 'simple candour' of such evidence is almost guaranteed to be reliable.[78] One way in which the reports cleverly imply the essential reliability and truthfulness of the children's responses is by leaving the respondents' spelling and grammar uncorrected, thereby suggesting adult involvement to have been minimal if not non-existent. 'Where quoted their words and spellings are reproduced as written', the BVC report explains,

'the answers are the unaided work of the children'.[79] Similarly, the BCEC report reassures its readers: 'It is to be understood clearly that these answers are the free work of the child. No assistance was given... So far as is possible the precise words of the children are used in this report. Spelling has not been corrected'.[80] This strategy therefore suggests that the quotes are unmediated – drawing attention away from the fact that they have been carefully selected for specific rhetorical purposes, as will now be shown.

The first three items on the BCEC/BVC questionnaire ask about frequency of cinema attendance, motivation for attendance and preferences for different types of films. Only a few responses are quoted, and these are often those of young, female (and therefore supposedly 'most vulnerable') children, who claim to enjoy the dangers of violent movies. The BCEC report notes:

> A girl of 11¾ who goes 'once or twice a week' writes: 'I like murder pictures best'... The Commissioner adds: 'One child said she would show me how to strangle people'.[81]

There are then three leading questions about the negative physical effects of cinema:

> Do you think the show is too long?
> Do the pictures tire your eyes?
> Do the pictures keep you, or children you know, from sleeping afterwards?[82]

In both studies, most children replied 'No' to all three questions. However, this was clearly not the response best suited to the argument of the reports and therefore the evidence is presented in a very selective manner. The Birmingham report grudgingly admits that the response to the first question was 'an almost unanimous "No"' and then it quickly moves on to the other two questions, where the number of 'No' responses is not even stated. Instead we are told that of 1,439 children, 353 reported tired eyes and 349 agreed that either they *or children they knew* claimed to have disturbed sleep. Nothing is said of the vast majority who did not report problems.[83] By reporting the minority view and ignoring the majority, this therefore diverts the

reader's attention towards the less significant figure, serving the rhetorical purpose of the report. Such an approach might be contrasted directly with a similar question in the ECEC enquiry, in which parents were asked: 'After a visit to the Cinema are the children (a) nervous, (b) sleepless, (c) more difficult to control?' This report finds:

> All over, more than 90 per cent replied No to all three questions; less than 2 per cent replied Yes to all three. Quite clearly, the parents do not think that attending the cinema has an adverse effect in these respects.[84]

The Birmingham enquiry goes on to reinforce its argument that cinema is physically damaging to children, by giving a selection of quotes. Twelve quotes are used and all are from the minority of children who agreed that viewing had an adverse effect on them (or someone they knew), including the following evocative examples:

> 'I was so afraid after it I thought burglars would be in the room.'
> 'The pictures have often kept my sister and myself from sleeping after by causing us to go hysterical.'
> 'We only dream after murders.'[85]

The penultimate question on the BCEC/BVC questionnaire is: 'What have you learned from the pictures?' This is rooted in blank slate theories of socialisation and assumes that cinema has the power to influence and teach children, for better or worse – a concept which is underlined in the BCEC report:

> Only psychologists could satisfactorily determine the full implication [of responses to this question] and yet everyday common sense, even without much imagination, can see in these children's remarks the far-reaching usefulness or injury of the film... All will agree with the crisp and clear-sighted reply of one lad: 'I have learnt many things. If I see anything I have not seen before I am bound to learn, whether it is good or bad.'[86]

This passage therefore reinforces the idea that children are blank slates, susceptible to learning from film images. It also utilises a number of rhetorical tools: presuming consensus (in the phrase 'all will agree'); appealing to the 'common sense' of readers; referring to psychologists to give an air of scientific credibility; and encouraging the assumption that a child's 'clear-sighted' remarks are inherently accurate and reliable.

In presenting the enquiry's detailed findings on the question of learning, the Birmingham report attempts to polarise films into two main categories, firstly by imposing headings and secondly by quoting responses which demonstrate either the positive value of educational films, or the negative influence of other types of movie. Positive educational value is cited under the heading 'General Knowledge', with quotes which include:

> 'I have learnt ways and customs of other lands.'
> 'I have learnt that insects are industrious.'
> 'I have learnt to keep my teeth clean.'[87]

Meanwhile, apparently harmful lessons are displayed under the headings 'Impressions with Regard to Sex' and 'Crime and Violence'. Here, children's comments are unproblematically employed as evidence of deviant socialisation, although they could equally be read as deliberately provocative or subversive statements. They include:

> 'I have learnt how to love and to murder people at the same time.'
> 'I have learnt nothing but murder.'
> 'I have learnt how to shoot through my pocket'.[88]

Other statements on this theme refer to children imitating behaviour seen in films. The Birmingham report is generous with sensational quotes on this topic, including: '"I have learnt how to but someone on the head"' and '"I have learnt how to choke wild animals"'.[89] Similarly, one child declared: '"Some boys call themselves the Rusty Dagger Gang and they throw rusty knives about"'. The BCEC report also

cites imitation of suicidal behaviour among children, including 'two references to boys imitating hanging themselves after being at the Pictures' and a child who explains that their sister has been so influenced by cinemagoing that 'when she's angry because she can't have her own way she goes to kill herself with a knife".'[90]

One final point of interest regarding the language of the BCEC and BVC enquiries relates to the use of 'adult' and 'child' voices in the responses of children. This concept has been explored by sociologists Robert Hodge and David Tripp in their study of children and television.[91] Hodge and Tripp suggest that decoding interview responses of children includes distinguishing between responses made in a 'child' voice (used for speaking to other children) and those made in a 'parent' voice (used for speaking to adult authority figures). 'Child' voice responses tend to be rapid, confident, and grammatically informal, with high energy and subversive content. Meanwhile 'parent' voice responses tend to be well-considered replies in a formal grammatical style, with conventional content and often ending with a rising intonation, like a question. The implication of this, in basic terms, is that responses in a 'child' voice might be considered to be a more reliable representation of the child's opinions, whereas responses in a 'parent' voice could be seen as the child's attempt to give the response they feel the adult investigator desires.

Interestingly, this phenomenon is very apparent in the BCEC and BVC enquiries, where children tend to offer neutral or positive comments about the cinema in the first person, with a 'child' voice, such as: 'I have learnt what life is like when we grow up' or 'I have learnt that a good laugh makes me more cheerful.'[92] However, when children make negative comments about the cinema, in support of the enquiries' hypothesis, these often appear to be given in an 'adult' voice, with children referring to childhood in the third person. Thus, in the BVC enquiry, one child asserts, '"murder pictures are unsuitable for children"', while another explains, '"pictures are not good for children, because it teaches them American slang"'.[93] Similarly in the BCEC enquiry, some children confirmed the investigators' expectations regarding imitative behaviour using an 'adult' voice, with one child declaring, '"children do all they see on the pictures"' and another explaining, '"when children see war pictures many of them want to be soldiers"'.[94] Interestingly, this response was also apparent

in evidence from an earlier Birmingham enquiry in 1926, when a child explained that cinema "'learns children how to break into shops'".[95]

Unlike the Edinburgh and London enquiries, therefore, which admitted and attempted to deal with problems of reliability, the BCEC and BVC enquiries set out to prove a hypothesis – that cinema was a threat to children – and they then selected the most inflammatory evidence available in support of that hypothesis, regardless of whether it was representative or reliable.

In considering the four enquiries together, it is clear that although they sprang from similar concerns regarding the impact of film on children, their differences in methodology, rhetorical strategy and, most importantly, their different findings, suggest that this was not a simple matter of moral panic. The enquiries of the LCC and the ECEC were the result of long standing concerns. They were conducted with care for reliability and balance and had largely positive findings regarding the impact of cinema. It should also be remembered that they were much larger enquiries in terms of sample size and were far more thorough in their approach than the first two enquiries. The BCEC and BVC enquiries might, however, represent aspects of a moral panic. They were a relatively sudden development, fuelled by an antagonistic attitude towards the cinema (mainly on moral grounds) and they were reported – especially in the case of Birmingham – in such a way as to provoke the strongest possible reaction among the public although, as will be shown, this reaction was not necessarily forthcoming.

Moral panic or flapdoodle?

Given the diversity of evidence from these four studies, it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that the situation in 1930s Britain regarding cinema and children was a wide-ranging debate rather than a case of outright demonisation, with expressions of extreme anxiety representing, to use a 1930s phrase, more of a 'flapdoodle' (commotion) than a moral panic.[96] Undoubtedly, as this and the previous two chapters have shown, there was a strong reaction against the cinema in certain quarters during the decade, particularly with regard to its potential impact on the young. Moreover, this reaction often drew on existing fears regarding juvenile delinquency, mass culture and the mob, creating what some moral panic theorists call a 'spiral effect' or

'convergence of discourses', which may have acted as a catalyst, intensifying fears about the threat posed by cinema to children.[97] However, it is important to remember that wholly negative or alarmist reactions to the medium were relatively rare. What is more, as the remainder of this chapter will show, within key institutions like the church, education and the media, there was a large range of opinion, including a significant amount of qualified support for children's cinemagoing.

A very mixed reaction was apparent, for example, in the responses of churches and other religious groups to the popularity of cinema. Some opposed film outright, some screened religious films and others set up secular matinees, showing carefully selected material. Thus, the LCC enquiry found that 'in some areas the fact that the Salvation Army throws its influence against cinema attendance seems to be effective in diminishing attendance. On the other hand, the penny performances organised by a religious mission possibly increase the attendance.'[98] Certainly, between 1930 and at least 1937, churches ran regular children's matinees in at least six cities across England and Scotland, each with average audiences of around 1,200 children.[99]

A wide range of opinion was also evident among Christians at a conference entitled 'Children and Films', conducted in February 1937 by the Cinema Christian Council and the Public Morality Council. Here the main cause for concern was not children's cinema attendance *per se*, but the nature of the films that they watched. Conference Chairman, the Bishop of London, claimed to be 'most anxious' about the impact of films on young people, especially having taken two children to see *King Kong* and finding to his surprise that 'the little girl was quite unmoved but...the little boy was whimpering with terror'.[100] Meanwhile, a complex examination of the problems of selecting films was provided by conference delegate, Islington Methodist minister Rev D. O. Soper, who had run children's film shows twice weekly since 1930. Soper explained that while even 'some of the earlier Mickey Mouse films were, frankly, indecent' and Westerns were perhaps 'not...entirely suitable for children', there was actually no 'need to trouble very much' about the impact of sex pictures on children. 'The double entendre goes over their heads', he explained, 'the "close-up" makes them snigger...they are generally bored stiff'.[101] Finally, William Farr of the BFI (another delegate) suggested that quite apart from

immoral or violent films, many U films were unsuitable for children simply because they were 'dull and uninteresting'.[102]

Evidence from this conference and elsewhere therefore indicates that churches in Britain were discussing children's cinemagoing in a complex and measured way. Moreover, they were increasingly using film themselves for matinee shows and other events. By the end of 1937, film equipment had been installed in churches of all denominations, including Roman Catholic churches, which had their own religious film organisation.[103] And by January 1938 over 200 churches had equipment for showing talking pictures, Gaumont-British Instructional were making films for the Religious Film Society and Arthur Rank was subsidising churches that could not afford the equipment.[104] The first screening in a cathedral was at Chichester on 9 January 1938. Three films with religious themes were shown and hymns and prayers were also projected onto a screen to a congregation of around 2,000 people.[105] At Easter 1937, one newspaper summarised the concept of such use of film by churches with the headline: 'Let's take the "Sin" out of the Cinema'.[106]

Similar trends were also evident in education and by 1935 there were around 650 film projectors being used in Britain's schools.[107] In Glasgow alone, twenty-five schools were reportedly using cinema apparatus 'for everyday work' in 1935 and membership of the Scottish Educational Cinema Society rocketed between 1934 and 1935 from 140 to 670 members.[108] Growth continued and between 1935 and 1936, the Edinburgh branch of this Society grew from eighty members to 530.[109] By the end of 1937, 916 of Britain's 32,000 schools and colleges had film projectors (136 of these had sound).[110] This trend extended across Europe and, if anything, Britain lagged behind. In 1935, Germany made provision for 60,000 school film projectors (10,000 of which were to be installed that year) and as early as 1932 France had between 16,000 and 18,000 school film projectors.[111] Even in Hungary, by the end of 1937, 400 of the total of 600 schools were reportedly equipped with projectors.[112]

Nevertheless, educationalists were still concerned regarding the impact of mainstream cinema on children and on the last day of 1936, the Annual Conference of the National Union of Teachers discussed, among other things, the need to exclude children from A film performances.[113] As with religious organisations, educational establishments therefore had mixed feelings about the medium of film and about

children's cinemagoing in general. Certainly some of those expressing most concern about the impact of film on children came from these two institutions. However, this is not to say that there was a unified response to the situation from either religious or educational organisations.

Finally, it is interesting to note the variety of opinions expressed regarding children and film in Britain's newspapers. Again, there was no unified response. Newspaper reports of the various enquiries and conferences, for example, displayed a wide range of reactions. In November 1936, the BFI held a two-day conference on 'Films for Elementary School Children', which was covered in a variety of ways by the press.[114] *The Grimsby Daily Telegraph* took exception to the conference's claim that juvenile delinquency was not linked to cinemagoing, suggesting that it was ridiculous to ignore the connection between film and petty crime, just because 'bootlegging, gunrunning, and putting citizens on the spot are not yet noticeably popular juvenile activities'.[115] The same article suggested that 'the showing of horror films to any person under eighteen years old is little less than criminal'. Meanwhile, the *Sheffield Independent* report on this conference took a far more lenient view and argued that there was little cause for concern, as 'a lot of nonsense is talked about children and the films, especially about the harm that certain films are said to be doing to the child mind'.[116] However, this article does go on to denounce 'the presentation of films in which speech is vulgarised by Americanisms and the language is spoken in a hideous drawling way that is an offence to the ear and to the mind', concluding that 'there is more cause to worry about the inartistic film than about the so-called morally obnoxious'.

There is little space to explore this area in any more detail, suffice it to say that newspapers and individual journalists took a wide range of stances on the subject of children and film. It is also essential to note that quite frequently journalists clearly recognised the place of the cinema debate in recurring arguments about children and leisure, spotting the potential for a panic and deliberately opting not to encourage it. A good example of this is the *Birmingham Mail* report on the 1931 BCEC enquiry, which saw through the rhetoric and came down firmly in favour of the cinema:

Personally we think [the BCEC] are exciting themselves unduly. It is the old story of the child and literature over again. It used to be the 'penny dreadful' which was corrupting our young innocents, now it is the pictures... the cinema is the most wonderful and most potent educational force yet evolved, and children probably get a great deal more good than harm from it.[117]

Unsurprisingly, the harshest critics of conferences were to be found in the cinema trade press and these provide the strongest examples of newspaper reports that blocked the development of a moral panic. This final example from the *Daily Film Renter* makes its opposition very plain indeed:

LEAVE THEM ALONE!

How far, we are tempted to ask, are the majority of children...really interested in their elders and betters providing them with special picture programs? We feel constrained to put this query in the view of the announcement that another conference in this connection is to be held in the autumn, under the joint auspices of the BFI and the Cinema Christian Council. There is probably more 'flapdoodle' in regard to the type of film which should or should not be exhibited to children than almost anything else. We do not doubt the good intentions of those responsible for these conferences but, quite frankly, are they likely to achieve any real or lasting purpose? ...Children, like grown-ups, demand first and foremost, entertainment. Secondly, most of them desire to be left alone so far as the provision of their amusement is concerned, and we doubt very much whether any of them are likely to be particularly thrilled at the prospect of bodies of well-meaning folk indulging in weighty pronouncements as to what the citizens of tomorrow shall see when they visit the Kinema. There is nothing whatever wrong with the influence of films, as we have pointed out over and over again.[118]

Conclusion

Despite their idiosyncratic nature, most moral panic studies consider certain common elements to be important. Firstly, moral panics are characterised by a sudden, high level of concern regarding a certain issue or event. This creates a volatile and hostile response, which may exaggerate the level of perceived danger. The threat and those who perpetrate it may be branded as 'folk devils' and finally, the panic may result in a diminution in the threat itself and/or increased regulation.[119]

Does this pattern apply to the evidence presented in this chapter? I would argue that, overall, it does not and that this did not therefore constitute a moral panic in the classic sense. First, although there was a great deal of concern about the cinema's impact on children, this was not a sudden reaction. As Chapters Two and Three have demonstrated, by 1930 the issue of children and cinema had already been debated for over three decades. Secondly, it was not generally speaking a wholly hostile, volatile, groundless, or irrational reaction. Issues were often discussed in a complex, thoughtful and positive manner, reaching largely productive conclusions. Furthermore, as Chapter Six will show, cinema did indeed pose a potential challenge to the influences of home, school, church and youth group; it spawned a distinct children's cinema culture involving alternative role models, an ambiguous moral code, a new learning environment and a largely unregulated arena of play. Therefore it is hardly surprising that parental, religious, educational and youth organisations should have considered it a potentially dangerous phenomenon. Thirdly, there is no easily identifiable 'folk devil' – although Hollywood itself might qualify for such a label – yet it must be conceded that increased regulation certainly did result from this debate during the course of the decade and, after changes to censorship in 1934, there was a marked diminution in the overall level of concern.

Perhaps most importantly, however, when considering the nature of this debate, it is crucial to recognise the wide range of perspectives that were represented. If it was a panic, then who was panicking? Although this period saw a proliferation of enquiries, conferences and reports, representing a high level of interest in the subject, these displayed a variety of agenda, they used different methodologies and rhetorical strategies and they reached very different conclusions about the issue. Meanwhile, the key establishments of church, education and the media were also by

no means uniformly opposed to the idea of cinema for children. There was a great deal of ambivalence and division within these groups as to the potential of the medium and a large range of opinions regarding any possible threat which it might pose. I would therefore argue that while debates surrounding children and cinema were vibrant and widespread during the 1930s, and while these debates had a central influence on the development of cinema regulation and censorship in Britain and elsewhere, this did not ultimately constitute a moral panic in the classic sense.

Endnotes

1 For example Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, pp. 98-120.

2 Richards, *Dream Palace*, pp. 67-85; Richards, 'The Cinema and Cinema-going', pp. 43-48; Staples, *All Pals Together*, pp. 29-41.

3 Thompson, *Moral Panics*, p. 72.

4 Philip Jenkins, *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Great Britain* (New York, 1992), p. 10.

5 Thompson, *Moral Panics*, pp. 19-20.

6 National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema: Its Present Position and Future Possibilities - being the report and chief evidence taken by the Cinema Commission of Inquiry, instituted by the National Council of Public Morals* (London, 1917), p. vii.. (Emphasis mine).

7 Ibid., pp. x and 332.

8 Ibid., p. xlvii. (Emphasis mine).

9 Ibid., pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

10 For examples of 1920s surveys in America, see Richard deCordova, 'Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees, *Camera Obscura* (May 1990), p. 104n.

11 International reports consulted for this thesis include: International Educational Cinematographic Institute, *The Social Aspects of the Cinema* (Rome, c.1930); International Institute of Educational Cinematography, *The International Congress of Educational and Instructional Cinematography, Rome 1934* (Rome, 1934); League of Nations Child Welfare Committee, Twelfth Session, April 27th, 1936, *Recreational Aspects of Cinematography* (Geneva, 1936); League of Nations Advisory Committee on Social Questions, *The Recreational Cinema and the Young* (Geneva, 1938); International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, *The Cinema and the Public: Preliminary Results of an International Enquiry* (Paris, 1940); also W. M. Seabury, *Motion Picture Problems: The Cinema and the League of Nations* (New York, 1929).

12 For a detailed overview, see Garth Jowett, Ian Jarvie and Kathryn Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge, 1996). Also Garth Jowett and James Linton, *Movies As Mass Communication* (London, 1980); Daniel

J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (1982); Carmen Luke, *Constructing the Child Viewer: A History of the American Discourse on Television and Children 1950-1980* (New York, 1990), pp. 35-42; Springhall, *Moral Panics*, pp. 110-12.

[13] H. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York, 1933); H. Blumer and P. M. Hauser, *Movies, Delinquency and Crime* (New York, 1935); W. W. Charters, *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary* (New York, 1933); E. Dale, *Children's Attendance at Motion Pictures* (New York, 1935) and *The Content of Motion Pictures* (New York, 1935); W. S. Dysinger, and C. A. Ruckmick, *The Emotional Responses of Children to the Motion Picture Situation* (New York, 1933); P. W. Holaday, *Getting Ideas from the Movies* (New York, 1933); Seton Margrave (ed.), *Meet the Film Stars 1934-1935* (London, 1935); M. A. May and F. K. Shuttleworth, *The Social Conduct and Attitudes of Movie Fans* (New York, 1933); C. C. Peters, *Motion Pictures and Standards of Morality* (New York, 1933); R. C. Peterson and L. L. Thurstone, *Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children* (New York, 1933); S. Renshaw, V. L. Miller and D. Marquis, *Children's Sleep* (New York, 1933). Also the unpublished volume, P. G. Cressey and F. M. Thrasher, *Boys, Movies and City Streets* (New York, 1933). This is quoted extensively in Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children* (New York, 1933) and several drafts are reprinted in Jowett et al, *Children and the Movies*.

[14] Jowett et al, *Children and the Movies*, p.7.

[15] Published reports include: Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life: Being the report of an enquiry conducted by the Commission into the service which the cinematograph may render to education and social progress* (London, 1932); Corporation of Glasgow Education Department, Sub-committee on Visual Education, *The Film in the Classroom* (November, 1933); Erith Education Committee, *The Effect of War Films on Child Opinion: Report of an Investigation, Erith, 1935* (Erith, 1935); British Film Institute, *The Cinema and Education: A Summary of the Reports Issued by Various Local Education Authorities in Great Britain, by A. A. Denholme* (London, 1937); Scunthorpe Grammar School, *An Enquiry into the Cinema-Going Habits and Tastes of the Pupils of Scunthorpe Grammar School, November, 1938* (Scunthorpe, 1938). Cinema enquiries were also conducted by the Catholic Church in Britain and in cities such as Bristol and Barnsley. See BFI - Censorship Folder, Verbatim Reports 1930-1938: Proceedings of a meeting between the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald and a deputation, in relation to the film industry, 15 January 1935; *Manchester Guardian* and *Leeds Mercury*, 27 October 1936.

[16] Notably, the Sheffield study published by A. D. K. Owen, 'Cinema Matinees for Children', *Social Service Review* (July 1931), pp. 141-4 and the BFI's *Report of the Conference on Films for Elementary School Children, November 20-21, 1936* (London, 1937).

[17] Low, *British Film, 1929-1939*, p. 59.

[18] Eventually, the BCEC became known as the National Cinema Inquiry Committee. BFI - Censorship Folder, Verbatim Reports 1930-1938: Proceedings of a meeting between the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald and a deputation, in relation to the film industry, 15 January 1935.

[19] Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee, *Report of Investigations, April 1930 - May 1931* (Birmingham, 1931), p. 3.

[20] For example, see BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931: Proceedings of a meeting convened by the BCEC, 'Cinema and its Influence Today', 7 November 1930. Also BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935: Proceedings of the National Conference on Problems Connected with the Cinema, convened by the Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee, 27 February 1932; Some Observations on the National Conference of 27 February 1932 (anon.); Proceedings of a meeting between the Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Samuel, and a deputation from the Birmingham Conference on Film Censorship, 6 April 1932. See also Richards, 'Cinema and cinema-going', pp. 43-48 and *Dream Palace*, pp. 57-60.

[21] Birkenhead Vigilance Committee, *The Cinema and the Child: A Report of Investigations, June-October 1931* (Birkenhead, 1931), p. 3.

[22] BVC, *Cinema and the Child*, p. 3.

[23] Older young people and adults were not consulted in this case.

[24] BVC, *Cinema and the Child*, pp. 22-3.

[25] F. H. Spencer, *School Children and the Cinema: London County Council Education Committee* (London, 1932), p. 1.

[26] BFI – LCC Verbatim Reports 1929-1930: Proceedings of LCC meeting (18 June 1929), re: Report of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee, 'Cinematograph Exhibitions – Attendance of Unaccompanied Children at Exhibitions of A films', 8 May & 12 June 1929.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Spencer, *School Children and the Cinema*, p. 1.

[30] John Mackie (ed.), *The Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry: Being an investigation conducted into the influence of the film on school children and adolescents in the city* (Edinburgh, 1933), p. 5.

[31] This number soon increased to twenty-seven – see Appendix 5.

[32] Mackie, *Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry*, pp. 5-6.

[33] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[34] Ibid., p. 30.

[35] Ibid., pp. 33 and 40.

[36] Ibid., p. 49.

[37] Richards, *Dream Palace*, p. 67.

[38] BFI – BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931: Proceedings of meeting between the BBFC and a deputation from the London Public Morality Council, 3 April 1930.

[39] BFI – BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931: Proceedings of a meeting convened by the BCEC, 'Cinema and its Influence Today', 7 November 1930, p. 24. (Emphasis mine).

[40] Richards, 'The Cinema and Cinema-going', p. 46.

[41] *News Chronicle*, 21 July 1936.

[42] See Appendix 5.

[43] For the impact of church conversion and Sunday opening in 1930s Birmingham, see Richards, 'The Cinema and Cinema-going', pp. 39-43.

[44] See Chapter 6.

[45] Spencer, *School Children and the Cinema*, p. 1.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[48] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[49] Ibid., p. 6.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., p. 4. This conclusion is corroborated by a great deal of other evidence (see Chapter Five).

[52] BFI Censorship Folder – Verbatim Reports 1930-1938: Proceedings of a conference, 'Children and Films', held under the auspices of the Cinema Christian Council and the Public Morality Council, 16 February 1937, p. 33.

[53] Spencer, *School Children and the Cinema*, pp. 4-5.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., p. 5.

[56] Ibid., pp. 5-6. (Emphasis mine).

[57] Ibid., p. 5.

[58] Ibid., p. 6.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Mackie, *Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry*, p. 5.

[61] Ibid., p. 11.

[62] Ibid., p. 6.

[63] Ibid., p. 13.

[64] Ibid., p. 14.

[65] Ibid., p. 32.

[66] Ibid., p. 41.

[67] Ibid., pp. 46-7.

[68] Ibid., p. 45.

[69] Ibid., p. 37.

[70] Ibid., p. 39.

[71] Ibid., p. 7.

[72] Ibid., p.11.

[73] Ibid., p. 7.

[74] Ibid., p. 11.

[75] BCEC, *Report of Investigations*, p. 3.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., p. 4.

[78] BVC, *Cinema and the Child*, p. 3.

[79] Ibid.

[80] BCEC, *Report of Investigations*, p. 5.

[81] Ibid., p. 10.

[82] The phrase 'or children you know' was only used in the BCEC questionnaire.

[83] BCEC, *Report of Investigations*, p. 12.

[84] Mackie, *Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry*, p. 35.

[85] BCEC, *Report of Investigations*, pp. 12-13.

[86] Ibid., p. 13.

[87] Ibid., pp. 13-15.

[88] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[89] Ibid., p. 17.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Robert Hodge and David Tripp, *Children and Television: A Semiotic Approach* (Cambridge, 1986).

[92] BVC, *Cinema and the Child*, p. 16.

[93] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[94] BCEC, *Report of Investigations*, p. 16.

[95] Enquiry by the West Midland Auxiliary Movement, reported in *Times Educational Supplement*, 11 December 1926.

[96] For another example of the use of this term see *Sunday Graphic*, 7 October 1928.

[97] Thompson, *Moral Panics*, pp. 19-20.

[98] Spencer, *School Children and the Cinema*, p. 3.

[99] BFI Censorship Folder – Verbatim Reports 1930-1938: Proceedings of a conference, 'Children and Films', held under the auspices of the Cinema Christian Council and the Public Morality Council, 16 February 1937, p. 3.

[100] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[101] Ibid., pp. 17-19.

[102] Ibid., p. 12.

[103] *Morning Post*, 1 September 1937.

[104] *News Chronicle*, 15 January 1938.

[105] *Daily Express*, 10 January 1938.

[106] *News Chronicle*, 6 April 1937.

[107] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 April 1935.

[108] *Today's Cinema*, 16 April 1935.

[109] *Today's Cinema*, 4 November 1936.

[110] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 10 December 1937.

[111] *Glasgow Herald*, 13 April 1935.

[112] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 10 December 1937.

[113] *The Cinema*, 30 December 1936.

[114] The conference report was published as: British Film Institute, *Report of the Conference on Films for Elementary School Children, November 20-21, 1936* (London, 1937).

[115] *Grimsby Daily Telegraph* , 23 November 1936.

[116] *Sheffield Independent*, 24 November 1936.

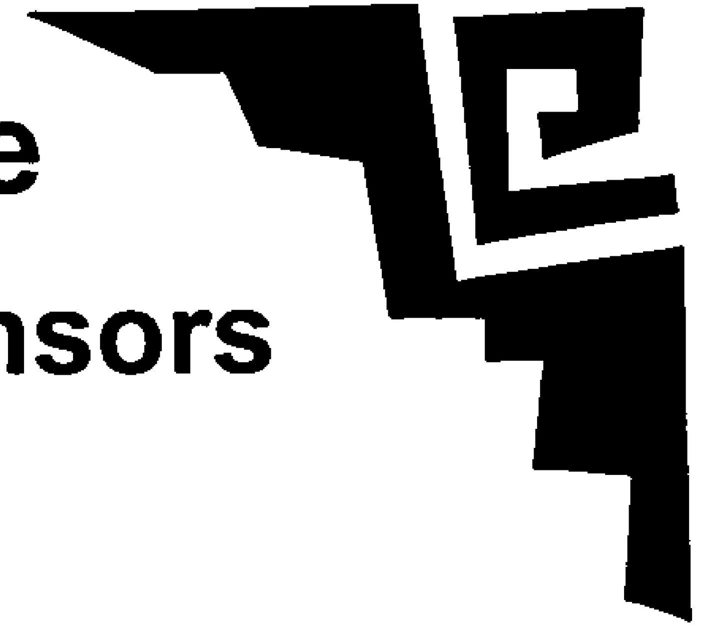
[117] *The Birmingham Mail*, 3 June 1931, cited in Richards, 'The Cinema and Cinema-going', p. 45. For another example relating to the 1936 BFI conference, see the *Nottingham Guardian*, 23 November 1936.

[118] *Daily Film Renter*, 15 July 1936.

[119] Thompson, *Moral Panics*, p. 9.

Chapter Five

Children As Censors



The time is past. We no longer see headlines in the paper, 'Should children go to the cinema?' If children want to go to the cinema they will go.

Miss E. M. Fox
Headmistresses Association
*12 January 1931**

* BFI – BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931: Proceedings of a Private Cinema Conference convened by the London Public Morality Council, 12 January 1931, p. 14.

Nearly all histories of film censorship are based on one common assumption: that censorship only involves the impact of certain institutions, and the bodies that influence them, on the content of films. Indeed, this assumption is so pronounced that most historians in the field do not even seek to define censorship. Instead, 'the censorship system' is accepted as a given, to mean those official practices of regulation which endeavour to control material in the public domain – ostensibly to protect public order and morality. Consequently, the agents of film censorship in Britain are generally taken to be the local authorities, the BBFC, the Home Office and sometimes, film exhibitors and production companies. In *The Hidden Camera*, for example, James Robertson identifies four levels of censorship: the BBFC, local authorities, 'extra-parliamentary critics and would-be social reformers' and 'the production companies themselves'.[1]

An overview of the history of official censorship is, of course, essential to an understanding of the regulation of children's cinemagoing in 1930s Britain (see Chapters Two and Three). Moreover, it is important to recognise the *productive* nature of censorship, as it impacts the creation of film texts (see Chapter Seven). However, this chapter represents a significant departure from the current literature, as it suggests that a focus on official censorship practices alone is insufficient as an explanation of the ways in which children's viewing was censored during the 1930s.

Annette Kuhn has provided an important critique of the traditional approach, characterising it as a 'prohibition/institutions' model, which assumes that censorship is something 'done' to films by certain bodies, in order to cut or ban undesirable content. Kuhn argues that this approach is unnecessarily limited, and ultimately even misleading, in its setting of boundaries:

> If this model provides a certain purchase on the historical study of film censorship, this is only because it constructs, *a priori*, an object of inquiry which is relatively amenable to empirical investigation. By the same token, though, the definition of censorship which both emerges from and sustains the prohibition/institutions model is a constricting one, for it allows only one story – and not necessarily the most interesting or important one – to be told about film censorship.[2]

Kuhn suggests that censorship was a far more complex, interactive process than is often acknowledged, involving 'an array of constantly shifting discourses, practices and apparatuses' and being productive, as well as prohibitive, in nature.[3] Similarly, this chapter will argue that a study of official censorship represents 'only one story' – or one part of the story – about children and censorship in Britain.

Specifically, what is fundamentally lacking in the literature to date is an appreciation of the cinema audience as regulators of their *own* viewing. Even Kuhn, who refers to the role of audiences, tends to represent them as 'a social group', as 'a site of resistance to strategies of regulation', or as 'a target of regulation'.[4] However, I would argue that audiences are also groups of *individuals*, centrally active in the practices of censorship, who each have some ability to regulate their own viewing. It might even be argued that an individual's response to a film is its ultimate censorship. Moviegoers can 'ban' a film for themselves, simply by refusing to watch it. Or they may make 'cuts' at will in a film's content as they view it, by leaving the room, hiding their eyes, or engaging in some other activity. Consequently, in order to explore the processes of censorship more fully, this chapter will differ from traditional approaches by highlighting the ways in which children (and their parents) were personally involved in the censorship of cinema during the 1930s – noting in particular the ways in which such autonomous self-regulation may have subverted or simply ignored the rulings of official censorship bodies.

As there is little literature within the history of cinema which focuses on self-regulation, I will draw on the fields of cultural and media studies and education for my theoretical background, looking in particular at theories regarding the ways in which children interact with television.[5] Clearly, this involves a different medium and a later period, but important parallels may still be drawn.

Theories of children and the media essentially fall into four main groups. 'Effects' research – which, incidentally, informed most of the 1930s studies into children and cinema – broadly sees the relationship between screen images and child behaviour as one of cause and effect; this is often labelled as the 'hypodermic' or 'magic bullet' theory of media influence, by its detractors. 'Critical' mass communications research, meanwhile, does not focus on the impact of media on behaviour as such, but is concerned with the role of media as a force of socialisation,

which draws on dominant ideologies in order to influence beliefs and values. The third theoretical stance is derived from cognitive psychology. It differs from the first two in that it emphasises the active role taken by audiences in the construction of meaning, rather than suggesting that the audience is a passive recipient of a fixed meaning, delivered by the text. However, it is the fourth approach, known as the 'uses and gratifications' model, which I wish to discuss in more detail.

Uses and gratifications research reverses the media-audience relationship described in the first two theories, by asking (as James Halloran does) not 'what the media do to people', but 'what people do with the media'.[6] It considers the ways in which people actively choose and use media, in line with their own needs and preferences. Furthermore, it does not treat audiences as homogeneous groups, but highlights the importance of individual differences such as personality, gender, class, race and, of course, age, as variables in the relationship between individuals and media. Thus, Barie Gunter and Jill McAleer argue that 'children do not simply sit passively and watch the images displayed before them on the screen... instead, they often actively select what to watch to satisfy particular needs or moods'.[7]

An application of the uses and gratifications model to a study of children's cinemagoing would therefore highlight the important factors of individual choice and preference, rather than official regulation or, for example, the impact of dominant ideologies. This does not mean to imply that children in 1930s Britain were necessarily self-aware, autonomous, or successful enough for their viewing behaviour to always reflect their personal preferences. However, what I do wish to question is the notion that the regulation of children's viewing was conducted solely, or even primarily, by institutional and other authorities. To this end, I aim to foreground the amount of choice exercised by children in regulating their own viewing; choice which clearly varied from child to child, depending on their preferences and situations; choice, crucially, which often involved subtle negotiation, blatant subversion, or complete disregard, of official and parental censorship.

Academic consideration of the role children play in regulating their own *television* viewing is, itself, a relatively recent development. A key study in this field is David Buckingham's *Moving Images: Understanding Children's Emotional Responses to Television* (1996), in which Buckingham examines not only how

children and their parents control their viewing, but also the ways in which children respond to a range of television material, including melodrama, documentary and horror films. Having interviewed a number of children from a variety of backgrounds, Buckingham asserts:

> Children are not merely passive objects of adults' attempts at regulation – nor indeed do they uniformly resist them. On the contrary, children actively learn to regulate their own emotional responses to television. They develop very definite ideas about what they can and cannot 'handle', and hence what they will or will not choose to watch.[8]

I aim to show that there are important similarities between Buckingham's argument here, regarding children and television, and the memories of oral history respondents concerning their cinemagoing as children in the 1930s. Three of Buckingham's main conclusions in this study are summarised below, as they are particularly pertinent to the assessment of children's cinemagoing which follows.

1. Official regulation of children's viewing, including video ratings and the television watershed, is often used for guidance, but is otherwise largely ignored by parents and children, who claim the right to make autonomous decisions about their viewing.

2. While parents often attempt to restrict their children's viewing, these attempts become increasingly ineffective as children grow older and use a range of strategies to evade or challenge parental regulation.

3. Most children deliberately avoid material they find frightening or otherwise undesirable, but many others enjoy and actively seek out such material, using a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with their own responses.[9]

The remainder of this chapter will show that these conclusions have distinct parallels in patterns of self-regulation practised by children going to the cinema in 1930s

Britain. The key question under consideration is: Who controlled children's cinema viewing during this period? Further questions necessarily follow. To what extent did official censorship impact children's lives? What was the relationship between official censorship, parental authority and children's choices? And by what means did children 'censor' images, once they were in the cinema?

Using oral history and other primary source material, a number of issues will therefore be considered in the remainder of this chapter, which is split into two main sections. The first assesses the various ways in which children's choice of films was regulated, looking at the interactive relationships between the BBFC certification system, cinema management, parental authority and children's own preferences, inasmuch as they all affected the autonomy children had in choosing the films they watched. The second section examines the unofficial censorship methods used by children themselves to handle screen images they considered frightening or otherwise undesirable. Both of these themes will be shown to have particular resonance with the work of David Buckingham summarised above.

REGULATION OF FILM CHOICE

This section will look at the theme of children's film choice from three different perspectives: the impact of BBFC certification regulations; the role of parental authority; and the ways in which children exercised autonomous control over their cinema attendance.

BBFC certification

As already outlined, the principal means by which the BBFC sought to control children's viewing choices in the 1930s was through a certification system. Thus, while U and A films were open to all ages, A films could only officially be seen by children under 16 if they were accompanied by a parent or *bona fide* adult guardian. From 1932, A films labelled 'horrific' were said to be completely unsuitable for children and, although this was initially only advisory, in 1937 the institution of an H certificate formalised the exclusion of children under 16 from all such films, whether accompanied or not. Cinemas not adhering to these regulations, established by the

BBFC and supported by local authorities and the Home Office, might be fined or could lose their license to exhibit films. However, this alone does not give a full picture of children's cinemagoing for, as previous chapters have indicated, young people habitually ignored and circumvented all such regulations.

For children who liked musicals, comedies or westerns, getting into the pictures seldom proved a problem, as most of these had U certificates. But many also liked genres that tended to attract A certificates – notably, gangster and horror films – and in order to see these, if a parent or guardian was not present, the use of strangers as 'accompanying adults' was widely practised. It is perhaps important to note that this activity is not remembered by oral history respondents as an overtly subversive act, however. They were not sneaking in underage to assert their right to see 'inappropriate' films; they simply preferred certain films and negotiated their way around official regulation, in order to see them.

The common nature of this activity is reflected in the number of respondents who mention it. Betty Verdant notes that 'you had to be 14 [sic] to get in unaccompanied, but if you were alone you could wait outside and ask a grownup if you could go in with them'.[10] Brigadier J. B. Ryall also recalls that when going to A films as a boy, he 'would wait for a man or couple to come along and say: "Please Mister, here's my money would you please buy me a ticket". This way', he explains, 'you dodged the censor'.[11] The widespread use of this technique is also described by Bernard Goodsall, who remembers, 'like others of my generation, asking people to take you in when an A certificate film was on the menu'.[12] Similarly, Olive Johnson suggests that this was a common practice:

> As ['chillers'] were restricted to adults, we had to implore older folk in the queue to 'take us in' with them! Very naughty, but all children did it if they were unaccompanied by their own parents.[13]

Incidentally, some children who looked old enough to attend A films *alone* also used this technique, in order to pass as a child and gain admission at a cheaper rate. For example, Bill Grant lived in Scotland, where A certificates were not enforced, but he also recalls sneaking in with strangers:

> I can remember wanting to go to the Picture House in Springburn and I would watch maybe a couple going down the street. 'Hey, mister! Will you take me in with you?' I would give him my money, but being accompanied with him I'd get in for four pence. If I'd been on my own it would have cost me six pence.[14]

The practice of children gaining entry with strangers was often accomplished with the collusion not only of the strangers, but also of the cinema staff. Oral history evidence strongly indicates that most cinema managers did at least adhere to the rule that under-16s must be accompanied to A films. For example, Denis Houlston found this something of an obstacle, as a rather diminutive 16 year-old in 1933, although he still managed to assert some autonomy.

> I used to go with my friends...and they wouldn't let us in on one occasion cos I was always small, so I probably looked younger than I was... so I took the huff and I *boycotted* them, and I never went there again![15]

However, while cinemas required children to be accompanied, they often chose to ignore the stipulation that this companion must be 'a parent or *bona fide* adult guardian' – turning a blind eye to the many unaccompanied children who randomly procured adults from the cinema queue, just to get past the box office. Thus, many cinema staff outwardly upheld certification regulations, while unofficially condoning the techniques used by children to circumvent them. Olga Scowen remembers going to the Harrow Coliseum during the school holidays:

> And if it was an A film, you see, I couldn't go in on my own. So you used to wait for somebody to come and say, 'Please, will you get me a ticket?' [Laughs] And the people behind the cash desk knew very well what was going on, but they never stopped you. [Laughs] So I saw quite a lot of A films when I shouldn't have done.[16]

A key example of adult collusion occurred in Bristol where, on 5 March 1932, a Mrs Saviour went to the Saturday matinee at the Metropole Cinema and found forty-five children outside, unable to gain entry. The film being shown was *Never the Twain Shall Meet* (1931), a romantic comedy about a man who goes native after falling in love with an uninhibited, sexy, young Polynesian woman. As the film had an A certificate, the unaccompanied youngsters could not enter alone, so Mrs Saviour gamely agreed to buy their tickets and accompanied all forty-five into the cinema. Following a timely visit from a police inspector the case went to Bristol Police Court. The defence argued in vain that the regulation was ridiculous, as it prevented under-16s from seeing a 'sex film' which would probably bore them, while allowing 16-21 year-olds to see it, even though 'the age of puberty rendered them more susceptible'. Eventually, the cinema owners were fined £10 on the grounds that a stranger was not a *bona fide* guardian, thus setting a legal precedent.[17]

Nevertheless, many cinema managers and staff colluded in the practice of children gaining entry with strangers and, when cases came to court, the legal authorities also often colluded to some extent by setting minimal fines. In 1931, for example, legal action was taken against the Manor Picture House, Sheffield, for admitting 200 unaccompanied children to see Hitchcock's *Murder!* (1930), an A film which touches not only on murder, but on suicide and transvestitism.[18] In March 1933, Victor Harrison and Charles Crotch, the owners of the Plaza Cinema, Norwich, were fined for allowing 400 unaccompanied children to see the A film *Death Ray*. Although their defence was weak – they claimed that they thought the film had a U certificate – they were only fined £1.[19] Similarly, in February 1937, when a cinema manager was found guilty of exhibiting an A film to children, Salford magistrate Mr Percy Macbeth fined him just £1, commenting, 'I can never understand why children's morals are more likely to be corrupted if they see a film alone than if they are accompanied by an adult'.[20] Meanwhile, in Southampton, the council was troubled by cinema managers deliberately allowing children to sneak into 'horrifics'. The 'problem' was fairly widespread, judging by the report in *Today's Cinema* in January 1937, for when Alderman Mouland naively suggested: 'I do not think any cinema manager would run the risk of breaking the [BBFC] regulation', his colleague Alderman Lewis simply retorted: 'Oh, don't be silly!'[21]

Although, as has been shown, cinema staff generally disregarded children's use of strangers as accompanying adults, some did frown upon the practice and these individuals had to be carefully avoided. James Barton recalls that from 1933-4, when he was aged 10 and 11, he would 'haunt the cinema queues, asking "Will you take me in mister" when an A film was showing'. But he also remarks that 'at these times one did of course need to keep an eye out for Mr Race – a tall, stern doorman, in a glorious fading red uniform'.[22] Similarly, film critic Leslie Halliwell recalls that as a boy, when he tried to see *King Kong*, he found that 'the Odeon had acquired a brisk and hawk-eyed new commissionaire, who shooed me off at every attempt'.[23]

The generally relaxed attitude of cinemas towards unaccompanied children attending A films is indicated by the fact that the only policing of this activity took place on the door. For while usherettes often tried to regulate other kinds of children's behaviour in the auditorium (see Chapter Six) children without adults at A films were not apparently in danger of being challenged once inside the cinema. Thus, they could leave the 'accompanying adult' and sit elsewhere to enjoy the picture. Ellen Casey recalls:

> If it was an X film [sic] you had to go in with adults. Well we used to stand outside and ask people, would they take us in? So they used to do that. Soon as we went in, like, we just left them. It was just that you had to be with an adult to go in.[24]

The introduction of the 'horrific' label apparently posed little problem either, as only eighteen films received this label between 1932 and 1936 (see Appendix 4) and several respondents remember seeing these as unaccompanied children anyway, including *The Invisible Man* (1932) and *The Werewolf of London* (1935).[25] A more serious obstacle, however, was posed by the H certificate, which banned children from certain films, whether they were accompanied or not. As a boy in North London, Mr A. M. Peary would check the local newspapers with his friend, before deciding which film to see. But when he was 12 years old, the H certificate was introduced and he and his friend considered such pictures a closed door to them:

> If there were A (ADULT) films, this would necessitate asking some kindly adult to 'take us in' if our parents could not take us. It was bad news if H (HORROR) certificate films were on as no person under 16 was admitted.[26]

A similar problem is recalled by film producer Richard Gordon who went to the cinema with his brother when they were boys in the 1930s.[27] They used a variety of methods to circumvent BBFC and LCC regulations, including trying to pass for 16 at the box office and using strangers to accompany them. 'Once in a while', he remembers, 'a cinema manager would allow us in alone to an A program on condition that we sat next to an adult in case an inspector came round to check the audience'.[28] However, Gordon notes that 'films rated "Adults Only" or with an "H" certificate were an insurmountable problem', recalling 'the ignominy of being turned away from...*The Ghoul*, despite being accompanied by our grandmother who valiantly tried to convince the manager that we were over sixteen'.[29]

Essentially, unless cinemas were prepared to openly flout licensing regulations, the only children that could see H films would be those that could pass for 16 years of age. H film rules certainly were more closely adhered to by cinemas; in fact, only one oral history respondent of those studied recalls attending an H film as a child. Anthony Venis gained admission to see *The Cat and the Canary* (1939), when 14 or 15 years old. He was alone and remembers that the cinema had a back projection system, which rendered the auditorium very dark indeed, making the experience 'a bit eerie' and more frightening for him.

> Of course...the cinema was very dark, and I was quite young, obviously, then. Eh, it begs the question as to how I got in! [Laughs] I can't remember really. Because 'H'... I'd have thought I'd have been banned from that.[30]

Still, there were some exceptions. For although Richard Gordon was initially unable to gain admission to Universal's 1939 re-release double bill of *Frankenstein*

and *Dracula* in its early smash hit run in the West End of London, when he was aged 13, a certain amount of persistence eventually paid off.

> When the double bill went on general re-release shortly thereafter, a schoolmate and I were able to see it in a suburban cinema where an usherette, who was a friend of my mate's mother, sneaked us in through the fire exit. *Son of Frankenstein* [certified H] arrived in London but by that time, I was taking no chances. I forged a school document to show that I was sixteen and got in to see it on my own.[31]

Despite the more stringent regulations, it is important to reiterate that the impact of the H certificate on children's choices was slight, as it affected only a handful of films (see Appendix 4). Meanwhile, for the majority of children, A film regulations were apparently no obstacle to their cinema attendance. Eileen Barnett's recollection is typical of the matter-of-fact ease commonly associated with the activity of unaccompanied attendance. She explains that she and her friends constantly asked strangers to take them into the pictures:

> They never refused. So *you could get into any film you wanted to.* You just had to ask somebody and they'd take you in as if you belonged to them.[32]

Thus it can be seen that children easily negotiated their way around BBFC certification rules (and, occasionally, zealous cinema staff) in order to see their films of choice. As Eileen Barnett puts it, 'you could get into any film you wanted to'. This system did rely, however, on the collusion of adults: those that 'accompanied' children, cinema staff who turned a blind eye and magistrates who relaxed the penalties imposed on cinema managers. In this sense, while children's choice of films was barely restricted by BBFC regulations, it was still dependent to some extent on adult sanction.

Parental authority

The other adults with a potentially strong direct bearing on the cinema attendance and film choices of children were, of course, parents. There is significant evidence from oral history respondents that parents did exert control over children's choices – particularly over the choice of cinema venue and the time of attendance, and, less frequently, over the choice of film itself.

Winnie Lees lived in Glasgow's West End during the 1930s and one of her nearby cinemas as a child was the Seamore, Maryhill, which Winnie explains, 'I wasn't really allowed to go to. I don't really know why. But my mother didn't think that it was very suitable.'[33] Thus, her mother regulated Winnie's viewing in terms of venue by forbidding her attendance at this cinema. Her mother's ban may well have been due to the fact that the Seamore was rebuilt by eccentric showman A.E. Pickard in 1926, with a Moulin Rouge-like, illuminated, revolving windmill on the roof and an auditorium ceiling decorated with paintings of female nudes. Hence Pickard's slogan, 'You'll see more at the Seamore!'[34] It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that Winnie's mother preferred her to go elsewhere.

The main form of parental regulation over children's viewing, as remembered by oral history respondents, involved the time of performance attended and the amount of supervision required. In these respects, many parents appear to have imposed a series of age-restrictions on their children's cinema attendance. Most did not allow small children to attend the cinema unsupervised, unless it was a children's matinee. For the many whose parents were not cinemagoers, this generally meant being taken by an older sibling or other relative. A fairly typical example is Vera Entwistle, from Bolton, who started going to the cinema in about 1935, when she was 8 years old. She went three times a week, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings with her older sister and to Saturday matinees with a group of friends.[35]

The age at which children were allowed to go to the cinema alone obviously varied, but for many it appears to have started when they were aged about 10. Thus, Ellen Casey was 10 when she reached this milestone in 1931, while James Barton remembers that it was 'around the age of ten (1933) I would have "gone solo" to early evening "First House"...performances'.[36]

This example leads conveniently to the other age-restriction often imposed by parents, which related to the time of attendance. Most cinemas offered two identical performances per evening, known as the first and second houses, starting at around 5.30pm and 8.00pm respectively. (This was particularly true of the early 1930s, before continuous shows were more widely introduced). A number of respondents recall that their parents did not allow them to attend the second house, as this was considered too late for bedtime. Moreover, cinema owners preferred to sell tickets for the second house to adults paying full price. As Bob Surtees explains, 'children were not allowed evening cinema or at least not encouraged'.[37] Consequently, going to the second house was often perceived as a sign of maturity. Mr Murray recalls with some pride how reaching this landmark made him feel like an adult:

> One thing I wasn't allowed to do was go into the second house of the pictures, which started at 8 o'clock at night and finished at 10. Not until I was 14. And when I was 14, Father said, eh, 'You can go in the, eh, second house'. WE-ELL! You were about 25 year old then, like! ...Just started work then he said, eh, 'Oh, you can go to second house now'. You know, 'You're working and you're 14', like, you know. Cos you worked till half past 5.[38]

It is interesting to see a parallel here with Buckingham's study, as he has noted that most children seem to subscribe to developmental models of childhood and look to shifts in parental regulation of their viewing as indications of their maturity. Thus, when Mr Murray was allowed to attend the second house, although he had already passed the milestone of gaining paid employment, it was this change in *viewing practice* that he recalls made him feel 'about 25 year old'. This upholds Buckingham's suggestion regarding children, that

> the definition of what it means to be an 'adult' or a 'child', or a child of a certain age, is established partly in response to their parents' regulation of their viewing. The discourse and the knowledge that it claims to embody are thus intimately connected with the operation of power.[39]

In the same way, it appears that parental regulation of the time at which children attended the cinema became an integral part of the process by which they were defined in terms of their age.

While children largely ignored age restrictions imposed by the BBFC and local councils, it can be seen that parental age restrictions on child attendance were more closely adhered to. Most restriction was on younger children, who often could only attend the cinema when genuinely supervised. Meanwhile, children that could attend alone were not normally allowed to go to second house performances. That being said, as the two evening performances were usually identical, the latter restriction made no difference regarding children's choice of films.

Consequently, although BBFC certification apparently provided no real barrier to the attendance of children, the choices younger children could make regarding which films they saw were often limited by the preferences of those that supervised them. This generally meant that younger children saw whatever their parents or guardians chose to see. However, it should certainly not be assumed that younger children were always taken to tame or otherwise 'suitable' pictures. For example, Sheila McWhinnie remembers being taken to her first talking picture – *Madame X* (1929) – which she reasonably describes as 'not all that suitable for a ten year old'.[40] And 6 or 7 year old Margaret Walsh was taken to see *Les Miserables* (1935); a rather harrowing version of the film, which includes repeated, lengthy flashbacks of the main character being strung up by a gang of guards and beaten senseless with solid wooden sticks. She remembers 'crying terribly' and explains, 'I was *horrified*'.[41] Molly Stevenson's first memory of the pictures is from the age of 8 or 9, when her parents took her with them to see the brutal social issue film *I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang* (1932). She cried throughout, but justifies her parents' selection, speculating that it was probably a double feature programme, with the other picture being 'a *funny* film, cos I can't imagine them taking us to *The Chain Gang*'.[42] Meanwhile, Joan Howarth remembers 'being taken by my mother to watch a film about a werewolf and I was terrified'.[43] A respondent in J. P. Mayer's 1948 study of British cinemagoing (a woman born in 1928) also recalled: 'To begin with I did not go to the pictures because I was *interested* – but because my parents wanted to go, and I could not be left at home'. She continues, 'I was hardly introduced to films in

the best way; for, at the age of eight my grandmother took me to see a Boris Karloff Horror Film!' – an experience which gave her nightmares for two years.[44]

A second assumption to be avoided, however, is that younger children could never choose to see films unless their parents wanted to see them. For on some occasions, it was the *child*, rather than the parent, who selected the film. Les Sutton, for example, remembers a 'moderately startling' trip with his father to the cinema in 1932, when he was 10 years old:

> I persuaded my father to take me to see Karloff as *The Mummy*. He hadn't much time for fantasy, but took me, as youngsters were not admitted without parents or guardians. What there was of horror in the film – the burying alive scene – annoyed him (to think that I should want to go to such films).[45]

Similarly, Jessie Boyd was desperate to see *Dracula* (1931), when she was just 8 years old, although her local cinema was reluctant to admit her and her mother had some misgivings:

> I begged Mum to take me along, and she pleaded with the doorman... 'My little girl has been *so* looking FORWARD to this'. He was moved by her appeal. Consequence, the 'little girl' took her FASCINATED terror home, and was haunted by vampire dreams for years![46]

Thus, some young children were able to choose the films they saw, *despite* their parent's preferences. Meanwhile, other families reached a convenient consensus regarding their choice of films, in which case no-one's preferences were necessarily undermined. Mrs Schneiderman recalls:

> I was born in 1931 and remember going to see 'suitable' films from a very early age... My mother used to take me to see all the Shirley Temple films, and the Hollywood musicals... Any other kind did not interest me anyway.[47]

It would therefore seem that young children had a range of experiences regarding their exercise of choice at the cinema. For many, interaction with parental authority in this respect involved a subtle process of negotiation – a process which is clearly demonstrated in the case of Ralph Hart. Ralph was born in 1921 and lived with his Jewish family in Golders Green. He and his mother both enjoyed going to the cinema and shared a love of musicals, which they saw together. Ralph's memory of his interaction with his mother over film choice is detailed and complex. His mother forbade some films, for example, and Ralph appears to have accepted this parental ban, which included gangster films:

> Well. *My mother did not like me to see those.* [Deliberate voice] *They were not for children...* she said they were for *older* people... A good straightforward murder mystery – Charlie Chan – yes. But not *gangster.*[48]

Meanwhile, although Ralph's mother did not like horror films, she still allowed Ralph to go and see them on his own (presumably gaining entrance with a stranger). The two films he especially recalls – *King Kong* and *The Invisible Man* – were released in 1933, when Ralph was 11 or 12 years old. The latter was one of only five films labelled 'horrific' by the BBFC that year (see Appendix 4). However, neither film scared him and, presumably, this contributed to the fact that Ralph's mother did not consider horror films harmful for him and therefore she allowed him to go:

> One of the *great* films, and again my mother wouldn't see it, was, em, *Invisible Man...* I saw that on my *own.* She let me go and see it, because she said it would be too *horrific.* It had no effect on me whatsoever.
>
> My mother wouldn't go and see *King Kong* so I went down and saw it by myself... I went down to the Grand to see it myself. I enjoyed it to the nth degree! I was not in any way frightened whatsoever! *King Kong* did not frighten *me*![49]

Ironically, Ralph's abiding memory of a traumatic cinema experience relates to *Outward Bound* (1930) – a film his mother chose and which they saw together, in 1931. The film involves a young couple, played by Douglas Fairbanks Jr and Helen Chandler, who attempt suicide by turning on the gas tap in their dingy London flat. They fall unconscious and the man starts to dream. The couple then find themselves travelling through thick fog on an eerie ship with no lights, and they soon discover that they and the other passengers are dead and bound for purgatory. Finally, in the dream, a young clergyman on board redeems the couple, and they are physically saved by their dog, who breaks a window in the flat and is then killed. This film was successful in New York, but was banned by the BBFC, who probably objected to its depiction of attempted suicide and its questionable religious theme. However, three local authorities – Middlesex County Council, Sussex County Council and the LCC – chose to overrule the BBFC ban and showed the film in February 1931 on the strict grounds that it was not to be shown to children under 16.[50]

Consequently, Ralph Hart was one of the few people in Britain to see this film, even though he was only 9 or 10 years old. It was, he says, 'the one and only film that ever gave me nightmares' and these recurred for ten years. His explanation of his reaction to the film is uncharacteristically inarticulate, as if distress is still associated with the memory:

> It gave me nightmares. Not because of the, cause of what it, the implications. It's not a monster or anything like that. Just the implications in this particular film.[51]

So although Ralph's own judgement regarding his ability to handle horror films was apparently sound and his mother was generally careful in her judgement over what he saw, *her* choice of film caused him some trauma on this occasion. It is not known whether Ralph's mother was aware of the BBFC ban on the film, nor how Ralph came to be admitted as a child by cinemas that should have barred him. However, it is very interesting to note that Ralph lays the ultimate authority – and therefore the responsibility – for the restriction of his viewing on his mother alone. 'Yeah, my

mother shouldn't a let me go and see that', he explains, 'That *really upset me.* I didn't tell my mother. She *should* not really have let me see it.'[52]

This example clearly demonstrates something of the complexity surrounding the regulation of children's cinema attendance and film choice in the 1930s, particularly as it relates to the role played by parents. Ralph's interaction with his mother regarding cinemagoing included a parental ban (on gangster films), child-parent consensus (on musicals), negotiation and concession (on horror films) and occasional misjudgements (on *Outward Bound*). Moreover, the case of *Outward Bound* shows that while BBFC bans could be ignored by local councils, and local council age restrictions could be circumvented by parents and children, parental intervention appears to have been the only really effective form of adult regulation for children's cinema attendance.

However, the effectiveness of parental regulation could also vary a great deal, depending on the individuals concerned. Certainly, once children were old enough to attend the cinema alone there was far more opportunity to go against parental authority – for example, by seeing films which parents would normally object to. Oral history interviews often produce some ambivalence regarding parental authority in this respect, as will now be shown.

Where parental authority is mentioned in interviews and correspondence, it is nearly always maternal authority; indeed, many respondents recall their mother's authority as a very powerful influence in the regulation of their behaviour. Husband and wife Irene and Bernard Letchet explain:

Irene: Well you see your mother ruled you. You know. If your mother said you didn't, you didn't. And there was no resentment.

Bernard: No. It was just life. [Laughs]

Irene: You did what mother SAID.[53]

Nevertheless, once children were old enough to go to the cinema unsupervised, many went to see films their parents would not have sanctioned – although this often seems to have involved *evading* parental regulation rather than openly *defying* it.

This was particularly easy to achieve if the parent was unaware of the films their children saw. Thus, Olga Scowen remembers sneaking into A films underage: 'I saw quite a lot of A films when I shouldn't have done', she recalls, 'My mother used to let me go and she didn't know what I was going to see, very often.'[54] Note how Olga explains her actions in terms of her mother's permission – 'my mother used to let me go' – albeit, given in ignorance – 'she didn't know what I was going to see'.

Similarly, Ellen Casey really enjoyed horror pictures and would attend these by asking adult strangers outside the cinema to accompany her and her younger brother past the box office.

> Now the frightening films – you had to go in with somebody for these. Now I shouldn't a gone to one but I wanted to see him in *Frankenstein*. *The Mummy's Hand* [*The Mummy*], *The Old Dark House* – they were all Boris Karloff. And, eh, I'd only be about 10 then. 9, 10. *Dracula*, 1931. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*... I used to run home terrified![55]

From her list, it would appear that Ellen attended such films on a fairly regular basis. When asked if she ever had nightmares, she replies:

> Oh yeah, I did. My brother did one night. He was going mad, him. ...So I thought, 'Oh I daren't tell me mother. She'd stop us going.'

These extracts paint a similar picture to that of Olga Scowen. Ellen's attendance was not sanctioned: 'Now I shouldn't a gone', she says. She was only able to attend because her mother was unaware of the situation. Thus, the feelings she recalls – 'Oh I daren't tell me mother. She'd stop us going.' – imply that her mother was ignorant of their attendance, that she certainly would not have approved of it and, particularly, that this parental authority was so significant that it had to be evaded, in order that the clandestine cinemagoing could continue. Crucially, parental authority was the only form of cinema regulation which might have serious consequences for children if defied. Thus, one man in Mayer's study remembers as a child 'sneaking

to see a horror film against my parents' wishes and returning home so impressed by it that I finished up with a nightmare and a caning in the bargain'.[56]

Interestingly, a complex mixture of autonomy, advice, regulation and subversion is also evident in interviews from Buckingham's television study. He finds that 'children often argued explicitly for the need for parental regulation; and asserted that, if they were parents, they would exert a considerable degree of control over their own children's viewing'.[57] However, he also notes that 'the strategies that children use in attempting to evade or undermine their parents' authority are diverse and often ingenious'. Nevertheless, he argues, 'despite such attempts at evading parental control, children also looked to their parents for guidance, and largely accepted their right to offer it.'[58]

Contradictions in oral history interviews often reveal something of this grey area between parental authority and children's choices, raising important questions regarding who made the final decisions in the regulation of children's viewing. One example is from an interview with Beatrice Cooper, who was born in 1921 and grew up in Hendon, North London. Beatrice recalls being forbidden by her mother to see Mae West films and her implication is that she obeyed this ban:

> Mae West. My mother would never allow me to see Mae West...
> She was a SEX SYMBOL, you see. So they thought I might be
> spoiled if I saw her.[59]

However, in the same interview, Beatrice surprisingly reveals a penchant for illicit horror movies. When asked about *Frankenstein* (1931), released when Beatrice was 9 or 10 years old, she replies:

> That was – they were good films. I loved those. *King Kong* and things like that... they were the ones I used to, em, you know, skip school for... Yeah, because my mother wouldn't have let me go to see them... *King Kong* – I went to see it on my own. And *Frankenstein*. And *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Mmm... Horrifying. But I loved it. You know [laughs] the more horrifying it was, the more I liked it!

Again, when asked about *The Invisible Man*, she replies, 'Oh I saw that... Yes, yes. Oh that's one I must've got off school for'.

So although Beatrice apparently obeyed her mother's ban on Mae West pictures, she *played truant* in order to see horror films (including at least two BBFC 'horrifics') that would have incurred a similar parental ban – as she says, 'my mother wouldn't have let me go to see them'. This clearly throws into question the effectiveness of parental authority in controlling Beatrice's film choices, and suggests that the more likely regulating influence was Beatrice's own preferences. So it would appear that for at least some children, while BBFC certification rules were ignored, parental regulation of movies was adhered to, as long as it did not conflict with the choice of the ultimate authority: the child.

Another example of childhood truancy and defiance of parental regulation comes from Mayer's study, in which a woman recalls that as a girl in the late 1920s she was forbidden to see 'sex pictures'. But this did not stop her.

> At twelve I wondered *what* sort of films they were that I was never allowed to see, and played truant from school – with another small and curious-minded friend – to see my first 'sex' film. It was of the trials and temptations of a rather blowsy continental actress, and puzzled us for weeks... *Did* men kiss women like that, and *did* babies come unwanted, from such episodes and behaviour? So my curiosity aroused...I sneaked off at twelve – now unescorted – to see all the extravagant and unreal epics of sex and high living I could find.[60]

Clearly, therefore, children tended to experience a complex relationship with parental authority regarding their choice of films. But, as with official attempts at regulation, the ultimate authority seems to have frequently rested with children themselves and this will now be explored in more detail.

Children as self-regulators of film choice

Having shown the limitations of official and parental attempts to control children's film viewing, the question remains as to how children actually chose the films they watched. Some commentators in the 1930s suggested that children were particularly susceptible to dangerous images in films precisely because they went to see whatever was screened, regardless of its content. Thus, the Edinburgh Enquiry argued:

> There is no effective censorship by them such as is exercised by adult patrons of the theatre, who can, and do, by withdrawing their support, cause an unpopular or poor play to be taken off. On the contrary, it appears that the children's attendance is independent of the kind of pictures shown.[61]

However, evidence from the very same enquiry contradicts this view, for when 250 young people aged between 14 and 21 were asked 'Do you go to the same Cinema regularly no matter what pictures are shown?' 224 (90%) replied 'No', explaining that they chose films based on a combination of personal preferences for stars and genres, newspaper reviews and the comments of friends.[62]

This pattern is confirmed by evidence from oral history interviews and correspondence which indicates that many children were regular cinemagoers who, like adults, made deliberate decisions regarding the films they wished to see (or to avoid). These decisions were usually based on preferences for stars and genres and were, importantly, *informed* decisions, made with extensive reference to sources such as cinema trailers, film reviews, magazines like *Picturegoer* and *Film Weekly*, and word-of-mouth recommendations.

Winnie Lees remembers exercising a great deal of discretion over the films she saw. When her interviewer claims that 'between the wars, people didn't discriminate too much about what films they went to see', she replies: 'Oh I wouldn't agree. You know, that may have applied to some people, but it certainly didn't apply to me'.[63] Winnie subscribed to several film magazines and based her viewing on informed personal preferences. 'I used to read up on films even then and reviews of films and I was quite selective about what I would go and see,' she explains. In this way,

Winnie also regulated her viewing by *avoiding* certain films, 'because I didn't fancy them, you know ...I only went to see films that either I liked the people in or, you know, for some reason or other'.

The amount of choice available to children was clearly great in many cases, due to the number of cinemas springing up all over the country. Irene Letchet, who was raised in Islington, describes the wide selection of films for child viewers there. 'Of course, there were more cinemas then, you see... so you had a choice... I mean you were a little bit, um...choosy.'[64] Irene also read *Picturegoer* and other film magazines 'avidly', and recalls being influenced by trailers, including the trailer for *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). She explains, 'I just wouldn't go...to *see* that because, having seen the trailer I thought, Oh no. Don't want to see *that*, you know'.[65]

Many children therefore exercised discretion regarding their viewing, basing their decisions on information and experience. Irene, like other respondents, explains that casting was often a clue as to whether or not a film would be worth attending – not only because of her preferences for particular stars, but also because actors were often associated with certain types of roles:

> ... you went to see your favourite film star. Because they were all the same. I mean, Clark Gable was ALWAYS Clark Gable, no matter WHAT film he was in! ...And Spencer Tracy was always SPENCER TRACY. Oh, or the other ones, you know...it was a regular thing.[66]

Sisters Molly Stevenson and Margaret Young also recall choosing their films carefully, based on genre and casting, and using weekly film magazines as a guide. Like many children, they made a beeline for musicals and comedies, although they emphasise the stars rather than the genres when they list 'the Andy Hardy films, and the Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaires...and the Deanna Durbins'. They particularly liked Shirley Temple, Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, and the gangster pictures made by the Dead End Kids. However, they did not like *all* films, as Margaret recalls, 'I think we'd what you'd call a catholic taste in films, except for the Frankenstein monster things, which we just did not like at all'. Molly concurs, 'Yes – and the like of Boris Karloff and people like that'.[67]

Such evidence is very important, for it supports the argument that it was personal preference and self-regulation by children which determined whether they went to see horror films, rather than the regulations of the certification system or parental authority. For not only did children choose the movies they *wanted* to see by using the star system, they also used casting (rather than certification) as an indication of which films they might prefer to *avoid*. Thus, Molly and Margaret avoided Boris Karloff due to their aversion to horror films. Similarly, when asked about Bela Lugosi films, Kath Browne conflates the star and his main genre, recalling, 'I deliberately didn't go, but my girlfriend, she did like thrillers.'[68] Yet Kath also demonstrates that a strong preference for favourite stars (in this case, Spencer Tracy) could still outweigh her aversion to a genre, for when asked 'Did you like the thrillers yourself?' she replies: 'No, not all particularly. I mean, I went to see *Jekyll and Hyde* – but that's cos of Spencer Tracy'.[69]

Evidence of children 'banning' horror films for themselves is also plentiful in contemporary sources. In Mayer's study, for example, a woman recalls having seen Karloff and Lugosi in *The Black Cat* (1934) when she was 6 years old. 'The whole picture terrified me', she remembers. 'For weeks...I was afraid to go to sleep as I used to dread dreaming about it'. Her immediate response was to avoid Boris Karloff films in future: 'I never went back to see one of his again', she says.[70] Another respondent reported having nightmares after seeing *Doctor and Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as a girl. Afterwards, she writes, 'I made a point of not going to see films which were alleged to be frightening'.[71] One last example from Mayer's study is a woman who was frightened as a child by one scene in a short comedy film:

> After that, I absolutely refused to go to any film which was an out-and-out horror film – *Frankenstein, Dracula* or any creepy murder story. I remember when *King-Kong* came [out], all my chums raved about it, but I refused to go as I thought I would be frightened... Even to-day I will not go to a horror film.[72]

The Birkenhead Cinema Enquiry also contains evidence of children 'banning' frightening films for themselves. When asked 'Do the pictures ever keep you from

sleeping afterwards?' the report notes that 'many' children replied 'no', adding that this was because they chose not to watch 'Mystery' or 'Ghostly ones'.[73] One young Birkenhead respondent also explained that they had learned 'never to go and see a mystery picture if you are nerves [nervous]'.[74]

In addition to the horror genre, other favourites and pet hates were deeply felt and are still recalled with great gusto, frequently demonstrating that children's tastes could be as unpredictable and varied as those of adults. Jessie Boyd, who was raised in Middleton, Lancashire in the 1930s, has very strong memories of her preferences. 'I loved "jungle pictures"', she says, 'I adored costume drama, *hated* cowboy films, but was *riveted* by the original *Dracula* [1931]'. She continues:

> Knock-about comedy didn't appeal to me. ...Hates? Shirley Temple – ugh! – sickening, simpering *BRAT*. Films in which the story was interrupted by the characters bursting into what came to me as STUPID songs. Most cartoons, including Popeye.[75]

Ellen Casey also produced a surprising and adamant response when asked about her preferences for films:

> I didn't like the Saturday matinee because they was mostly westerns. I didn't like westerns. I *didn't* like westerns. You know, all this *shooting* one another and the Indians. I was terrified. So it was very rare I went to the children's matinee – if it was a western. I didn't like them.[76]

Consequently, although Ellen could more easily afford the cheaper children's matinees, she chose to go less frequently and attended early evening performances, in order to see the films she liked most:

> When I could get the money together, I used to always save it till there was a MUSICAL on. Or a ROMANCE. That's what I wanted. Oh I LOVED musicals... I made it my business. I never went when the films were, you know, not my taste or whatever.

Like Ellen, Eric Holmes also chose not to attend matinees, and went to the first house with his mother instead. He explains, 'Saturday mornings were for the children when they would show cowboy films, I only went once because I found it to be very noisy and rowdy.'[77]

There is a great deal of other evidence suggesting that many children chose not to go to matinees (see Chapter Six) – either because they disliked the atmosphere, or often because, like Ellen Casey, they did not like the types of films exhibited. One early example of this was in 1916 in New York City, when attempts to show 'wholesome' films at children's matinees failed, because children voted with their feet. On offer were movies about animals and a production of *Alice in Wonderland.* But, as one newspaper article explained,

> The children would not attend on Saturday morning, nor on succeeding Saturday mornings. They wanted to pay more and see a sensational adult picture thrown on the screen. As one little girl of twelve expressed it: 'We like to see them making love and going off in automobiles.' And a boy explained, 'There won't be any shooting or dynamiting in those kid pictures. What's the use of seeing them?'[78]

Finally, for those who attended the pictures in a 'gang', peer group consultation was another common way of selecting films. Denis Houlston describes how such decisions were reached, as his 'gang' did not simply go to one regular cinema, but chose between all the programmes on offer at various local venues:

> So how...did you choose what film to go to? Well often as a youngster, it was the *gang* of you, you know... 'What're we going to do tonight then, lads?' 'What have they got on up at the Grand?' 'There's something up at the Arcadia and there's something somewhere else.' 'Oh, that's a *sloppy* one! We don't want to see that!' 'But we want to see *Robin Hood.*' So, you went with the herd.[79]

The evidence presented therefore strongly suggests that many children negotiated their way around official regulation and parental authority, exercising their own personal choices regarding which films to see, with care and considerable forethought, weighing up a variety of factors. Certainly it is erroneous to suggest that they went to see whatever was put in front of them. Winnie Lees' comment is representative of many others, as she recalls, 'I only went to see films that either I liked the people in or, you know, for some reason or other'.[80] Furthermore, unlike the unreliable nature of official and parental regulation, when a *child* chose not to see a film, that film was effectively banned. This firm and non-negotiable form of self-regulation is evident in responses to films described above, including curt phrases like, 'I deliberately didn't go' and 'I just wouldn't go'.[81] As Vera Entwistle explains regarding her choice not to see *North West Passage* (1940): 'I didn't go, because I took that decision that I didn't want to go and see it'.[82]

Having considered the relationship between official regulation, parental authority and children's own choices regarding the selection of films, the following section will go on to examine ways in which children acted as censors of film content once inside the cinema.

CHILDREN AS CENSORS OF SCREEN IMAGES

The second form of self-regulation exercised by children involved the way in which they censored or 'cut' film images. For, contrary to common assumption, the removal of unwanted scenes and sections of films was effected not only by filmmakers, local councils and the BBFC, but also by children themselves.

The need for children to censor screen images arose from two main sources. Although, as Buckingham notes regarding television, children 'develop very definite ideas about what they can and cannot "handle", and hence what they will or will not choose to watch', it has already been demonstrated that, in the 1930s, children did not always have control over which films they saw – particularly younger children.[83] Consequently, these children may have been subjected to screen images that they did not wish to see. Secondly, those who chose what they saw could still make mistakes and unintentionally subject themselves to unwanted screen images. For example,

Dorris Braithwaite remembers as a child in Stockport going 'to see a werewolf one' by accident, because it was being screened as a double feature with a Bing Crosby film that she wanted to see. 'And we'd gone to see Bing', she explains, 'And of course, on came the were[wolf] and I hated it! I couldn't do with horror stories'.[84]

Frightening images, a key target for 'cuts' cited by oral history respondents, could also occur in quite unexpected places. Although Michael Trewern-Bree was a regular filmgoer, he remembers an apparently mild silent film of the Good Samaritan story, shown at Penzance Pavilion by a local church, which 'frightened the life out of' him.[85] Conversely, many respondents who saw *Frankenstein* (1931) remember feeling not fear, but sympathy. Tom Walsh recalls: 'For a monster he had a kinda human face. He had a kinda gentleness about him which, eh, maybe detracted from the horror of the film.'[86] Tom Affleck agrees that '*Frankenstein* didn't really frighten... somehow we felt great sympathy for the monster'.[87] However, such sympathy might also lead to unwanted emotional responses in children, as described by Ellen Casey:

> And I tell you what broke me heart. You'll never believe this! Broke me heart crying in bed about KING KONG! KING KONG! D'you know with the end where all the planes were going round. And he's firing at him and he's grabbing the planes, you know...[88]

Therefore, many children found themselves in a position where they needed to censor film content, either because they were taken to films they would not have chosen to see, or because they were unexpectedly confronted with unwanted images.

This was perhaps particularly true of children that *enjoyed* being frightened by films and therefore deliberately watched pictures on the boundaries of what they could 'handle'. Ellen Casey, for example, repeatedly chose to see Boris Karloff movies and other horror films from the age of 9, although they frightened her long after the performance:

> I used to be terrified. I used to run home terrified. I used to run home all the way. And then we didn't have no lighting up the stairs and...

> we used to get a candle... I remember going up the stairs, me hand shaking like that... Terrified. But them films were really frightening... But I made it my business. I never went when the films were, you know, not my taste or whatever.[89]

As will be shown, children like Ellen deliberately chose to see films that would terrify them for some time afterwards and many enjoyed the 'ride' of watching as much as they dared, before using 'cutting' techniques and other coping mechanisms to regulate their viewing.

For younger children who were distressed by film content, parents could sometimes intervene and censor the child's viewing by physically removing them from the cinema. Margaret Young remembers being taken to a silent comedy:

> I think it was a Harold Lloyd film and he got his foot into a spittoon and I got so upset, I cried and cried, and my mother had to take me out, cos I thought, he'll never get his foot out of that spittoon! ...and, eh, I was taken out of the picture house.[90]

This is an interesting example, in terms of control over the viewing experience. For although it would appear to be Margaret's mother who resolved the situation, it was Margaret that really initiated her *own* removal, by becoming uncontrollably upset: 'I cried and cried, and my mother *had* to take me out', she explains (emphasis mine). It might perhaps be stretching a point to suggest that her crying may itself have been a form of censorship, in that it rendered Margaret unable to see the screen. Still, there were numerous other techniques used by children to 'cut' unwanted screen images.

Some of the most common 'cutting' techniques involved deliberate blocking of film images by children, who physically impaired their view of the screen by covering their eyes or hiding. For example, one man in Mayer's study remembered that at 16, he had 'covered [his] face at the sight of Spencer Tracy "changing" in two or three scenes from *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*'.[91] Meanwhile, a woman born in 1926 recalled: 'Almost the only thing I can remember of my very early film-going experiences is seeing a band of horses thunder across the screen, and burying my

head in my mother's arm with a yell because I thought we were going to be trampled to death'.[92] Similarly, when Molly Stevenson was taken to see *I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang*, she became upset and deliberately blocked many scenes. She says, 'I remember crying and my head being more or less between my knees most of the time.'[93] And Dorris Braithwaite remembers reacting to a frightening scene in *North West Passage* (1940), after a man has been carrying a mysterious bag for some time: 'And then he brought out what was in the bag, and it was a skull!', she laughs, 'I was under the chair! I was absolutely terrified!'[94]

Being under a chair would obviously preclude viewing and was a common form of image censorship for children – albeit a relatively gymnastic one. There are numerous other examples of this from oral history respondents. Hilda Moss remembers taking evasive action from frightening scenes at children's matinees: 'The serials were very gripping', she explains, 'I was always under the seat if things got too scary'.[95] And Molly Stevenson recalls of one early cinema experience: 'the first item was a gangster picture and I spent most of the time under the seat'.[96] Similarly, when asked about *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1932), Margaret Walsh laughed and replied, 'Oh, I remember hiding under the seats!'[97]

For other children, less extreme methods of regulation were required, as they wished to control their viewing without completely negating it. In this sense, the children were aiming to regulate both the screen image and their own emotional reactions to it. David Buckingham has described a number of similar 'coping mechanisms' used by children watching horror films on television, who seek to regulate their responses to the material:

> In some instances...children simply learn to avoid material that they feel they will be unable to cope with, either by refusing to watch it in the first place, or by hiding or leaving the room or turning it off when it gets too much. In other cases, they look to comfort in the form of pillows or toys – or indeed people – to hug; or they attempt to distract themselves with other activities... There is ample evidence here that, in all sorts of ways, children learn to regulate their *own* viewing, and their emotional responses to it.[98]

One such technique used by oral history respondents involved watching a film selectively, through one's fingers – a strategy also found by Buckingham among television viewers – allowing the child to discover the outcome of events, while also providing a feeling of relative safety.[99] Joan Howarth recalls using this technique during a werewolf picture. She says, 'I was terrified; hiding my face in my mother's shoulder and peeping, from time to time, through my fingers.'[100]

As has already been shown, children were often quite able to assess their own ability to handle screen images and they selected films accordingly. For those that enjoyed surfing between fear and fun, this often meant choosing films on the borderline and using coping mechanisms to reduce the fear element, and thus enhance their enjoyment, of frightening films. This might also include deliberate avoidance of the most frightening images in a given film. Joan Donaghue and her friends did this when she was aged between 7 and 9:

> It seemed that there was never anything we didn't want to see. We went especially to be frightened by Boris Karloff in *The Old Dark House* or *Frankenstein* and we would cling to each other and squeal or shut our eyes. It didn't take much to set us off in those days![101]

Thus, Joan and her friends can be seen to have habitually adopted a number of coping strategies. In addition to cutting images by shutting their eyes, they also used the security of viewing in a group, they sought reassurance through mutual physical contact and they apparently found some emotional release by squealing.

Tom Walsh was another respondent who recalled an ambivalent reaction to frightening screen images. He enjoyed the fear and therefore pushed his own boundaries in terms of coping with frightening film content. He says that he 'loved ...horror films', but also notes: 'Children have a strange fascination for horror films. They're afraid of them, but they like them.'[102] However, when he went to see *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1932) alone, aged 9 or 10, he found that he had over-reached himself and needed to adopt the kind of coping techniques that Buckingham calls 'psychological strategies', which include 'distracting oneself, seeking comfort' and 'seeking more information':[103]

> I was *terrified* by it! And I remember saying to a man in desperation beside me, a grown up man: 'Is he gonnae turn again?' You know, he used to turn into the monster... I was grabbing this man by the arm... He said, 'I don't know son, you better go and ask him.' ...He was being funny. But that was a comfort to me you know...that somebody could make a joke about this horrifying...portrayal.

A similar response was noted by a young woman in Mayer's study, who used this strategy when frightened by a mask in a comedy film:

> I got a dreadful shock and looked away from the picture instantly. Mother told me she would tell me when to look again... From then on, if it looked as though there would be anything frightening in the film I would tell whoever was with me to 'tell me when to look again'.[104]

Children therefore used a number of techniques to 'cut' or otherwise regulate both frightening screen images and their own emotional responses to them. However, it was not only fear which prompted children to censor films, as there were three other common targets of child film regulation – namely, news reels, educational films and the ultimate nightmare – 'sloppy stuff'.

Just as the above examples demonstrate that some children cut images and scenes from films, others regularly cut entire sections of the cinema programme that did not interest them – notably, the newsreels. Such 'cuts' might involve going to the toilets, fighting, playing, engaging in other activities or even walking out. For example, one 11 year-old girl told the Birmingham Enquiry that she had once left a cinema because she found the film offensive. She recalled: '"The monster killed the girls' brother and when she found out she threw the cross into the sea and said she did not believe in God. I walked out."'[105]

Some children chose to engage in alternative activities during the sections of the cinema programme that did not appeal to them. As Sheila McWhinnie's account

of cinemagoing in the Gorbals, Glasgow suggests, this kind of activity could become something of a ritual among children:

> The cinema was a great meeting place for all my class-mates and friends in the district. Before leaving school for the day, we would tell each other which cinema we would be at in the evening... Then while the newsreels were on, we would take this opportunity to walk around the cinema in order to see and be seen.[106]

Thus, whole groups of children could effectively censor the newsreels out of their viewing experience and use the time for a different activity entirely.

Worthy attempts to ply young cinemagoers with educational films could also be subject to censorship by children. As Methodist minister Rev D. O. Soper told a conference in 1937, these films were often met with catcalls by matinee audiences. 'My experience is that instructional films get what is know in Islington as "the bird" and they get it very quickly', he explained. 'Children do not go to matinees...to be instructed, and the first breath of suspicion that they are there to be instructed calls forth a very vigorous protest'.[107]

The biggest target for child censors, however, was neither violence, nor horror, nor newsreels, but love scenes – derided by most children (especially boys) as 'soppy bits' or 'sloppy stuff'. Thus, when Ralph Hart was asked to recall what made a good film for children in the 1930s, he replied: 'Action, action and action... No lovin'. Please [laughs] no lovin' ...No what the boys called soppy love.'[108] Probably the toughest censors in this respect were the audiences at children's matinees, where derision for sloppy stuff apparently knew no bounds. If the offending material was short, the action taken might simply involve shouting the scene down, in order to undermine its atmosphere. As Thomas McGowan explains, 'If you got, eh, men and girls slabbering over each other... they would have catcalls, "Aw – get them off! GET THEM OFF!"'[109] However, Thomas explains that longer love scenes initiated more extensive cutting by children, who would then ignore the screen altogether:

> When that was on we used to make our *own* entertainment. We used to run up and down the passages, you know? And annoy the chucker outs! Hide under the seats, eh, do, do all sorts of things, play cowboys, until something *interesting* come on, and then you sat down and watched it.

Cinema managers giving evidence at the 1936 BFI *Conference on Films for Elementary School Children* also described similar censorship practices used by children at matinee performances. According to one manager, 'love and sex, of course, bore the children to distraction' and during 'the final reconciliation scenes ...they make for the exits before the "sloppiness" gets into its stride.' The same manager concluded:

> An uncensored version of Decameron Nights or Balzac's Droll Stories would do no moral harm at a children's matinee. The kiddies would simply start a private fight or swop cigarette cards or find some other diversion until Mickey Mouse or Hoot Gibson came along with some intelligent entertainment.[110]

Thus, the fact that children regulated their own viewing was recognised by at least some authorities. A second manager at the conference confirmed that 'love scenes, even in Westerns, are greeted with derision', and he noted that children at matinees would also censor language they considered inappropriate, by shouting it down:

> Dialogue must be rigorously correct or it meets with instant disapproval. Although the average boy has frequent recourse to his own stock of oaths, he will not tolerate it on the screen. Recently we showed a British Film in which a character called someone a "swine". At once a murmur of reproof arose and a firm voice shouted: "Oi, no swearing!"[111]

This form of censorship among matinee audiences was therefore widespread, with children deliberately cutting those elements of the films that did not meet with their approval. As sisters Molly Stevenson and Margaret Young explain:

Molly:	It was only if there was something terribly exciting on the screen that you would get silence...
Margaret:	I mean, if there was any kissing or anything like that, that was [laughs] nobody wanted to know!
Molly:	[Laughs] 'Let's have some action! No that kind of action! But action!'[112]

Conclusion

During the 1930s, it appears that attempts at both official and parental control over children's film viewing were often significantly limited, particularly once children reached the age of independent cinemagoing. In particular, the restrictive impact of certification was apparently almost negligible, while that of parental authority seems to have been highly variable and potentially subordinate to the preferences of the child. Meanwhile, children have been shown to be both selective in their choices of films and able to use a variety of censorship strategies and coping techniques when confronted with unwanted screen images.

There is therefore significant agreement between the evidence presented in this chapter and the conclusions drawn by David Buckingham in his study of children and the self-regulation of television viewing. In the 1930s, as in the 1990s, official regulations were used as a guideline, but were often otherwise ignored; parental regulation tended to diminish as children grew older and could evade it; and while some children avoided material they found unappealing, others actively sought out emotionally challenging images, using a range of mechanisms to help them cope.

Certainly, the relationship between children, parents and official censors seems to have been a complex and interactive one. As Buckingham has suggested:

> Children are not merely passive objects of adults' attempts at regulation – nor indeed do they uniformly resist them. On the contrary, children actively learn to regulate their own emotional responses... They develop very definite ideas about what they can and cannot 'handle', and hence what they will or will not choose to watch.[113]

Oral evidence confirms that film choices were made by children in the 1930s with reference to a number of sources of information, including reviews and magazines, and tended to reflect their personal preferences and moods – in line with the 'uses and gratifications' model – rather than the influence of external authorities. Thus, while some children deliberately sought the stimulation of horror movies, for example, others doggedly avoided them; but in both cases the determining factor seems to have been one of personal choice, rather than adult limitation.

Having said this, it would be a mistake to characterise children's viewing as devoid of adult regulation. Younger children in particular often found their film choices limited by adult preference. Many children were also restricted by their parents in terms of choice of venue, time of attendance, or level of supervision. Meanwhile, those who chose to watch films without parental sanction could only really do so by evading this authority, often relying on a lack of parental awareness, and it seems likely that some children were unsuccessful in this strategy. The practice of sneaking into A films with strangers has also been shown to rely on the collusion of adults, including the strangers themselves, cinema staff and magistrates. Furthermore, some parental bans on certain types of film seem to have been obeyed – although the reasons for this obedience may have been quite complex. Finally, while BBFC certificates and labels may not have barred children from attendance, they could still influence children's film choices. As Buckingham argues regarding television censorship categories, such as video ratings and the watershed:

> These definitions were used 'negatively', as a means of warning children off material they might find upsetting; yet they were also used 'positively', as a means of marking out material that might be seen as 'stronger' or more exciting. As Julian Wood has noted, the classification system often has the unintended consequence of identifying 'forbidden fruit' which children then actively seek out.[114]

Similarly, it seems likely that the application of an A certificate or 'horrific' label by the BBFC in the 1930s may well have influenced children's choices one way or another, depending on whether they preferred to avoid such material or to watch it.[115]

In conclusion, traditional histories based on the prohibition/institutions model of censorship have tended to paint a very limited if not misleading picture of the activities surrounding attempts to regulate children's cinemagoing in the 1930s. For what becomes clear from a study of individual cinemagoing experiences is that, above all, children were largely *unaffected* by the restrictions imposed by official censorship bodies and, moreover, that they actively censored their *own* cinema viewing in various ways, based on their individual personalities and preferences. Consequently, the relationship of children with parental and official forms of censorship should not be seen solely or even primarily as a top-down, regulatory, prohibitive model. Instead it might better be characterised as a complex, interactive process, in which children negotiated, subverted and often circumvented both official organs of censorship and parental authority, in order to take an active and leading role in the regulation of their own cinema viewing.

Endnotes

1 Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema*, p. 3.

2 Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, pp. 3-4.

3 Ibid., p. 127.

4 Ibid., p. 129.

5 See, for example, David Buckingham, *Moving Images: Understanding Children's Emotional Responses to Television* (Manchester, 1996); Buckingham, *Children and Television*; Buckingham, *Children Talking Television*; Robert Hodge & David Tripp, *Children and Television: A Semiotic Approach* (Cambridge, 1986); Barie Gunter & Jill McAleer, *Children and Television: The One-Eyed Monster?* (London, 1990).

6 Cited in Buckingham, *Children and Television*, p. 7.

7 Gunter & McAleer, *Children and Television*, p. 157.

8 Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p. 254.

9 Ibid., pp. 303-7.

10 Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain [hereafter CCINTB] 95-110: Betty Verdant, correspondence, 19 February 1995.

11 CCINTB 95-48: Brigadier J.B. Ryall CBE, correspondence, 8 February 1995.

12 CCINTB 95-81: Bernard Goodsall, correspondence, 10 February 1995.

13 CCINTB 95-60: Olive M. Johnson, correspondence, 14 February 1995.

14 Scottish Film Archive [hereafter SFA] 8/41: Bill Grant, interview, 7 December 1981.

[15] CCINTB 95-34: A. Denis Houlston, interview, 26 April 1995.

[16] CCINTB 95-190: Olga Scowen, interview, 6 July 1995.

[17] *The Times*, 16 & 18 April 1932; *Justice of the Peace*, 30 April 1932; Low, *Film Making in 1930s Britain*, p. 58.

[18] Johnson, *Censored Screams*, p. 30.

[19] Ibid., p. 81.

[20] *Daily Express*, 17 February 1937.

[21] Johnson, *Censored Screams*, p. 143.

[22] CCINTB 95-121: James F. Barton, correspondence, 27 February 1995.

[23] Halliwell, *Seats in All Parts*, p. 64.

[24] CCINTB 95-182: Ellen Casey, interview, 31 May 1995.

[25] For example, see CCINTB 95-33 Les Sutton, extract from his own writings, p. 114; CCINTB 95-201: Raphael 'Ralph' Hart, interviews, 24 July 1995 & 27 November 1995; CCINTB 95-208: Beatrice Cooper, interview, 27 November 1995.

[26] CCINTB 95-119: Mr A.M. Peary, correspondence, 21 February 1995.

[27] Gordon was the only film producer to work with Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee.

[28] Richard Gordon in Foreword to Johnson, *Censored Screams*, p. xiii.

[29] Ibid., p. xiv.

[30] CCINTB 95-202: Anthony Venis, interview, 11 July 1995.

[31] Richard Gordon in Foreword to Johnson, *Censored Screams*, p. xiv.

[32] CCINTB 95-195: Eileen Barnett, interview, 18 July 1995. Emphasis mine.

[33] SFA–8/45: Winnie Lees, interview, 14 June 1983.

[34] Bruce Peter, *100 Years of Glasgow's Amazing Cinemas* (Edinburgh, 1996), pp. 128-9.

[35] CCINTB 95-51: Vera Entwistle, questionnaire.

[36] CCINTB 95-182: Ellen Casey, interview, 31 May 1995; CCINTB 95-121: James F. Barton, correspondence, 27 February 1995.

[37] CCINTB 95-96: Bob Surtees, correspondence, 6 February 1995.

[38] CCINTB 95-39: Mr J Murray, interview, 9 May 1995.

[39] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p.83.

[40] CCINTB 92-4: Sheila McWhinnie, questionnaire 92-4-3d.

[41] CCINTB 92-11b: Margaret Walsh, interview, 27 January 1995.

[42] CCINTB 92-2: Molly Stevenson, interview, 5 December 1994.

[43] CCINTB 95-91: Joan Howarth, correspondence, 3 February 1995.

[44] J. P. Mayer, *British Cinemas and Their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London, 1948), p. 99.

[45] CCINTB 95-33: Les Sutton, extract from his own writings, p. 112.

[46] CCINTB 95-93: Jessie Boyd, correspondence, 5 February 1995.

[47] CCINTB 95-77: Mrs M Schneiderman, correspondence, 10 February 1995.

[48] CCINTB 95-201: Raphael 'Ralph' Hart, interview, 24 July 1995.

[49] Ibid., interviews, 24 July 1995 & 27 November 1995.

[50] Robertson, *Hidden Camera*, p. 40.

[51] CCINTB 95-201: Raphael 'Ralph' Hart, interview, 24 July 1995.

[52] Ibid., interview, 27 November 1995.

[53] CCINTB 95-207a & 95-207b: Irene and Bernard Letchet, interview, 21 July 1995.

[54] CCINTB 95-190: Olga Scowen, interview, 6 July 1995.

[55] CCINTB 95-182: Ellen Casey, interview, 31 May 1995.

[56] Mayer, *British Cinema*, p. 104.

[57] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p. 256.

[58] Ibid., p. 257.

[59] CCINTB 95-208: Beatrice Cooper, interview, 27 November 1995.

[60] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 97.

[61] Mackie, *Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry*, p. 11.

[62] Ibid., p. 31.

[63] SFA–8/45: Winnie Lees, interview, 14 June 1983.

[64] CCINTB 95-207a: Irene Letchet, interview, 21 July 1995.

[65] Ibid., interview, 23 November 1995.

[66] Ibid., interview, 21 July 1995.

[67] CCINTB 92-1&2: Margaret Young & Molly Stevenson, interview, 20 February 1995.

[68] CCINTB 95-38-26: Multiple interview, 11 May 1995.

[69] CCINTB 95-44: Kath Browne, interview, 1 June 1995.

[70] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 56.

[71] Ibid., p. 63.

[72] Ibid., p. 87.

[73] BVC, *Cinema and the Child*, p. 11.

[74] Ibid., p. 16.

[75] CCINTB 95-93: Jessie Boyd, correspondence, 5 February 1995.

[76] CCINTB 95-182: Ellen Casey, interview, 31 May 1995.

[77] CCINTB 95-108: Eric Holmes, correspondence, 20 February 1995.

[78] Cited in deCordova, 'Ethnography and Exhibition', p. 99.

[79] CCINTB 95-34: A. Denis Houlston, interview, 26 April 1995.

[80] SFA–8/45: Winnie Lees, interview, 14 June 1983.

[81] CCINTB 95-207a: Irene Letchet, interview, 23 November 1995; CCINTB 95-38-26: Multiple interview, 11 May 1995.

[82] CCINTB 95-38-26: Multiple interview, 11 May 1995.

[83] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p. 254.

[84] CCINTB 95-38: Dorris Braithwaite, interview, 11 May 1995.

[85] CCINTB 95-209: Michael Trewern-Bree, correspondence, 20 July 1995.

[86] CCINTB 92-11a: Tom Walsh, interview, 25 November 1994.

[87] CCINTB 92-16: Tom Affleck, recollections 92-16-3c.

[88] CCINTB 95-182: Ellen Casey, interview, 31 May 1995.

[89] Ibid.

[90] CCINTB 92-1: Margaret Young, interview, 5 December 1994.

[91] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 41.

[92] Ibid., p. 64.

[93] CCINTB 92-2: Molly Stevenson, interview, 5 December 1994.

[94] CCINTB 95-38: Dorris Braithwaite, interview, 11 May 1995.

[95] CCINTB 95-135: Hilda Moss, correspondence, February 1995.

[96] CCINTB 92-2: Mollie Stevenson, correspondence, 23 December 1992.

[97] CCINTB 92-11b: Margaret Walsh, interview, 27 January 1995.

[98] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, pp. 129-30.

[99] Ibid., p. 115.

[100] CCINTB 95-91: Joan Howarth, correspondence, 3 February 1995.

[101] CCINTB 95-87: Joan F. Donoghue, correspondence, 11 February 1995.

[102] CCINTB 92-11a: Tom Walsh, interview, 27 January 1995.

[103] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p. 307.

[104] Mayer, *British Cinema*, p. 87.

[105] BCEC, *Report of Investigations*, p. 19.

[106] CCINTB 92-4: Shiela McWhinnie, questionnaire.

[107] BFI Censorship Folder – Verbatim Reports 1930-1938: Proceedings of a conference, 'Children and Films', held under the auspices of the Cinema Christian Council and the Public Morality Council, 16 February 1937, p. 17.

[108] CCINTB 95-201: Raphael 'Ralph' Hart, interview, 24 July 1995.

[109] CCINTB 92-9: Thomas McGoran, interview, 30 November 1994.

[110] BFI, *Report of the Conference*, p. 32.

[111] Ibid.

[112] CCINTB 92-1&2: Margaret Young & Molly Stevenson, interview, 5 December 1994.

[113] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p. 254.

[114] Ibid., pp. 255-6.

[115] See Chapter Three regarding the practice of 'pinking'.

Chapter Six

Matinees, Cinema Clubs and Children's Cinema Culture

Oh it was great – 'cause the life, the cinema life then, it was everything! ...It caught the imagination of the kids, you know?

Thomas McGoran
Young matinee-goer
b. 1927, Glasgow

Having examined the mechanisms of regulation involved in children's cinemagoing in the 1930s, it is important to recognise that many of these were, at least in part, a response to the massive impact that cinema was having on children's lives. For while concerns regarding children and film were in one sense simply the latest incarnation of a recurring debate about children and popular culture, it cannot be denied that cinema did indeed have a profound cultural influence on the lives of many children; an influence which surely informed the debate to some extent. This chapter will therefore examine the ways in which children related to film as a cultural phenomenon.

As already mentioned, studies of the social history of cinemagoing have tended to focus on adults and on issues of class and gender, often ignoring children or subsuming them into adult audience models.[1] But this is an inappropriate way to deal with the child audience, which in many ways had a distinct cinema culture of its own. This is not to say that adults did not have *similar* experiences of cinema culture, as there are areas of overlap. Moreover, children's cinema culture was by no means homogeneous, as individual experiences of film varied widely, depending on factors such as age, gender, geographical location, family income and parenting style, as well as differences in children's frequency of attendance and viewing preferences. Nevertheless, certain common features in children's cinemagoing are apparent and this chapter will therefore aim to demonstrate that overall, the multifaceted cinema experience of child spectators was significantly different from that of adults.

Spectatorship will be considered in its broadest sense. As Judith Mayne argues, 'the consumption of movies and their myths are symbolic activities, culturally significant events' and 'spectatorship is not just the relationship that occurs between the viewer and the screen, but also and especially how that relationship lives on once the spectator leaves the theater'.[2] Consequently, this chapter will examine children's spectatorship from several angles, looking at the distinctive ways in which children gained access to the cinema, the ways in which they behaved during films and the ways in which film impacted their culture once the show was over. Finally, it will compare the raucous matinees of the first half of the decade with the more organised cinema clubs of the second, examining the extent to which this trend may have represented another attempt to control children's cinemagoing.

Gaining Entry

Children's cinemagoing in the 1930s typically involved weekly attendance at a Saturday matinee (sometimes known as the penny or tuppenny rush or crush) and mid-week attendance at early evening first house performances, with family or friends. (The matinees in particular provided a very distinctive type of viewing experience, which will be examined below). And in order to attend the cinema, unlike most adults, children generally needed to seek permission and subsidy.

There is some debate among historians as to whether or not children could gain admission to matinee performances with jam jars, but oral evidence does bear this out, especially in rural areas and small towns. In fact, on special occasions, cinema entrance could be gained in exchange for things like an egg, a potato, a packet of tea (generally donated by the cinema to local hospitals) or even rabbit skins.[3] Notably, such payment in kind seems only to have been associated with the attendance of children at matinees and was not therefore part of adult cinemagoing.

A more important distinctive in the entry of children to cinemas, however, was that it was frequently illicit. The common practice of children going to A films with strangers has already been detailed in the last chapter. But in addition to this, in the absence of funds, a variety of methods were used by children to get into the pictures without paying, variously known as sneaking, cadging, bunking or nicking in. Thus, one child might buy a ticket and then admit their friends through the back door or toilet window. Ellen Casey, who grew up in Manchester in the 1930s, remembers an unusual variation on this strategy. Her local cinema was covered in corrugated iron and she recalls, 'kids used to run along it with sticks [and] somebody'd slip in' when the attendants came out to investigate.[4] Brigadier J.B. Ryall also used sneaking in and soliciting strangers as forms of cinema entry as a boy in London. He explains:

> Normally when we went to the Ionic [cinema] one of us would pay and then having been seated by the usherette would go to the toilet and open the emergency exit doors and let our friends in for free. At any of the cinemas if the films being shewn were 'A' or 'H' then you would wait for a man or couple to come along and say 'Please Mister, here's my money would you please buy me a ticket'.[5]

Thus, children had particular ways of gaining entry to the cinema. In addition to payment in kind, there were a variety of illicit methods of entry used. Meanwhile, even when children entered by conventional means, most still had to seek both permission and subsidy from adults before they could attend.

Inside the Cinema

The experiences of children *within* the cinema were also different from those of adults, particularly in that most characteristic form of children's picturegoing, the Saturday matinee. The atmosphere inside an auditorium during a 1930s children's matinee is often recalled by oral respondents in very vivid colour and detail, creating an overwhelming impression of noise and excitement, both before and during the screening of films. As Irene Letchet recalls, '*the noise was deafening*, because *everybody screamed* the whole time'.[6] Les Sutton uses very similar terms in describing his arrival at a matinee in Manchester. Note his use of the present tense:

> Soon we get to the door and push in the dimly-lit hall and it would appear all seats are taken. The noise is deafening, with shouts – screams from the girls – stamping, fighting here and there, children climbing over and crawling under seats, banging seats down, running up and down the aisles, with a ceaseless chatter going on among the less athletic patrons... We are separated and have to sit on the ends of different forms, but may have an opportunity to sit together later when the criminal element sneak to the dearer seats.[7]

Here, Les is referring to another practice common among children of limited funds, known as 'upping' – buying a ticket for a cheap seat and then moving into a more expensive one. As Irene Letchett recalls, 'it was only ninepence to get in...if you went and sat right in the front. Well if it wasn't too full you could keep nipping back a few rows, you see!'[8] Dickie Alexander also explains: 'We used to buy tickets for the cheap front seats and crawl up under the seats to the dearer back seats. If the usher caught you he would throw you out.'[9]

Before the show started there were two other important aspects of cinemagoing for children: food and comics. Many brought food with them, including oranges, nuts, sweets and sandwiches, which were often eaten on arrival, while others bought sweets and ices at the cinema itself.[10] Meanwhile, magazines or comics were often read while waiting for the show to begin, sometimes distributed by cinema managers hoping to keep their audience relatively quiet and happy. One of Mayer's respondents (in his 1945 sociological study of cinemagoing) recalls her ritual on arrival at the cinema for first house performances in the 1930s:

> We arrived promptly at 6.30 when the doors opened, and claimed our usual seats. Then, after taking off our coats and hats, we would bring out all kinds of sticky concoctions and chew noisily. When we had become acclimatised, we would read what we considered to be the very best literature – namely the *Wizard*, *Chips*, *Schoolgirls' Own* and *Film Fun*. The show started at 7.0.[11]

At matinee shows, once the films began, the noise level would quickly rise to a crescendo, reflecting the excitement in the auditorium. Valentine Tucker attended Saturday matinees in Dagenham from 1934 and she recalls the atmosphere with some animation:

> We stamped our feet and whistled and clapped until our hands were sore and the building shook… they were silent films and it did not matter how much noise we made… We all shouted, 'Look be-ind yer!' when a baddie was creeping up on our hero, and in unison with the pounding of the horses hooves our enthusiastic feet slithered on discarded bread crusts and empty winkle shells, and paddled in pools deposited by those who had used the floor as a lavatory rather than miss out on any of the excitement.[12]

This account evokes the thrilling atmosphere and heightened emotional state often remembered in accounts of children's viewing in the 1930s. In Mayer's study of cinemagoing, several respondents recalled having had a more pronounced level of

emotional involvement with films as children. One woman of 27 noted in 1945:

> I find it easier to control my emotions than in my younger days. I get a lump in my throat during a sad scene, but I can remember sobbing bitterly over a film when I was ten years old. I also used to scream with laughter at the antics of such comedians as Laurel and Hardy.[13]

Another 20 year-old respondent in 1945 recalled the way in which her emotional responses to films had changed with age since the 1930s:

> My usual reaction to an exciting film was to clench my hands and dig my nails into the palms, I still do react that way but when I used to go the matinees and got excited I used to jump up and down in my seat and it wasn't an unusual thing to hear all the other children shouting out to their particular hero in the film that someone was coming up behind them in an exciting part of the serial.[14]

The physically and vocally expressive nature of children's viewing at matinees was clearly different from that of adults and it could therefore create problems if it was not curbed when watching films in a different environment. One of Mayer's respondents noted: 'my parents decided to take me to an adult show...with many warnings about being quiet and threats that I'd get a pasting if I wasn't'.[15] Meanwhile, another respondent recalled that when she saw *Trader Horn* (1931) in Leicester Square as a child, there was a clash of child and adult viewing practices:

> The first time I saw it, it made a shocking hole in my manners. The black men, were swinging across the river on branches, whilst crocodiles snapped at their legs. As one of these men was taking off, I suddenly swung myself out of my seat into the lap of the person, an entire stranger, next to me. I held my feet as high as I could in the air, so as not to be bitten. Ye Gods, what a commotion.[16]

The most unruly behaviour for which matinees became known, however, tended to occur during the more boring elements of the show. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, such elements might include anything from educational films to prolonged bouts of 'sloppy stuff', which the audience chose not to watch. There are countless descriptions of unruly behaviour from oral respondents, including fighting within the cinema, using stink bombs, cap guns and knicker-elastic catapults, and children on balconies dropping missiles such as itching powder and even lighted matches onto the patrons below.[17]

One other common form of illicit behaviour within the cinema was smoking, which is generally recalled by male respondents as a communal activity. Thomas McGoran, who went to the cinema in Glasgow as a boy, explains:

> We used to smoke in the pictures. The ushers used to watch us about this, you know? You'd go into a wee shop... and you'd buy the cigarettes at a hapenny, and a match to go with it. Now, strictly speaking it was against the law for shopkeepers to sell children cigarettes but just as nowadays a lot of them did... You'd get into the pictures, you'd strike up your cigarette, you'd have a puff and you'd pass it on to your neighbour! *Everybody'd* have a puff of your cigarette! And if the usher came along, somebody'd say 'Here he's coming!' and it'd be stamped out on the floor. And some would smoke cinammon sticks! ...And you could buy that for a hapenny in the shops. And it was a devil of a thing to start burning, but it did. You *could* smoke it. It tasted absolutely terrible![18]

The nature of children's film viewing in the 1930s was therefore quite different from that of adults, especially during matinee performances. Notably, there tended to be a far higher level of emotional involvement with the films, which was often expressed both physically and vocally. Moreover, children's cinemagoing could frequently involve illicit activity, from sneaking in through a window or with an adult stranger, though to smoking or other types of unruly behaviour. It was this kind of activity which would come under the scrutiny of those introducing more orderly cinema clubs in the late 1930s, as will be shown later in this chapter.

After the Show

Having shown the distinctive nature of children's cinemagoing in terms of entry to the cinema and behaviour during performances, this section will assess the ways in which film impacted children's culture outside the auditorium. The areas under consideration will include the impact of film on children's play, imitative behaviour (speech, dress, mannerisms and 'love-making') and the availability of various film-related toys and hobbies.

The most immediate impact of the viewing experience was that many children felt a continuing emotional reaction to films once outside the cinema; an afterglow effect, if you like, often expressed through re-enactments on the way home. Agnes Watson attended the cinema in Dalmuir and she recalls:

> Cowboy films were...my favourite also adventure films and war films. When we left the cinema we were cowboys too as we galloped along holding imaginary reins and slapping our thighs to make the 'horses' go faster. Then we were the swashbuckling Zorro with our trench coats fastened at the neck only and the sleeves hanging loose, with our wooden sword and our 'cape'.[19]

Thomas McGoran tells a similar story:

> When we came out of the cinemas if we'd seen a sort of a cowboy picture, we would all be galloping down the road! ...And of course, if we'd seen a Boris Karloff film, you would walk down the road like this [mimes a monster] like monsters! If we'd seen a musical picture, we would all be singing and dancing! But, this, this, THIS it caught the imagination of the kids! You know? That they actually were living the lives that they had seen on the screen just before.[20]

This kind of recollection was also common among Mayer's respondents. One young man remembered that after matinees he 'would organize a meeting at a secluded street corner where a clique of us reproduced certain thrilling scenes from

the exciting cowboy and adventure plots just seen'.[21] Similarly, a young woman recalled that at the age of about 4, 'it was a favourite game, after we came home from the picture house, to play at what we had just seen and we girls had to submit to being tied up, shot at and very thoroughly given a rough time'.[22]

After the initial excitement had worn off, cinema continued to affect children's play in general, inspiring role-playing games, like Cops and Robbers or Cowboys and Indians, or involving specific characters such as Tarzan or Robin Hood. One of Mayer's respondents recalled:

> Mostly we went to see cowboy pictures and when the programme was ended we would dash up the road and betend we where cowboys. We would make masks and lots of other things. Robin Hood pictures.[23]

Similarly, Freddie Martin remembers watching *The Adventures of Robin Hood* in 1938, when he was about 6 years old. After this, he and other local children played at Robin Hood, using 'timber slats' as swords, and 'bamboo canes for bows and arrows', in a tenement hallway, which he says 'became our Sherwood Forest'.[24]

Another specific example comes from Jim Dunsmore, who saw the film *M* in 1931, also aged 6. At the end of this film, a child murderer is identified, chased and arrested, when someone pats him on the back, having first chalked the letter M on their hand. Jim recalls: 'For some time after that lots of boys were stealing a piece of chalk at school and doing the same thing to their friends'.[25]

Interestingly, Mayer's respondents were specifically asked to comment on the ways in which cinemagoing had influenced their play and many confirmed that films had been very influential in this respect.[26] One young woman recalled:

> Films affected our play very much. Our second favourite was a good Western film, with plenty of shooting, fighting and fast riding. After becoming thoroughly worked up about Buck Jones or Ken Maynard, we would enact these films, in versions all our own, after school each day the following week.[27]

Another remembered films inspiring her play with her male cousin:

> If we saw a Red Indian film we plagued our most generous uncle for money to buy bows and arrows. If we saw a gangster film we used to turn the old sofa into a barge and pretend we were sailing down a river with stolen property aboard. Now and again we would 'fight' the cushions, and throw them 'overbroard'![28]

There are numerous other examples, including children playing a version of film charades with their friends and others playing Cowboys and Indians, with 'horses' made from 'thick poles about 5 feet long with a piece of string tied at the top end for reins'.[29]

Another common form of cinema-related play, especially among girls, was dressing up as glamorous film stars. Several respondents mention this, both in oral evidence and in Mayer's study. Lucinda Allan remembers:

> We borrowed high heeled shoes from our mothers, evening dresses, hats, stoles, furs and make up. Rouge and red red lipstick, which we plastered on our faces. We were Hollywood actresses.[30]

Similarly, one of Mayer's respondents explained: 'we...dressed ourselves up in old evening dresses and high-heeled shoes and tried to copy the manner of our favourite film star [Jean Harlow]'.[31] Another recalled:

> One cousin...and I developed a craze for those musicals starring Dick Powell, Ruby Keeler and Ginger Rogers... We used to hum 'I'll string along with you', 'Honeymoon Hotel' and such, and execute what we fondly hoped to be intricate tap-dancing steps. We would dress up, I remember, and pretend to be glamourous lovelies with scores of good-looking admirers simply swooning at our feet if we so much as gave them a glance. (She was Ginger Rogers and I was Ruby Keeler). Of course it was rather awkward to prevent ourselves tripping over our evening dresses, but as they were only coats tied round our waists with the sleeves, it really didn't matter.[32]

Although film clearly had a huge impact on the games children played in the 1930s, of far more concern to those worried about the impact of cinema on children was the apparent influence of the medium on their day-to-day lives, as they imitated stars' conversation, speech, dress, mannerisms and, in particular, 'love-making'.

Cinema was the 'in' place to go and became the main topic of conversation among children. So much so, that such conversation was banned in some school rooms, just as Pokemon is today. Slang such as 'OK' and 'youse guys' was lifted from gangster films and became widely used by children, as were the speech patterns of some other film characters. Angus Bruce from Leith explains: 'We were all quite fluent in "Tarzan Speak" since "Ungawa" covered about every contingency'.[33]

Similarly, one of Mayer's respondents recalled that he 'imitated...American Slang from films with the "Dead End Kids"'.[34] And another explained how cinemagoing affected her speech as a girl in the mid-1930s:

> New words crept into my vocabulary, and I remember clearly that my parents were quite shocked when I first used the word 'scram' before them! I liked to copy expressions used by my favourite actors, and use them often.[35]

It is important to note that the specific concern of watchdogs and others in this regard was the Americanisation of children's speech, by their acquisition of the vocabulary of American slang (see Chapters Three and Four). And although there may have been little cause for real concern, it is true that many children did deliberately adopt this fashionable, new vernacular. As one of Mayer's respondents remarked:

> I have been imbued with an intense admiration for America, and most things American. The films I have seen have increased this. Whilst at school, which I left when I was 16, I used as many American slang phrases as I could... Nowadays everyone uses American slang, but when I did it five years ago, it was quite a brave thing to do.[36]

In addition to speech, film characters' mannerisms were also freely imitated. Maurice de la Bertauche saw Charles Laughton in *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) when

he was about 10 years old. He then recalls 'stomping around school, scowling with hands clasped behind my back looking at boys I disliked saying: "Have him lashed Mr Christian"!'[37] Meanwhile, Vera Entwistle could do a mean Bette Davis:

> I was Bette Davis. I were Bette Davis, me, when I come home. My Dad used to say, 'Oh look! Her eyes have come out all organ stops... Put your eyes back, Bette!'[38]

Perhaps more interestingly, one of the young men in Mayer's study also deliberately imitated Bette Davis:

> My particular screen idol is Bette Davies who is adept at mannerisms... I've often caught myself using her mode of speech during a conversation using clipped phrases and highly dramatic movements. Yes. I'm sure this actress has influenced my way of thinking and doing things in everyday life. I have seen most of her films four times over and when she is billed at a local cinema it's a certainty that's where I'll be found most evenings that week.[39]

Some children even started to dress like their favourite stars. Ivy Royal describes how she and her friends tried to 'copy hairstyles, dress and mannerisms'.[40] Similarly, one of Mayer's respondents explained, 'I don't remember ever acting scenes from films, but I did try to copy mannerisms and expressions of popular stars at the time when I had just started work (16)'. She also remembered 'making a copy of a dress worn by Janet Gaynor, for myself, when I was 18'.[41] Another of Mayer's respondents, who was 15 in 1930, recalled with some amusement that she too copied her favourite stars: 'I was often better dressed than before...and my hair looked more cared for and more attractively arranged...and what if I did try to look like Joan Crawford – I tried to look like Norma Shearer too – so it all balanced itself out.'[42]

Copying of film stars' dress and mannerisms, while especially popular with girls, was by no means limited to them, as boys also engaged in this kind of activity. For example, Jim Godbold and his friend enjoyed the gangster movies of the early

1930s, including *Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy* and *Scarface* and he remembers:

> When we went to gangsters [my friend] would really come out, you know, he was aping the gangsters. He'd strike a match on the wall, and that... My friend and me, we bought a black shirt and a white tie because one of the gangsters had this.[43]

The film star most copied by girls in the 1930s, however, appears to have been teenaged musical actress Deanna Durbin. Of course, the term 'teenager' had yet to be coined and, by and large, there were no specific fashions worn by young people, yet Durbin apparently started something of a trend in this respect. Beatrice Cooper recalls:

> Deanna Durbin was one that I was keen on. Because...she was the same age as me and we both *sang*... As her films came out, I got the songs. And, em, sang them... and I *dressed* like her... I think a *lot* of kids if that age, ...around 15, 16, eh, because there were no *fashions* for children of that age. No teenagers. You either dressed as a very small child, or you dressed as an adult – sophisticated clothes. You know, there were no *teenage* clothes at that time. And she brought a new fashion.[44]

One of Mayer's respondents also noted that when she was 13 (and Durbin was 14), she was influenced by Durbin's feature film debut, *Three Smart Girls* (1936):

> It was Deanna whom I have to thank for initiating me into my first attempt at curling my hair, and breaking away from the previous straight school-girl bob. Of course, my Mother had to be consulted, but she agreed with me that if it was all right for Deanna, then it should be all right for me, so there I was with a centre parting, and curly hair! Another direct influence of films on my life.[45]

Similarly, one other respondent remarked:

> I have always taken a very keen interest in Deanna Durbin's films and I used to copy her hair styles and note the styles of her clothes, mine were never exactly the same but accessories were an easier matter and I nearly always took much more interest in Deanna's wardrobe than that of any other star.[46]

Some children were therefore influenced in terms of their dress and mannerisms by the things that they saw at the cinema. More worrying for reformers, however, was the apparent influence of movies on the sexual behaviour of young people.

One of the first ways in which children were influenced by films in terms of their sexuality was by becoming infatuated with a particular star. Many respondents remember having such crushes and, although adults were often attracted to stars too, it should be remembered that for children, the film star was often their very first experience of sexual attraction. As Irene Letchet recalls:

> We all had...the magazines – the *Picturegoer* and all this sort of thing. And *read* these avidly. And collected postcards of your favourite stars... And under your desk lid, you had your favourite film star...pinned. ...Oh! That was the first sort of man [laughs] you fell in love with.[47]

Some of these attractions were mild and rather fickle, such as that of the respondent who admitted, 'when I was about fifteen...I fell in and out of love with practically the whole of Hollywood's manhood'.[48] Meanwhile, others were quite serious. One respondent recalled that from the age of 13,

> I was experiencing varied emotions as a result of picture-going... Passionate school-girl 'crushes' followed each other as new and handsome men made their appearances on the screen. Many were the nights I cried myself to sleep because John Howard, Preston Foster or Robert Taylor was so far away.[49]

Similarly, another respondent remembered her first crushes on film stars in the late 1930s as being very painful indeed:

> It was in my early teens that I first fell in love – and that was with Jan Kiepura, whom I had seen in *Tell Me Tonight.* Love? Infatuation you would say! And I suppose you are right. But it was heartbreakingly real to me. I was assured by adults that I would soon grow out of that phase. But no! All through my teens I continued falling in love, with one film star after another. And each time was sheer torture – a desperate longing to be made love to by them all... I sincerely hope that other youngsters don't go through such hell.[50]

In some cases, a crush could even become something of an obsession. One male respondent in Mayer's study recalled that from the age of 13 to the present (aged 18) he had been attracted to British actress Sally Gray. He had seen many of her films, but his devotion did not stop there:

> Since then, I've accumulated files of cuttings and data about this one actress. I started a collection of stills from her films and put them in albums. I wrote to her and obtained an autographed photograph, which I had framed and hung on the wall of my bedroom where it still is. From my data I found her birthdate and sent her a birthday present, which she acknowledged, later I sent other and more valuable gifts, and at the time I decided to join up I was saving, to be able to send a gift for Xmas.[51]

Films could also impact adolescent sexuality in less conventional ways, as with one of Mayer's woman respondents, who had a crush on Greta Garbo:

> When I was eleven years old, I…had my first experience of what were known as 'pashes' or 'crushes' on various film stars. Everyone had a favourite, with Bing Crosby well in the lead… I had no particular favourite, until one night, I saw *Queen Christina.* From then on, I was a Garbo fan.[52]

Meanwhile, another respondent found film images a source of early sexual fantasies from the age of 13:

> I ...had no emotional reactions to a love scene...nor to any male hero. In fact the only emotion I remember feeling at this stage was when I saw a girl being badly treated by men. I remember vividly a scene in Laurel and Hardy's *The Bohemian Girl* [1936] where the gypsy girl was being dragged out to be whipped. She was stripped and lashed to a post. Of course, she was saved at the last minute. That scene stimulated me a great deal, & I would enact over & over again in the privacy of my own bedroom any scenes like that, with me playing the heroine, of course I usually altered it so that I was not saved so promptly. My saviour was never the film hero, but the particular boy in my class at school that my imagination had fastened on for the time being. This effect of being excited by a scene of a girl being badly treated went on for a long time, until I was 16, at least, I am sure. It gradually faded, but it can still be reactivated occasionally.[53]

The key area in which films influenced the sexual behaviour of young people, however, was in courting or 'love-making'. As one young woman noted in Mayer's study, 'films definitely *did* make me more receptive to love-making *and* I expected it to be a more experienced job than I would have done had I not seen – on the films – how love should be made!'[54] Again, some youngsters apparently followed Deanna Durbin in this regard, as one respondent recalls taking tips from her film *First Love* (1939), when she was 14:

> When I first became interested in boys I enjoyed Deanna's first [screen] love affair with Robert Stack in...*First Love* and used to tell my 'boy-friend of the moment' to note the way Robert Stack held Deanna in his arms and kissed her... I've always noted little tricks (which I've put into practice) such as curling my boy-friend's hair in my fingers or stroking his face exactly as I've seen my screen favourites do in their love scenes,

one of the first things I noticed was that an actress always closes her eyes when being kissed and I don't need to add that I copied that too.[55]

It was therefore not surprising that various bodies expressed concern regarding the impact of films on children's sexual behaviour, as this was a genuine area of influence. In particular, this helps explain the controversy surrounding pre-code sex pictures which, limited only by an ineffective A certificate, were widely available to many young people.[56]

In addition to play and imitation, the other key area in which movies impacted children's culture outside the cinema was through a range of consumable and collectible items and film-related hobbies. As the next chapter will show, film merchandising was already underway in the 1930s and many movie-related toys were available. For example, Margaret Young remembers having a cut-out Shirley Temple doll with an assortment of paper clothes.[57] Children could also buy miniature viewers and off-cut pieces of real film, depicting their favourite stars.

Film magazines were massively popular, particularly with girls, who would regularly read British and sometimes American publications, including *Picturegoer*, *Film Weekly*, *Picture Show*, *Film Pictorial*, *Photoplay*, *Movie Magazine* and *Screenland*. Once read and perhaps exchanged, magazine contents were then glued into scrapbooks, used as pin-ups in children's bedrooms, or stuck inside their school desks to be secretly adored.[58] Although some boys read and collected film magazines, they were clearly targeted at girls. For example, *Film Pictorial* was packed with advertising for cosmetics and other gendered products, and it also included romantic fiction, woman-to-woman-style interviews with actresses, and articles with titles like 'Beauty "Tips" From the Beautiful'.[59]

The popularity of scrapbooks is very evident in Mayer's study, which shows that this was not merely a private activity. One respondent explained, 'every picture of stars or film extracts etc. we used to cut out and paste in a large scrap book to show our friends'.[60] Film diaries were also kept, as young people maintained a record of the films that they had seen.[61]

Where girls read film magazines, boys collected film-related cigarette cards, which had movie stills or stars' photographs on one side and written information

about them on the reverse.[62] Boys (and some girls) would pester adult smokers to obtain these cards and would then collect and swap them, as well as gambling for them in a variety of pitch and toss games.

In addition, children could buy birthday cards depicting their favourite stars and film postcards, which were highly collectible. Related hobbies included joining film postcard collectors' clubs, or writing to stars for photographs and autographs, which were freely available from addresses listed in movie magazines.[63] This was a highly interactive activity, in which children related in both co-operative and competitive ways and it could be quite expensive and time-consuming, as is apparent in this example from Mayer's study:

> When I was 13 [in 1938]...I was visiting the movies quite often...& very soon I had 'favourite stars'. The next step, of course, was that I wanted pictures of these stars, so I started taking *Picture Show*. Not content with the slow rate at which my collection was growing, I soon started taking *Picture Goer*, *Film Pictorial*, and *Film Weekly* every week, out of pocket-money given to me by an indulgent granny, who would keep me with any hobby... Very soon I was buying American film books (which I infinitely preferred...) & had a number of pen-friends, all over the world, with whom to exchange film pictures. I got an album, & stuck my best pictures in it. This filled up, & I got another – and another, – etc.[64]

Film musicals particularly seem to have captured children's imaginations in terms of related hobbies and pastimes. One of Mayer's respondents recalled designing dresses, having seen *Gold-Diggers of Broadway* (1933). 'For weeks afterwards I sketched designs for dresses, all over my books', she wrote, 'and nothing suits me better after seeing a good musical, than to knock off a few sketches of the various dresses or costumes worn and to improve and alter them to suit my own taste'.[65] Meanwhile, other children were inspired to collect sheet music or sing numbers from their favourite musicals, as already described in the case of Deanna Durbin fans. Another respondent recalled:

> A new interest presented itself...in the form of the early musicals... I was taking piano-playing lessons myself, just then, and the effect of these musical films with their catchy tunes...caused me to be very discontented with my Daisy Waltzes etc., that I was learning to play. My mother... promised me that if I should practise very hard...she would buy me some music from the films. I now have about 2,000 copies of songs.[66]

Dancing also took off as a result of 1930s musicals, particularly among adults, but for children too young to go to dance halls, this meant using alternative venues. One respondent recalled how she and some friends learned to dance when she was 11:

> We saw Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in *Flying Down to Rio* and that brought on a dancing craze. We saw every Rogers-Astaire film...and during lunch-hour breaks at school, the changing room rang with the strains of the 'Carioca' etc. I learned to dance and became very proficient.[67]

It can therefore be seen that cinemagoing impacted children's lives in a large number of ways, resulting in what became a distinctive children's cinema culture. Young people often required permission and subsidy to attend the cinema and they gained entry by various illicit methods not generally used by adults, including asking strangers to buy them tickets, sneaking in without paying and shifting to dearer seats. They could also sometimes gain entry by means not available to adults, including paying for matinee tickets with jam jars or other goods. Once inside the cinema, the viewing experiences of children were also quite different from those of adult filmgoers, especially during matinee performances, which were characterised by loud noise, vocal and physical interaction with film images and a great deal of unruly behaviour. Overall, the viewing experiences of children appear to have been more intense than those of adults, as evidenced in their emotional responses to films and the devastating crushes some children had on movie stars. Finally, children's cinema culture involved a range of activities outside the auditorium, as films influenced their play, hobbies, speech, dress, mannerisms and behaviour.

The scope of this influence is demonstrated in one respondent's account of her reaction to Deanna Durbin's films as a child:

> She fairly caught my imagination. She became my first & only screen idol. I collected pictures of her, & articles about her & spent hours sticking them in scrapbooks. I would pay any price within the range of my pocket money for a book, if it had a new picture, however tiny, of her in it. I adored her & my adoration influenced my life a great deal. I wanted to be as much like her as possible, both in my manners & clothes. Whenever I was to get a new dress, I would...ask for a dress like she was wearing. I did my hair as much like her as I could manage. If I found myself in any annoying or aggravating situation, which I previously dealt with by an outburst of temper, I found myself wondering what Deanna would do, & modified my own reactions accordingly. She had far more influence on me than any amount of lectures or rows from parents would have had. I went to all her films, & as often as I could, too... I bought all the records she made & played them over & over again.[68]

It is important to reiterate that adults were also influenced by cinemagoing in some of the ways described, but it was the combination of aspects in children's cinema culture which was distinctive – not least the fact that this was a generational group culture, with cinema being a focal point around which children interacted. As one respondent recalled:

> It was a recognised thing for all the children I played with to go to the pictures often. They knew the names of all the film stars & their latest films. They went whenever they could get anybody to take them, & they always went together to a children's matinee on a Saturday afternoon.[69]

As previous chapters have shown, the cultural phenomenon of children's cinemagoing provoked much concern in some quarters. The remainder of this chapter will therefore focus on the impact of one particular area of concern, examining the ways in which matinees were transformed into children's cinema clubs.

From Matinees to Cinema Clubs

Children's matinee performances were a feature of cinemagoing from the very beginning, enabling managers to cram the auditorium with youngsters during the day on Saturdays, freeing up the evening performance for adults paying full price. The content and environment of matinees were of some concern to various groups during the early decades of cinema, but to little effect.[70] However, in Britain, one event more than any other caused people to sit up and take notice, resulting in the more stringent regulation and organisation of matinee shows from the 1930s onwards.

On the afternoon of 31 December 1929 there was a matinee show at the Glen Cinema, Paisley.[71] Like many matinees all over the country, this was something of a free-for-all, with probably well over 700 children, including toddlers, crammed into an auditorium that seated about 600 adults. They were watching a western, *Desperado Dude*, when smoke started coming through the auditorium doors. In fact, the fumes were from a smouldering film in a tin box, which was about to be kicked out of the building. But there was a fair amount of smoke and the children started to panic. The level of supervision in the auditorium was minimal, one male attendant and a chocolate girl, and they were unable to handle the ensuing stampede. Because the smoke was emanating from the entrance hall, many children rushed for exits by the stage, which led down a short flight of steps to double doors and then outside. The tragedy was that when these stiff double doors were pushed apart, the children in front found not freedom, but an immovable steel gate. In the inevitable crush that followed, seventy children were killed and between thirty and forty were badly injured. As the *Daily Mail* reported the next day, 'most of the dead children were under 10 years of age, while some were only babies' and some families had lost two or three children.[72]

James Porter was 10 years old when he survived the Paisley disaster. He recalled his memories of that day in an interview for the Scottish Film Archive:

> When the panic started, I got out as quickly as I could, through the front. I saw them filling the trams with children to take them to the hospital. There were sixteen children living in my street, and all of them were at the Glen that day. They all died, except me. It was a disaster that need never have happened.[73]

Charles Dorward, the Glen's manager, was charged with culpable homicide. In court he claimed that the gate was unlocked that afternoon, but he admitted that it was often locked during matinees, to stop children sneaking in without paying.[74] He was eventually found Not Guilty, but the Glen was never used as a cinema again.[75]

This was clearly a shocking event and the impact of the Paisley disaster on matinee performances in Britain was widespread.[76] The enquiry that followed cited a number of contributory factors, including a lack of supervision, avoidance of regulations regarding the numbers of children present and even the influence of the film being shown.[77] The report explained:

> While it is impossible to say that attendants in proper numbers would have been able to prevent the panic altogether, it is fair to argue that the rush of children might have been...prevented from developing into the mad rush which occurred... A very exciting film was being shown and excitement would lead to children getting out of hand more easily, and this in itself points to the very great necessity of having an adequate number of attendants present as is required by the regulations.[78]

Immediately after the trial and the publication of the report, the Home Office amended the Cinematograph Act of 1909 to include the phrase:

> Where at any exhibition the majority of the persons attending are under fourteen years of age the number of attendants required...shall be such as to enable them effectively to control the movements of the children whilst entering and leaving the premises and to ensure the orderly and safe clearance of the hall in case of emergency.[79]

The Paisley disaster also raised the profile of issues relating to children's viewing, motivating a number of local surveys, including those detailed in Chapter Four. Among the first was an enquiry conducted in November and December of 1930 by the Sheffield Juvenile Organizations Committee, which focused specifically on children's matinees in the city.[80] All the Sheffield cinemas that held special matinees or had a majority of children in the audience on a Saturday afternoon were

visited, totalling twenty-one venues. The audiences ranged in size from 200 to 1,100 and included children aged mainly between 5 and 14 years old.

Among the priorities of the survey was an assessment of the level of supervision at the matinee performances, but, in the wake of the Paisley disaster, most cinemas appeared to have addressed this issue. The report noted that generally 'several attendants were on duty...five or six being the usual number', although in one case 'only one male attendant appeared to be present...in addition to girls selling chocolates'.[81] However, the amount of control exercised by these attendants varied widely, from those successfully leading community singing, to 'cases, usually where dull programmes were being shown, [where] a good deal of threatening and shouting had to be employed in order to get tolerable order. In one case the lights were turned up and in another case the film was stopped before lively disturbances among the youthful audience could be quietened'.[82] One unpublished visitor's comment noted: 'Children bored and very noisy throughout the performance. Several fights in the audience'.[83]

Being relatively happy with levels of supervision, the Sheffield survey turned its attention to the types of films being shown at matinees, as these were thought to cause problems of unruly behaviour due to boredom. Concern was expressed about the fact that nearly all cinemas showed 'the same programme...as was shown the previous evening' (to predominantly adult audiences) and only three of the twenty-one matinees visited were 'unreservedly praised for being children's performances'.[84] Meanwhile, four others showed films 'reported as being actively harmful for children, depicting night-club and "underworld" life'.[85]

Consequently, the report concluded, 'although the arrangements made for the supervision of the children at cinema matinees in Sheffield are on the whole satisfactory, the quality of the entertainment provided leaves much to be desired'.[86] It recommended that more attention should be given to 'increasing the number of films made suitable for children's performances' and making these 'more readily and cheaply available' to cinemas.[87]

The problems identified in Sheffield were relatively minor, however, when compared to the matinee programmes on offer in Scotland's cinemas at this time. As A certificates were not enforced in Scotland, children could attend any films,

regardless of their certificate, whether they were accompanied or not. Although, as Chapter Five has demonstrated, this did not represent a vast difference in real terms from the English child's experience, the situation was considered more dangerous in Scotland, as there were no *regulations* in place (no matter how ineffectual these may have been). As a result, an intensive investigation took place between January and March 1935, when 211 investigators visited 101 cinemas in fourteen Scottish towns, in order to assess the nature of children's cinemagoing there.[88] They reported:

> Almost all towns confirm the fact that specially advertised matinees for children...are not common. The general practice in Scottish towns is to admit children, accompanied or unaccompanied, at reduced rates in the afternoon and early evening (in some areas, particularly on Saturdays) and to show at these hours, the same programme as for the evening, irrespective of whether the films are 'A' or 'U', with, perhaps, the additional attraction, at the afternoon performance, of an instalment of a serial adventure story, or a cowboy film.[89]

Films being shown at Scottish children's matinees included not only large numbers of questionable A films, such as *The Story of Temple Drake* (1933) and *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), but also 'Horrifics' including *The Ninth Guest* (1934) and films with suggestive titles, like *Cupid in the Rough* and *Love, Honour and Oh, Baby.*

Specific anxiety about the programmes at children's matinees, fuelled by evidence from various studies such as those already mentioned, led to an interesting shift of focus among reformers during the 1930s. Essentially, those concerned about matinees gradually stopped denouncing films that children should *not* see, as it became clear that these would not go away. Instead, discussion started to revolve around what children *should* see. Suggested alternatives included setting aside whole cinemas for children and a campaign grew up calling for more films to be made specifically for the young audience.[90] In this sense, therefore, the debate was becoming productive as well as prohibitive in nature. And perhaps the most important change that consequently took place was a gradual move away from raucous matinees and towards more orderly, wholesome children's cinema clubs.[91]

The earliest systematic attempt to introduce this kind of 'clean, healthy, entertainment' in Britain was that of Sidney Bernstein in 1928, who started running non-profit-making shows for children in his Granada cinema chain. However, while initially successful, the scheme folded a year later because so few children were coming along. Bernstein blamed lack of co-operation from local schools, but the real problem was that children preferred the exciting programmes on offer at other cinemas, rather than sitting through films chosen with children in mind, such as nature documentaries or a two-hour silent version of *Peter Pan* (1924).[92] Other worthy attempts followed Bernstein's lead, but all ran aground, as young patrons wanted gangsters and monsters, not literary adaptations and educational films.

In America, however, a viable alternative emerged at the end of the 1920s, when Disney and the National Committee for Better Films joined forces to create the Mickey Mouse Club. These clubs provided an attractive matinee programme, always including Disney cartoons, a serial episode and a carefully selected feature film. But the key difference, which would shape children's matinees both in America and Britain, was the introduction of various rituals and elements aimed at shaping the character of young cinemagoers and improving the reputation of the cinema itself. These included community singing, saluting the American flag and memorising a club motto:

> I will be a square-shooter in my home, in school, on the playgrounds, or wherever I may be. I will be truthful and honorable and strive always to make myself a better and more useful little citizen. I will respect my elders, help the aged, the helpless and children smaller than myself. In short, I will be a good American.[93]

The Mickey Mouse Club idea soon spread to Britain, where the first club started in 1934 at the Odeon cinema, Worthing. Here, the manager wrote a special song for club members to sing each week, which emulated the American club's motto, encouraging patriotism, good behaviour and impeccable morals, while also promoting loyalty to Odeon cinemas:

Every Saturday morning, where do we go?
Getting into mischief? Oh dear, no!
To the Mickey Mouse Club with our badges on,
Every Saturday morning at the O – DE – ON!

Play the game, be honest, and every day
Do our best at home, at school, at play;
Love of King and Country will always be our song,
Loyalty is taught us at the O – DE – ON![94]

The Odeon Area Manager saw the Worthing club in action and liked it very much. Consequently, the idea was quickly introduced at other cinemas in the Odeon circuit, as well as some non-Odeon cinemas. Soon after, cinema clubs were organised by many other cinemas across the country, gradually replacing the relatively riotous matinee with its more orderly alternative.

By 1939, most circuits had created new cinema clubs of their own: Mickey Mouse Clubs on the Odeon circuit; Grenadier Clubs at Granada; Chums Clubs on the Union circuit (before it was absorbed by ABC in 1937, which then began ABC Minors Clubs); and Shirley Temple or Pop-Eye Clubs in some Gaumont British cinemas.[95] There were also various individual children's clubs running along similar lines in independent cinemas.

The clubs all boasted the provision of 'suitable' films along with competitions, community singing and other activities, including collections for charity and talks on subjects like road safety. They were generally well-staffed by numerous adult supervisors and 'responsible' older children, who sometimes formed a committee to help run the club. Using memorised mottos, club songs, badges, rules, and codes of conduct, they encouraged children to conform, to behave well and to act as caring and responsible citizens, making it clear to both parents and reformers that the image of children's matinees had changed for good.[96] This philosophy was embodied in two new verses that were added to the Mickey Mouse Club song in 1937:

> Before we cross a busy road, we know it pays
> To think of motor cars and look both ways;
> If a car's approaching we wait until it's gone,
> Safety first they teach us at the O – DE – ON!
>
> For the poor and needy, a gift we'll always share
> For other people's troubles have a care.
> To the sick and suffering our sympathies belong,
> We're taught to think of others at the O – DE – ON![97]

Although children's cinema clubs became increasingly widespread by the end of the 1930s, the less refined children's matinee did persist in some places. John Ford, who attended the tuppenny rush at a Watford flea-pit, known as the Coliseum, remembers the transition that took place after about 1936:

> The Gaumont and Odeon cinema chains started their own (*six*penny) children's Saturday morning matinee clubs complete with Uncles and Aunties together with opportunities to do 'good deeds' like saving silver paper for hospitals. The films were sanitised...especially for children, allegedly to counteract the pernicious anti-social content of the more robust fare offered by the *Coliseum*, which, I regret to say, *continued* to hold the allegiance of myself and a good many others.[98]

The transition from matinee to children's cinema club was not always smooth and children did not always comply. In particular, cinema managers running the clubs could have a hard time controlling their young audiences. Noise (especially) and subversive behaviour continued, as one manager found when he used a public address system, in order to be heard above the din. He explained:

> The very first time I used the newly installed microphone, I opened out with 'Good Morning, Mickeys and Minnies, and how are you to-day?' A boy in the front immediately replied, 'Lousy'.[99]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that although historians have tended to portray the cinema audience as a relatively unified entity (split only by class or gender), many children in 1930s Britain had a distinct cinema culture of their own, involving various activities and rituals, both inside and outside the cinema. Miriam Hansen and Judith Mayne have suggested the cinema was used by groups such as women, immigrants and gay and lesbian viewers, as an 'alternative public sphere' – a place where they could indulge more freely in voyeurism and active spectatorship than they could in other environments.[100] In the same way, I would argue that, during a period when home, school, and even leisure activities (such as uniformed youth movements) were strong on discipline, the cinema was colonised by children as an alternative public sphere, which offered liberating escapism through films and a warm, dark, virtually adult-free environment for engaging in 'wild' and subversive behaviour. By using illicit or conventional means of entry and by establishing all sorts of rituals for matinee viewing, children were therefore able to assert a sense of ownership and control over a public space – the cinema – which was unavailable to them elsewhere. The consequent popularity of this cultural form can be easily demonstrated not only in the numbers of children going to the cinema, but also in the numerous ways in which they allowed film to penetrate and permeate their lives.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, this sense of autonomy, the popularity of children's cinemagoing, the apparent cultural influence of films and the unruly behaviour associated with matinees, presented a direct threat to the virtual monopoly of established youth organisations and other 'healthy' pastimes. This challenge posed by cinema is clearly evident in the comments of one of Mayer's respondents:

> I have become so interested in films, that my ordinary life has completely changed. For instance, before going to the films I would go as often as 6 times a week to the Young Men's Christian Association (I joined at the age of 14), each Sunday I went cycling with my pals, and occasionally went for walks. This has all stopped with a terrific Halt. No longer do I go 6 times a week to the club, or each Sunday go cycling and walking. Sunday evening means pictures to me.[101]

It is therefore unsurprising that, given the impact of cinema on children's culture, some adults expressed real concern about the medium – especially those from groups traditionally associated with the socialisation of the young, including women's organisations, schools, churches and youth movements.

Although this chapter distinguishes between the relative freedom of matinees and the controlling aspects of children's cinema clubs, Richard deCordova has suggested that, from the turn of the century, there was always a sense in which matinees were a means of controlling children and of separating them from adults. Thus, he argues that in the 1920s, in the midst of fears that 'the mass media and modern life were destroying childhood', matinees 'were one means of attempting to reassert traditional distinctions between children and adults by identifying, producing and preserving a children's culture within the cinema itself'.[102] Moreover, he argues, 'the matinees exerted a power over the child's body, both through the ways in which it worked systematically to separate the child from the adult and through the ways it placed the child in a system of surveillance within the space of the theater itself'.[103] This surveillance, he suggests, involved placing 'the spectator under the steady gaze of social scientists, reformers and policy makers. Certain groups of spectators would not simply watch movies; they would be watched while watching them'.[104]

While this is true to some extent of children's matinee viewing in 1930s Britain, I would argue that deCordova significantly fails to recognise the agency of children themselves both in the process of separation and in the creation of a distinct children's cinema culture. Some children chose to attend matinees, others chose not to. And those that chose to attend did so, at least in part, because of the freedom of expression available to them in that viewing environment. Certainly, many of the activities taking place within the cinema during matinee performances in the 1920s and early 1930s cannot realistically be said to have been determined by adults. Furthermore, I would suggest that, at least in Britain, the surveillance and control which deCordova describes only really became significant in the early years of the 1930s, alongside heightened concerns about the popularity of cinema, increasing numbers of well-attended children's matinees and the coming of sound. Finally, it is important to remember that children's viewing was not confined to matinee shows by any means, as many also attended the cinema at other times.

The evidence provided in this chapter strongly suggests that in interwar Britain, children established and fostered their own, somewhat subversive, cinema culture. However, during the 1930s this culture came under increasing scrutiny and surveillance, culminating in attempts at cultural control, with the establishment of new children's cinema clubs. From this point, I would agree with deCordova that cinema clubs and 'suitable' films became a means of defining and regulating the body of the child at the movies. Such motivation also apparently lay behind plans to establish separate cinemas for children. In particular, the growing movement to create more suitable films for children represented an attempt to dissociate the child viewer from 'adult' films, and to give them a 'way of looking at films that satisfied adult conceptions of childhood innocence'.[105]

Overall, the developments of the 1930s suggest that debates surrounding young people and cinemagoing were becoming more productive and less prohibitive in nature – no longer simply denouncing the medium, but suggesting and producing alternative modes of viewing for children. The next chapter will look more closely at the productive nature of these debates, by examining the impact that issues relating to child viewers had on the development of one film genre.

Endnotes

1. Examples include: Philip Corrigan, 'Film Entertainment as Ideology and Pleasure: Towards a History of Audiences', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), pp. 24-35; Robert C. Allen, 'From Exhibition to Reception: Reflections on the Audience in Film History', in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (eds), *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 13-21; Nicholas Hiley, '"Let's Go to the Pictures": The British Cinema Audience in the 1920s and 1930s,' *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 2 (1999), pp. 39-53; John Sedgwick, 'Cinema-going Preferences in Britain in the 1930s', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An alternative History of the British Cinema 1929-1939* (London, 1998), pp. 1-35; Peter Stead, 'The People and the Pictures: The British Working Class and Film in the 1930s', in Nicholas Pronay and D. W. Spring (eds), *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-45* (London, 1982), pp. 77-97. Important exceptions include Staples, *All Pals Together* and Richards, *Dream Palace*.
2. Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (London, 1993), pp. 1-3.
3. CCINTB
4. CCINTB 95-182: Ellen Casey, interview, 31 May 1995.
5. CCINTB 95-48: Brigadier J. B. Ryall, letter, 8 February 1995.

[6] CCINTB 95-207a: Irene Letchett, interview, 21 July 1995.

[7] CCINTB 95-33 Les Sutton, book extracts.

[8] CCINTB 95-207a: Irene Letchett, interview, 21 July 1995.

[9] NMS: Dickie Alexander (1932) – Piershill (Edinburgh?).

[10] Cinema managers in the 1930s found that children's matinees produced far more litter, including orange peels and sweet wrappers, due to the large amount of food consumed. In particular, they tried to phase out the eating of monkey nuts, as the shells clogged the vacuum cleaners. Richard Ford, *Children in the Cinema* (London, 1939), pp. 44-46.

[11] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 64.

[12] CCINTB 95-98: Valentine Tucker, letter, 6 February 1995.

[13] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 30.

[14] Ibid., p. 41.

[15] Ibid., p. 37.

[16] Ibid., p. 62.

[17] CCINTB 95-209: Michael Trewern-Bree, letter, 20 July 1995.

[18] CCINTB 92-9: Thomas McGoran, interview 20 November 1994.

[19] NMS: Agnes Watson, Dalmuir.

[20] CCINTB 92-9: Thomas McGoran, interview 20 November 1994.

[21] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 104.

[22] Ibid., pp. 55-6.

[23] Ibid., p. 31.

[24] NMS: Freddie Martin, letter, 7 October 1999.

[25] NMS: Jim Dunsmore, Edinburgh.

[26] The specific question was: 'How did films influence your play and other activities?' Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 14.

[27] Ibid., p. 50.

[28] Ibid., p. 109.

[29] Ibid., pp. 41 and 114-5.

[30] NMS: Lucinda Allan, Grantown-on-Spey.

[31] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 56.

[32] Ibid., p. 65.

[33] NMS: Angus Bruce, letter, 30 September 1999.

[34] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 36.

[35] Ibid., p. 50.

[36] Ibid., p. 129.

[37] CCINTB 95-92: Maurice F Dela Bertauche, letter, 6 February 1995.

[38] CCINTB 95-36: Vera Entwistle, in interview with Norman Wild, 13 June 1995.

[39] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 104.

[40] CCINTB 95-299: Ivy Royal, letter, 21 September 1995.

[41] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, pp. 30-31.

[42] Ibid., pp. 97-8.

[43] CCINTB 95-214: Jim Godbold, interview 17 October 95.

[44] CCINTB 95-208: Beatrice Cooper, interview, 27 November 1995.

[45] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 83.

[46] Ibid., p. 42.

[47] CCINTB 95-207a: Irene Letchett, interview, 21 July 1995. From a range of oral evidence, it would appear that in the mid-1930s, for girls the two main focuses of attraction were either Robert Taylor or Robert Donat.

[48] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 65.

[49] Ibid., p. 51.

[50] Ibid., pp. 83-4.

[51] Ibid., p. 54.

[52] Ibid., p. 46.

[53] Ibid., p. 89.

[54] Ibid., p. 98.

[55] Ibid., p. 42.

[56] See Chapter Three.

[57] CCINTB 92-1: Margaret Young, interview, 5 December 1994.

[58] See for example, CCINTB 95-216-8&9: Scrapbooks of cuttings from 1930s film magazines.

[59] *Film Pictorial*, 30 September 1933, p. 23.

[60] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 41. See also pp. 44 & 83.

[61] See for example, CCINTB 92-1-20c: Margaret Young, ms diary, 1930s-1940s. Also Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 83.

[62] See for example, CCINTB 92-1-20a: Collection of 1930s cigarette cards.

[63] For examples, see CCINTB 95-34-25,26 & 27: *The Golden Album of Film Stars – Picturegoer* collector's albums of early 1930s signed postcard photographs; CCINTB 95-34-28: Collection of 159 *Picturegoer* Postcard Club cards; CCINTB 95-34-29a-q: Letters and photographs in response to fan mail, early 1930s; CCINTB 96-3-3: Scrapbook of 1930s film star photographs.

[64] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 128.

[65] Ibid., p. 46.

[66] Ibid., p. 45.

[67] Ibid., p. 47.

[68] Ibid., p. 90.

[69] Ibid., p. 85.

[70] For early examples, see Staples, *All Pals Together*, pp. 1-28; DeCordova, 'Ethnography and Exhibition'.

[71] For details, see Major T. H. Crozier, (H. M. Chief Inspector of Explosives), *Report to the Right Honourable Secretary of State for Scotland on the Circumstances attending the Loss of Life at the Glen Cinema, Paisley, on the 31st December, 1929* (HMSO, 1930).

[72] *Daily Mail*, 1 January 1930, p. 1.

[73] SFA – 8/35: Interview with James Porter (b.1919), Survivor of the Glen Cinema Disaster, April 1981.

[74] *The Times*, 1 & 2May 1930.

[75] Staples, *All Pals Together*, p. 28.

[76] For numerous examples, see PRO - HO45/15166: Control of cinematograph theatres after Paisley inquiry 1930-1933.

[77] Section 121 of the Children Act 1908 states that if any entertainment for young people attracts more than one hundred children and the venue includes stairs, the provider of that entertainment must employ enough adult attendants to prevent overcrowding and to safeguard the welfare of the children involved. Crozier, *Report*, p. 14.

[78] Crozier, *Report*, p. 9.

[79] This amendment aimed to reinforce the 1908 Children Act, cited in endnote 77. It was effective from 1 July 1930; a circular was sent out to all licensing authorities to inform them on 19 June 1930 and it was widely reported in the press. PRO - HO45/15166: Control of cinematograph theatres after Paisley inquiry 1930-1933.

[80] PRO - HO45/14731: Children and the cinema 1929-1932; see also the report, A. D. K. Owen, 'Cinema Matinees for Children', *Social Service Review* (July 1931), pp. 141-4.

[81] Owen, 'Cinema Matinees', p. 142.

[82] Ibid.

[83] PRO - HO45/14731: Children and the cinema 1929-1932.

[84] Owen, 'Cinema Matinees', p. 142.

[85] Ibid., p. 143.

[86] PRO - HO45/14731: Children and the cinema 1929-1932.

[87] Owen, 'Cinema Matinees', p. 144.

[88] PRO - HO45/17036: Films for children (children and 'A' Films) 1932-1937.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Key events in this regard included conferences run by the BFI, the Public Morality Council and the Cinema Christain Council in 1936. See British Film Institute, *Report of the Conference on Films for Elementary School Children, November 20-21, 1936* (London, 1937); PRO - HO45/17036: Films for children (children and 'A' Films) 1932-1937; British Film Institute, *Suggested Programmes for Children's Matinees* (London, 1937). Although feature films for children were not made in Britain until the 1940s, children's productions were a familiar concept, as *Children's Hour* provided 'radio for children' from the outset. From 23 December 1922 (just eight days after the BBC Ltd had been registered), *Children's Hour* was broadcast every weekday at 5pm. David Oswell,

'Early Children's Broadcasting in Britain: Programming for a Liberal Democracy', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 18, 3 (1998), pp. 375 and 382.

[91] For a contemporary overview of this movement, and other 'productive' approaches, see Ford, *Children in the Cinema.*

[92] Staples, *All Pals Together*, pp. 25 & 42-3.

[93] Cited in Staples, *All Pals Together*, p. 52.

[94] Ibid., p. 53.

[95] Ford, *Children in the Cinema*, p. 162.

[96] For specific details on the philosophy of the Odeon circuit cinema clubs, see Odeon Theatres Limited, *Odeon National Cinema Club for Boys and Girls: Aims and Objects* (Birmingham, 194?).

[97] Cited in Staples, *All Pals Together*, p. 60.

[98] CCINTB 95-141: John Ford, letter, 13 February 1995.

[99] Cited in Ford, *Children in the Cinema*, p. 157.

[100] Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (London, 1991); Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship*, p. 67.

[101] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, p. 118.

[102] DeCordova, 'Ethnography and Exhibition', p. 102.

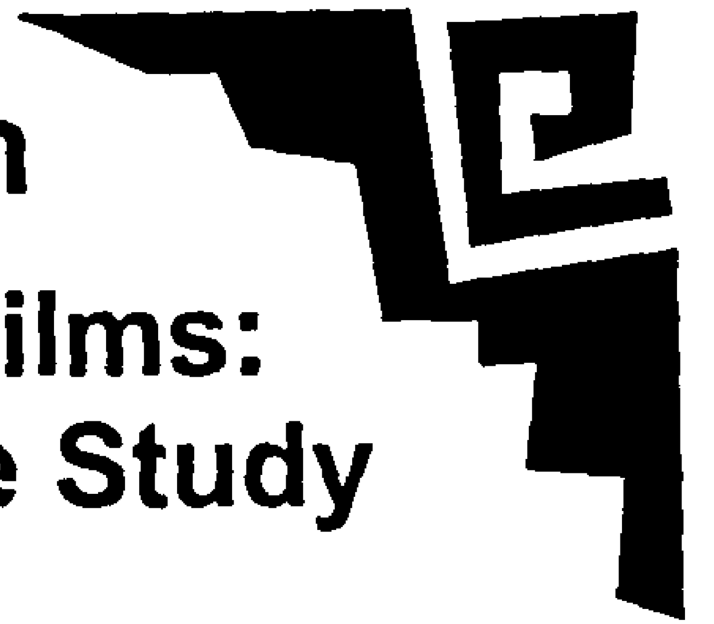
[103] Ibid., p. 103.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., p. 96.

Chapter Seven

MGM Tarzan Films: A Case Study



He's the finest gentleman I ever knew – trousers or no trousers!

'Herbert Henry Rawlins'
Tarzan Finds A Son! *(1936)*

Introduction

So far this thesis has considered the ramifications of the debate concerning children and cinema in a number of areas, including official censorship, cinema regulation, legislation and, especially, the viewing practices of children. It has examined the interrelationship between censors, moral watchdogs, enquiry committees, the Home Office, local government, the press, cinema staff, parents and children themselves. For many historians of cinema this might be considered a sufficient overview. However, I wish to examine one further highly important factor sometimes surprisingly overlooked in histories of censorship; that is, the impact of issues surrounding children's viewing on censorship at the point of film production.

Clearly, self-regulation by filmmakers is an important element in the creation of any film. A screenwriter may choose not to include violence; a director may focus only on the faces in a bedroom scene; an actor may refuse to portray something they find distasteful; producers and distributors may withhold money unless they consider a film's content 'suitable'. All could realistically be termed 'censors', for they are involved in the regulation of film content. As Baxter Philips argues, *everyone* involved in filmmaking may help to censor the product, rendering 'the final print of a film...its first censorship, because it eliminates all other possible versions of that film at that time'.[1]

This chapter will therefore present a case study of four films in order to examine the *productive* nature of censorship and the ways in which debates about the child audience may, directly or indirectly, have influenced the making of movies. The films chosen for this purpose are the first four in the MGM Tarzan series starring Johnny Weissmuller. They are: *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), *Tarzan Escapes* (1936) and *Tarzan Finds A Son!* (1939). A wide range of primary source material has been utilised, relating to both the released versions of these films and their rejected alternatives, the aim being to paint as broad a picture as possible regarding their production, distribution and reception. This material includes the movies themselves, drafts of scripts at all stages, studio production notes, story conferences and press books, PCA and BBFC files, newspaper articles, published cinema enquiry reports, oral history interviews, correspondence and a specially-formulated questionnaire.

The Tarzan series was chosen primarily because, as will be shown, it was extremely popular with young people and this (initially unintentional) association with the child audience apparently caused the film series to be transformed from violent, sexy extravaganzas to mildly amusing stories of jungle family life.

A second important reason for choosing the series is that it straddled the watershed of 1934 (when the Hays Code really started to affect film production), thus providing a rare opportunity to analyse the impact of the watershed on four closely matched movies – two pre-code and two post-code. Moreover, one of these (*Tarzan and His Mate*) is a key example of controversial pre-code film.

Finally, the series was chosen because it is of special interest to British film historians. Censorship material for 1930s British films is more or less destroyed, due to the bombing of the BBFC in World War Two. Therefore, any analysis of detailed BBFC files relating to specific films from this period is impossible. By contrast, the MGM Tarzan films have a virtually complete collection of censors' records held safely in America.[2] More importantly, although these were Hollywood productions, it will be shown that the Tarzan series was heavily anglicised, being deliberately aimed at the British market, made in collaboration with the BBFC and producing more box office revenue in Britain than it ever did in the USA. Therefore, in the unfortunate absence of a comprehensive BBFC archive, the censorship of the MGM Tarzan series is potentially of particular interest to British film historians.

This chapter will chart the development of the Tarzan series over the 1930s, with particular reference to issues relating to children and censorship. The first few sections will outline the background to the movies, including their appeal to British audiences and their popularity with young people. There follows an examination of the ways in which the content of the series changed over time, with a detailed analysis of each of the four films in turn. Finally, the chapter will suggest reasons for the great popularity of these films with children and it will explore the extent to which this popularity may be implicated in the process of change.

BACKGROUND TO THE MGM TARZAN SERIES

Tarzan was created in 1912 by American pencil-sharpener salesman Edgar Rice Burroughs. His work of pulp fiction was soon published as a novel, *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914) and the character then transferred to the big screen in 1918, when Elmo Lincoln played him as a chunky, longhaired, wild-man in a movie of the same name. Lincoln was followed by other silent Tarzans, but the first hit Tarzan movie was an MGM talkie, *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), starring Olympic swimming champion Johnny Weissmuller (still considered the ultimate Tarzan by many film fans).

Ape Man was originally conceived as a sequel to the hit jungle movie *Trader Horn* (1931), which was nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award in 1931. *Trader Horn*, shot largely on location in Africa, tells the story of a safari trekking through the jungle, which is captured by dangerous 'savages' and then rescued by a beautiful, young, white woman. She turns out to be the daughter of missionaries, who has been missing, living wild (and semi-clad) in the jungle, for some time. Although *Trader Horn* was extremely expensive to make, it successfully targeted an international audience and made a huge profit (see Table 7.1). In fact, it was both the most expensive and the highest earning film made by MGM in 1930-31.[3]

Smelling a potentially lucrative film cycle, top MGM producer Irving Thalberg and production supervisor Bernie Hyman decided to repeat the formula of exotic location, thrilling action, basic character and simple plot, to create a follow-up film, *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932).[4] Along with the same producers, *Ape Man* utilised the same director, W.S. 'Woody' Van Dyke, screenwriter Cyril Hume, editor Ben Lewis and cinematographer Clyde de Vinna. The character of Trader Horn was involved in the original *Ape Man* storyline, but he was cut in later drafts. However, *Ape Man* did keep the *Trader Horn* theme music, as well as some of the cast (including C. Aubrey Smith) and much footage of wild animals and indigenous African tribes.

To the delight of MGM, *Ape Man* was immediately successful, ranking as one of the top ten grossing films of 1932.[5] The studio therefore decided to create more sequels and a series was born. Over the next ten years, six MGM Tarzan films were made, starring Weissmuller as Tarzan and Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane. They were: *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), *Tarzan Escapes* (1936), *Tarzan Finds A Son!* (1939), *Tarzan's Secret Treasure* (1941) and *Tarzan's New*

York Adventure (1942). (This chapter will focus on the first four films in the series, as these were made during the 1930s). In the early 1940s, the rights to the series were sold to RKO, who continued to make Tarzan films with Weissmuller. However, the MGM series remained the most profitable, critically acclaimed and popular collection of Tarzan films ever made.

Table 7.1 Financial Performance of *Trader Horn* & MGM Tarzan Films (US$)

Film	Production Cost	Domestic Earnings	Foreign Earnings	Total Earnings	Profit*
Trader Horn (1931)	1,322,000	1,642,000	1,953,000	3,595,000	937,000
T the Ape Man (1932)	660,000	1,112,000	1,428,000	2,540,000	919,000
T and His Mate (1934)	1,286,000	811,000	1,428,000	2,239,000	161,000
T Escapes (1936)	1,063,000	763,000	1,150,000	1,926,000	209,000
T Finds a Son! (1939)	898,000	1,039,000	1,049,000	2,088,000	528,000
Ts Secret Treasure (1941)	978,000	1,073,000	1,568,000	2,641,000	866,000
Ts NY Adventure (1942)	707,000	1,404,000	1,315,000	2,719,000	985,000

* Profit figures allow for post-production costs including distribution and publicity.

Source: My thanks to Mark Glancy, who gleaned these figures for me from the Eddie Mannix Ledger, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library, Beverly Hills, California.

Tarzan in Britain

Before analysing these films in detail, it is important to recognise their significance for a thesis on British cinemagoing. As Chapter Three shows, American films were very popular in Britain, especially with children, and this country consequently became the single most important foreign market for Hollywood.[6] MGM sought to capitalise on this market and, in an attempt to replicate the financial successes of *Trader Horn*, they designed the Tarzan films to appeal to British audiences in particular. This strategy was evident in two key areas. First, the anglicisation of the movies (Hollywood generally equated Britishness with Englishness) and second, the

special attention given by MGM to the wishes of the BBFC, notably regarding animal cruelty. These will both be discussed shortly.

Essentially the strategy paid off. As Table 7.1 shows, the MGM Tarzan films all generated more income from foreign markets than domestic (USA and Canada), which was a rare accomplishment for this period.[7] Indeed, Robert Fenton suggests that 'in the early thirties, the Tarzan movies consistently out-grossed any other motion picture, American or foreign, in the overseas market'.[8] And Rudy Behlmer argues that this was paradoxically one of the reasons behind MGM selling the rights for the series to RKO, as the foreign market declined during World War Two and 'the great percentage of Tarzan profits traditionally [came] from other countries'.[9]

Evidence of the anglicisation of Tarzan films comes primarily from details relating to their content and casting. From the outset, important adjustments were made to anglicise *Ape Man*, which was the only MGM film based on Burroughs' books. In the books, Jane is Jane Porter from Baltimore; in *Ape Man* she becomes the well-bred Jane Parker from London. And although all the actresses initially short-listed to play her were American, Thalberg finally chose Irish actress Maureen O'Sullivan, who played Jane with a refined English accent. Moreover, all the central white characters in the 1930s movies are English and (with the exception of Boy and Tarzan) they were played by British or Irish actors. Notably, C. Aubrey Smith (Jane's father in *Ape Man*) was quintessentially English; a Cambridge graduate and England cricketer, who received an OBE in 1938 and a knighthood in 1944. This ploy was not lost on American journalists. One review of *Tarzan Escapes* noted, 'these pictures [are] always popular with...foreign audiences...the whole cast...in the main are British, which should give the picture quite a foreign circulation'.[10]

In early scripts, some of the characters were painfully, stereotypically English. For example, in *Ape Man*, the comical Beamish (played by Forrester Harvey) was originally written by Cyril Hume as a cockney caricature. However, English actor, composer and playwright Ivor Novello was then added to the writing team and he not only invested much of the dialogue with a witty, clipped, English style, but also suggested that if the English market were to be targeted, Beamish would need to be rewritten. In a story conference with Bernie Hyman and Woody Van Dyke, Novello explained: 'If people in England...went to see that picture, every time [Beamish]

spoke everyone would say, "Oh, dear"'.[11] The character was consequently rewritten, still as a funny cockney, but without the unrealistic style of speech that would alienate English audiences.[12]

The final key English element in the 1930s films is that, although they take place in Africa, the stories always explicitly involve the relationship between Africa and England. While individual characters display varying moral standards, England is generally portrayed as the centre of a questionable civilisation that values money, fashion and status, while Africa is shown as a place of simple pleasures, moral absolutes and savage nobility. This counterpoint is regularly reiterated, establishing Africa as the brave escapist's dream destination and England as the place from which people might seek to escape forever, presumably feeding English escapist fantasies.

Thus in *Ape Man*, Jane arrives from London and her father and ex-boyfriend Harry Holt spend the entire film trying to persuade her to return there. Eventually, however, Holt leaves for England alone. In *Tarzan and His Mate*, Holt returns to the jungle and again tries to entice Jane back to England (as does his lecherous English colleague, Martin Arlington). They fail. In *Tarzan Escapes*, Jane is persuaded by her cousins to go to England, to sign her inheritance over to them. Meanwhile, a bounty hunter captures Tarzan and aims to take him to England as an exhibit. Again, both projects fail before leaving the jungle. Finally in *Tarzan Finds a Son!* a plane flying from London to Cape Town crashes and the baby survivor turns out to be heir to an English peerage. Years later, the boy's relatives come in search of him, hoping to take him back to England. Tarzan and Jane resign themselves to his departure, but Boy eventually stays, when the relatives are revealed to be self-serving parasites.

An English plot element was also present in proposed storylines that were *not* made, several of which had English locations. For example, the Tarzan family is based in London in an early storyline for *Tarzan Finds A Son!* Much cross-cultural confusion ensues, including a scene in which Tarzan is taken to the opera and, during the live burial scene in *Aida*, he 'launches himself to the rescue, via the chandelier to the stage'.[13] Again, England is portrayed as second best and Tarzan has to employ the services of zoo elephants to rescue Jane and Boy from kidnappers, before the family can return to the relative safety of the jungle.

The Tarzan series was, therefore, heavily weighted to appeal to the British audience, by using British cast members, characters and storyline references. MGM also sought to underpin this investment by giving special attention to the views of the BBFC. This was very significant, as there is no evidence of specific attention being given to the concerns of any other non-American censors regarding these films. In particular, consideration was given to a very British sensibility – cruelty to animals.

The BBFC were themselves under pressure on this issue from organisations including the RSPCA and the Performing and Captive Animals Defence League. The latter had complained about reports of 'gross cruelty to animals in the production of *Trader Horn*'.[14] Meanwhile in May 1934, the Home Office, the BBFC and fourteen other organisations met to discuss the issue of animal welfare – specifically focusing on the 'gladiatorial' aspects of jungle films (men fighting animals) and one film in particular: *Tarzan and His Mate*.[15] At the same meeting, Mr Johns of the National Canine Defence League mentioned that he was in correspondence with the PCA, who seemed 'extraordinarily anxious to ascertain the psychology of the ordinary people in this country who are interested in animals'.[16]

As a result of these and other investigations, the PCA prepared detailed reports on the responses of various foreign censors to the Tarzan series and these reports highlighted British concerns over animal welfare. For example, regarding *Tarzan Escapes*, the BBFC stands out as being particularly sensitive to scenes in which animals were subject to fear or violence. Other than Britain, only Denmark objected to such material and they only deleted one scene, involving the shooting of a lion. Meanwhile, the BBFC required numerous cuts to the final print, including:

> Fry shooting lion and lion's death struggles
> Shots of ape caught in trap and squealing
> Shots of Tarzan killing Hartbeest
> Shots of monkey trying to ride Zebra and all shots of Fawn showing terror at approaching crocodile
> Shots of monkey showing fright at lion[17]

MGM consequently responded to British concerns over animal cruelty by reducing the number and intensity of Tarzan scenes involving animals fighting or in fear. As

Table 7.2 shows, scenes involving the violent death of animals also fell consistently, from fifteen in 1932 to two in 1939 (these two being merely fake spiders).

The production of *Tarzan Finds A Son!* provides perhaps the best evidence of both the increasingly collaborative relationship between the PCA and the BBFC and the desire of MGM to avoid offence to British audiences. When MGM submitted an early script to the PCA in 1938 for comments, Breen objected to the overall level of violence and recommended that MGM employ someone from the SPCA to certify that animals were treated properly. 'This is especially important', Breen noted, 'if your picture is to be released in England.'[18] MGM took his advice. In the same letter, Breen draws attention to other scenes which might irritate the BBFC:

> Scene 196: It is not clear here as to the sleeping arrangements of Tarzan and Jane. You will have in mind that the British Censor Board deletes scenes of married couples in bed together.
>
> Scene 306: The business of the Boy jabbing the lion will probably be cut in England as suggestive of cruelty to animals.[19]

Consequently, both these scenes were shot in a milder form. Tarzan and Jane lie on distant twin beds, arguing rather than sleeping. And Boy, when escaping from a lion, merely taps it with a leafy branch. Not only was this film far less violent than its predecessors, but it showed very little in terms of violence towards animals. However the BBFC still deleted an early sequence in the finished film, involving a rather strange altercation between leopards, monkeys, hyenas and a panther.[20]

It is therefore apparent that the MGM Tarzan series was a collection of films made deliberately to appeal to the British market. The movies were anglicised in terms of their cast, characters and storylines and particular attention was given to the requirements of the BBFC and other British organisations, especially regarding the issue of animal cruelty. As outlined in Table 7.1, this strategy was highly productive. The films were a huge success in Britain and, as will now be shown, they were particularly popular with British children.

Tarzan and children

Evidence for the popularity of MGM Tarzan films with British youngsters is not hard to come by. However, in order to gain specific detail for this thesis regarding the reception of the series, a questionnaire was devised and sent to nine respondents from the CCINTB project, who had mentioned Tarzan at interview or in correspondence. Appendix 6 shows the full questionnaire, which presented five main questions:

1. As a child, how did you feel about the Tarzan films starring Johnny Weissmuller?
2. How popular were these films with children in general?
3. Which of the [listed] characters do you remember?
4. What were your impressions of the Tarzan films as a child?
5. Did you think that they were suitable or unsuitable for children?

Of the nine respondents approached, seven replied: four men and three women. Two grew up in London, two in Bolton, two in Glasgow and one in Lancashire, with dates of birth ranging from 1918 to 1930.[21] Their responses provide a fascinating insight into the popularity of MGM Tarzan movies with British children.

All of the questionnaire respondents claimed to remember how they felt about MGM Tarzan films. Two rated these films as among their 'favourites' as children and the other five 'liked them a lot'. None expressed a mild preference or a dislike for the films. In terms of gender, both respondents claiming Tarzan films as 'favourites' were women. So among this selected sample, Tarzan films were apparently highly popular and, if anything, more popular with girls than with boys.

When asked how popular the Tarzan movies had been with children in general, one respondent could not remember, two recalled that they were 'extremely popular' and four, 'very popular'. Again, no mild or negative responses were given and the overall impression is that these movies were well liked by children. This is borne out in the detailed comments added by some respondents. Thomas McGoran recalls:

> The early Tarzan movies were very popular with children... A Tarzan film at our local flea-pit was an occasion to look forward to. Sometimes we would go to see it twice, if funds extended so far.[22]

Norman Wild confirms this view. 'The Tarzan films were very popular indeed with the younger end', he writes. 'If a Tarzan film was on the programme we were always among the first in the queue to get a good seat'.[23] Similarly, Arthur Orrell remembers that 'Tarzan films [were] particular favourites for Saturday afternoon children's "Penny Rushes"', adding the considerable accolade that they were 'almost as much favoured as "Cowboy Films"'.[24] Finally, Bernard Letchet explains that when Tarzan films were on, he and his sister 'had to queue to get into the cinema as they were very popular'.[25] Incidentally, these responses suggest that Tarzan was favoured by children across Britain, coming as they do from Bolton, Glasgow and London and this national aspect is confirmed by similar evidence from a range of other sources which will be utilised in the remainder of this section.

The fact that Tarzan films were highly popular with children is evidenced not only in the way young people anticipated and queued to see them, but also in their reception within the cinema. While sloppy stuff was greeted with derision and educational films with alternative pursuits among the audience, MGM Tarzan movies seem to have evoked the kind of response reserved for favourite genres. Angus Bruce writes of his Tarzan-viewing in Leith:

> There was absolute mayhem in the cinema as every one of us were cheering like mad as the swinging Tarzan navigated his way through the jungle at a fair rate of knots... Tarzan – Johnny Weissmuller, the only real Tarzan – never let us down and gave us something to relish for the rest of the week.[26]

Similarly, Norman Wild recalls, 'the Tarzan films were...very exciting, adventurous, and when he was winning all his battles and rescues the roof nearly lifted with the cheering from the kids'.[27]

Meanwhile, like other popular genres, Tarzan films inspired a range of behaviours among children outside the cinema, including re-enactment, play and imitation, making Tarzan an important part of 1930s children's cinema culture. Playing at Tarzan often included practising the 'Tarzan yell' and, as with gangster and horror films, the fun generally started immediately outside the cinema. Norman Wild and Vera Entwistle remember this.

Norman:	Oh I liked TARZAN, yeah... Johnny Weissmuller. Yeah... I liked them.
Interviewer:	Did you feel that you...
Norman:	You were part of it.
Vera:	Oh yes, we all used to come out going Ah-ah-aaahh![28]

Yelling after the film was also mentioned by Bernard Letchet, who always went to his Grandfather's house after the cinema. Bernard admits, 'following the Tarzan films I did give a bellow sometimes on the way'.[29] Marjorie Cunningham lived above a Glasgow cinema and could hear the films from her bedroom. She recalls:

> I loved Johnny Weissmuller's TARZAN there was only one TARZAN and it was him. My brother would take me down to see the film and thereafter I would relive every yell and scream while listening to the soundtrack. I was the only kid in school that could do TARZAN's call.[30]

In addition to the yell, the simple language of Tarzan was adopted by some children, including Angus Bruce, who notes, 'we were all quite fluent in "Tarzan Speak" since 'Ungawa' covered about every contingency'.[31]

More complex Tarzan games were also played, albeit still including the obligatory yell. Arthur Orrell explains, 'we boys played at copying Tarzan as we did "Cowboys" – though mostly I remember was in imitating his jungle calls'.[32] Similarly, Lewis Howells recollects playing with friends in beech woods, quarries and caves, where their 'film-inspired games...involved explorers we had seen, plus the...opportunity to try the Tarzan cry'. He says of Tarzan movies, along with gangster, cowboy and explorer genres: 'these groups of films certainly had strong influence on the group games we played'.[33] Girls, too, played at Tarzan, as Marjorie Cunningham remembers:

> We all learned this call as we "acted out" our Jungle on the back stairs of our Tenement and back courts. The BINS were our escarpment. The stair landing for our Tree-House... We all talked and acted out the scenes.

Although we had no open space to play...our nearest park had a fountain which helped with the crocodiles!![34]

Finally, some children had access to toys and other items directly or indirectly linked to the MGM Tarzan films. Official merchandise included flip-books, pocket knives, ice-cream cups, books, comic strips, rubber toys, writing pads and games (see Table 7.3) and while some of this may have been unavailable to British children, they could still relate Tarzan to other toys. For example, Marjorie Cunningham was given 'a celluloid PARROT' one Christmas. 'I made my way through it, biting it to bits at – Tarzan and the Apes', she recalls, 'I LOVED TARZAN JOHNNY'.[35]

Although both boys and girls liked Tarzan movies and played Tarzan games, the issue of gender and Tarzan is very interesting and this is reflected in the comments of questionnaire respondents regarding the popularity of the films. Notably, it appears that boys considered the films to be 'theirs', despite the fact that they were also extremely popular with girls.

Three of the four male respondents state that these were essentially boys' films. Arthur Orrell describes them as 'particularly of interest to boys – there did not seem to be a connection between Tarzan and girls'.[36] Thomas McGoran agrees that 'boys enjoyed Tarzan better than girls' and Norman Wild concurs, 'I think the films did appeal mostly to the young lads'.[37] Two of these men explain their statements by referring to images of masculinity. Arthur Orrell suggests that 'Tarzan films helped to create a sense of physical well being in boys in the days of Charles Atlas fitness advertisements'.[38] And Thomas McGoran argues that their popularity with boys 'could be because Tarzan seldom played lovey-dovey scenes with Jane, this made him more manly for tender aged hero worshippers'.[39]

Nevertheless, women respondents indicated that, if anything, girls had a stronger preference for the series than did boys. As Marjorie Cunningham recalls of these films, 'boys *and* girls loved them'.[40] Evidence of girls' interest in Tarzan films is also present in published primary sources. For example, in the Worktown project (investigating cinemagoing in 1930s Bolton) 15-year-old Ida Heyes wrote: 'I would ...like a few more jungle pictures e.g. Tarzan, Elephant Boy, etc'.[41] Meanwhile, in J. P. Mayer's 1945 collection of cinemagoers' autobiographies, three women and two

men referred to their liking for MGM Tarzan movies as children in the thirties.[42]

Jessie Boyd's memories of the films suggest that she felt passionately about them; she particularly notes their exciting content, her love of animals and her desire to emulate the character of Jane. In her letter to the CCINTB project, she writes:

> I loved "jungle pictures" with intrepid...British explorers on their terrible trecks, with the sound of menacing drums coming ever closer, snarling leopards, snakes about to coil round necks, etc.; but I especially thrilled to TARZAN, and fantasised about being the "mate"...sharing his jungle "pad" and being on really pally terms with chimps, elephants, etc.[43]

In the Tarzan Questionnaire (five years later), Jessie reiterates this view:

> I like all "jungle" films, and as I've always loved animals, these had a great attraction. I sometimes fantasised about being "The Mate" (in a totally innocent, asexual way).[44]

Despite the claims of some male respondents, therefore, it is clear that both sexes enjoyed the Tarzan films, although they may well have enjoyed them for various reasons. One indication of this is that when questionnaire respondents were asked to describe the films, two of the three women chose the option 'romantic', whereas none of the men did. Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression from the questionnaire is that children liked the entire MGM Tarzan package, including all the main characters (Tarzan, Jane, Boy and Cheeta), regardless of gender. Thus, Thomas McGoran (who suggests that boys preferred the films because of the 'manly' Tarzan) notes that he liked all the main characters, with no particular favourite. His recollections of specific scenes reflect this and, in fact, rather than focusing on the 'manly' Tarzan, Thomas recalls scenes in which he is vulnerable or domesticated:

> I can recall several scenes, like Tarzan imprisoned in a cage and shaking it until it fell down into a chasm with a pool at the bottom, or Jane having a spear in her back as she tried to draw attention from 'Boy' as he made a getaway... Tarzan always finished the movie smiling – with Jane and

> 'Boy' beside him, – not forgetting Cheeta – back to their tree top house, to live happily ever after.[45]

Overall, therefore, the MGM series was massively popular with children in Britain. Although it may have evoked gendered responses, it appealed equally to young people of both sexes and became one of their favourite film cycles of the decade, impacting their culture through play, imitation, language and merchandise.

The 'Kiddification' of the Tarzan Series

Having established the significance of these films for a study of children's cinemagoing in 1930s Britain, attention will now be given to the ways in which issues surrounding child viewing may have impacted the development of the MGM Tarzan series. Specifically, I would argue that this series was increasingly tailored by MGM towards the child audience, through a process of what might be called 'kiddification'. Evidence to support this assertion is derived primarily from an analysis of the films themselves, but also with reference to comments made at MGM during script development and in choices made by them in the marketing of the films, including trailers, publicity and merchandising. Consideration is also given to the ways in which newspaper reviews and articles may have helped to identify the series with a child audience.

The methodology used in assessing the content of the films for this chapter was deliberately basic, aiming to provide only a simple sketch of broad trends. To this end, the films were viewed several times and record was kept of the frequency of various types of incident which might be considered 'unsuitable' for children (such as violence, nudity and sexual innuendo) or 'particularly suitable' for them (including light humour, the use of baby animals, child characters, and domestic or family scenes). Although this assessment necessarily involved subjective judgements (for example, regarding what constitutes violence) care was taken to apply consistent standards across the series. In addition, reference was made wherever possible to the contemporary perceptions of censors, critics and the filmmakers themselves, regarding the content of these movies.

Overall, an analysis of the films based on the frequency of certain incidents

suggests that over the decade there was a gradual decline in elements considered unsuitable for children and a steady increase in more apparently suitable content. These trends are depicted in Table 7.2 and Figures 7.1 and 7.2. Of course, counting incidents gives only a basic representation of content, with no indication for example of its intensity or duration. However, if measures of severity and duration had been included in the table and graphs, this would merely have made the trends more prominent in every case. For example, incidents involving the violent death of a person declined from a peak of seventy-three in 1934 to just six in 1939. But what is more, in 1939 four of the six deaths occur offscreen and one onscreen incident simply involves a man being shot in the back, far from the camera. Meanwhile, the seventy-three deaths depicted in 1934 included people being strung upside-down and shot with arrows in the head. More detail of specific incidents will be given in the individual film analyses that follow.

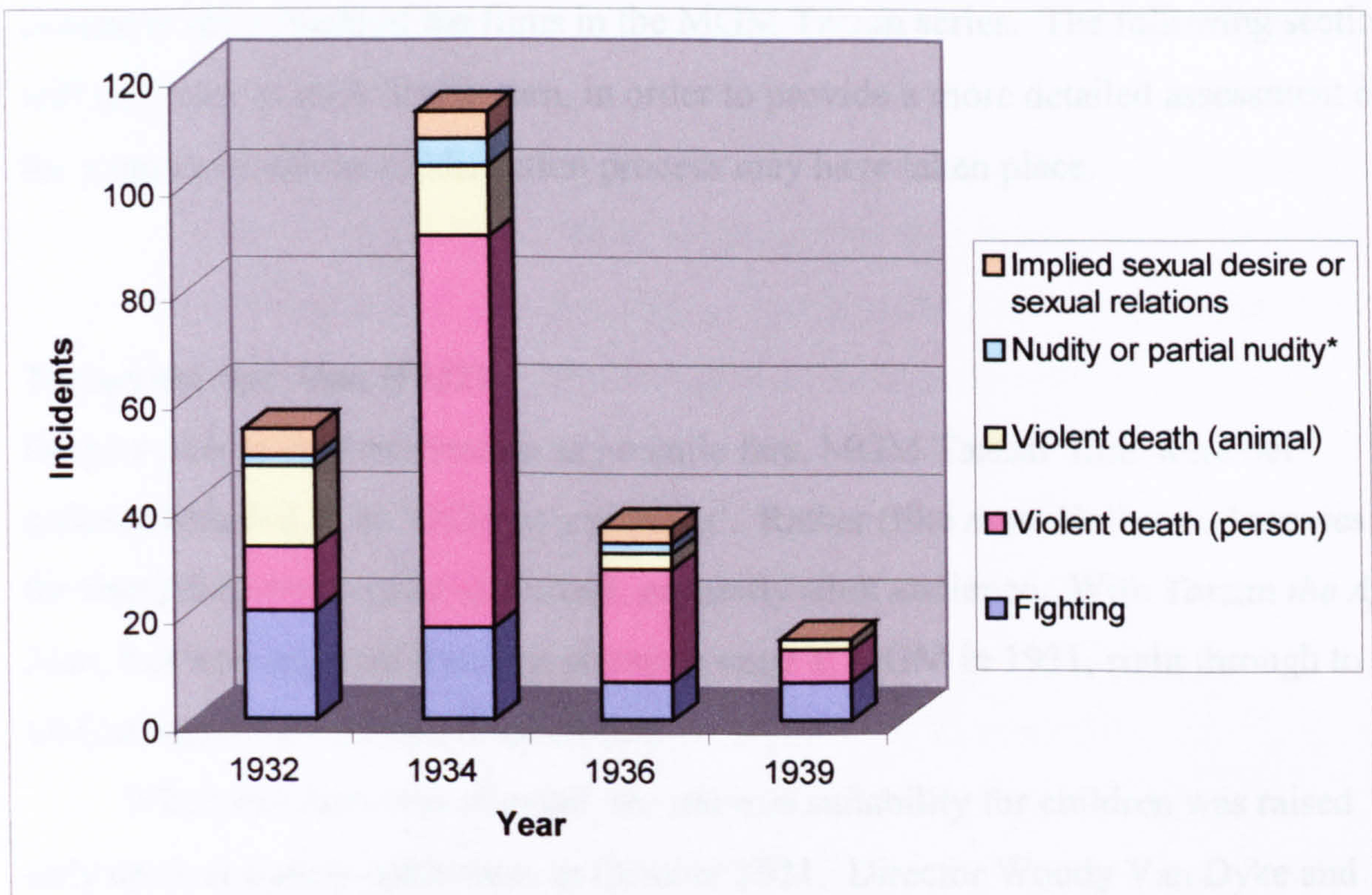
Table 7.2 Selected Content of MGM Tarzan Movies, 1932-1939

Incident	**Number of incidents in each film**			
	T the Ape Man (1932)	*T & His Mate* (1934)	*T Escapes* (1936)	*T Finds a Son!* (1939)
Nudity or partial nudity*	2	5	2	0
Implied sexual desire/sexual relations	5	5	3	0
Fighting	20	17	7	7
Violent death (animal)	15	13	3	2
Violent death (person)	12	73	21	6
Domestic/Family scenes	1	0	4	7
Cute/light humour	2	6	16	15
Scenes with baby animals	4	5	6	7
Scenes with children	2	0	2	17

* Includes partial nudity of women and total adult nudity only. Excludes normal costumes worn by Tarzan, Jane, Boy and bearers.

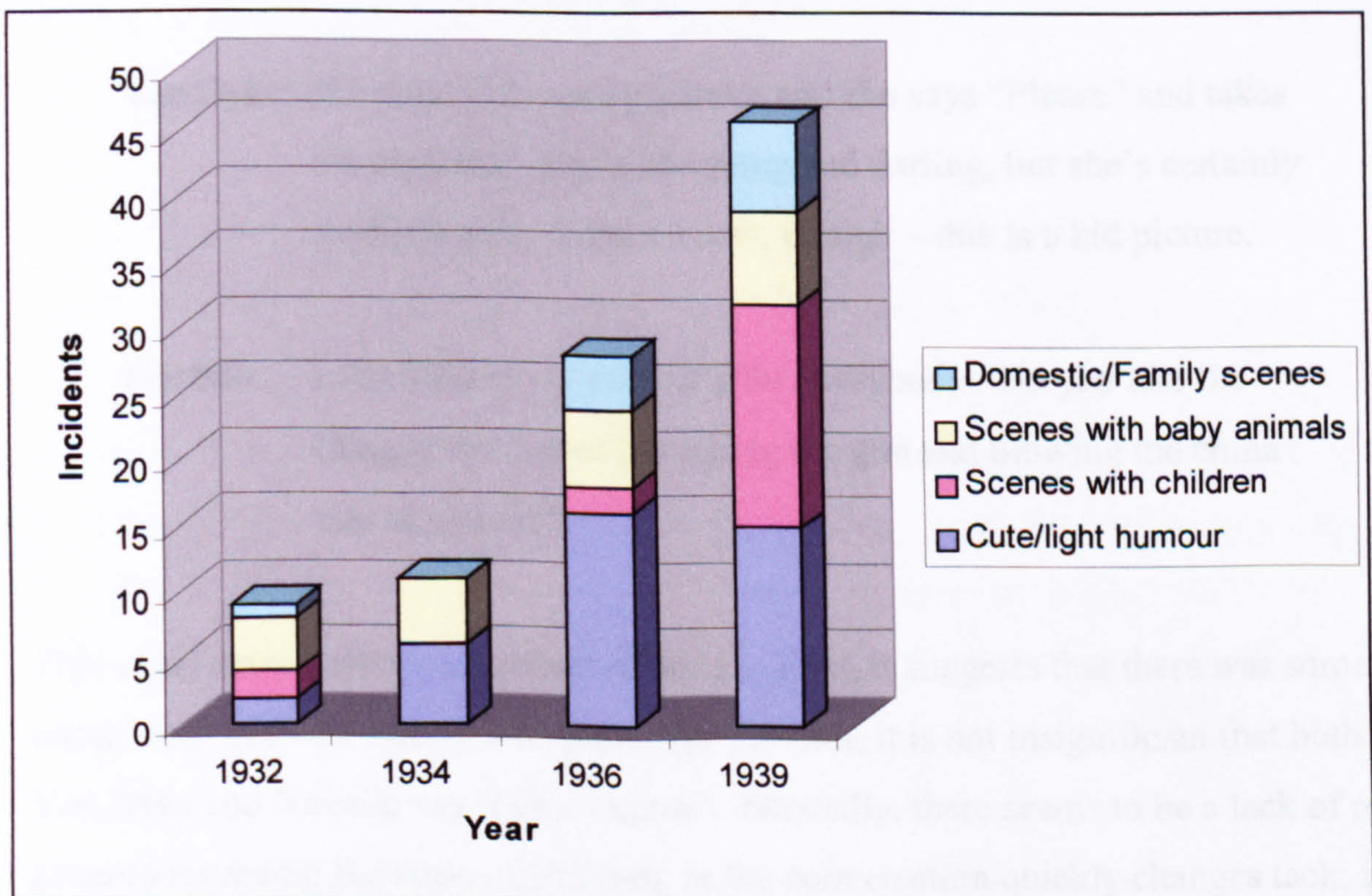
Source: Data compiled by the author from viewings of the initial release versions of the films.

Figure 7.1 'Unsuitable' Content in MGM Tarzan Films, 1932-1939



* Includes partial nudity of women and total adult nudity only. Excludes normal costumes worn by Tarzan, Jane, Boy and bearers.

Figure 7.2 'Suitable' Content in MGM Tarzan Films, 1932-1939



Source: Data compiled by the author from viewings of the initial release versions of the films.

Table 7.2 and Figures 7.1 and 7.2 therefore give an indication of the broad trends evident in the content of the films in the MGM Tarzan series. The following sections will now look at each film in turn, in order to provide a more detailed assessment of the ways in which the kiddification process may have taken place.

***Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932)**

Despite their later identification as juvenile fare, MGM Tarzan films were not initially intended to be 'children's pictures'. Rather (like most Hollywood movies of the time) they were aimed at a broad, primarily adult audience. With *Tarzan the Ape Man*, this was apparent from the planning stage at MGM in 1931, right through to the violent, sexually-charged, finished film.

When *Ape Man* was planned, the issue of suitability for children was raised only once, at a story conference in October 1931. Director Woody Van Dyke and writer Ivor Novello were discussing the character of Jane and had decided that she was a woman who knew how to drink and handle a gun and that she was to be 'sophisticated' – that is, worldly-wise and sassy. However, when they turned to the subject of smoking, Van Dyke started to worry that they were making her too 'adult':

> Van Dyke: If Porter took out a cigarette and she says "Please" and takes the cigarette. She's charming and darling, but she's certainly sophisticated. I don't know, though – this is a kid picture.
>
> Novello: I don't know – I think it's for everybody. Do you like the thing at the end of her taking the gun and blowing the china cup to pieces?[46]

This small extract shows a number of things. First, it suggests that there was some uncertainty as to the intended audience for the film; it is not insignificant that both Van Dyke and Novello say 'I don't know'. Secondly, there seems to be a lack of real concern regarding the issue of children, as the conversation quickly changes tack; in fact, the production team never returned to the subject in this or any other meeting.

So it seems they were aiming to make a film with a broad appeal, 'for everybody'. Nevertheless, the implication remains that if this *had* been considered 'a kid picture' their approach would have somehow been different.

The fact that *Ape Man* was not principally directed at children was also evident from its trailer, which emphasised the sexual content and violent thrills of the film. Trailer audiences first saw Tarzan carrying Jane off in his arms and then dragging her, screaming and struggling, into his shelter. The superimposed titles read:

> The demand of the picture public for another giant romance of
> primitive life and unfettered love – HAS BEEN ANSWERED!
> TARZAN, The Ape Man,
> Knows only the law of the jungle – to seize what he adores![47]

Over a romantic shot of Tarzan and Jane, a title then reads: 'Many women would delight in living like Eve – if they found the right Adam!' A sequence of violent action clips follows, including Jane being lynched by pygmies, and the titles read:

> THRILL FOLLOWS THRILL!
> Hold your breath for the most daring and exciting screen
> adventure you've ever known!

This emphasis on thrilling violence and raw sexuality was evident from the film's first proposal, through every variation of the script. And apart from Van Dyke's brief comment ('I don't know, though – this is a kid picture'), there is no indication that the content was tempered at all by the likelihood that children would be in the audience. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the filmmakers were mindful of the potential reactions of audiences and censors to their product.

A good example of this is the brutal Gorilla Pit Sequence at the end of the film, which was discussed in great detail during development. In this sequence, a tribe of malevolent pygmies captures a safari, including Jane and her father. They are taken into a hut, containing a pit, in which is a huge, deadly gorilla. One at a time, members of the safari are strung up by the neck and swung into the pit, where the

gorilla kills them. Finally, Tarzan arrives and kills the beast.

The details of this sequence were gradually thrashed out by producer Hyman, director Van Dyke and writer Cyril Hume, each aiming to include as much action as possible. Hyman's early suggestions even included Jane being dropped into the pit and the giant ape 'ambling with a licentiously gorilla look toward the girl'.[48] Van Dyke concurred that they should 'establish a relationship between this woman and the ape', but Hume disagreed, warning: 'they'll censor you'.[49]

In addition to the censors, the demands of the audience were considered. At one point in the conference, they discussed cutting the entire pygmy village sequence due to cost and Hume suggested that they 'could make a charming romantic comedy out of this – very cheaply'. However, Hyman claimed this would make the film too tame for audiences. 'It wouldn't satisfy the people who want to see Tarzan', he said. 'We couldn't get by with it'.[50] So the pygmy village sequence was retained.

The movie's level of violence was also discussed in minute detail, but again, there was no reference to potential child viewers. Initial ideas about the pit scenes had Tarzan stabbing the gorilla in the back, cutting off its hand, burying the knife in its chest and then throwing the knife into its heart or throat.[51] Alternatively, Hyman suggested, 'how about if [Tarzan] lands with his legs around the gorilla's neck and starts stabbing him in the head?'[52] The brainstorming continued:

Van Dyke: The gorilla unwinds himself, reaches out –

Hyman: To pull the man apart –

Hume: Do you see him getting pulled apart –

Hyman: No. We go to the girl's reaction as the man screams. If you want, show a flash of blood on the floor.

Van Dyke: Maybe the gorilla throws an arm to the pigmies.[53]

Care was taken as to what would be explicitly shown and what would be implied. Having decided on the violent route, Van Dyke suggested a trick to sneak some of it past the censors. 'If the execution is at night', he ventured, 'we can get away with a lot of stuff we couldn't otherwise, because we can make it shadowy and vague'.[54]

The conference lasted from 11.00am to 9.45pm, with ideas for further violence coming thick and fast. Not even Tarzan's companion, Cheeta the chimp, was spared:

Van Dyke:	Now the little monkey comes in. The gorilla tears him apart.
Hume:	I think he would crumple the monkey up in one hand...
Van Dyke:	[Tarzan's] got to kill a couple of little fellows –
Hume:	Have him pick up a little fellow and knock the [door] props out of the way with him...
Hyman:	Having [Tarzan] cut the gorilla's head off would be too incredible, wouldn't it?[55]

The demise of friendly, comic character Beamish was also debated. Hyman recommended that he 'falls full of arrows'. Hume suggested that there could be 'a big pot of poison boiling and Beamish spills it, which kills him', before hitting on a better idea: Beamish could start a fire and then be 'immolated in his own gravy'.[56] The violence of the pit sequence was also enhanced by the writers, who threw Jane's elderly father into the fray in a later version of the script. A stage direction reads: 'Parker rushes with the blazing torch and jams it into the gorilla's face. The gorilla roars with pain and rage, and snatching the torch out of Parker's hand, beats him savagely with it.'[57]

Given this evidence of planning for one sequence, it is unsurprising that the result of the various story conferences, script versions and shooting decisions was a finished film with a considerable amount of violence. The first violent sequence is a raft attack in which the safari slay hippos at random and two bearers are eaten alive by crocodiles. Later, a large ape – Tarzan's 'mother' – is shot and killed by Holt. Tarzan then pursues the safari, bent on revenge. He cold-bloodedly drowns one bearer and ambushes another, whose off-camera screams suggest his death to be inevitable. Holt then shoots Tarzan in the head and, on escaping with his injury, Tarzan is attacked by lions. He fights and kills two of them.

Finally, the climactic pygmy village sequence contains a great deal of violence, as planned. Many of the original ideas were retained and others were adapted. For example, when Cheeta attacks the gorilla, it grabs the chimp by the legs and beats her head brutally several times against the floor, before throwing her out of the pit in a senseless heap. Many of the safari are lynched and swung into the pit and this is a particularly disturbing image in the case of Jane. The gorilla also beats up and knocks out Holt and Jane's father. Meanwhile, Tarzan's attack on the beast is both

effective and gruesome. He slashes its chest, slicing it open right through the nipple. He then throws his knife square into the gorilla's face and the shot cuts to a close-up of the gorilla with a knife firmly impaled in its eye. Holt looks away, revolted, while Tarzan retrieves the knife and attacks the gorilla from behind, repeatedly stabbing it in the throat until it drops dead. He yells out over its body in triumph, as the pygmies bury arrows and spears in the mangled corpse. Finally, Tarzan's elephants stampede through the village. One drags a screaming pygmy from his hut, throws him over its back to the ground, and tramples him to death.

The sexual content of *Ape Man* was also extensive and carefully planned. Essentially it took several forms including partial nudity, flirting, teasing, suggestive language and innuendo, embracing on screen, implied sexual activity off screen and even one scene suggestive of sexual violence.

The first scene of note is early in the finished film, when Jane arrives from England to find her father in his African traders' post. This sequence contains a great deal of suggestive ambiguity as they embrace, kissing and crying, and calling each other 'my darling', 'my dear', 'my baby'. Parker examines his daughter and declares her: 'attractive; mighty attractive'.[58] Jane decides to change her clothes and hands Parker her dressing gown to hold. He smells it, smiling, as she strips down to her lingerie in front of him, to his apparent discomfort:

Jane:	Darling, don't be embarrassed by me. Why you bathed me sometimes and very nearly spanked me too. Several times.
Parker:	Very nearly!

Jane continues to chatter as she cleans her face, the camera lingering on her exposed cleavage and her low-cut slip.

This ambiguous relationship was evident from the first versions of the script. When Jane's father (called Porter in early drafts) is nervous about meeting her from the boat, it is said that he resembles a man about to meet his bride. Holt advises Porter that if he is concerned about recognising his daughter, he should 'just kiss every woman on the boat 'til one of them yells "Daddy!"'[59] Again, in an early version of the script, after undressing, Jane stands in her underwear and declares to her father: 'I've been *told* that I'm getting to be quite a big girl' and he agrees that

she is 'an exceedingly attractive and shapely young woman'.[60] Later in the same script, while on safari, Porter proudly exclaims: 'Didn't I tell you Holt? She always did have a grand pair of legs on her!' Holt is embarrassed and changes the subject, but Jane then teases: 'I hate to think how I might disgrace myself if it were to rain. Likely I'd mistake it for a shower bath and – ahem – (suggestively plucking at her shirt...) – get right *out* in it!' The stage directions note that 'Porter looks mildly shocked' while 'Holt gives Jane a quick speculative glance.'[61]

Nude bathing – which would later be the talking point of *Tarzan and His Mate* – was also introduced in this early script, but not included in the final film. Jane decides to bathe in a river and is 'calmly beginning to unbutton her flannel shirt' as Porter and Holt watch and protest about her safety. She then 'nonchalantly removes her skirt' and presumably finishes stripping off camera, as the shot switches to Holt, who turns away, 'horrified into silence'. Meanwhile, Tarzan and Cheeta are also watching and Jane cutely asks them to leave. With her hand held at chin level, she quips, 'I haven't much on under this.'[62]

Sexual teasing also features in this script, soon after Jane meets Tarzan:

> Jane: (very quietly, not looking at him – after several seconds)
> Tarzan – kiss me!
>
> He watches her as before, not understanding.
>
> Jane: (more persuasively) Won't you?......Kiss me, Tarzan!

After a few moments, Jane breaks the tension: 'I just wanted to be *sure* you didn't understand English!'

Although not all of the sexual content of various script versions made it to the screen, the finished film is extremely sexy. The relationship between Tarzan and Jane is deliberately heightened by their location, as Tarzan's mastery of the jungle environment offsets Jane's relative physical vulnerability. A great deal of the sexual energy of the film also centres around the fact that Jane is attractive, uninhibited and an incorrigible flirt, while Tarzan is also extremely attractive and virtually naked, with a dangerous 'animal' quality, which makes him exciting, yet threatening. Much of the early sexual *frisson* between Tarzan and Jane, therefore, centres on the fact that while she is an attractive flirt, he is essentially wild, and she may well be playing

with fire. Nowhere is this more strongly explored than in a sequence soon after Tarzan snatches Jane away from the safari and into the trees. This extraordinary sequence will now be described as it appears in the finished film.

Tarzan and Jane have just met for the first time. Although she speaks to him, he is unable to understand or reply, so he resorts to action. He carries Jane into the trees and sits her down on a high branch. The dichotomy between Jane's attraction to Tarzan and her fear of him starts to emerge; she holds on to the Ape Man, because although she is frightened of him, she is more scared of falling. Thus, despite her fear of him, she insists, 'Don't let me go! ...Hold onto me!' Tarzan is intrigued by her clothes and pulls at her scarf. She hits his hand away; he pushes her back, hard; she wobbles on the branch and grabs his leg for support. When a large ape and a small chimp try to get in on the act, an unsteady Jane repeatedly grabs Tarzan's neck, arm, calf and inner thigh.

Tarzan sends the animals away, then tears the scarf from Jane's neck. Again she grabs his thigh for support. She is contemplating escape, when a leopard climbs into the tree. Tarzan draws his knife, jumps down, fights it and kills it. He climbs back up and stares at Jane. He is very attractive; dark, broody and athletic, dressed only in a loincloth, his well-muscled body beautifully lit through the trees. Tarzan stares at Jane then down at the leopard; at Jane again, then at the sky, which is darkening. He stares at Jane again, looks up to his shelter in the trees, then back to Jane. She seems worried by his intentions, when he picks her up and carries her to the platform outside his shelter. They sit there while Tarzan stares at Jane, who looks around with increasing alarm.

Suddenly, Tarzan enters the shelter, as does the camera. He drags her after him, screaming and a semi-improvised scene ensues, which is quite startling in its implications regarding the threat of rape. For over a minute (a long time in screen terms), Tarzan pins Jane down tightly by the wrists and body, as she thrashes and writhes in his lap, screaming. His intentions are ambiguous, but the implication is certainly sexual. The more Jane fights him, the harder he holds her. He is hurting her and she is terrified. She starts to panic: 'Oh...Oh...don't...don't...let me go... let me...let me go...let me go...let me go...[screams] let me go...let me go...' She desperately repeats 'Let me go!' a total of thirteen times and begs him to 'Stop!'

three times, while he grips her, his head bent over hers, gazing at her face and body.

Gradually, Jane stops screaming and starts to sob, then she gasps and pants for air and, as she looks into Tarzan's face, she quietens, until she is whimpering and almost flirting with him. He seems confused and looks as though he might kiss her, but then he throws her from him, across the shelter. Jane stays prone and cries quietly, but by now it is unclear whether she is crying from shock or rejection. Tarzan leans over her again, but is just looking. He then goes outside, draws his knife and lies down to sleep. Jane sits up, rubs her arm and watches him through the shelter entrance. Her shirt is roughly unbuttoned to show a flash of naked white breast, her hair is messed up, her face is wet with tears and expresses a strange combination of shock, fear and trust, as she too lies down to sleep. This remarkable scene is all the more extraordinary in that it was chosen for the trailer, again reinforcing the theory that *Ape Man* was not principally directed at children.

Throughout the film, the relationship between Tarzan and Jane is essentially one of physical attraction. However, with the exception of the scene described above, this is always softened by the use of gently comic or romantic tones. Another sexually loaded sequence occurs after Tarzan has been shot in the head and Jane has been taken to find him. Having torn strips from her clothing to bandage Tarzan's head, the semi-clad Jane leaves him to sleep while she goes to the river. She bathes her bare legs, then unbuttons and starts to remove her blouse. Cheeta watches and applauds and Jane realises Tarzan is watching too. She dresses again, while Tarzan does some high-bar gymnastics and dives into the river. He does not reappear and Jane is anxiously looking for him, when he grabs her leg and pulls her in. Tarzan holds Jane in his arms and playfully ducks her in the river. Jane initially struggles and then strokes Tarzan's face, to persuade him to take her to the bank. She climbs out of the water and we see the damage to her thoroughly soaked clothes; not only is she missing a sleeve and half of her skirt, but the back of her shirt is torn right open.

Suddenly, frightened by a galloping wildebeest, Jane leaps back into the river and Tarzan's arms. He is perhaps a little too friendly now and she primly slaps his caressing hands away from her shoulders and legs. However, she soon succumbs to the mutual attraction, curling one arm around his head and using the other hand to play with his hair. She floats on her back and he stands shoulder-deep, holding her,

as they languidly drift down the river. They gaze at each other. The river becomes deeper, until his head is level with her breasts. He plays with the water in his mouth.

Jane: What color are your eyes? Yes, I know, they're the color of the forest. Grey-green. I wonder what you look like dressed. (Laughs) Pretty good! You'd be a great success in London. And I believe you'd love it.

Tarzan: Love it?

Jane: (Still floating, lying in his arms) I don't think you'd better look at me like that. (She turns his head away, but he immediately gazes at her again) Far too attractive. I love saying things to a man who can't understand. You don't even know what kisses are.

Tarzan: Love it.

Jane: I dare say you would.

After a while, Jane climbs onto the bank and pushes Tarzan back into the water. She runs upriver, but he swims faster, climbs out and sits on her boots, so that she cannot retrieve them. In the play fight that ensues, he fondles her foot as she lies on the bank. 'Love it?' he asks. 'No such thing!' is her mock stern reply. He leans over her and they smile and smoulder at each other. He gently puts his palm over her face and says her name, then measures her hand against his own. Jane's breathing, facial expression and tone of voice suggest she is becoming sexually aroused.

Jane: (Huskily) Yes. There's quite a difference isn't there. Do you like that difference? You've never seen a human like me before, have you?

Tarzan leans across her again and, in a less threatening version of a previous scene, he looks at her face, then into the trees (up to his shelter), then back at her face. He rises and she tries to stop him leaving, but he pulls her to her feet, lifts her into his arms and gently carries her through romantic, dappled lighting, to the foot of the trees. The camera is above them. Tarzan pauses, looks up at the trees, then back to

Jane, questioningly. She embraces him and softly buries her face in his neck by way of consenting reply. He slowly carries her up into the trees and the shot fades out.

Tarzan: 'Love it?' (*Tarzan the Ape Man*, 1932)

There is clearly a strong implication of a sexual relationship here, reinforced in the following 'morning after' scene, when Tarzan brings Jane (forbidden?) fruit for breakfast and she puts her arms around his neck and draws him close to her. Later, she reluctantly rejoins the safari and, as Tarzan leaves, Jane's father comforts her:

Parker: You must let him go. He belongs to the jungle.

Jane: (Sobbing) Not now. He belongs to me! Tarzan!

Holt glares with jealous anger at this passionate display of affection, again reinforcing the implication that Tarzan and Jane have become lovers.

Ape Man therefore contains not only a fair amount of violence, but also a significant sexual charge. Furthermore, there is a marked absence of elements that might be considered particularly 'suitable' for children. There are only two scenes

involving comedy, two involving children (quick glimpses in footage of African tribes), a few brief shots of baby animals and only one that could be described as 'domestic': the final 'family' shot of Tarzan, Jane and Cheeta.

Can this therefore be described as an 'adult' movie? Certainly it appears to have been written and directed for a mainly adult audience. However, the making of *Ape Man* was not the end of the story. Notably, there were significant differences between the filmmakers' intentions and those of the people marketing *Ape Man* on its release in March 1932. In addition, factors of reception must be considered, including the responses of critics and, essentially, of audiences to the movie.

One of the main targets for *Ape Man* publicity was women. Advertising stressed the sexual or romantic content of the film, using shots of Tarzan carrying Jane in his arms, with captions including: 'If all marriages were based on the Jungle mating instinct – it would be a happier world' and 'Modern marriage can learn plenty from this drama of primitive jungle mating'.[63] For the film's World Premiere in Baltimore, one department store put a live Tarzan model in their most prominent window, which 'attracted crowds and stopped traffic' and they also ran a twice-daily bathing suit fashion show.

However, children were also specifically targeted. A baby lion was donated to Baltimore Zoo and local children were asked to name it, while another store featured exhibitions of 'Leo the MGM Lion' in their Toy Department. The *Baltimore Post* also ran a Tarzan colouring competition and MGM produced a children's animated flip-book of Tarzan fighting a lion. The trade press followed this lead, emphasising the broad audience appeal of *Ape Man*, but also highlighting its specific attraction for children. *Kinematograph Weekly* called the film 'superlative entertainment' with an 'appeal...directed to the young of all ages'.[64] Meanwhile, *Motion Picture Herald* advised cinema managers to publicise the movie in schools and to encourage school groups to attend:

> It's a safe bet that young and old will spend a thoroughly enjoyable evening's entertainment... Youngsters who have been literally starved for suitable screen fare will go for it hook, line and sinker, and this means that schools and P.T. associations can be contacted for essays on Africa,

the jungle and the natural history angle, plus attendance en masse.[65]

Finally, a crucial factor in the definition of the series was that children did indeed attend 'en masse', claiming the picture as their own; as already indicated, Weissmuller's Tarzan was immediately popular with children. Reviewers noticed this and, in commenting on it, arguably helped encourage a perception of the series as being suitable for children. For example, the first line of the *New York Times* review associated *Ape Man* with the child audience: 'Youngsters home from school yesterday found the Capitol a lively place, with all sorts of thrills in the picture "Tarzan the Ape Man".'[66]

Evidence therefore suggests that *Ape Man* was initially conceived and written for a broad, mainly adult audience, including fairly graphic violence as well as a strong sexual undercurrent. The marketing of the movie targeted adult women but also children and the latter attended in particularly large numbers. This demographic was reinforced by film critics and trade press reports. Consequently, despite the initial intentions of the filmmakers, the nascent definition of *Ape Man* was not as a feast of sex and violence, but as primarily a family or children's picture. And when MGM produced the next film in the series two years later, this disparity between intention and definition would be even more pronounced.

Tarzan and His Mate (1934)

Tarzan and His Mate, the second film in the series, was both the most critically acclaimed movie of the MGM collection and also the most controversial. Released in April 1934, it just slipped in before the Hays Code watershed of July and challenged censors in four main areas – animal cruelty, violence, sexual content, and costume and nudity. Such issues were generally problematic but this was heightened, of course, by anxieties regarding their impact on young Tarzan fans.

Mate was actually more liable to accusations of animal cruelty than its predecessor. *Ape Man* features the violent deaths of fifteen animals, including eleven onscreen. *Mate* shows thirteen animal deaths, all onscreen and violence involving animals is also more sustained. Notably, the climactic fight sequence is a

prolonged five-way battle between a safari, a hostile African tribe, and large numbers of apes, lions and elephants, with many incidents suggestive of animal cruelty. In fact, this sequence involved the actual shooting of at least two lions. Bernie Hyman reassured the PCA that these were 'old animals, whose owner had decided to destroy [them] because of their general unfitness for service'. They were shot by 'an expert marksman' employed (rather ironically) by the SPCA, and MGM obtained a formal explanatory statement from the SPCA in case of serious protest.[67]

Mate also features a significant escalation in violence between people, despite the already high levels of violence in *Ape Man*. As Table 7.2 shows, violent deaths of people leapt from twelve in *Ape Man* (including eight onscreen) to seventy-three in *Mate* (including fifty onscreen) while large-scale screen battles doubled from two to four. Gory deaths include people being shot with guns at close range; speared in the head and body; killed and eaten by lions; strung upside-down and shot in the head with arrows. In one case, a man is stabbed to death as a bloody human sacrifice and in another, a character named Saidi is caught and tied to a tree, his bare chest is sliced open with a knife and lions are summoned to finish him off.

The Hollywood Reporter previewed *Mate* in early April 1934. Like most reviews of the film, it was laudatory, describing elements as 'outstanding', 'terrific' and even 'miraculous'. It even welcomed the nude swimming scene (detailed below) as 'one of the most beautiful sequences ever filmed'. However, objection was taken to the high level of violence in the movie, with particular reference to young viewers:

> About half the picture is utterly delightful, and the other half just a gruesome, harrowing, nerve-wracking, noisy, bloody, unpleasant experience... the latter half of the picture literally drips with blood... If the picture is not cut...parents all over the country will appreciate warnings to keep their children away from it. If it is cut, the parents will probably insist on taking the kids to the show themselves.[68]

Similarly, *Photoplay* reviewed it as being 'a breath-taking production' that was 'perhaps too gory for young children'.[69] Still, some trade reviews differed. Thus, the *Kinematograph Weekly* declared *Mate* 'safe for children' and the BFI Monthly

Film Bulletin described it as 'definitely a film the entire family will enjoy'.[70]

The third area of concern to censors in *Mate* was the depiction of sexual desire and sexual relations. This was by far the most provocative film of the series in this regard, with sex imbedded in its very title as well as throughout the picture.

In the opening sequence, Harry Holt finds his friend Martin Arlington leaving the room of his married lover, just before her husband returns. Holt and Arlington then amble around arm in arm (Holt seems particularly unable to keep his hands off his friend) and some 'pansy comedy' follows, when Arlington strips completely naked and takes a bath. Holt's manservant Beamish then slips on the soap and falls into Arlington's lap twice. Thus, adultery and a 'touch of lavender' are evident from the outset.

Most of the sexual content, however, revolves around Jane, who flirts with and is sexually attractive to three men – Tarzan, Holt and Arlington. This four-way relationship is a pivotal element of the film, as is emphasised in the Press Book.[71] The first time the four characters meet, Jane is clearly Tarzan's (sexual) 'mate', but she also embraces Holt, gazes into his eyes and plays with his shirt as she talks to him. Meanwhile, Arlington makes it clear that he is also attracted to her. When Tarzan and Holt leave, Jane notices that Arlington has been grazed by an arrow during a recent skirmish. The shooting script reads:

> She takes the wounded hand and puts her lips over it, sucking the wound. This brings her close to Arlington. He leans so that his body presses against hers. Evidently, something other than the wound is affecting him. He looks down at her, with great desire.[72]

During the following sequence, Holt and Arlington try to tempt Jane to return to England, with dresses, stockings, lingerie and perfume. It grows dark and Tarzan goes to build a shelter. Meanwhile, Jane changes into these clothes and, as she is in a tent, her naked silhouette is clearly visible, thrown onto the canvas by a lantern. Holt walks away, but Arlington ogles at the display and chats to Jane:

Arlington:	Need any help?
Jane:	Do you always help ladies to dress?

Arlington: When they're lovely enough.

She emerges from the tent.

Arlington: You know you're the first woman I ever had to coax *into* an evening dress.

Jane: I imagine that isn't your usual practice.

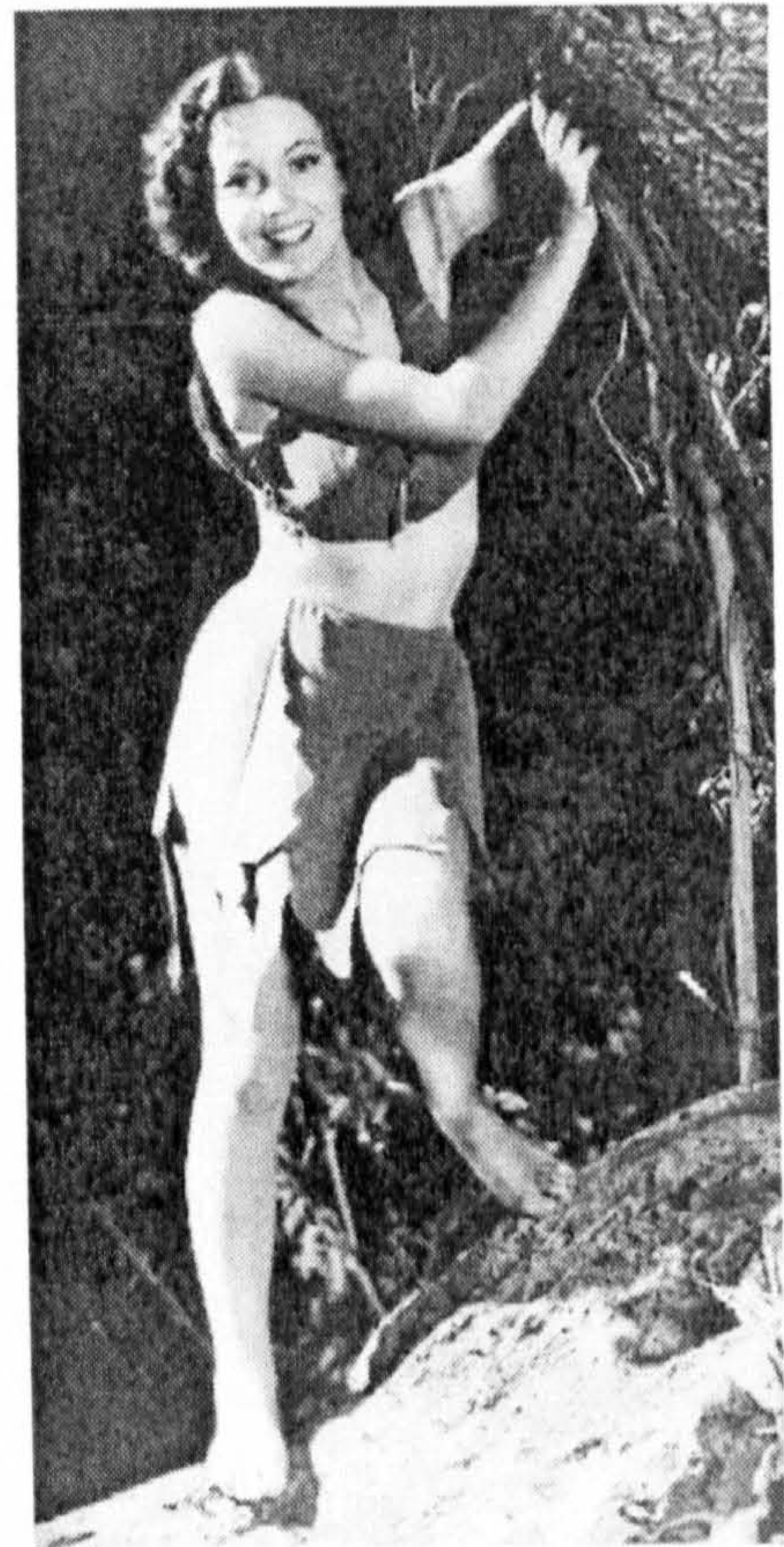
They dance.

Arlington: You know, you're a fascinating little savage.

He kisses her, passionately.

This scene concludes when Tarzan suddenly returns and, being aroused by the feel of Jane's dress and stockings and the smell of her perfume, he picks her up and carries her off, unmistakably for sex. The following sequence, as in *Ape Man*, is a 'morning after' depiction of post-coital bliss, in which Tarzan nuzzles Jane awake (naked under a fur blanket) and offers her some fruit juice, before they kiss and go off for their famous skinny-dipping scene.

Nakedness and costume in *Mate* represented the final bone of contention for censors and reformers. Interestingly, relatively little was said about Tarzan's rather scanty costume, about Arlington stripping naked for a bath (including a shot of his bare behind), or about shots of topless African women in the movie's opening sequence. However, a great deal of controversy surrounded Jane's costume (or lack of it). Thus, double standards of race and gender were clearly at work.



Jane's costume for *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934)

In *Ape Man*, Jane had worn a safari suit – albeit rather depleted sometimes. But her costume for *Mate* was quite different. Initially, MGM toyed with outfits in black panther skin or feathers, or a 'sports suit', as in *Ape Man*.[73] However, the final decision was that Jane should wear a version of Tarzan's leather loincloth (which has

front and back flaps and thongs at the sides, exposing his hips, thighs and occasionally buttocks, with a pair of briefs underneath). Jane's version was a similar loincloth with nothing covering her hips and (judging by one shot in the film) nothing at all underneath.[74] Her midriff is also bare and she wears a sleeveless leather top, cropped at breast level and tied with thongs in the front and at the sides. This skimpy garment exposes her cleavage, plus the sides and occasionally the undersides of her breasts. Although reformers were appalled, a recent interview with Maureen O'Sullivan suggests that this was conservative compared to earlier ideas:

> They tried different things to make Jane look pretty sexy. And first off they had the idea of having Jane wearing no bra. No brassiere at all. And she would always be covered with a branch. And they tried that and it didn't work. So then they made a costume.[75]

Nevertheless, Jane does wear nothing in *Mate* on two occasions: the tent silhouette scene already mentioned and the infamous swimming scene, in which Olympic swimmer Josephine McKim doubled for O'Sullivan. This latter sequence begins when Tarzan playfully throws Jane into a river from a high tree. An overhanging branch rips off her gown and the couple then swim together, he in his loincloth and she completely naked. Their underwater antics are captured in up to eight minutes of 'water ballet' footage, before Jane leaves the water and chases Cheeta through the jungle, to retrieve her dress.

Daring as it was, this scene was not without precedent, for *Birds of Paradise* (1932) and *Ecstasy* (1932) had featured naked swimming scenes with Dolores Del Rio and Hedy Lamarr respectively.[76] Nevertheless, in early April 1934, Breen rejected *Mate* for violating Code regulations regarding nudity.[77] MGM appealed, but a jury (including representatives of RKO, Universal and Fox) upheld Breen's decision and the sequence was reshot. When the movie was finally passed and released later that month, three versions were in circulation – one with the nude swimming sequence, one showing Jane topless and the third with no revealing shots at all. It was some time before the two illicit versions were completely withdrawn.

Mate was therefore liberally laced with sex and nudity and showed a marked escalation in violence compared to *Ape Man*. Moreover, it contained no scenes of

domesticity or family life and had no children in it whatsoever. This suggests that, again, children were not the main intended audience for the film – a view reinforced by the fact that much of the proposed advertising still deliberately targeted adult women. Doherty has argued that both *Ape Man* and *Mate* were 'aimed straight at the female audience', with Weissmuller's Tarzan being promoted as a 'sex toy, a congenial stud' and 'the most sexually potent romantic lead of the…pre-Code era'.[78] This is an understandable conclusion, but it is not wholly accurate, for MGM actually marketed both films to a broader audience, including children.

As with *Ape Man*, the MGM Press Book for *Mate* plays up the movie's sex and violence, highlighting the theme of a 'PRIMITIVE MARRIAGE beyond the bounds of convention', but also promoting it as 'a screen adventure that will startle every picturegoer from eight to eighty!' Suggested 'catchlines' include: 'A PICTURE FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY. MOTHER WILL ENJOY THE LOVE STORY. FATHER THE FAST-MOVING ADVENTURE. AND THERE ARE THRILLS FOR CHILDREN OF EVERY AGE!'[79] MGM also produced a forty-four-page advertising manual for *Mate*, declaring that Tarzan 'inspires grown ups and children alike', although it still foregrounds the impropriety of Tarzan and Jane's relationship:

> See the thin veneer of civilization drop from this dazzling society beauty as she melts into the arms of her lover of the wilderness… PRIMITIVE LOVERS in a PARADISE OF PERIL! …Two lovers in a world of romance…defying civilization to rob them of their rightful rapture![80]

Despite the content of the film, therefore, the advertising campaign was quite mixed and did encourage the promotion of the film for children as well as adults. The advertising manual for *Mate* encapsulates this philosophy:

> **ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL!**
>
> Since the advent of talking pictures the most important problem that production executives have had to solve is that of creating entertainment for the ENTIRE AMERICAN FAMILY. Some are successful in producing entertainments for adults, all too few have been able to appeal to children,

but now comes the perfect combination in entertainment for everyone from eight to eighty. The picture is TARZAN AND HIS MATE.[81]

The manual also provides various promotional ideas, including Tarzan-related displays in cinema foyers and shop windows, Weissmuller swimming lessons for publication in local newspapers, Tarzan lookalike competitions and zoo animal processions. Importantly, this list also includes a large range of activities for children, such as tree-house, essay and Tarzan yell competitions, Tarzan Boys Clubs and 'health contests' for Boy and Girl Scouts.[82] It also suggests a press release regarding a tree-house-building craze which had apparently emerged since *Ape Man*, noting that 'the new Weissmuller picture…is expected to even increase interest in "Tarzan" among children'.[83]

Finally, the trailer for *Mate* deliberately foregrounds the literary roots of the Tarzan series and its suitability for children. It opens with a shot of 'two boys and a little girl on their knees reading a book', superimposed over various shots of the jungle. We then see the Tarzan comic strip from a Sunday newspaper, followed by a man reading a book by the fire, with a superimposed shot of Tarzan riding a rhino. The next scene is of a boy and girl sitting on a divan, reading a magazine, with a superimposed shot of Tarzan and Jane. The clear suggestion here is one of cultural legitimacy and suitability for children. Nevertheless, the trailer also has more 'adult' content, including violence, shots of Arlington kissing Jane and, to the consternation of the PCA, parts of the nude swimming sequence.[84] As with *Ape Man*, therefore, it could be argued that *Mate* was a film with significant 'adult' content, which was nevertheless marketed to a broad audience, including children. And again, children went in droves to see the picture.

***Tarzan Escapes* (1936)**

As shown by Table 7.2 and Figures 7.1 and 7.2 the next film in the series, *Tarzan Escapes*, showed a marked diminution in levels of sex and violence, alongside an increase in content considered suitable for children. Nudity occurs only in the first few minutes of the film, with shots of two topless African women preparing food and

four naked African children with their backs to camera. Since the furore over *Mate*, Jane's costume has also transformed, from brazen bikini to modest mini-dress (with shorts beneath for extra security).

Comparison of Jane's costumes in *Tarzan and His Mate* (left) and *Tarzan Escapes*

Sexual relations are implied just once: the 'Garden of Eden' sequence, when Tarzan and Jane swim and play; their underwater kiss being the only romantic kiss in the movie. When they leave the water, Tarzan amorously bites Jane's neck, then he gives her a lily. Jane lies back and Tarzan stands over her, casting his shadow across her body. She smoulders at him and the camera assumes Tarzan's gaze, moving in, as Jane tilts her head and parts her lips, letting the lily drift away on the river. Sexual relations are then implied by a close-up on the lily as it floats downstream.

The level of violence in the film is also greatly reduced. Twenty-one people die violently, but only eleven of these deaths are shown onscreen. Meanwhile, just three animals die – two onscreen and one offscreen. However, there are still a number of fight sequences and a certain amount of gruesome spectacle, including shots taken from *Mate* of speared bodies and men hung upside-down with arrows in their heads. *Escapes* also includes one of the most memorable violent sequences in the MGM series, when a safari (including Jane) is captured by the Himandi tribe.[85] The tribe ties one of the safari's bearers to two trees, which have been crossed and

bent down to the ground. The crossed trees are then raised upright, with the bearer hanging upside-down between them. When a rope is cut, the trees fly apart and the bearer (obscured by the crowd) screams horribly, presumably being torn asunder.

Escapes also saw an increase in content more suitable for children. Notably, there is far more light humour, often generated by Cheeta or at the expense of new working class character Herbert Henry Rawlins (Herbert Mundin), a born coward who frequently interacts with Cheeta and other animals. Children feature briefly in this film too (naked African children, as already described) and there are six scenes involving baby animals. Finally, there is a significant shift in the tone of Tarzan and Jane's relationship, away from the wild, animal passion of previous films and towards a domesticated family life, with Cheeta as their surrogate child.

In particular, Tarzan, Jane and Cheeta no longer live in rough shelters, but in a fabulous tree-house (with tree outbuildings), reached by an elephant-operated lift and serviced by an ingenious running water supply. Jane invites her cousins and their safari back to this 'town house' for dinner, sending Tarzan off to 'do the marketing' and explaining to her guests, 'I designed the kitchen myself... hot and cold water – all the latest conveniences'. The importance of this domestic location is emphasised at the end of the film when Tarzan sadly returns home, thinking Jane has left for England with her cousins. He sees smoke rising from the tree-house chimney and rushes home to find Jane waiting there for him. They embrace and Cheeta comically celebrates, by imitating a Tarzan yell. Thus, domesticity and humour (rather than sex and violence) have become this film's dominant features.

Before considering issues relating to the reception and marketing of this film, it is important to mention that *Escapes* was actually the result of a complete re-shoot; the third film in the MGM series was initially intended to be *The Capture of Tarzan*, which was completed in 1935. However, after filming *Capture*, MGM found it inadequate in various ways (primarily, Tarzan's character was considered too passive and the story was thought to lack 'menace'). The studio was so disappointed that they scrapped it and made *Escapes* instead – adding a year to the production and a great deal to the cost.[86] Sadly, there are no known prints of *Capture*, but detailed records are available regarding its script development and censorship.

Capture had the working title *Tarzan Returns* and used much the same story as *Escapes*, but with more sex and violence.[87] Nevertheless, both elements were utilised with care in the light of increased PCA activity and *Returns* was significantly tamer than *Mate*. For example, one outline for *Returns* suggests that Jane's cousin Rita has a sexual relationship with safari-leader Fry, but notes that this is 'necessarily to be done with great care – account censorship'.[88] Meanwhile, a script for *Returns* describes a violent event (the death of hunter Seedy Bombay) with some caution:

> The thicket is dense enough to protect us from gruesomeness, yet [we] know...that the gorilla is pulling Seedy apart -- legs and arms -- ...There is no sound except the breathing of the beast – and, if we dare – a faint ripping and cracking as he tears Seedy's limbs from his body.[89]

This indicates that by early 1935 MGM filmmakers were making some attempt to balance the style of Tarzan movies with the increased vigilance of the PCA.

Another example of this trend involves the relationship between Tarzan and Jane's cousin Rita. Early suggestions for *Returns* were that a mutual attraction should develop between them, with Rita 'throwing sex at him any time she wants'; the implied danger being that 'she may not be able to control him beyond a certain point'.[90] However, this attraction was merely hinted at in the completed *Capture*, and by *Escapes* it had been reduced to one ambiguous glance.

Increasing pressure from the PCA is also evident in that Breen passed the script for *Returns* without reservations in April 1935, yet a similar script for *Escapes* was initially rejected the following year, 'on the grounds that the story contains an element of brutality, cruelty and gruesomeness which is in violation of the Code'.[91] Breen also objected to material in *Escapes* which was previously passed for *Ape Man* and *Mate*, including people with arrows in their heads, mutilated bodies and injured elephants.[92] Regarding the bearer being tied to trees and torn apart, he noted: 'Scene 249 is shocking and we respectfully ask you to dispense with it'.[93] However, the tone of this request and the fact that this and other scenes were retained by MGM and eventually passed, suggests that censorship, though more intense, was still a process of negotiation rather than direct regulation.

Unsurprisingly, sexual content was also more carefully monitored. In particular, although Tarzan and Jane acted as husband and wife in *Mate*, they had never legally 'married' and this became an issue in the censorship of *Escapes*. Breen wrote to studio head Louis B. Mayer: 'It is our confident hope that there is no intention of showing the existence of an improper sex relationship between Tarzan and Jane... Any such suggestion would, of course, be offensive and in violation of the Production Code.'[94] MGM consequently reshot the Garden of Eden (lily) sequence 'in a different key', toning down the innuendo and adding an animal rescue event to draw attention away from the interaction between Tarzan and Jane.[95]

On 15 October 1936, Breen told MGM that, having viewed *Escapes*, he would now gladly pass it, as it contained 'little, if anything, that is reasonably censorable'.[96] Five days earlier, a key element had been cut: the Vampire Bat Sequence. This was a favourite with MGM and originally featured (in a different form) in *Capture*. It involved Tarzan leading a safari through a dark swamp, where they were attacked by giant vampire bats, with much ensuing violence. It is unclear whether or not the PCA objected to this sequence, but it was certainly cut – perhaps because of the negative reactions of preview audiences.[97]

Meanwhile, Breen apparently overlooked a sequence implying an improbable and presumably 'improper sex relationship' between Rawlins and Cheeta. Tarzan, Jane, and the cousins all go to bed in the tree-house, leaving Rawlins unsure where to sleep. Cheeta enters and takes his hand:

> Rawlins: 'Ello! Wotcher want *now*?
>
> Cheeta has succeeded in drawing him half way...to her own miniature quarters before Rawlins realizes the significance of her friendliness.
>
> Rawlins: (indignantly resisting) Not blinkin' likely! (struggling as Cheeta drags him along) 'Ere! Let go! I won't do nothink of the sort! (then wailing over his shoulder as Cheeta hauls him inexorably on) Captain Fry..! (As Cheeta and Rawlins disappear into her love-nest --) [98]

This rather surprising sequence, which somehow managed to elude Breen, appears in the finished version of *Escapes*.

Overall, the development of *Escapes* therefore provides useful evidence of broad trends in the MGM series. Content of a sexual or violent nature was now on the decline, in line with growing pressure from the PCA after July 1934. Meanwhile, there was an increase in humour and domesticity, which might be thought more suitable for children. Notably, the comic character Rawlins and the well-equipped tree-house were added to *Escapes* when *Capture* was reworked by MGM.

Importantly, early versions of *Returns* also contained the series' first suggestions of customisation for the child audience. One outline introduces Dan, the adventurer and 'overgrown kid': 'a character played for the kids of the audience – someone for them to associate themselves with'. It continues, 'he must represent what they would like to be...a boy out in the African jungles...hunting for Tarzan'.[99] Other scripts also tried to make *Returns* educational for children by including facts about animals (especially baby animals). In one version, Jane describes an unusual creature: 'Children all over the world know him as the bear-cat. If you will notice, he has the face and fur of a bear, yet the claws of a cat.'[100] Thankfully, such material was abandoned in later scripts and Dan was also dropped, but this foreshadowed a priority on child viewers which would re-emerge with *Tarzan Finds A Son!*

As with *Ape Man* and *Mate*, *Escapes* was marketed to a broad audience, but this time with an increased emphasis on child viewers. The movie's Press Book offered cinemas various promotional ideas aimed at adults, including fashion shows, bread packaging and a life-size Weissmuller cut-out against which male cinemagoers could measure themselves.[101] It also suggested that cinemas use local firms, such as travel bureaux offering holidays to Africa, shops selling leopard and crocodile skin goods and (as Maureen O'Sullivan had just married) bridal stores. Nevertheless, the book particularly encouraged cinemas to sell the film to children.

One page has the massive headline 'JUVENILE INTEREST! GREATEST BOX-OFFICE ASSET YOU HAVE'. This article argues that children 'constitute an altogether separate type of audience whose patronage is essential to the full money return on any picture', noting that young people are also 'invaluable word-of-mouth salesmen whose irrepressible enthusiasm communicates itself to their parents'. A

further section, headed 'PACK THE KIDS IN', suggests that 'special exploitation will make every kid in your city a "Tarzan" fan!' It describes a range of promotional activities aimed at young people, including colouring contests, special performances, free animal masks, and quizzes and questionnaires about jungle animals or the film itself. The Press Book also suggests that cinemas form branches of the Tarzan Safety Club, claiming that this benefits children and also appeals to 'parents, governors and mayors, newspapers, parent-teacher associations and...women's and civic clubs'. Finally, the book provides a child-related press release for local use, regarding a wild-child 'Boy Tarzan' aged 7 or 8, allegedly discovered in the San Salvador jungle.

Table 7.3 Merchandise Related to the MGM Tarzan Films

Film	Merchandise	
Tarzan the Ape Man (1932)	Flipbook	Comic strip
Tarzan and His Mate (1934)		
Tarzan Escapes (1936)	Pocket knife Ice-cream cup Book Comic Strip	Writing pad Toy Film Game
Tarzan Finds a Son! (1939)	Ice-cream cup Wooden plaque Clay statuettes Costumes Balloons Stationery	Rubber toy Spear Knife Locket Game

Source: BFI Press Books

In addition to these ideas, the book details a range of Tarzan merchandise for children. As Table 7.3 shows, while *Ape Man* had just a flip-book and comic strip, and *Mate* had apparently no specific merchandise, saleable items for *Escapes* included Tarzan games, books, pocket knives, comic strips, toy films, ice-cream cups and writing pads. This seems to indicate that children were increasingly seen as an important target audience for MGM Tarzan films and, as Table 7.3 demonstrates, this

trend would develop further with the release of the next film, *Tarzan Finds A Son!*

The trailer for *Escapes* also targeted a broad audience, including children. While *Ape Man*'s trailer highlighted sex and violence and *Mate*'s emphasised (perhaps misleadingly) its literary basis and suitability for children, the trailer for *Escapes* was a fair representation of the movie's major elements, stressing its wide appeal.[102] The picture is introduced as 'A TOWERING TRIUMPH OF AFRICAN ADVENTURE AND PRIMITIVE LOVE' and the film clips and titles focus mainly on features popular with children: action, animals and humour. The numerous animal clips have titles including: 'SEE THOUSANDS OF WILD BEASTS! ...THE CROCODILES! ...THE AVENGING HORDE OF STAMPEDING ELEPHANTS!' Cheeta features prominently and is the last image in the trailer. And a slapstick clip is included of Rawlins falling from a vine into a puddle, while Cheeta laughs at him.

On its release, reviews for *Escapes* were generally favourable and, more than ever, critics focused on its great attraction for children. *Variety* reported, 'the tree-to-tree stuff has worn pretty thin for adult consumption. Appeal of the film will be mostly for children'.[103] In Britain, the *Sunday Chronicle* claimed that despite its inherent 'improbability', *Escapes* was 'the very thing for all children irrespective of age', and the *Daily Telegraph* quipped that this production was 'not a bit like Eisenstein, but the children will never guess'.[104] Meanwhile back in America, *The Sun* called it a 'super-thriller for juveniles' and *The Post* predicted that *Escapes* would be a hit with 'the younger generation to whom it is especially dedicated'.[105] Critics also recognised that children had made this series their own. For example, *Motion Picture Herald* suggested that the popularity of previous Tarzan films, 'especially [with] the youngsters', would help to sell *Escapes*, while *Variety* forecasted broken limbs aplenty 'when the youth of America once again starts to emulate Johnny by imitating some of his swing-time movements in this opus'.[106]

It can therefore be seen that, along with high levels of child attendance, the media and marketing surrounding *Escapes* helped define it as primarily for children. This pattern had already been tentatively established with the two previous films. However, in the case of *Escapes*, the definition was significantly reinforced by the movie's content, due to a reduction in sex and violence alongside an increase in domesticity, light humour and the use of baby animals. Gabe Essoe identifies this as

a 'major step in lowering the Tarzan series to the child's level', with *Escapes* being a 'compromise on what could have been a first class adventure film', that was 'watered down "to appeal to young and old alike"'.[107] Certainly, as Essoe suggests, the process of kiddification reached new heights with *Escapes*, although it is debatable whether this necessarily implied a reduction in quality.

***Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939)**

Child-related content was undoubtedly the dominant feature of the last MGM Tarzan movie of the 1930s – *Tarzan Finds a Son!*[108] Most importantly, this film introduced the series' first principal child character, Boy (played by Johnny Sheffield), around whom the entire story revolved. In addition, *Son* maintained and extended the trends in content, marketing and media representation that were established by its predecessors. As Figures 7.1 and 7.2 indicate, 'unsuitable' content, including sex and violence, was markedly reduced in this film (in terms of intensity as well as frequency), while there was a substantial increase in content considered appropriate for children. As Rudy Behlmer comments:

> The erotic element, so prominent in the first two films and to a considerably lesser degree in the third, was totally absent from the last three films in the MGM series produced in the late 1930s and early 1940s. By then the family, including 'Boy' (John Sheffield), was thoroughly domesticated.[109]

Nevertheless, somewhat paradoxically, both MGM and the PCA showed increasing vigilance regarding any potentially offensive material.

There is no nudity or partial nudity in the film and Jane's costume retains the modest design used in *Escapes*. However, for the first time Tarzan's loincloth came under PCA scrutiny when Hays saw production stills for *Son* and 'indicated some concern' about it.[110] Al Block (MGM's main contact with the PCA) reassured Hays that Weissmuller's costume had not changed, delicately adding that while it might 'sometimes seem questionable when the actor was standing still...in action, this questionable element...disappeared'. Furthermore, Block promised, 'nothing

questionable would be left in' during editing. The hyper-vigilance of the PCA regarding costume was also apparent in Breen's comments on a swimming scene involving Tarzan and Boy. Perhaps mindful of *Mate*, he wrote to MGM, 'we assume that Tarzan and the Boy will be wearing trunks in this scene'.[111] Of course, they did.

Son also contained absolutely no scenes implying sexual desire or sexual relations and, by this time, MGM were even at pains to avoid the potential moral minefield of Tarzan and Jane's physical relationship. The specific problem with the fourth film was that the story involved the 'unmarried' screen couple raising a child. Eschewing any hint of indecency, however, MGM quickly discarded a plot in which Jane gave birth to a son, in favour of one in which the couple finds a baby in the jungle.[112] As the *New York Times* wittily remarked,

> The question of issue was bound to arise sooner or later, and Metro seems to have answered it in the handsomest and most hygienic fashion... The child...is dropped from the Afric skies not by the stork, but by an Imperial Airways liner.[113]

Meanwhile, there are no flirtatious interludes in *Son* between Tarzan and Jane and the movie's only romantic kiss is between Boy's biological parents, just before their demise at the start of the film.

Violence was also markedly reduced in *Son* – the number of violent human deaths falling from twenty-one in *Escapes*, to just six, with only two onscreen. Moreover, the moments of screen violence that did occur were managed with great caution by MGM. The script for one torture scene reads: 'The horror throughout is to be minimized. Only enough should be glimpsed to sketchily indicate what is... happening...and this obscured by distance, motion, speed, smoke, and intervening figures.'[114] Nevertheless, the PCA exercised still more caution in their script notes, repeatedly asking 'please avoid gruesomeness' whenever violence was mentioned.[115]

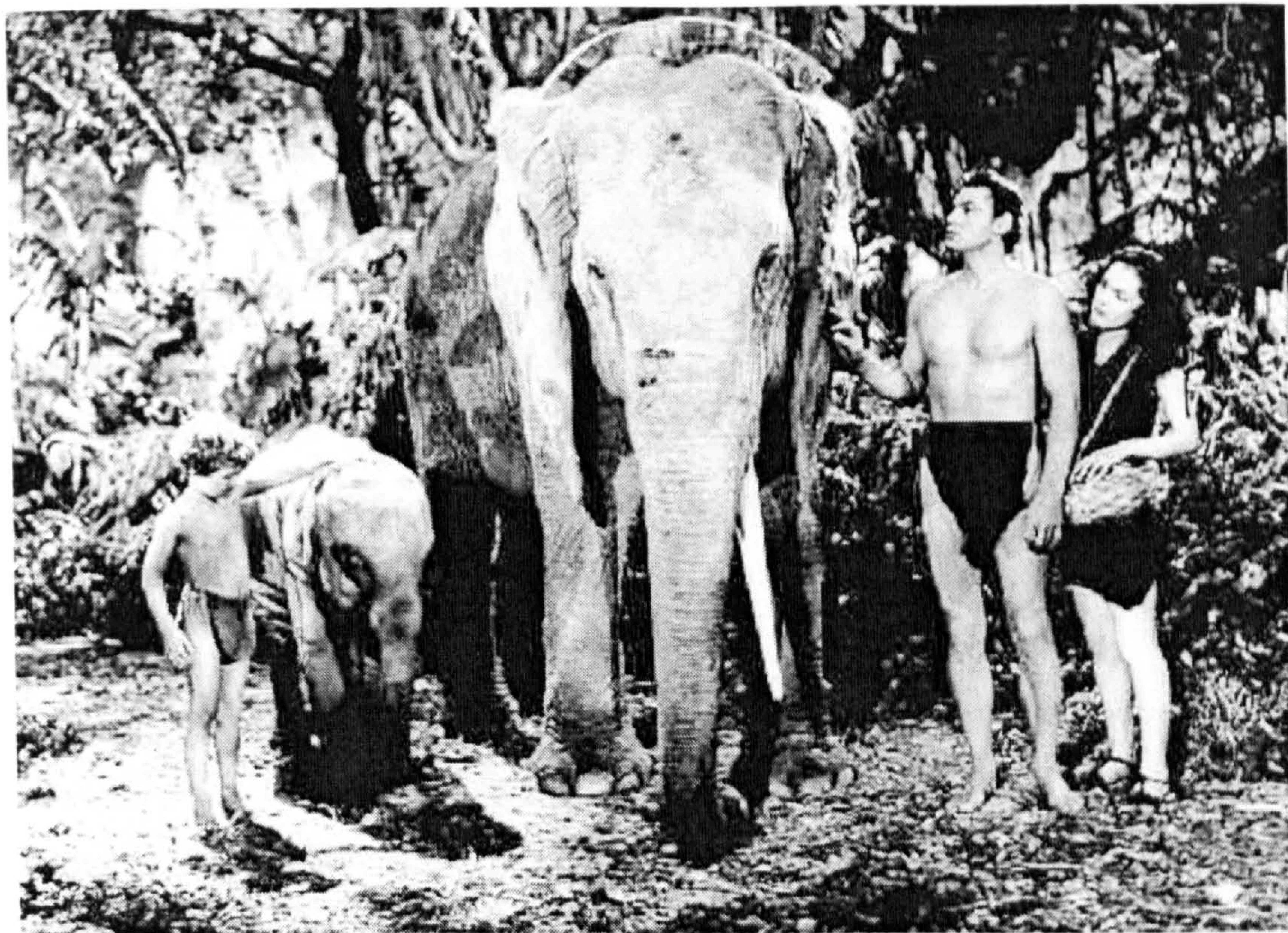
With unsuitable content reduced to a minimum, *Son* also saw a massive increase in content considered particularly appropriate for children. In addition to the character of Boy, this entailed more humour, more animals (especially baby animals) and a strong emphasis on dominant themes of family and domesticity.

In the first three films, animals are primarily used for action, from hippo attacks and elephant rescues, to battles with various lions, crocodiles and leopards. In *Son*, however, there are far more animals simply on display, in a *mise en scène* that tends to resemble a petting zoo rather than a jungle. There are still battles, but this film contains far less violence towards animals, with only two fake spiders being killed onscreen. Nevertheless, the PCA were still cautious and Breen suggested that even the spider-killing might be 'unnecessarily gruesome'.[116] *Son* also has far more footage of baby animals, including a fawn, a zebra foal, leopard cubs, lion cubs, baby chimps and, most importantly, Boy's friend and personal mode of transport, Bea the Baby Elephant.[117] Meanwhile, Cheeta is the animal star, with a prominent role as a member of the Tarzan family, as Boy's playmate and, especially, as a source of light humour. Indeed, there is a great deal of whimsical comedy in this film, generally involving Boy and/or Cheeta. Even this came under PCA scrutiny, however, when Breen advised MGM to take care in filming a comic sequence where Cheeta milks a doe, prudishly noting that 'any scenes of the udders will be deleted'.[118]

The final key element in *Son* is its representation of domesticity and family life. This theme, introduced in *Escapes*, dominates the fourth film, which is really a study in family values. Boy is orphaned and is raised in the extended family of Tarzan, Jane, Cheeta and other animals. Meanwhile, Bea the orphaned baby elephant is adopted by Timba (a Tarzan family pet) who we are told 'lost her baby in the river last year'. Cheeta also has a group of peers or siblings with whom she interacts.

The theme of family provides a frame for the movie, as well as being a major source of content and conflict within it. The action opens with the destruction of a family (Boy and his parents, crashing en route to Cape Town). The plot then focuses on Boy's new jungle family and turns on the question of whether he belongs with them or with his English relatives, who arrive in the jungle five years later. Much of the story centres on the tree-house, with frequent and lengthy domestic scenes, from caring for the new baby to providing hospitality for Boy's relatives. Even these sequences harboured potential pitfalls according to the PCA, who predicted problems over a simple stage direction in which Jane 'adjusts a diaper'. Breen advised: 'all of the business dealing with the diapers is highly dangerous...and will probably be deleted'.[119] Finally, the movie closes on a scene celebrating the survival of Boy's

jungle family, as his scheming relatives depart, leaving Tarzan, Jane, Boy, Cheeta and her siblings to ride home on a family of elephants.



Domesticity and family values predominate in *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939)

Having established this cosy set-up, MGM hoped to use it as a basis for further Tarzan movies, but this was threatened when Maureen O'Sullivan decided to leave the series. A storyline for *Son* was then produced in which Jane was speared in the back, trying to protect Boy from danger. The film then closed with Tarzan and Boy burying her and burning the tree-house, symbolically suggesting the death of the domestic ideal.[120] Subsequently, however, O'Sullivan was persuaded to stay and the script was rewritten, with Jane recovering from her injury.[121] The family and the tree-house went on to feature in two more MGM films (*Secret Treasure* and *New York Adventure*) before the rights were bought by RKO, at which point O'Sullivan made a swift exit.

As with the previous films, MGM proposed that *Son* should be marketed to as wide an audience as possible, albeit with an increased emphasis on child viewers. The Press Book assured cinema managers that Johnny Sheffield would 'endear himself to mothers and fathers and…excite the admiration of every kid in your

audience!'[122] It also claimed that the character of Boy 'touches the hearts of men, women and children, thereby making *Tarzan Finds a Son!* of general audience appeal and not of interest merely to males and juveniles'.

Nevertheless, cinemas were encouraged to make the most of the film's appeal to children. Promotional ideas included contests for Tarzan yelling, Boy lookalikes and photographs of children posed with animals or cinema lobby cut-outs. MGM also produced badges and membership cards with Weissmuller's signature, so that cinemas could establish Sons of Tarzan Clubs. Members could go to special cheap performances and the child most like Johnny Sheffield could win a chance to meet Weissmuller at the New York World's Fair. The studio also proposed an outrageous publicity stunt, suggesting that cinemas pay a child to hide out in local woods, to be 'found' by a reporter. The child would then give the journalist a pre-arranged story of runaway and survival for publication, together with 'phony photos, etc.'.

Finally, the promotion of *Son* to children was evident in its trailer, which emphasised all of the major 'suitable' elements in the film, including humour, extensive footage of Boy and Cheeta and numerous animals, especially 'BEA (The Wonder Baby Elephant)'.[123] As Table 7.3 shows, merchandise aimed at children also increased with this picture and now included wooden plaques, clay statuettes, costumes, balloons, stationery, rubber toys, spears, knives, lockets and games.

Unsurprisingly, reviewers recognised that this film would attract children. *Variety* hailed it as 'a cinch setup for the kids'.[124] In fact, by now the series was so associated with young people that trade papers were keen to stress that *Son* was suitable for *adults* too, as in the *Motion Picture Herald* article which said that the film was 'perhaps the best adapted to popular appeal of both young and old of the MGM "Tarzan" series'.[125] Even the *Catholic Film News* conceded, 'the children will love it, provided they are not too nervous, and there is nothing in it that can bring a blush to the most innocent or scandalise the most particular'.[126]

Therefore, as Essoe suggests, *Son* was 'purely kid stuff'.[127] The kiddification process was complete. However, there is a critical postscript to this, for deliberate customisation of a film for children does not, of course, guarantee its popularity with them. And, as the final section will show, the whimsical *Son* would actually prove less popular with young audiences than its predecessors had done.

Conclusions: Examining the Kiddification Process

Having considered each of the films in detail, three key questions remain relating to the series a whole. Why did these films appeal so much to children in the first place? What were the factors driving the kiddification of the series? And, finally, how did the child audience respond to this transformation?

As the detailed film analyses have shown, the early movies in the MGM series were, if anything, rather unsuitable for children, revolving as they did around violence, gruesome spectacle and sexuality. MGM intended them to be violent, sexy movies for a wide audience with an emphasis on adults. They were not intended to be 'kid pictures'. Nevertheless, as with horror and gangster movies, the action and adventure of jungle pictures proved extremely popular with young people.

One of the important elements which may have attracted them was violence, as *Ape Man* director Woody Van Dyke would later suggest, exciting, violent action films attracted young people in the same way that children were drawn to a fight in the playground.[128] Over and above this, however, the Tarzan films contained other distinctive elements which, while not calculated to attract children, might be seen in retrospect to have helped make the early MGM films ones which hordes of children would enjoy, regardless of the filmmakers' intentions.

A massively important element in this respect is the child-like nature of many of the characters – especially Tarzan – although it is possible to read his character without reference to its specific appeal to children and MGM may well have done this. Walt Morton, for example, provides an adult-centred analysis of the character, reading Tarzan's attributes of relative muteness, nakedness and innocence as implications of 'intrinsic goodness' and focusing on 'Tarzan as erotic spectacle', arguing that the adult male audience 'enjoys a narcissistic identification with the power fantasy suggested by Tarzan's strength and command of nature'.[129] Morton *compares* adult male identification with Tarzan to the 'desire to experience a fantasy of great power...seen in children who regularly adopt "roles" of superheroes, adults, sports figures and royalty in their play', yet he does not go on to consider the clear implications of these attributes for a child audience.[130] Similarly, MGM intended the Tarzan character to appeal primarily to adults (both men and, especially, women) and they therefore decided to introduce Boy as a character for children to relate to.

However, with hindsight, it seems obvious that children would relate to Tarzan. He is learning to talk, cannot read and fails to grasp the rules of adult (white) society, yet he is strong and agile and dominates his environment. Thus, Tarzan can be said to represent aspects of both the limitations and aspirations of childhood. Indeed, the essence of Tarzan's life (and later Jane's) in the jungle is immediately recognisable to children, being a mixture of fun, fear and fascination, heightened experiences and extremes of emotion, with an emphasis on physicality – eating, sleeping, playing and fighting – rather than intellectual or 'adult' preoccupations like finance, work or politics. Moreover, it is a short step from the wild animals, aerial acrobatics and slapstick comedy routines of Tarzan movies to that familiar children's entertainment medium, the circus. Edgar Rice Burroughs himself remarked that circuses were clearly an entertainment form 'to which the Tarzan picture is analogous'.[131]

Although MGM appear not to have realised that *Ape Man* would have a direct appeal to children, the storylines and scripts repeatedly mention the 'childlike' nature of Tarzan's trusting naïveté, his simple philosophy and his blunt social skills, as well as making indirect references to childhood. For example, when first teaching Tarzan to talk, in the often misquoted 'Tarzan...Jane...' (not 'Me Tarzan, you Jane') scene, Jane is described as acting 'very patiently, rather like a school mistress'.[132] And when Tarzan ducks Jane in the river and sits on her boots, she complains: 'You're just like a nasty little school boy! ...I do wish you weren't so frightfully playful!'.[133] MGM Script Reader, Franclien Macconnell, also noted that Tarzan 'plays tricks on [Jane] like a prankish boy'.[134] Meanwhile, both Cheeta and Jane display traits associated with childhood, including playfulness and temper tantrums and Jane makes direct references to children's culture, for example when she remarks: 'I'm getting like Alice in Wonderland – jabbering away to myself.'[135]

Other factors which may have encouraged American (and possibly British) children to associate immediately with the Tarzan series were the availability of the Burroughs novels, a daily newspaper Tarzan cartoon strip (published in America from 1929) and a Tarzan radio show (broadcast in America after *Ape Man* in 1932). This familiarity might therefore have predisposed children (and adults) to thinking that the films were suitable for a young audience.

Once *Ape Man* and *Mate* were seen to be enormously popular with children, the kiddification process began in earnest, transforming the series from a genre aimed at a broad audience of mainly adults, to one intended particularly for children. This transition was driven by a number of forces, but it is crucial to recognise that in each case, a key factor was the awareness that these films were loved by children (however 'unsuitable' their content). In this sense, child viewers may be seen to have *provoked* the kiddification process; a productive mechanism, which would not stop until the content of the films were thought to match their main audience in terms of perceived suitability.

Those involved in this transformation included moral watchdogs such as the Legion of Decency, the PCA and BBFC and, of course, MGM. Key figures in the debate surrounding children and cinema had expressed specific concerns regarding the early Tarzan pictures, such as PFS neurologist Dr Frederick Peterson, who suggested that *Ape Man*, along with films such as *Phantom of the Opera* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, caused children sleep loss and nightmares and could potentially induce 'an effect very similar to that of shellshock'.[136] Meanwhile, in 1934, the PCA crossed swords with the Legion of Decency over Jane's costume in *Mate*.[137]

The PCA themselves raised very specific concerns with MGM in 1933 regarding the influence of *Mate* on young people. James Wingate told MGM that the script was 'satisfactory' and 'reasonably free of censorship difficulty'. However, he added, 'inasmuch as this is the type of picture which carries a very definite appeal for children and younger people, we feel that you should be more than usually careful to avoid stressing too much the sex elements and the nudity'.[138] Of course, being just inside the pre-code period, MGM were able to ignore this plea. However, pressure was growing to clean up the content of the series for the child audience and, after July 1934, this would be brought to bear more strongly. Another important influence on the transformation of these films was undoubtedly the overall impact of the Hays Code on filmmaking after 1934, for this alone would have toned down the Tarzan series, regardless of its audience. But, as established in previous chapters, the Hays Code was itself inextricably linked to concerns regarding child audiences.

Finally, after 1934, MGM decided to actively kiddify the series. The reasons for this strategy were probably numerous, but it certainly does not appear, from story

conferences and other studio evidence, that MGM were especially worried about the impact of the Tarzan films on young minds. Neither did they need to introduce changes in order for the films to appeal to children, because they were already hugely popular. It therefore seems likely that MGM kiddified the later films primarily in order to appease adults (including censors), creating a product based on a perception of what children *should* watch rather than on what they *wanted* to watch. In 1932 and 1934, MGM were trying to make exciting Tarzan films. By 1939, they were trying to make 'good' Tarzan films, suitable for families and especially for children.

Meanwhile, MGM was also motivated by a desire to capitalise on the child audience that had flocked to the early Tarzan pictures. As a result, the studio was engaged in a reciprocal relationship with child viewers – on the one hand reacting to an unexpected audience demographic (created largely by children themselves) and on the other, proactively transforming the series in terms of content, promotion and merchandising, in an attempt to attract and retain yet more child viewers.

So complete was the transformation of this series and so strongly did it become identified with the child audience, that even now it is often remembered as being 'for children'. Memories focus on images of family and domesticity – such as Boy or the gadgets in the tree-house – while the early sex and violence are largely missing from memories of Tarzan films. This is apparent in responses to the Tarzan Questionnaire for when asked to describe their impressions of Tarzan films as a child, respondents chose descriptions such as 'exciting', 'fun', 'predictable', or 'romantic', but not one of the respondents remembered finding these films 'violent' or 'sexy/rude' and all seven said that the films had been 'suitable' for children, with none choosing the milder option of 'fairly suitable' or the negative 'unsuitable'. Not one questioned the concept of these being children's films.

Interestingly, the fact that the entire Tarzan series has been associated with child viewers can still create problems when these films are broadcast on television. When BBC2 screened the entire series in 1987, the *London Evening Standard* critic complained, in a review reminiscent of the 1930s, that 'the Tarzan adventures set a disgraceful example to the younger generation', with this screening representing 'the most appalling display of illicit sex, debauchery and immorality we are ever likely to see'.[139] Consequently, television broadcasts of *Ape Man* and *Mate* in particular are

often preceded by a warning that they may be unsuitable for children.

There is one further significant aspect of the kiddification process which should be explored and that is the response of child viewers to the transformation of one of their favourite genres. Notably, in addition to the decline in violent action, one of the key changes for child viewers was that between 1934 and 1936, Tarzan 'grew up'. So by *Escapes*, he can talk, he exercises control over his emotions and desires and he plays less. Finally, to add insult to injury, MGM introduced Boy – a child character that young people were apparently expected to relate to. Evidence suggests that these changes did not go down well with child viewers, however.

Some clues regarding children's responses to the transformation may be derived from a questionnaire given to 151,000 Mickey Mouse Club members in 1938 (see Table 7.4). Animal and adventure films gained 37% of the vote in this study of children's film preferences, giving a strong indication as to why Tarzan films were favourites with young audiences. However, many respondents clearly disliked child stars, whose films were voted least popular. As the *Manchester Guardian* remarked, it was 'apparently left to the elders to gush over infant prodigies' and it would therefore appear that, among other things, children wanted to see and relate to Tarzan himself, not the cute Boy.[140]

Table 7.4 Children's Preferences for Feature Films

Film type	Popularity
Western	21%
Adventure (not Western)	19%
Animal	18%
Comedy, slapstick	17%
Historical	13%
Musical	6%
Child stars	6%

Source: Mickey Mouse Club Questionnaire, as reported in the *Daily Telegraph* and *Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1938.

Other evidence comes from the Worktown project, which investigated cinemagoing in Bolton from 1937 – that is, one year after *Escapes* was released and two years before *Son*. One respondent was 15-year-old Ernest Rostron, who attended the cinema about thirteen times per month. He explained:

> I like travel and adventure. Such as Tarzan, but the Tarzan pictures of today are too civil, the first Tarzan picture I saw was very interesting because it was more wilder than they are today. At one time Tarzan was unable to speak English, but today he acts like a civilized being and that's what spoils them, I think.[141]

Similarly, respondents to the Tarzan Questionnaire devised for this thesis reported that their interest in the series started to wane with *Escapes*. They often attribute this to their own maturation. For example, Bernard Letchett comments that he does not remember Boy, as 'by 1939...I was nearly 14 years old and losing interest in Tarzan'.[142] Similarly, Thomas McGoran recalls, 'like other things, as one grows older, taste changes, and so it was with Tarzan, I outgrew him'.[143] In fact, it seems more likely that the films lost their appeal because of their kiddification, rather than the maturation of their young audience.

As already shown, child stars were often unpopular with young cinemagoers and this seems to have been the case with Boy. Although some children liked him, they still preferred Tarzan. Interestingly, Boy was the only main character not selected by Tarzan questionnaire respondents as a favourite and none of the sources suggest that children chose to imitate him in play. It is therefore ironic, though not unexpected, that once the series was kiddified and was associated primarily with children, it lost much of its early appeal for young audiences.

Overall, the MGM Tarzan series represents an interesting case study for the purposes of this thesis. Not only does it provide evidence of the ways in which a genre impacted children's cinema culture through play and imitation, but, more importantly, it provides an example of the ways in which issues relating to children could have a *productive* impact on filmmaking. Ultimately, the kiddification of the 1930s MGM Tarzan series was driven by its popularity with the child audience, who

adopted the films as their own, and the ongoing debate surrounding children and the cinema. In this sense, child viewers and concerns and perceptions regarding child viewing can be said to have shaped a genre.

Endnotes

[1] Philips, *Cut*, p. 7.

[2] Held by Special Collections at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library, Beverly Hills, which has PCA files (hereafter AMPAS/PCA) and the MGM Script Collection (AMPAS/MGM). There is no PCA file for *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932).

[3] My thanks to Mark Glancy for this information.

[4] Rudy Behlmer, *Behind the Scenes: The Making of...* (Hollywood, 1990), p. 292.

[5] Walt Morton, 'Tracking the Sign of Tarzan: Trans-Media Representation of a Pop-Culture Icon', in Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim (eds), *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men* (London, 1993), p. 116.

[6] Tom Mathews has estimated that during the 1930s over 75% of films shown in British cinemas were American, while Britain represented nearly half the international sales of American filmmakers. (Mathews, *Censored*, p. 53). By 1939 American companies earned between six and eight million pounds per year from British cinema admissions. (Dickinson & Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 1).

[7] For comparisons, see H. Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film 1939-45* (Manchester, 1999), p. 70.

[8] Robert W. Fenton, *The Big Swingers* (New Jersey, 1967), p172.

[9] Rudy Behlmer, 'Tarzan and MGM: The Rest of the Story', *American Cinematographer* (February 1987), p42; on the decline of the foreign market, see also Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain*, pp. 7-20.

[10] *The Hollywood Reporter*, 24 October 1936; *Film Daily*, 27 October 1936.

[11] AMPAS/MGM, *Tarzan The Ape Man* (hereafter *Ape Man*): Story conference transcript, 23 October 1931, 10.15am-12.15pm, p. 5.

[12] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Compare Cyril Hume's screenplay of 8 October 1931 with Ivor Novello's rewritten version of 28 October-16 December 1931.

[13] AMPAS/MGM, *Tarzan Finds A Son!* (Hereafter, *Son*): Treatment - Cyril Hume, 30 July-2 Aug 1938, p. 9.

[14] BFI – BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931: Proceedings of the Performing and Captive Animals' Defence League Preliminary Conference on Cruel Films, 9 December 1931.

[15] BFI – Censorship Folder, Verbatim Reports 1930-1938: Proceedings of a meeting called by the BBFC, 'Representing Organisations Interested in Animal Welfare', 31 May 1934, pp. 28-9. Notably, over one third of the board's 1933 Annual Report related to 'animal films' and animal cruelty. PRO-HO45/24084: BBFC Annual Report 1933, pp. 11-18.

[16] Ibid.

[17] AMPAS/PCA, *Tarzan Escapes* (hereafter, *Escapes*): Censors cuts, November 1936-April 1937.

[18] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 28 December 1938.

[19] Ibid.

[20] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Local censor board elimination reports, June 1939-January 1940.

[21] For full details, see under Tarzan Questionnaire (hereafter TQ) in Bibliography.

[22] TQ4: Thomas McGoran, p. 1.

[23] TQ7: Norman Wild, p. 1.

[24] TQ5: Arthur Orrell, p. 3.

[25] TQ3: Bernard Letchet, p. 1.

[26] NMS: Angus Bruce, Leith, letter, 30 September 1999.

[27] TQ7: Norman Wild, p. 2.

[28] CCINTB 95-36: Norman Wild (and Vera Entwistle), interviews, 16 May & 13 June 1995.

[29] TQ3: Bernard Letchet, p. 3.

[30] CCINTB 92-3: Marjorie Cunningham, letter, 14 November 1994.

[31] NMS: Angus Bruce, Leith, letter 30 September 1999.

[32] TQ5: Arthur Orrell, p. 3.

[33] CCINTB 95-100: Lewis Howells, letter, 9 February 1995.

[34] TQ2: Marjorie Cunningham, pp.1 and 3.

[35] CCINTB 92-3: Marjorie Cunningham, letter, 14 October 1992.

[36] TQ5: Arthur Orrell, p. 2.

[37] TQ4: Thomas McGoran, p. 3; TQ7: Norman Wild, p. 3.

[38] TQ5: Arthur Orrell, p. 1.

[39] TQ4: Thomas McGoran, p. 3.

[40] TQ2: Marjorie Cunningham, p. 2. Emphasis mine.

[41] Cited in Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass-Observation*, pp. 54-5.

[42] Mayer, *British Cinemas*, pp. 27, 32, 52 and 58.

[43] CCINTB 95-93: Jessie Boyd, letter, 5 February 1995.

[44] TQ1: Jessie Boyd, p. 1.

[45] TQ4: Thomas McGoran, pp. 2-3.

[46] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Story conference transcript, 24 October 1931, 12.00-1.45pm, p. 4.

[47] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Trailer – Dialogue Cutting Continuity Script (re-released, 28 January 1949).

[48] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Story outline – Bernard H. Hyman (22 Oct 1931).

[49] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Story conference transcript, 21 October 1931, 11am-9.45pm, p. 3.

[50] Ibid., p. 17.

[51] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Story outline – Bernard H. Hyman (22 October 1931).

[52] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Story conference transcript, 22 October 1931, 4.15pm-6.30pm, p. 4.

[53] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Story conference transcript, 21 October 1931, 11am-9.45pm, p. 2.

[54] Ibid., p. 5.

[55] Ibid., pp. 15-17.

[56] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[57] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Complete OK screenplay – Ivor Novello, 28 October - 16 December 1931, p. 107.

[58] Where script references are absent, extracts are transcribed from the finished film.

[59] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Temporary incomplete screenplay – Cyril Hume, 10-28 September 1931, pp. 1-2.

[60] Ibid., p. 7.

[61] Ibid., Sc. 2, p. 4.

[62] Ibid., Sc. 2, pp. 5-7.

[63] Details in this section are all taken from the *Ape Man* Press Book, held at the BFI.

[64] *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 April 1932, p. 43.

[65] *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 April 1932.

[66] *New York Times*, 28 March 1932.

[67] AMPAS/PCA, *Tarzan and His Mate* (hereafter, *Mate*): Memorandum from Joe Breen, 10 April 1934.

[68] *The Hollywood Reporter*, 7 April 1934.

[69] *Photoplay*, September 1934, p. 116. See also *Photoplay*, July 1934.

[70] *Kinematograph Weekly*, 31 May 1934; *BFI Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1, 5, (June 1934), p. 42.

[71] AMPAS, Press Books: *Mate*.

[72] AMPAS/MGM, *Mate*: Shooting script, J.K. McGuinness, 2 November 1933, p. 48.

[73] AMPAS/MGM, Temporary complete screenplay, Frank R. Adams, 25 November – 8 December 1932.

[74] The scene in question is one in which Jane is warding off some lions by building a fire. At one point the front flap of her loincloth is briefly displaced and there appears to be no other clothing beneath it.

[75] Television Documentary – *MGM: When the Lion Roars* (1992).

[76] It is interesting to note that, *Birds of Paradise* and *Mate* had the same cinematographer, Clyde de Vinna, while Dolores Del Rio was married to *Mate* director, Cedric Gibbons.

Ecstasy was advertised with the tagline: 'The Stark Naked Truth Of A Woman's Desire For Love'.

[77] AMPAS/PCA, *Mate*: Correspondence for April 1934. Accounts can also be found in Behlmer, *Behind the Scenes*, pp. 303-5 and Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, pp. 260-62.

[78] Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*, pp.257 and 262.

[79] AMPAS, Press Books: *Mate*.

[80] AMPAS/MGM, *Mate*: MGM advertising manual, Howard Dietz, pp. 2-8.

[81] Ibid., p. 10.

[82] Ibid., pp. 14-19.

[83] Ibid., p. 31.

[84] AMPAS/MGM, *Mate*: Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script, 14 April 1934.

[85] All the fictional tribe names in the series relate to someone on the team – in this case the Himandis are named after producer Bernie Hyman.

[86] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Extended memo from Edwin H. Knopf to Jack Cummings, 23 December 1935, pp. 1-16. For more details, see Behlmer 'Tarzan and MGM', pp. 35-6 and Gabe Essoe, *Tarzan of the Movies: A Pictorial History* (New York, 1968), pp. 95-8.

[87] Its other working titles were *Tarzan* and *Tarzan and the Vampires*.

[88] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Outline, Karl Brown, 30 January 1935, p. 17.

[89] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Temporary complete screenplay, Karl Brown and Louis Mosher, 6-28 February 1935, p. 120.

[90] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Outline, Karl Brown, 30 January 1935, p. 25. See also temporary complete screenplay, Karl Brown and Louis Mosher, 6-28 February 1935, pp. 67-8.

[91] AMPAS/PCA, *Escapes*: Letters from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 6 April 1935 and 16 July 1936.

[92] AMPAS/PCA, *Escapes*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 16 July 1936.

[93] Ibid.

[94] AMPAS/PCA, *Escapes*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 15 October 1936.

[95] AMPAS/PCA, *Escapes*: Notes, inserts, cuts, etc, Sam Zimbalist and Richard Thorpe, 13 July - 12 October 1936, Retakes, 1 September 1936.

[96] AMPAS/PCA, *Escapes*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 15 October 1936.

[97] AMPAS/PCA, *Escapes*: Notes, inserts, cuts, etc, Sam Zimbalist and Richard Thorpe, 13 July - 12 October 1936. One note dated 10 October 1936 simply reads: 'Item 34: Eliminate bats from swamp scenes'. See also Behlmer, 'Tarzan and MGM', pp. 35-6 and the (possibly apocryphal) account in Essoe, *Tarzan of the Movies*, pp. 96-7.

[98] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Complete OK screenplay, Cyril Hume, 18 May-16 July 1936, p. 70.

[99] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Outline, Karl Brown, 30 January 1935, p. 16.

[100] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Temporary complete screenplay, Eddie Hannan(?), 12 June-27 July 1935, p. 77a.

[101] Details in this section are all taken from the *Escapes* Press Book, held at the BFI. A similar range of activities is suggested in *Showman's Trade Review*, 31 October 1936.

[102] AMPAS/MGM, *Escapes*: Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script, 29 October 1936.

[103] Cited in Essoe, *Tarzan of the Movies*, p. 98.

[104] Cited in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 11 February 1937.

[105] Cited in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 7 December 1936.

[106] *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 November 1936; *Variety*, 24 October 1936; see also *Hollywood Reporter*, 24 October 1936 and *Film Daily*, 27 October 1936.

[107] Essoe, *Tarzan of the Movies*, pp. 97-8.

[108] Working titles included *Son of Tarzan* and *Tarzan King of the Jungle*.

[109] Behlmer, *Behind the Scenes*, p. 307.

[110] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Memo from Geoffrey Shurlock, 11 February 1939.

[111] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 28 December 1938.

[112] AMPAS/MGM, *Son*: Treatment, Cyril Hume, 2 August 1938, has the original storyline.

[113] *New York Times*, 15 June 1939.

[114] AMPAS/MGM, *Son*: Complete OK screenplay (revised), Cyril Hume, 22 December 1938 – 22 February 1939, Scene 273.

[115] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 28 December 1938.

[116] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 31 December 1938.

[117] AMPAS/MGM, *Son*: Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script, 10 June 1939.

[118] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Letter from Joe Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 21 February 1939.

[119] Ibid.

[120] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: Treatment, C. R. Metzger, 27 December 1938.

[121] AMPAS/PCA, *Son*: PCA review, F. Stinnette, 28 April 1939.

[122] BFI Press Books, *Son*.

[123] AMPAS/MGM, *Son*: Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script, 10 June 1939.

[124] *Variety*, 27 May 1939.

[125] *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 June 1939. See also *The Reporter*, 27 May 1939; *Variety*, 27 May 1939, *Motion Picture Daily*, 31 May 1939, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 July 1939.

[126] *Catholic Film News*, Volume 1, Number 11, September 1939.

[127] Essoe, *Tarzan of the Movies*, p. 102.

[128] Rudy Behlmer (ed.), *W.S. Van Dyke's Journal: White Shadows in the South Seas and other Van Dyke on Van Dyke* (Maryland, 1996).

[129] Morton, 'Tracking the Sign', pp. 120 & 113.

[130] Ibid., p. 113.

[131] Cited in Behlmer, *Behind the Scenes*, p295-6.

[132] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Complete OK screenplay – Ivor Novello, 28 October - 16 December 1931, p. 62.

[133] Ibid., pp. 88 & 92.

[134] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Reader's synopsis – Franclien Macconnell, 6 April 1933.

[135] AMPAS/MGM, *Ape Man*: Complete OK screenplay – Ivor Novello, 28 October - 16 December 1931, p. 90.

[136] Cited in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, p. 153.

[137] Ibid., p. 184.

[138] AMPAS/PCA, *Mate*: Letter from James Wingate (PCA) to Eddie Mannix (MGM), 3 August 1933.

[139] *London Evening Standard*, 22 December 1987, p. 27.

[140] *Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1938.

[141] Cited in Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass-Observation at the Movies*, p. 44.

[142] TQ3: Bernard Letchet, p. 2.

[143] TQ4: Thomas McGoran, p. 4.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions: Children and Cinema; Control and Resistance

> Everybody is talking about the movies, about what is wrong with them, what is right with them; whether they are moral or immoral. There are many who say they are the one and just as many who say they are the other, and in between there are those who say they are both and those who say they are neither...
>
> *Alice Miller Mitchell*
> ***Children and Movies*** *(Chicago, 1929)*

Fears about the social effects of new media have recurred for over two centuries and the debates they generate nearly always revolve primarily around the potential impact of these new media on children. Despite thousands of research projects, conferences and other enquiries (most of which find the medium in question to be intrinsically benign), such debates still persist today, including recent controversies about children's use of mobile phones, computer games and the Internet. And whenever a shocking incident occurs involving young people, the immediate reaction is often to blame the latest forms of popular culture, however tenuous this link might be – as in the bogus scapegoating of *Child's Play 3* in the James Bulger murder case, or neo-Nazi websites, television, film and the music of 'shock rocker' Marilyn Manson in the Columbine High School Massacre.[1]

In a recent article entitled 'An Archaeology of Popular Anxieties', Graham Murdock has called for more detailed historical research into these fears and their associated debates:

> If we are to develop a more comprehensive analysis of the interplay between popular media and everyday thinking, feeling and behaviour, and to argue convincingly for expressive diversity in film, television and the new media, we need to challenge popular fears. Retracing the intellectual and political history that has formed them is a necessary first step.[2]

This thesis has therefore sought to contribute to academic understanding about the nature and impact of recurring debates surrounding children and media usage, by exploring one key example – the controversy surrounding children and cinema in the 1930s – from a number of different perspectives. A wide range of primary source material has been utilised, together with approaches from a number of disciplines, in order to assemble as comprehensive a picture as possible of the ways in which children interacted with attempts to control their viewing. This has involved examining the debate from the points of view of moral watchdogs and enquiry committees, the Home Office, the press, censorship boards, local authorities, cinema managers, filmmakers and, perhaps most importantly, children themselves, in order to consider not only what happened, but how and why it happened.

In particular, the focus has been on mechanisms used to try and control or contain children's viewing, including an assessment of the extent to which these mechanisms were successful. This has important ramifications for all debates surrounding children and popular culture, for while regulations aimed at limiting children's access to new media may create a sense of control that allays certain fears, the reality is that children frequently evade such attempts to control their activities. In the same way, this thesis has demonstrated that, despite attempts of the BBFC and others to limit the access of young people to films, many children were essentially the regulators of their own viewing in the 1930s, as they frequently subverted or circumvented the largely ineffectual mechanisms of official cinema regulation.

One question which has emerged might be applied to all kinds of debates about young people and popular culture. Namely: were those who called for increased regulation and changes to film production in the 1930s aiming to protect children, or to control them? As has been shown, the arena of cinema was often one of complex power-play between children and a range of adults, including parents, reformers, censors, filmmakers, politicians and the press. David Buckingham has identified a similar power-play in debates about children and television, as he argues that 'television viewing is merely part of the broader struggle for power and control between parents and children'.[3] Similarly, the concern expressed about children's cinemagoing often seems to have been less about film images than it was about a perceived loss of control over the culture and behaviour of children. Consequently, the anxiety expressed in the 1930s by teachers, parents, churches and youth organisations reinforces the suggestion made by Bazalgette and Buckingham, that in debates about children and new forms of entertainment media, 'the threat which has been posed by each successive technological development...has derived from the fact that they seem to offer less and less control for adults'.[4]

One of the other main issues at the heart of this thesis has been the question of whether or not the controversy surrounding children's cinemagoing in 1930s Britain can be termed a moral panic. Certainly there was a great deal of debate on this topic, which had a fundamental influence on the development of cinema regulation and censorship in Britain and elsewhere. However, this did not ultimately constitute a moral panic in the classic sense for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the reaction of various bodies to the medium of cinema in the 1930s

was neither sudden nor rapid. As previous chapters have demonstrated, this subject had already been discussed for over three decades by 1930.

Secondly, this was not a wholly hostile reaction. As details of local enquiries have shown, issues were often discussed in a complex, thoughtful manner, displaying a range of agenda, different methodologies and rhetorical strategies and reaching very different conclusions about the issue – often positive. Meanwhile, the key establishments of church, education and the media were by no means uniformly opposed to children's cinemagoing. In fact, there was a great deal of ambivalence and division within these groups as to the medium's potential and a large range of opinions regarding any possible threat which it might pose.

Finally, negative reactions that did emerge were neither groundless nor irrational, in that there was apparently genuine cause for concern. Cinema was the first mass medium to be distributed simultaneously to audiences of millions and by the 1930s, with the advent of talking pictures, it was experiencing massive growth and huge popularity with young people (the first generation to be fundamentally influenced by so-called mass culture). Before the Hays Code was applied in 1934, significant numbers of films explored taboo subjects on the edges of conventional morality and, as several chapters have shown, existing regulations proved ineffective at restricting the access of children to such material. Furthermore, based on oral testimony and other evidence, cinema did indeed pose a potential challenge to the influences of home, school, church and youth group; it spawned a distinct children's cinema culture involving alternative role models, an ambiguous moral code, a new learning environment and a largely unregulated arena of play. Therefore it is hardly surprising that parental, religious, educational and youth organisations should have considered it a potentially dangerous phenomenon. Consequently, the controversy surrounding children and the cinema in 1930s Britain appears to have been too gradual, complex and varied to be accurately described as a classic moral panic.

Nevertheless, the consequences of debates about young people's viewing in the 1930s were substantial and these may be split into two overlapping categories: restrictive and productive. Restrictive consequences included the growth of official film censorship and cinema regulation practices in Britain. As the early chapters of this thesis have shown, concern regarding the impact of the medium on young people drove the development of censorship in Britain before 1930 and, after the coming of

talkies, increased concern led to the creation of new restrictions, such as 'horrific' labels and H certificates, all of which were introduced with children in mind. There was also an international dimension, as similar developments were taking place worldwide and this aspect of the topic is certainly worthy of further research.

Meanwhile, productive consequences of the debate were numerous. In particular, the 1930s saw the introduction of organised, supervised children's cinema clubs, which aimed to replace the more raucous, largely unsupervised matinees that were seen as a central problem. Other creative ideas aimed at solving the 'problem' of children's cinemagoing included the establishment of special children's cinemas and the promotion of films made specifically for young audiences. The impact of such thinking on one particular genre, Tarzan, has already been explored. But in Britain, the consequences were more far-reaching than this, culminating for the first time in the production of British films for children from 1943.

The first of these, according to Staples, was the Gaumont British Instructional (GBI) production, *Tom's Ride*, which lasted for ten minutes and told the story of a boy's wish for a bicycle.[5] After this, in 1944, GBI established a Children's Film Department (CFD) to make short films and features for young people. The first feature they produced was *Bush Christmas* (1947), after which the CFD changed its name to Children's Educational Films (CEF), before folding.[6] In 1951, Mary Field (formerly of the CFD/CEF) became the first executive officer of a new, pan-industry production agency known as the Children's Film Foundation, which took on the task of making 'suitable' films for children in Britain for the next thirty years.[7]

But this was not the end of the debate about children and screen images, as it re-emerged even more strongly from the 1950s and 60s, due to high levels of screen sex and violence and the advent of television and video, giving children more access to 'unsuitable' material than ever before.[8] Consequently, over the last half century, controversies about all kinds of popular culture have followed in quick succession, with recent targets including playground text-messaging and Internet chatrooms.[9] And it therefore seems likely that whenever popular new entertainment media emerge in the future, such as virtual reality, the primary concern will continue to focus, as it did in the 1930s, on the impact of these new technologies on children. The question remains: are we seeking to protect these children, or to control them?

Endnotes

[1] 'All American Monsters', 'Sick Lyrics of Marilyn Manson', 'Hitler-Worshipping Fanatics Linked by a Web of Hate' and 'Outisders, A Gun Culture and a Dangerous Diet of TV Death and Destruction', *Daily Record*, 22 April 1999, pp. 1 & 6-9; Martin Barker and Julian Petley, 'Introduction: From Bad Research to Good – A Guide for the Perplexed', in Barker & Petley (eds), *Ill Effects*, p. 23; Martin Barker, 'The Newson Report: A Case Study in "Common Sense"', in Barker & Petley (eds), *Ill Effects*, pp. 27-46. Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, pp. 1-4.

[2] Graham Murdock, 'Reservoirs of Dogma: An Archaeology of Popular Anxieties', in Barker & Petley (eds), *Ill Effects*, p. 153.

[3] Buckingham, *Moving Images*, p. 257.

[4] Bazalgette & Buckingham (eds), *In Front of the Children*, p. 3.

[5] Staples, *All Pals Together*, pp. 92-7.

[6] Ibid., pp. 128-32.

[7] Ibid., pp. 152-240.

[8] Barker & Petley (eds), *Ill Effects*.

[9] For example, see Meridian Tonight, 'Children and the Internet', 10 July 2001 (http://www.meridian.tv.co.uk/pdf_files/consumer/sortedchildinternet.pdf); or 'Chat Danger – Parent's Guide' (http://www.chatdanger.com/parents/main.htm).

Appendices

Appendix 1

T. P. O'Connor's 43 Rules of the BBFC as told to the Cinema Commission of Inquiry, 1917

1. Indecorous, ambiguous and irreverent titles and sub-titles.
2. Cruelty to animals.
3. The irreverent treatment of sacred subjects.
4. Drunken scenes carried to excess.
5. Vulgar accessories in the staging.
6. The *modus operandi* of criminals.
7. Cruelty to young infants and excessive cruelty and torture to adults, especially women.
8. Unnecessary exhibition of underclothing.
9. The exhibition of profuse bleeding.
10. Nude figures.
11. Offensive vulgarity, and impropriety in conduct and dress.
12. Indecorous dancing.
13. Excessively passionate love scenes.
14. Bathing scenes passing the limits of propriety.
15. References to controversial politics.
16. Relations of Capital and Labour.
17. Scenes tending to disparage public characters and institutions.
18. Realistic horrors of warfare.
19. Scenes and incidents calculated to afford information to the enemy.
20. Incidents having a tendency to disparage our Allies.
21. Scenes holding up the King's uniform to contempt or ridicule.
22. Subjects dealing with India, in which British officers are seen in an odious light, and otherwise attempting to suggest the disloyalty of Native States or bringing into disrepute British prestige in the Empire.

23. The exploitation of tragic incidents of the war.
24. Gruesome murders and strangulation scenes.
25. Executions.
26. The effects of vitriol throwing.
27. The drug habit, e.g. opium, morphia, cocaine, etc.
28. Subjects dealing with White Slave traffic.
29. Subjects dealing with the premeditated seduction of girls.
30. 'First night' scenes.
31. Scenes suggestive of immorality.
32. Indelicate sexual situations.
33. Situations accentuating delicate marital relations.
34. Men and women in bed together.
35. Illicit sexual relationships.
36. Prostitution and procuration.
37. Incidents indicating the actual perpetration of criminal assaults on women.
38. Scenes depicting the effect of venereal diseases, inherited or acquired.
39. Incidents suggestive of incestuous relations.
40. Themes and references relative to 'race suicide'.
41. Confinements.
42. Scenes laid in disorderly houses.
43. Materialization of the conventional figure of Christ.

Reprinted in Neville March Hunnings, *Film Censors and the Law* (London, 1967), pp. 408-9.

Appendix 2

Codified Grounds for Censorship in BBFC Annual Report, 1926

Religious

1. The materialised figure of Christ.
2. Irreverent quotations of religious texts.
3. Travesties of familiar Biblical quotations and well-known hymns.
4. Titles to which objection would be taken by religious organisations.
5. Travesty and mockery of religious services.
6. Holy vessels amidst incongruous surroundings, or shown used in a way which would be looked upon as desecration.
7. Comic treatment of incidents connected with death.
8. Painful insistence of realism in death bed scenes.

Political

1. Lampoons of the institution of monarchy.
2. Propaganda against monarchy and attacks on royal dynasties.
3. Unauthorised use of royal and university arms.
4. Themes which are likely to wound the just susceptibilities of our allies.
5. White men in state of degradation amidst native surroundings.
6. American law officers making arrests in this country.
7. Inflammatory sub-titles and Bolshevist propaganda.
8. Equivocal situations between white girls and men of other races.

Military

1. Officers in British regiments shown in a disgraceful light.
2. Horrors in warfare and realistic scenes of massacre.

Social

1. The improper use of the names of well-known British institutions.
2. Incidents which reflect a mistaken conception of the police forces in this country in the administration of justice.
3. Sub-titles in the nature of swearing, and expressions regarded as objectionable in this country.
4. Painful hospital scenes.
5. Scenes in lunatic asylums and particularly in padded cells.
6. Workhouse officials shown in an offensive light.
7. Girls and women in a state of intoxication.
8. Orgy scenes.
9. Subjects which are suitable only for scientific or professional audiences.
10. Suggestive, indecorous and semi-nude dancing.
11. Nude and semi-nude figures, both in actuality and shadowgraph.
12. Girls' clothes pulled off, leaving them in scanty undergarments.
13. Men leering at exposure of women's undergarments.
14. Abortion.
15. Criminal assault on girls.
16. Scenes in and connected with houses of ill repute.

17. Bargain cast for a human life which is to be terminated by murder.
18. Marital infidelity and collusive divorce.
19. Children following the example of a drunken and dissolute father.
20. Dangerous mischief easily imitated by children.
21. Subjects dealing with venereal disease.

Questions of Sex

1. The use of the phrase 'sex-appeal' in sub-titles.
2. Themes indicative of habitual immorality.
3. Women in alluring or provocative attitudes.
4. Procuration.
5. Degrading exhibitions of animal passion.
6. Passionate and unrestrained embraces.
7. Incidents intended to show clearly that an outrage has been perpetrated.
8. Lecherous old men.
9. White slave traffic.
10. Innuendoes with a direct indecent tendency.
11. Indecorous bathroom scenes.
12. Extenuation of a woman sacrificing her honour for money on the plea of some laudable object.
13. Female vamps.
14. Indecent wall decorations.
15. Men and women in bed together.

Crime

1. Hanging, realistic or comic.
2. Executions and incidents connected therewith.
3. Objectionable prison scenes.
4. Methods of crime open to imitation.
5. Stories in which the criminal element is predominant.
6. Crime committed and condoned for an ostensibly good reason.
7. 'Crook' films in which sympathy is enlisted for the criminals.
8. 'Third degree' scenes.
9. Opium dens.
10. Scenes of, traffic in and distribution of illicit drugs.
11. The drugging and ruining of young girls.
12. Attempted suicide by asphyxiation.
13. Breaking bottles on men's heads.

Cruelty

1. Cruel treatment of children.
2. Cruelty to animals.
3. Brutal fights carried to excess, including gouging of eyes, clawing of faces and throttling.
4. Knuckle fights.
5. Girls and women fighting.
6. Realistic scenes of torture.

Source: BBFC Annual Report 1926, pp. 5-8.

Appendix 3

List of "Don'ts and Be Carefuls"
Adopted by California Association for guidance of producers, 8 June 1927

Resolved, That those things which are included in the following list shall not appear in pictures produced by the members of this Association, irrespective of the manner in which they are treated:

1. Pointed profanity – by either title or lip – this includes the words "God", "Lord", "Jesus", "Christ" (unless they be used reverently in connection with proper religious ceremonies), "hell", "damn", "Gawd", and every other profane and vulgar expression however it may be spelled;
2. Any licentious or suggestive nudity – in fact or in silhouette; and any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture;
3. The illegal traffic in drugs;
4. Any inference of sex perversion;
5. White slavery;
6. Miscegenation (sex relationships between the white and black races);
7. Sex hygiene and venereal diseases;
8. Scenes of actual childbirth – in fact or in silhouette;
9. Children's sex organs;
10. Ridicule of the clergy;
11. Willful offense to any nation, race or creed:

And be it further *Resolved,* That special care be exercised in the manner in which the following subjects are treated, to the end that vulgarity and suggestiveness may be eliminated and that good taste may be emphasized:

1. The use of the flag;
2. International relations (avoiding picturizing in an unfavorable light another country's religion, history, institutions, prominent people, and citizenry);
3. Arson;
4. The use of firearms;
5. Theft, robbery, safe-cracking, and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc. (having in mind the effect which a too-detailed description of these may have upon the moron);

6. Brutality and possible gruesomeness;
7. Technique of committing murder by whatever method;
8. Methods of smuggling;
9. Third-degree methods;
10. Actual hangings or electrocutions as legal punishment for crime;
11. Sympathy for criminals;
12. Attitude toward public characters and institutions;
13. Sedition;
14. Apparent cruelty to children and animals;
15. Branding of people or animals;
16. The sale of women, or of a woman selling her virtue;
17. Rape or attempted rape;
18. First night scenes;
19. Man and woman in bed together;
20. Deliberate seduction of girls;
21. The institution of marriage;
22. Surgical operations;
23. The use of drugs;
24. Titles or scenes having to do with the law enforcement or law-enforcing officers;
25. Excessive or lustful kissing, particularly when one character or the other is a "heavy":

Resolved, That the execution of the purposes of this resolution is a fair trade practice.

Reprinted in Raymond Moley, *The Hays Office* (New York, 1945), pp. 240-241.

Appendix 4

Films classified as 'Horrific' or certified 'H' by the BBFC 1933-1940

1933	*The Ghoul* *The Invisible Man* *King Klunk* *Vampire* (*Vampyr*) *The Vampire Bat*
1934	*The House of Doom* *The Medium* *The Ninth Guest* *The Son of Kong* *The Tell Tale Heart*
1935	*The Bride of Frankenstein* *The Hands of Orlac* *The Mark of the Vampire* *The Night on the Lonely Mountain* *The Raven* *The Werewolf of London*
1936	*The Devil Doll* *The Man Who Changed His Mind*
1937	*The Thirteenth Chair*
1938	*I Accuse* (*J'Accuse*)
1939	*The Cat and the Canary* (Cut 1943 version was 'A') *Boy Slaves* *A Child is Born* *The Dark Eyes of London* *The Gorilla* *Hell's Kitchen* *The Man They Could Not Hang* *The Monster Walks* *On Borrowed Time* ('A' from July 1945) *The Return of Doctor X* *The Son of Frankenstein*
1940	NONE

Listed in James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* (London, 1985), p. 183.

Appendix 5

Members of the Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry Committee

Boys' Brigade (Edinburgh)	Colonel W.C.C. Sinclair, D.S.O., T.D.*
Boys' Brigade (Leith)	Peter B.W. Smith R. Borthwick M.A., B.Sc*
Boys' Club Union	C.J. Tait, B.Sc*
Boy Scouts Association	Colonel R.S. Harding Rev. W. Burnett, B.D.*
Catholic Enquiry Office	Miss George
Church Lads' Brigade	John Blamire
Church of Scotland (Edinburgh Presbytery)	Rev. J. Maxwell Blair, M.A. Isaac J. Cowie
Education Committee	Councillor Thomas Paris*
Educational Institute of Scotland	Miss Henderson, L.L.A., F.E.I.S.* Miss Muir, J.P., F.E.I.S.* Sam Hamilton, M.A.* Miss Janet Renwick, F.E.I.S. George Cowe, M.A., F.E.I.S.*
Edinburgh Diocesan Social Service Board	E.W.M. Balfour-Melville, M.A.*
Girls' Association	Miss Stanford Miss P. Brown
Girls' Club Union	Miss Craw Miss Gee
Girls' Friendly Society	Miss D. Gunn
Girl Guides	Mrs Porter Miss Dalmahoy*
Girls' Guildry	Mrs Middleton Miss E. Irvine
Howard League	Miss Turnbull Miss Crawford
Juvenile Organisations Committee	Miss M.G.Cowan, O.B.E., M.A.* The Hon. Lady Hope, O.B.E., J.P.*
Mothers' Union	Mrs Gardyne
National Council of Women (Edinburgh)	Miss H.M. Blair Miss Troup Miss E. De La Cour, O.B.E., J.P.
National Vigilance Association	Miss K.M. Stewart Mrs Cadell
Roman Catholic Church	The Rt Rev. Monseigneur M'Gettigan*
Scottish Council for Research in Education	R.R. Rusk, M.A., B.A., Ph.D.*
Scottish Temperance Alliance	Thomas Murray
St Vincent De Paul Society	R. Davidson, B.Com.
Women Citizens Association	Mrs M'Call* Mrs Burt* Miss Macgregor*

Women Citizens Association (Junior Section)	Mrs Makepeace Mrs Anderson
Y.W.C.A. of Great Britain	Miss D. Crerar
Y.W.C.A. of Scotland	Miss Kemp
Co-opted	J.R. Peddie, M.A., D.Litt* Very Rev. J. Harry Miller, C.B.E., D.D* Mrs Alice M. Ross, M.A.* Mrs Bruce* Mrs Griffith Thomas J. Mackie, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.E.* D.S.W. Pentland* Rev. W. Ross, B.D.*
Honorary Secretaries	Miss M. Gunn Miss Martin Stewart

* = Members of Executive Committee

Composition of the Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry Committee 1931-1933

	General Committee	**%**	**Executive Committee**	**%**	**Proportional Representation***
Total members	57	100%	25	100%	44%
Men	22	39%	15	60%	68%
Women	35	61%	10	40%	29%
Married women (Mrs)	12	21%	5	20%	42%
Single women (Miss)	23	40%	5	20%	22%
Clergy	5	9%	4	16%	80%
Graduates	15	26%	14	56%	93%
Education organisations	7	12%	6	24%	86%
Religious organisations	9	16%	2	8%	22%
Youth organisations	22	39%	7	28%	32%
Women's organisations	11	19%	3	12%	27%
Social/moral campaigners	7	12%	1	4%	14%

* Proportion of general committee members of each category on executive committee

Source: John Mackie (ed.), *The Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry: Being an investigation conducted into the influence of the film on school children and adolescents in the city* (Edinburgh, 1933).

Appendix 6

Tarzan Questionnaire and Letter

Sarah J. Smith
Department of History
University of Strathclyde
16 Richmond Street
Glasgow G1 1XQ

Tel: 0141-558-6484

20th July, 2000

Dear Mr Letchet,

I am doing some research on the history of children and cinema in the 1930s and I have been lucky enough to read the information gathered by Valentina Bold and Annette Kuhn, for the 'Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain' project a few years ago.

Your contribution was of particular interest to me, as you mentioned the Tarzan films made by MGM, with Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O'Sullivan. I am hoping to get some idea of how popular these films were with children at the time and what, if anything, people remember about seeing the stories of Tarzan, Jane, Boy and Cheeta the Chimp. As an example of children's cinema-going, this information will be very valuable to me in trying to complete my thesis for a doctorate in History.

I would therefore be very grateful if you could answer a few questions by ticking boxes on the enclosed questionnaire. This should only take about ten minutes. However, if you have more time and would like to add any other memories or comments about Tarzan films, I would be extremely interested to read them! The films that I am researching are: *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), *Tarzan Escapes* (1937) and *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939).

I hope this is not a nuisance and I can assure you that your reply is very important to me, as I am only contacting nine people in this way. However, please do not worry if you are unable to help, as I will certainly understand. All completed questionnaires will also be added to the archive started by Annette Kuhn and Valentina Bold for the use of researchers in the future.

Please note that I have enclosed a stamped, addressed envelope for your reply.

Many thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah J. Smith

Tarzan Questionnaire

Your Name: ....

Date of Birth: ....

If you want to reply quickly, please just tick the boxes. However, it would be really helpful if you can use the lines provided (or a separate sheet of paper if necessary!) to add any details or comments that spring to mind.

1. As a child, how did you feel about the Tarzan films starring Johnny Weissmuller? (Tick one box)

   - These films were among my favourites ☐
   - I liked them a lot ☐
   - I quite liked them ☐
   - I did not like them much ☐
   - I hated them ☐
   - I do not really remember ☐

Comments:
....
....
....
....
....

2. How popular were these films with children in general?

   - Extremely popular ☐
   - Very popular ☐
   - Quite popular ☐
   - Not very popular ☐
   - I do not really remember ☐

Comments:
....
....
....
....
....

3. Which of the following characters do you remember? (Tick as many boxes as you wish). Write beside each one whether you liked them, disliked them, or were indifferent. If you had a favourite, please indicate this.

Tarzan (Johnny Weissmuller) ☐ ....
Jane (Maureen O'Sullivan) ☐ ....
Boy (Johnny Sheffield) ☐ ....
Cheeta the Chimp ☐ ....

Comments:
....
....
....
....
....

4. What were your impressions of the Tarzan films as a child? (Tick as many boxes as you wish and add more descriptions if you want to).

Romantic	☐	Boring	☐	....	☐
Violent	☐	Sad	☐	....	☐
Fun	☐	Sexy/Rude	☐	....	☐
Predictable	☐	Exciting	☐	....	☐
Frightening	☐	Funny	☐	....	☐

Did you think that they were suitable or unsuitable for children?
Suitable ☐ Fairly suitable ☐ Unsuitable ☐

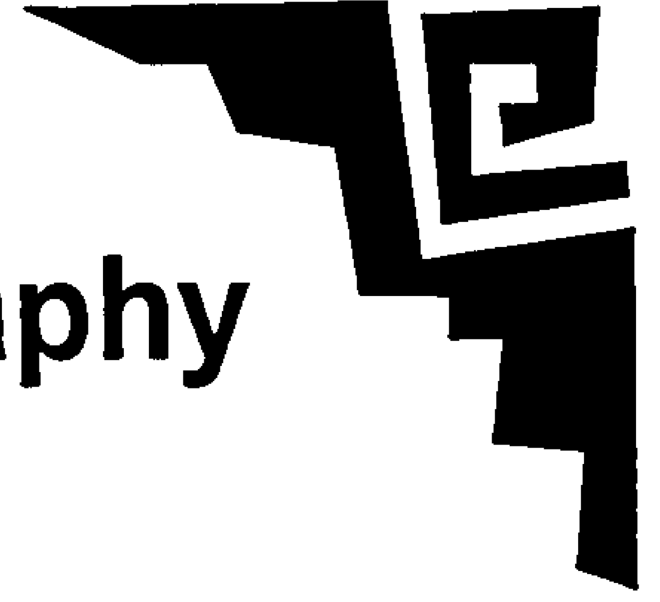
Comments:
....
....
....
....
....

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please mention anything you recall about watching Tarzan films as a child. For example, did you go alone, with family, or friends? What did you like most about the films? Was there anything you disliked? Do you remember any particular scenes or images? Did the films appeal to children in general, or to boys or girls specifically? Did you ever play at being Tarzan, Jane, or one of the other characters? MGM Tarzan films came out in 1932, 1934, 1937, 1939, 1941 and 1942, and the character of Boy appeared from 1939. Did the films change much over that time? If so, how? Any other comments are also very welcome!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT

Bibliography



BIBLIOGRAPHY

A: UNPUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

THE TARZAN QUESTIONNAIRE (see Appendix 6)

Selected respondents from the project Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain (CCINTB). Dates of birth are listed as (known) or [estimated]. Geographical locations, where known, refer to the places in which respondents lived as children.

TQ1 Jessie Boyd (30 November 1922) – Middleton, Lancashire (CCINTB 95-93)

TQ2 Marjorie Cunningham (21 July 1930) – Cowcaddens, Glasgow (CCINTB 92-3)

TQ3 Bernard Letchet (15 February 1926) – Finchley, London (CCINTB 95-207b)

TQ4 Thomas McGoran (22 November 1927) – Glasgow (CCINTB 92-9)

TQ5 Arthur Orrell (29 March 1920) – Farnworth/Bolton (CCINTB 95-175)

TQ6 Olga Scowen (4 December 1918) – Harrow, London (CCINTB 95-190)

TQ7 Norman Wild (23 August 1926) – Bolton (CCINTB 95-36)

ORAL HISTORY AND CORRESPONDENCE ARCHIVES

CINEMA CULTURE IN 1930S BRITAIN
c/o INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL RESEARCH, LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

While all files in this archive were examined, only those considered directly relevant are listed below. Numbers refer to individual respondents whose files may include interview transcripts, questionnaires and correspondence (and Tarzan questionnaire for those marked *). Dates of birth are listed as (known) or [estimated]. Geographical locations, where known, refer to the place in which respondents lived as children. All interviews conducted by Valentina Bold.

CCINTB 92-1 Margaret Young (24 November 1925) – Glasgow

CCINTB 92-2 Molly Stevenson (17 June 1923) – Glasgow

CCINTB 92-3 Marjorie Cunningham (21 July 1930) – Cowcaddens, Glasgow*

CCINTB 92-4 Shiela McWhinnie (19 November 1919) – Gorbals, Glasgow

CCINTB 92-9	Thomas McGoran (22 November 1927) – Glasgow*
CCINTB 92-11a	Tom Walsh (1922) – Glasgow
CCINTB 92-11b	Margaret Walsh (29 August 1928) – Glasgow
CCINTB 92-16	Tom Affleck [1924] – Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire
CCINTB 92-35	A. Murrie (1928) – Hamilton, Lanarkshire
CCINTB 95-32	Annie Wright (November 1919) – Manchester
CCINTB 95-33	Les Sutton (3 March 1922) – Ardwick, Manchester
CCINTB 95-34	A. Denis Houlston (20 Feb 1917) – Levenshulme, Manchester
CCINTB 95-36	Norman Wild (23 August 1926) – Bolton*
CCINTB 95-38	Doris Braithwaite (1922) – Stockport
CCINTB 95-39	Mr J. Murray (November 1920) – Bury, Greater Manchester
CCINTB 95-44	Kath Browne (1921) – Bolton
CCINTB 95-48	Brigadier J.B. Ryall, C.B.E. (1922) – Golders Green, London
CCINTB 95-51	Vera Entwistle (1 December 1926) – Bolton
CCINTB 95-54	Mr S.H. Beadle (1915) – Beckenham/Penge, London
CCINTB 95-55	J. Charles Hall (1927) – Battersea, London
CCINTB 95-60	Olive M. Johnson (1922) – Exeter
CCINTB 95-66	Beryl M. Down [1929] – Welsh mining valley
CCINTB 95-77	Mrs M. Schneiderman (1931) – London
CCINTB 95-81	Bernard Goodsall [pre-1925] – Essex
CCINTB 95-83	Mr W. Ward (1923) – Manchester
CCINTB 95-87	Joan F. Donoghue (1923)
CCINTB 95-91	Joan Howarth
CCINTB 95-92	Maurice F. Dela Bertauche (1925)
CCINTB 95-93	Jessie Boyd (30 November 1922) – Middleton, Lancashire*
CCINTB 95-96	Bob Surtees (1922) – South Shields
CCINTB 95-98	Valentine Tucker (1925) – Dagenham, London
CCINTB 95-100	Lewis Howells (1923) – Blaenavon, Gwent
CCINTB 95-108	Eric Holmes – East End of London
CCINTB 95-110	Betty Verdant
CCINTB 95-119	Mr A.M. Peary (1925) – North London
CCINTB 95-121	James F. Barton (1923) – Sheffield
CCINTB 95-135	Hilda Moss (1927) – Welsh valley
CCINTB 95-141	John Ford (1923) – Watford
CCINTB 95-175	Arthur Orrell (29 March 1920) – Farnworth/Bolton*

CCINTB 95-182	Ellen Casey (1921) – Manchester
CCINTB 95-190	Olga Scowen (4 December 1918) – Harrow, London*
CCINTB 95-195	Eileen Barnett (1924) – North London
CCINTB 95-201	Raphael 'Ralph' Hart (1921) – Golders Green, London
CCINTB 95-202	Anthony Venis (1924) – Wembley, London
CCINTB 95-207a	Irene Letchet (1923) – Islington, London
CCINTB 95-207b	Bernard Letchet (15 February 1926) – Finchley, London*
CCINTB 95-208	Beatrice Cooper (1921) – Hendon, London
CCINTB 95-209	Michael Trewern-Bree [1920s] – Penzance, Cornwall
CCINTB 95-214	E. Jim Godbold (1918) – Stowmarket, Suffolk
CCINTB 95-230	Sam Reilly (1932) – Dennistoun, Glasgow
CCINTB 95-232	Raymond Aspden (1923) – Blackburn
CCINTB 95-233	M. Coia
CCINTB 95-272	Zonia Ives (1926) – Great Yarmouth
CCINTB 95-276	Eric Williams (1925) – Great Yarmouth
CCINTB 95-279	J.G. Leggett (1921) – Great Yarmouth
CCINTB 95-299	Ivy Royal (17 November 1921) – Norwich
CCINTB 95-304	Lilian Wilkinson – Norwich
CCINTB 95-316	Barbara Duncan (1927) – Norwich
CCINTB 95-318	Dulcie Chapman [1927] – Littleport, Cambs
CCINTB 95-322	Mr E.F. Prew (1932) – Ipswich
CCINTB 95-325	Mrs Zena Jesney [1919] – London
CCINTB 95-334	Irene Woollestone (30 August 1912) – Norwich
CCINTB 95-337	Mrs T. Mather (4 July 1934) – Stretford, Lancs
CCINTB 95-338	Mr N. Wright (19 March 1920) – Manchester
CCINTB 95-341	Mr W. Ashton (28 August 1923) – Rostrevor, County Down

Memorabilia and donations

CCINTB 92-1-20a	Collection of 1930s cigarette cards
CCINTB 92-1-20c	Margaret Young ms diary 1930s-1940s
CCINTB 95-216-8&9	Scrapbooks of cuttings from 1930s film magazines
CCINTB 95-34-25,26 & 27	*The Golden Album of Film Stars – Picturegoer* collector's albums of early 1930s signed postcard photographs
CCINTB 95-34-28	Collection of 159 *Picturegoer* Postcard Club cards
CCINTB 95-34-29a-q	Letters and photographs in response to fan mail, early 1930s

CCINTB 96-3-3 Scrapbook of 1930s film star photographs

SCOTTISH FILM ARCHIVE, GLASGOW
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Unless otherwise stated, interviewer was Janet McBain, Curator of Scottish Film Archive. Known dates of birth in parenthesis. Dates of interviews in square brackets.

8/5 GEORGE SINGLETON (b.c.1899) – Manager and owner of Singleton's cinemas from the 1920s [9 December 1977]

8/8 ROBERT DOUGLAS – Projectionist [21 March 1978]

8/10 MR J.K.S. POOLE (b.1911) – Owner of the Cameo, Edinburgh [24 May 1978]

8/11 PETER ARMOUR – Owner and manager of the Picture House, Campbelltown [24 July 1978]

8/12 JAMES 'JIMMY' NAIRN – Manager, film maker, since 1918 [19 September 1978]

8/17 BILL RAMSAY – Manager of Victoria Cinema, Dundee [21 June 1979]

8/18 ROBERT GAVIN and ROBERT SCOTT – Former managers of ABC cinemas, West of Scotland [12 December 1979]

8/28 GEORGE MILLER – Projectionist and Manager [29 July 1980]

8/29 J. B. BARCLAY – Co-founder of Scottish Evacuation Film Scheme, 1939, relating its history for the National Library of Scotland [29 January 1980]

8/30 J. B. BARCLAY – Co-founder of Saturday morning cinema performances for Edinburgh school children, 1932-8, relating their history for Scotland's record in the National Library of Scotland [1980]

8/35 JAMES PORTER (b.1919) and WILLIAM STIRLING (b.1922) – Survivors of the Glen Cinema Disaster in Paisley, 31 December 1929 [April 1981]

8/39 KEN SMITH – Manager, and CHARLIE BROWNLIE – Projectionist, of the Odeon Cinema, Eglinton Toll, Glasgow [24 October 1981]

8/40 OSCAR BAILLIE (b.1909) – Manager for Gaumont British and George Green Ltd. [12 November 1981]

8/41 BILL GRANT (b.1909) – Employee, Paramount Film Renters [7 December 1981]

8/42 'CHICK' ELLIS (b.1891) – Film renter & sales manager for Fox & Warner Bros. [5 March 1982]

8/45 WINNIE LEES (b.1914) – Film Critic, *Sunday Mail*, 1950-83 [14 June 1983]

8/46 JOHNNY MULHEARN (b.1911) – Spool boy, projectionist [20 June 1983]

8/47 GEORGE KEMP (b.1913) – Exhibitor [28 June 1983]

8/48 JOHN BOLL – Spool boy and projectionist [4 July 1983]

8/49 ALEX FRUTIN (b. pre-1903) – Exhibitor and theatre owner [7 July 1983]

8/50 ALEC DAVIDSON – Projectionist; started cinema work 1927 [4 August 1983]

8/51 BESSIE McCUE *née* FURY – Usherette at the Royal, Glasgow, c.1930-46 [8 August 1983]

8/52 MRS SMILLIE – BB children's matinee member [10 August 1983]

8/53 MRS STEVENSON (b.1903) – Attender of children's matinees, 1909-11 [10 August 1983]

8/54 BERT McGUFFIE (b.1896) – Attender of Wellington Palace, Gorbals, Glasgow, c.1908 [17 August 1983]

8/55 KATIE SMITH (b.1910) and JACK SMITH – Cinema-goers since c.1914 [September 1983]

8/57 RICHARD TELFER - Cinema organist, Edinburgh 1932-50 [2 November 1983]

8/58 ALEX HAMILL – Chocolate Boy (aged 14) and Spool Boy (aged 15) during the 1930s and projectionist after World War Two [8 November 1983]

8/64 VESS HUDSON – Manager and owner, interviewed with his sister and their film-going friend [6 December 1984]

8/65 JACK BROWN – Manager for Rank, from the 1930s [14 December 1984]

8/66 WILLIE TENNANT – Cinema pianist, c.1927-30 [c.1985]

8/67 MRS JENNY CHAPMAN (b.1910) – Daughter of a cinema owner in Kirriemuir, 1913-20 [27 March 1985]

8/68 MRS PEGGY McBRIDE – Manageress, La Scala, Edinburgh, 1923-?? [27 March 1985]

8/69 MRS MARY ROBERTSON – Attender of children's matinees in Glasgow, c.1918 [November 1985]

8/70 MRS PEG HOWIE – Manageress of the Kinema, Newmills, interviewed with her son, FRANK [26 March 1986]

8/71 GRAHAM SALMON – Former secretary of Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, interviewed with his sister, CATHERINE [3 April 1986]

8/79 SANDY CAMPBELL – Projectionist, Cupar and Dunfermline [4 August 1987]

5/7/97 DAVID GOUK – Former Pathe film distributor and member of the Glasgow Cinema Club, interviewed by unknown party for the People's Palace Museum, Glasgow [6 November 1975]

5/7/314 NORMAN WOOLSTENHULME – Former cinema manager & film distributor; interviewers Catriona Finlayson & Matthew Hume [1 February

1996]

5/7/315 DEREK CAMERON – Owner & manager of Dominion Cinema, Edinburgh; interviewers Catriona Finlayson & Matthew Hume [16 January 1996]

5/7/136 CHARLIE HAMILL – Projectionist for Paragon, Gorbals, Glasgow, from c.1930; interviewers Catriona Finlayson & Matthew Hume [c.1995-6]

5/7/319 GRAHAME WEAR – Manager, Odeon Cinema, Clerk Street, Edinburgh; interviewers Catriona Finlayson & Matthew Hume [21 December 1995]

NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH
SCOTTISH LIFE ARCHIVE
'GOING TO THE PICTURES' PROJECT

While all of the material in this collection was examined, only that considered directly relevant is listed below. Individual correspondents' files can include letters and other materials. Dates of birth are listed as either (known) or [estimated]. Geographical locations, where known, refer to the place in which respondents lived as children.

- Dickie Alexander (1932) – Piershill
- Lucinda Allan [1923] – Grantown-on-Spey
- George Anderson
- Elspeth Beaton – Glasgow
- Angus Bruce – Leith
- Molly Buchanan (1930) – Glasgow
- Joan Connelly [1929]
- Mary Cook (1915) – Dundee
- William Cooper [1925] – Aberdeen
- Mabel Cunningham (1920) – Dennistoun, Glasgow
- Jim Douglas (1933) – Fife
- May Dunn (1931) – Glasgow
- Jim Dunsmore [1925] – Edinburgh
- John Finnie [1928] – Innerleithen, Edinburgh
- Hazel Galloway
- Catherine Jarvis (1905)
- J. D. MacDonald [1925] – Thurso

- Freddie Martin [1932] – Glasgow
- Mathilda Roberts [1918] – Edinburgh
- Agnes Watson – Dalmuir
- Walter Watt (November 1924)
- John Williamson (1929)
- Ann Young (1938) – Townhead, Glasgow

OTHER ARCHIVES

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, KEW, LONDON

(All Home Office Entertainments files unless otherwise stated)

HO45/10551/163175: Film Censorship 1912-1914

HO45/11008/272403: CHILDREN - child attendance at cinematograph 1915-1917

HO45/12969: Children and the cinema 1919-1928

HO45/139/6: PORTFOLIO - no.12 BBFC

HO45/14731: Children and the cinema 1929-1932

HO45/15166: Control of cinematograph theatres after Paisley inquiry 1930-1933

HO45/15175: Cinematograph regulations, miscellaneous, 1930-1933

HO45/15206: Film Censorship in the UK 18 September 1931-30 April 1932

HO45/15207: Film Censorship in the UK 19 May 1932-26 May 1933

HO45/15208: Film Censorship Consultative Committee 1931-1933

HO45/16327: Unsuitable premises for children's cinema exhibitions 1932-1935

HO45/17036: Films for children [children and 'A' Films] 1932-1937

HO45/18047: CHILDREN - children taking part in entertainments 1933-1939

HO45/20876: Cinema operators: age and qualifications 1915-1947

HO45/21118: Admission of children to cinemas 1937-1947

HO45/21310: CHANNEL ISLANDS - admission of children to cinemas 1947

HO45/22906: Censorship: powers of BBFC and local authorities 1923-1929

HO45/24084: BBFC legal position and work of the board 1926-1950

HO45/24945: Film Censorship Consultative Committee 1934-1951

MEPO2/1528: METROPOLITAN POLICE - BBFC, Inception and functions 1913

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE, LONDON
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

BBFC Verbatim Reports 1930-1931

Proceedings of meeting between the BBFC and a deputation from the London Public Morality Council, 3 April 1930.

Proceedings of a meeting convened by the Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee, 'Cinema and its Influence Today', 7 November 1930.

Proceedings of a Private Cinema Conference convened by the London Public Morality Council, 12 January 1931.

Proceedings of the first meeting of the Film Censorship Consultative Committee, 26 November 1931.

Proceedings of the Performing and Captive Animals' Defence League Preliminary Conference on Cruel Films, 9 December 1931.

BBFC Verbatim Reports 1932-1935

Proceedings of the National Conference on Problems Connected with the Cinema, convened by the Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee, 27 February 1932.

Some Observations on the National Conference of 27 February 1932 (anon.).

Proceedings of a meeting between the Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Samuel, and a deputation from the Birmingham Conference on Film Censorship, 6 April 1932.

Proceedings of a meeting between the Mothers' Union, the National Council of Women, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Public Morality Council, 'The Influence of the Cinema', 29 May 1933.

Proceedings of a meeting of the LCC re: 'Rules of Management with Regard to Places of Public Entertainment', 20 June 1933.

Proceedings of a meeting of the LCC re: 'Exhibition of Alleged Objectionable Films', 5 December 1933.

Proceedings of a hearing, LCC vs Mrs Fanny Shore (licensee of the Palace Cinema, 254-6 Southwark Park Road), Tower Bridge Police Court, 25 April 1935.

Censorship Folder – Verbatim Reports 1930-1938

Public Morality Council, 'Report on Cinema Films' (29 October 1931), presented by

a deputation to the BBFC, 4 December 1931.

Reply by Rt. Hon. Edward Shortt, President of BBFC, to Public Morality Council 'Report on Cinema Films', 29 October 1931 (undated).

Confidential Report: 'Control of Cinematograph Exhibitions: Summary of Replies to a Questionnaire Addressed from the Home Office in February 1931 to all Licensing Authorities under the Cinematograph Act 1909 in England and Wales'.

Proceedings of a meeting of the Mothers' Union: 'The Influence of the Cinema – In Support of the Model Conditions Suggested by the Home Secretary'.

Proceedings of a meeting called by the BBFC, 'Representing Organisations Interested in Animal Welfare', 31 May 1934.

Proceedings of a meeting between the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, and a deputation, in relation to the film industry, 15 January 1935.

Proceedings of a conference, 'Children and Films', held under the auspices of the Cinema Christian Council and the Public Morality Council, 16 February 1937.

Proceedings of LCC meeting re: 'Exhibition of Films'.

Report of the LCC Entertainments Committee, 1 October 1937 to 31 March 1938.

London County Council Verbatim Reports 1929-1930

Proceedings of LCC meeting (19 February 1929), re: Report of the Special Committee on Procedure for Licensing Places of Public Entertainment (No.2) – 'Censorship of Cinematograph Films', 30 January 1929.

Proceedings of LCC meeting (18 June 1929), re: Report of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee – 'Cinematograph Exhibitions – Attendance of Unaccompanied Children at Exhibitions of A films', 8 May & 12 June 1929.

Proceedings of LCC meetings (23 & 30 July 1929), re: Report of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee (No.3) – 'Cinematograph Exhibitions – Attendance of Unaccompanied Children at Exhibitions of A Films', 17 July 1929.

Proceedings of conference between the LCC Theatres and Music Halls Committee and the BBFC, on the Attendance of Unaccompanied Children at Exhibitions of A Films, 6 November 1929.

Proceedings of LCC meeting (28 June 1930), re: Report of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee – 'Cinematograph Exhibitions – Exhibition of Films for Children', 22 January 1930.

BFI Clippings Collection 1935-1940

Box 1: Children's performances; churches & films; films in schools; educational

films.
Box 4: Educational films; children and the cinema.
Box 6: BFI general; films in schools.

Bernstein Collection

79: Granada Scrapbook 1928-34

Ivor Montagu Collection

65: Anti-censorship Correspondence 1929-31

Other Collections

BBFC Scenarios 1930-1939
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Collection

BFI PRESS BOOKS AND CLIPPINGS FILES

Frankenstein (1931)
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)
Tarzan the Ape Man (1932)
Tarzan and His Mate (1934)
Tarzan Escapes (1936)
Tarzan Finds a Son! (1939)

ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES LIBRARY, BEVERLY HILLS, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Production Code Administration (Hays Office) Files

Billy the Kid (MGM, 1930)
Frankenstein (Universal, 1931)
Tarzan and His Mate (MGM, 1934)
Tarzan Escapes (MGM, 1936)
Tarzan Finds a Son! (MGM, 1939)

Press Books And Clippings Files

Tarzan the Ape Man (MGM, 1932)

Tarzan and His Mate (MGM, 1934)
Tarzan Escapes (MGM, 1936)
Tarzan Finds a Son! (MGM, 1939)

A. Arnold Gillespie Collection

Special Effects Records and Photographs
Tarzan Escapes (MGM, 1936).
Tarzan Finds a Son! (MGM, 1939).

Bud Barsky Collection

Box 4, Folder 74: *Tarzan and His Mate* (MGM, 1934).
Box 4, Folder 76: *Tarzan and His Mate* (MGM, 1934).

Biography Collections

Maureen O'Sullivan
Tarzan
W.S. Van Dyke
Johnny Weissmuller

Metro Goldwyn Mayer Script Collection

***Tarzan the Ape Man* (MGM, 1932)**

Temporary incomplete screenplay, Cyril Hume (10-28 Sept 1931)

Temporary incomplete screenplay, Cyril Hume (8 Oct 1931)

Story outline, Bernard Hyman (22 Oct 1931); Story conference transcripts (21-24 Oct 1931); Script section, Bernard Hyman, Ivor Novello, James McKay (20 Nov 1931)

Temporary complete screenplay, Ivor Novello (28 Oct-16 Dec 1931)

Complete OK screenplay, Ivor Novello (28 Oct-16 Dec 1931); Reader's synopsis, Franclien Macconnell (6 Apr 1933)

Projection room notes: cuts and additions, Bernard Hyman (3-15 Jan 1932)

Dialogue cutting continuity script, Ben Lewis and Tom Held (3-28 Mar 1932)

Instructions for superimposing titles (7 Apr 1932)

Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script (28 Jan 1949)

***Tarzan and His Mate* (MGM, 1934)**

Story outline, Bud Barsky (17 June 1932)

Screenplay sections, H.E. Rogers (24 June 1932-20 July 1933)

Treatments by Bernard Hyman and Robert Lee Johnson (18 Sept-4 Nov 1932); Notes, anonymous (7 Oct 1932)

Notes, Elliott Nugent (15 Oct 1932)

Dialogue continuity partial script, Frank R. Adams (17 Nov 1932)

Temporary complete screenplay, Frank R. Adams (25 Nov-8 Dec 1932)

Treatment/Story outline, C. Gardner Sullivan (28 Jan 1933)

Temporary complete screenplay, C. Gardner Sullivan (22 Feb 1933)

Notes (synopsis of Sullivan screenplay), James McKay (3 Mar 1933)

Various conference notes and script changes (8 Mar 1933-14 Mar 1934)

Screenplay section: Act 1, Leon Gordon (24 Mar 1933)

Temporary complete screenplay, Leon Gordon (20 Apr 1933)

Screenplay sections, notes, story conference transcripts, notes from underwater shooting (3 May-14 July 1933)

Temporary complete script, H.E. Rogers? (8 July 1933)

Screenplay sections I, J.K. McGuinness (28 July 1933-25 Jan 1934)

Screenplay sections II, J.K. McGuinness (28 July 1933-25 Jan 1934)

Screenplay sections, Bernard H. Hyman (25 Sept 1933-4 April 1934)

Shooting script, J.K. McGuinness (2 Nov 1933)

Scenes, sequences, changes, J.K. McGuinness, Cedric Gibbons, Earl Taggart, et al (5 Nov-22 Dec 1933)

Dialogue cutting continuity script, Tom Held (7 Apr 1934)

Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script (14 Apr 1934)

Revised short version dialogue cutting continuity, Tom Held (20 Apr 1934)

Re-issue version dialogue cutting continuity, Tom Held (23 Jan 1950)

MGM advertising manual: *Tarzan and His Mate*, Howard Dietz

Tarzan Escapes (MGM, 1936) - aka _Tarzan Returns_

Outline, Karl Brown (30 Jan 1935)

Temporary complete screenplay, Karl Brown and Louis Mosher (6-28 Feb 1935)

Temporary complete screenplay, Otis Garrett, from John Farrow (2 Apr 1935)

Temporary complete screenplay, John Farrow (Otis Garrett?) (3 Apr 1935)

Screenplay sections and synopsis, Wyndham Gittens (5-21 June 1935)

Temporary complete screenplay, Eddie Hannan? (12 June-27 July 1935)

Outlines, notes, sections and additions (4 Oct-5 Dec 1935)

Notes and screenplay sections, Edwin H. Knopf (26 Nov-23 Dec 1935)

Screenplay sections, Cyril Hume and Edwin H. Knopf (16 Jan-28 Feb 1936)

Screenplay sections, Cyril Hume (14 March-16 May 1936)

Screenplay sections and sequence outlines, Cyril Hume, et al (15-22 Apr 1936)

Complete OK screenplay, Cyril Hume (18 May-16 July 1936)

Notes, inserts, cuts, etc, Sam Zimbalist and Richard Thorpe (13 Jul-12 Oct 1936)

Dialogue cutting continuity script, W. Donn Hayes (28 Oct 1936)

Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script (29 Oct 1936)

Tarzan Finds a Son! **(MGM, 1939)**

Treatment, Cyril Hume (30 July-2 Aug 1938)

Story outlines, Cyril Hume (18 Aug-26 Oct 1938)

Temporary complete screenplay, Cyril Hume (1-9 Dec 1938)

Temporary complete screenplay, Cyril Hume (12-16 Dec 1938)

Complete OK screenplay (revised), Cyril Hume (22 Dec 1938-22 Feb 1939)

Complete OK screenplay, Cyril Hume (22 Dec 1938-22 Feb 1939); Synopsis (undated)

Miscellaneous screenplay sections, notes and retakes (10 Mar-19 Apr 1939)

Dialogue cutting continuity script, Frank Sullivan and Gene Ruggiero (29 May-5 June 1939)

Trailer dialogue cutting continuity script (10 June 1939)

B: PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

Allen, Lady Allen of Hurtwood, 'Children and the Cinema', reprinted from *The Fortnightly Review* (July 1946).

Aydelotte, Winifred, 'The Miseries of Nudism', *Photoplay* (September 1934), pp. 26-7, 119-20.

Bell, Oliver, *An Expose of the Principles of British Organisation of Children's Recreational Films, to be given in Geneva to the Child Welfare Commission of the League of Nations* (BFI, 1938).

Bell, Oliver, *Sociological Aspects of the Cinema* (1939).

Beman, Lamar T. (compiler), *Selected Articles on Censorship of the Theater and Moving Pictures* (New York, 1931).

Birkenhead Vigilance Committee, *The Cinema and the Child: A Report of Investigations, June-October 1931* (Birkenhead, 1931).

Birmingham Cinema Enquiry Committee, *Report of Investigations, April 1930 - May 1931* (Birmingham, 1931).

Blumer, Herbert (ed.), 'The Motion Picture Autobiographies' and 'Private Monograph on Movies and Sex', reprinted in Garth S. Jowett, , Ian C. Jarvie and Kathryn H. Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 242-80.

Bower, Hon. Mrs Robert, *Children in the Cinema: A Summary of the Main Aspects of the Report on Children and the Cinema* (Newport, Mon., 1947).

British Film Institute, *Report of the Conference on Films for Elementary School Children, November 20-21, 1936* (London, 1937).

British Film Institute, *Suggested Programmes for Children's Matinees* (London, 1937).

British Film Institute, *The Cinema and Education: A Summary of the Reports Issued by Various Local Education Authorities in Great Britain, by A. A. Denholme* (London, 1937).

British Film Institute, *The Film in National Life: Proceedings of a Conference held by the BFI in Exeter, April 1943* (London, 1943).

British Film Institute and Motion Picture Association of America, *Delinquent Children: A World Problem* (London, c.1950).

Browning, H. E. and Sorrell, A. A., 'Cinemas and Cinema-going in Great Britain', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, Part 2 (1954), pp. 133-70.

Burnett, R.G. and E.D. Martell, *The Devil's Camera: Menace of a Film-ridden World* (London, 1932).

Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life: Being the report of an enquiry conducted by the Commission into the service which the cinematograph may render to education and social progress* (London, 1932).

Comstock, Anthony, *Traps For The Young* (New York, 1883), edited by Robert Bremner (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

Corporation of Glasgow Education Department, Sub-committee on Visual Education, *The Film in the Classroom* (November, 1933).

Cressey, Paul G., 'The Motion Picture Experience as Modified by Social Background and Personality', *American Sociological Review*, 3 (August 1938), pp. 516-25, reprinted in Garth S. Jowett, , Ian C. Jarvie and Kathryn H. Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 336-45.

Crozier, Major T.H. (H.M. Chief Inspector of Explosives), *Report to the Right Honourable Secretary of State for Scotland on the Circumstances attending the Loss of Life at the Glen Cinema, Paisley, on the 31st December, 1929* (HMSO, 1930)

Erith Education Committee, *The Effect of War Films on Child Opinion: Report of an Investigation, Erith, 1935* (Erith, 1935).

Film Lovers Annual, The (London, 1932).

Ford, Richard, *Children in the Cinema* (London, 1939).

Forman, Henry James, *Our Movie-Made Children* (New York, 1933).

Greiner, Grace, 'Children and the Cinema', *Christus Rex* (July, 1954), pp. 252-260.

Humbert, Dr., 'Effect of Cinematograph on the Mental and Moral Well-Being of Children: A report to the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations, Geneva, May 1926', reprinted in WM Seabury, *Motion Picture Problems: The Cinema and the League of Nations* (New York, 1929), pp. 265-355.

Hunter, William, *Scrutiny of Cinema* (London, 1932).

International Educational Cinematographic Institute, *The Social Aspects of the Cinema* (Rome, c.1930).

International Institute of Educational Cinematography, *The International Congress of Educational and Instructional Cinematography, Rome 1934* (Rome, 1934).

International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, *The Cinema and the Public: Preliminary Results of an International Enquiry* (Paris, 1940).

Interim Report of the Joint Committee on Eyestrain in Cinemas (London, 1919).

Juvenile Organisations Committee of the Board of Education, *Report on Juvenile Delinquency* (1920).

League of Nations Child Welfare Committee, Twelfth Session, April 27th, 1936, *Recreational Aspects of Cinematography* (Geneva, 1936).

League of Nations Advisory Committee on Social Questions, *The Recreational Cinema and the Young* (Geneva, 1938).

London County Council, *London Children and the Cinema* (London, 1951).

Mackie, John (ed.), *The Edinburgh Cinema Enquiry: Being an investigation conducted into the influence of the film on school children and adolescents in the city* (Edinburgh, 1933).

Mayer, J.P., *British Cinemas and Their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London, 1948).

Middlesbrough Head Teachers' Association, *Children and the Cinema: Report on an investigation carried out in June 1946* (Middlesbrough, 1946).

Mitchell, Alice Miller, *Children and Movies* (Chicago, 1929).

National Council on Freedom from Censorship, *What Shocked the Censors: A Complete Record of Cuts in Motion Film Ordered by New York State Censors, 1/32-3/33* (New York, 1933).

National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema: Its Present Position and Future Possibilities - being the report and chief evidence taken by the Cinema Commission of Inquiry, instituted by the National Council of Public Morals* (London, 1917).

National Under Fourteens Council, *Those Saturday Morning Cinema Clubs: Report on the cinema clubs in the London County Council Area* (London, 1947).

Newnham, John K., 'Film Censors', in Clarence Winchester (ed.), *The World Film Encyclopedia: A Universal Screen Guide* (London, 1933), pp. 13-17.

Odeon Theatres Limited, *Odeon National Cinema Club for Boys and Girls: Aims and Objects* (Birmingham, 194?).

Orwell, George, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1st edn 1937; London, 1989).

Owen, A. D. K., 'Cinema Matinees for Children', *Social Service Review* (July 1931), pp. 141-4.

Payne Fund Studies, the

— Blumer, H., *Movies and Conduct* (New York, 1933).

— Blumer, H. and Hauser, P.M., *Movies, Delinquency and Crime* (New York, 1935).

— Charters, W.W., *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary* (New York, 1933).

— Cressey, P.G. and Thrasher, F.M., *Boys, Movies and City Streets* (New York, 1933).

— Dale, E., *Children's Attendance at Motion Pictures* (New York, 1935).

— Dale, E., *The Content of Motion Pictures* (New York, 1935).

— Dysinger, W.S. and Ruckmick, C.A., *The Emotional Responses of Children to the Motion Picture Situation* (New York, 1933).

— Holaday, P.W., *Getting Ideas from the Movies* (New York, 1933).

— Margrave, Seton (ed.), *Meet the Film Stars 1934-1935* (London, 1935).

— May, M.A. and Shuttleworth F.K., *The Social Conduct and Attitudes of Movie Fans* (New York, 1933).

— Peters, C.C., *Motion Pictures and Standards of Morality* (New York, 1933).

— Peterson, R.C. and Thurstone, L.L., *Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children* (New York, 1933).

— Renshaw, S., Miller, V.L. and Marquis, D., *Children's Sleep* (New York, 1933).

Picture Show Annual for 1933, The (London, 1933).

Rook, Clarence, 'Hooligan London' in *Edwardian London*, Vol.3 (1st edn 1902; London, 1990).

Rowson, Simon, 'Statistical Survey of the Cinema Industry in Great Britain in 1934', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 99 (1936), pp. 67-129.

'Scotland, John', *The Talkies* (London, 1930).

Scottish Film Council, *21 Years of the Scottish Film Council 1934-1955* (Glasgow,

c.1955).

Scunthorpe Grammar School, *An Enquiry into the Cinema-Going Habits and Tastes of the Pupils of Scunthorpe Grammar School, November, 1938* (Scunthorpe, 1938).
Seabury, William Marston, *The Public and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York, 1926).

Seabury, William Marston, *Motion Picture Problems: The Cinema and the League of Nations* (New York, 1929).

Spencer, F.H., *School Children and the Cinema: London County Council Education Committee* (London, 1932).

Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, *Report of an appraisal of children's road safety films, conducted for Petroleum Films Bureau* (1947).

Under Secretary of State, Home Office, *Children and 'A' Films: [A letter to] the Clerk to the Licensing Authority, under the Cinematograph Act 1909, 6 March 1933* (HMSO, London, 1934).

Ward, J.C., *Children and the Cinema: An inquiry made by the Social Survey in October 1948 for a Departmental Committee appointed by the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Education* (London, 1949).

Watts, Stephen (ed.), *Stars and Films of 1938* (Daily Express Publications, 1938).

Wheare, K.C., *Report of the Departmental Committee on Children and the Cinema* (London, 1950).

Contemporary Newspapers and Journals

Answers
Belfast News-Letter
Bioscope
Birmingham Gazette
Birmingham Mail
Birmingham Post
Bristol Evening Post
Box Office
Catholic Film News
Catholic Herald
Cinematograph Times
Daily Express
Daily Film Renter
Daily Mail
Daily Mirror
Daily News
Daily Sketch
Daily Telegraph
Education
Enfield Gazette
Evening News
Evening Standard
Film Daily
Film Pictorial
Film Weekly
Glasgow Herald
Grimsby Daily Telegraph
Guardian
Harrison's Reports
Hendon Times
Hollywood Reporter
Hollywood Spectator
Illustrated London News
Justice of the Peace
Kinematograph Weekly
Leeds Mercury
Liverpool Daily Post
Leicestershire Mercury
Linlithgowshire Gazette
Manchester Guardian
Methodist Recorder
Monthly Film Bulletin of the BFI
Morning Post
Motion Picture Daily
Motion Picture Herald
New York Herald Tribune
New York Journal
New York Post
New York Sun
New York Times
Newcastle Evening Chronicle
News Chronicle
News of the World
New Zealand Herald
Nottingham Guardian
Observer
The People
Photoplay
Picturegoer
Sheffield Independent
Showman's Trade Review
Sight and Sound
Stage
Star
Sunday Graphic
Sutherland Echo
Times
Times Educational Supplement
Today's Cinema (The Cinema)
Variety
Variety Daily
Weekly Scotsman
Wolverhampton Express & Star
Yorkshire Evening News

Abbott, Mary, *Family Ties: English Families 1540-1920* (London, 1993).

Adorno, Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Max, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (1st edn, *Dialektik der Anfklarung*, 1944; this trans. London, 1986), pp. 120-67.

Agajanian, Rowena, '"Just For Kids?" Saturday Morning Cinema and Britain's Children's Film Foundation in the 1960s', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 18, 3 (1998), pp. 395-409.

Aldgate, Tony, 'Comedy, Class and Containment: The British Domestic Cinema of the 1930s', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), pp. 257-71.

Allen, Robert C., 'From Exhibition to Reception: Reflections on the Audience in Film History', in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (eds), *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 13-21.

Anderson, James A., 'Research on Children and Television: A Critique', *Journal of Broadcasting*, 25 (1981), pp. 395-400.

Anderson, James A., Meyer, Timothy P. and Hexamer, Anne, 'An Examination of the Assumptions Underlying Telecommunications Social Policies Treating Children as a Specialized Audience', in M. Burgoon (ed.), *Communication Year Book 5* (New Brunswick, 1982), pp. 369-84.

Ang, I., *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London, 1991).

Aries, Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth, 1960).

Auerbach, Nina, 'Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child', *Victorian Studies*, 17, 1 (September 1973), pp. 31-47.

Barker, Martin, *A Haunt of Fears: The Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign* (London, 1984).

Barker, Martin, *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* (Manchester, 1989).

Barker, Martin and Petley, Julian (eds), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, 2e (London, 2001).

Barr, Charles (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986).

Bazalgette, Cary and Buckingham, David (eds), *In Front of the Children: Screen Entertainment and Young Audiences* (London, 1995).

Behlmer, Rudy, 'Tarzan: Hollywood's Greatest Jungle Hero', *American Cinematographer* (January 1987), pp. 38-48.

Behlmer, Rudy, 'Tarzan and MGM: The Rest of the Story', *American Cinematographer* (February 1987), pp. 34-44.

Behlmer, Rudy, *Behind the Scenes: The Making of...* (Hollywood, 1990).

Behlmer, Rudy (ed.), *W.S. Van Dyke's Journal: White Shadows in the South Seas and other Van Dyke on Van Dyke* (Maryland, 1996).

Bernstein, Matthew (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, 1999).

Best, Stephen, 'Foucault, Postmodernism and Social Theory', in D.R. Dickens and A. Fontana (eds), *Postmodernism and Social Inquiry* (London, 1994), pp. 25-52.

Billips, Connie J., *Maureen O'Sullivan: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York, 1990).

Black, Gregory D., 'Hollywood Censored: The Production Code Administration and the Hollywood Film Industry, 1930-1940', *Film History*, 3, 3 (1989), pp. 167-89.

Black, Gregory D., *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (Cambridge, 1994).

Blanch, Michael, 'Imperialism, nationalism and organised youth', in J. Clarke, C. Critcher and R. Johnson (eds), *Working Class Culture: Studies in history and theory* (London, 1979).

Brownlow, Kevin, *Beyond the Mask of Innocence: Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime - Films of Social Conscience in the Silent Era* (Berkeley, 1990).

Buckingham, David, *Children and Television: An Overview of the Research* (BFI Mimeo, London, 1987).

Buckingham, David, *Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy* (London, 1993).

Buckingham, David, *Moving Images: Understanding Children's Emotional Responses to Television* (Manchester, 1996).

Buckingham, David, Davis, Hannah, Jones, Ken and Kelley, Peter, *Children's Television in Britain: History, Discourse and Policy* (London, 1999).

Buckingham, David, 'Electronic Child Abuse? Rethinking the Media's Effects on Children', in Martin Barker and Julian Petley (eds), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, 2e (London, 2001), pp. 63-77.

Campbell, Beatrix, 'Moral Panic', *Index on Censorship*, 24, 2 (1995), pp. 57-61.

Cannom, Robert C., *Van Dyke and the Mythical City, Hollywood* (California, 1948).

Chanan, Michael, *The Dream that Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain* (London, 1980).

Chen, Kuan-Hsing, 'Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalization: An Interview with Stuart Hall', in Kuan-Hsing Chen and Morley (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996).

Chen, Milton, 'Six Myths About Television and Children', in Everette E. Dennis and Edward C. Pease (eds), *Children and the Media* (London, 1996), pp. 77-85.

Clarens, Carlos, 'The Hollywood G-Man, 1934-45', *Film Comment*, 13, 3 (1977), pp. 10-16.

Clifford, Brian R., Gunter, Barie and McAleer, Jill, *Television and Children: Program Evaluation, Comprehension and Impact* (New Jersey, 1995).

Connell, Ian, 'Fabulous Powers: Blaming the Media', in Len Masterman (ed.), *Television Mythologies: Start, Shows and Signs*, 2e (London, 1986), pp. 88-93.

Connell, L., 'Ideology/Discourse/Institution', *Screen*, 19, 1 (1978), pp. 129-134.

Connell, R.W., *The Child's Construction of Politics* (London, 1971).

Conrich, Ian, 'Traditions of the British Horror Film', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* (London, 1997), pp. 226-34.

Conway, Martin A., *Autobiographical Memory: An Introduction* (Milton Keynes, 1990).

Cooke, Lez, 'British Cinema: From Cottage Industry to Mass Entertainment', in Clive Bloom (ed.) *Literature and Culture in Modern Britain, Volume 1: 1900-29* (London, 1993), pp. 167-88.

Corrigan, Philip, 'Film Entertainment as Ideology and Pleasure: Towards a History of Audiences', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), pp. 24-35.

Cullingford, Cedric, *Children and Television* (Aldershot, 1984).

Czitrom, Daniel J., *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (1982).

Davies, P. & Neve, B. (eds), *Cinema, Politics & Society in America* (Manchester, 1981).

deCordova, Richard, 'Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees, *Camera Obscura* (May 1990), pp. 90-107.

Dickens, David R. and Fontana, A., 'Postmodernism in the Social Sciences', in D.R. Dickens and A. Fontana (eds), *Postmodernism and Social Inquiry* (London, 1994), pp. 1-22.

Dickinson, Margeret and Street, Sarah, *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the Government 1927-84* (London, 1985).

Doherty, Thomas, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality and Insurrection in American Cinema* (New York, 1999).

Donald, James, 'Green Paper: Noise of Crisis', *Screen Education*, 30 (Spring, 1979), pp. 13-49.

Drotner, Kirsten, *English Children and their Magazines, 1751-1945* (London, 1988).

Eckert, Charles, 'Shirley Temple and the House of Rockerfeller', in Christine

Gledhill (ed.), *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London, 1991), pp. 60-73.

Elkin, F., and Handel, G., *The Child and Society: The Process of Socialization* (1st edn 1960; New York, 1972).

Essoe, Gabe, *Tarzan of the Movies: A Pictorial History* (New York, 1968).

Eyles, Allen, 'Exhibition and the Cinemagoing Experience', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* (London, 1997), pp. 217-225.

Eysenck, H. J. and Nias, D. K. B., *Sex, Violence and the Media* (London, 1978).

Fehrenbach, Heide, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany* (North Carolina, 1995).

Fenton, Robert W., *The Big Swingers* (New Jersey, 1967).

Fillingham, Lydia Alix, *Foucault for Beginners* (London, 1993).

Foucault, Michel, 'Space, Power and Knowledge', in Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London, 1993), pp. 161-9.

Fowler, David, 'Teenage Consumers? Young wage-earners and leisure in Manchester, 1919-1939', in A. Davies and S. Fielding (eds), *Workers' Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939* (Manchester, 1992).

Fraser, W. Hamish, 'Developments in Leisure', in W.H. Fraser and R.J. Morris (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, Vol.II, 1830-1914* (Edinburgh, 1990).

Frayling, Christopher, *Nightmare: The Birth of Horror* (London, 1996).

Fuller, Kathryn H., *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (London, 1996).

Fury, David, *Kings of the Jungle: An Illustrated Reference to 'Tarzan' on Screen and Television* (North Carolina, 1994).

Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London, 1993).

Gianetti, L. and Eyman, S., *Flashback: A Brief History of Film* (New Jersey, 1991)

Glancy, H. Mark, 'MGM Film Grosses, 1924-1948: The Eddie Mannix Ledger', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 12, 2 (1992), pp. 127-144.

Glancy, H. Mark, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film 1939-45* (Manchester, 1999).

Gordon, Colin (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault* (Hemel Hempstead, 1980).

Gosser, H. Mark, 'The *Bazar de la Charité* Fire: The Reality, the Aftermath, the Telling', *Film History*, 10, 1 (1998), pp. 70-89.

Gunter, Barie and McAleer, Jill, *Children and Television: The One-Eyed Monster?* (London, 1990).

Gunter, Barie and McAleer, Jill, *Television and Children*, 2e (London, 1997).

Hall, Stuart and Jefferson, Tony (eds), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (London, 1976).

Hall, Stuart, 'The Meaning of New Times' in Kuan-Hsing Chen and Morley (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996).

Hall, Stuart, 'What is this "black" in black popular culture', in Kuan-Hsing Chen and Morley (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996).

Halliwell, Leslie, *Seats in All Parts: Half a Lifetime at the Movies* (London, 1985).

Hansen, Miriam, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (London, 1991).

Harrison, Brian, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls' Friendly Society 1874-1920', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), pp. 107-38.

Hartley, John, '"When Your Child Grows Up Too Fast": Juvenation and the Boundaries of the Social in the News Media', *Continuum*, 12, 1 (1998), pp. 9-30.

Hebdige, Dick, 'From Culture to Hegemony', in Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London, 1993), pp. 357-67.

Hendrick, Harry, *Children, Childhood & English Society 1880-1990* (Cambridge, 1997).

Hendrick, Harry, 'Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An Interpretive Survey, 1800 to the present', in Allison James and Allan Prout (eds), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, 2e (London, 1997), pp. 34-62.

Hiley, Nicholas, '"Let's Go to the Pictures": The British Cinema Audience in the 1920s and 1930s,' *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 2 (1999), pp. 39-53.

Hodge, Robert and Tripp, David *Children and Television: A Semiotic Approach* (Cambridge, 1986).

Hoikkala, T., Rahkonen, O., Tigerstedt C. and Tuormaa, J., 'Wait a Minute Mr Postman! - Some Critical Remarks on Neil Postman's Childhood Theory', *Acta Sociologica*, 30, 1 (1987), pp. 87-99.

Howitt, Dennis and Cumberbatch, Guy, *Mass Media and Violence in Society* (London, 1975).

Hughes, M.V., *A London Child of the 1870s* (1st edn 1934; Oxford, 1989).

Humphries, Stephen, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (1st edn 1981; Oxford, 1995).

Hunnings, Neville March, *Film Censors and the Law* (London, 1967).

Hunt, David, *Parents and Children in History: The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France* (New York, 1970).

Hunt, Lynn, 'Introduction: History, Culture, and Text', in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (London, 1989), pp. 1-22.

Jacobs, Lea, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film 1928-1942* (London, 1991).

Jacobs, Lea, 'Industry Self-Regulation and the Problem of Textual Determination', in Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, 1999), pp. 87-101.

James, Allison and Prout, Alan (eds), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, 2e (London, 1997).

James, Louis, 'Tom Brown's Imperialist Sons', *Victorian Studies*, 17, 1 (September 1973), pp. 89-99.

Jameson, Frederick, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C., 1990).

Jarvie, Ian, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: The North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 1992).

Jenkins, Philip, *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Great Britain* (New York, 1992).

Johnson, Tom, *Censored Screams: The British Ban on Hollywood Horror in the Thirties* (London, 1997).

Jowett, Garth S. and Linton, J.M., *Movies as Mass Communication* (London, 1980).

Jowett, Garth S., Jarvie, Ian C. and Fuller, Kathryn H., *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge, 1996).

Jowett, Garth S., '"A Capacity for Evil": The 1915 Supreme Court *Mutual* Decision', in Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, 1999), pp. 16-40.

Joyce, Patrick, *Visions of the People* (1991).

Kaes, Anton, 'The Debate About Cinema: Charting a Controversy 1909-1929', *New German Critique*, 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 7-33.

Kellerman, Jonathan, *Savage Spawn: Reflections on Violent Children* (New York, 1999).

Kessel, Frank, 'On Cultural Construction and Reconstruction in Psychology', in Frank S. Kessel and Alexander W. Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions* (New York, 1983), pp. 224-60.

Kessen, William, 'The Child and Other Cultural Inventions', in Frank S. Kessel and Alexander W. Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions* (New York, 1983), pp. 26-47.

Kessen, William, 'The American Child and Other Cultural Inventions', in Frank S. Kessel and Alexander W. Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions* (New York, 1983), pp. 261-70.

Kift, Dagmar, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge, 1996).

Kinder, Marsha, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Oxford, 1991).

Kinnard, Roy, *Horror in Silent Films: A Filmography, 1896-1929* (London, 1995).

Knox, W., 'The Political and Workplace Culture of the Scottish Working Class, 1832-1914', in W.H. Fraser and R.J. Morris (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, Vol.II, 1830-1914* (Edinburgh, 1990).

Kuhn, Annette, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925* (London, 1988).

Kuhn, Annette, '*Mandy* and possibility', *Screen* 33, 3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 233-43.

Kuhn, Annette and Stacey, Jackie, 'Screen Histories: An Introduction', in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (eds), *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 1-10.

Kuhn, Annette, 'Memories of Cinema-Going in the 1930s', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 2 (1999), pp. 100-120.

Larsen, Otto N. (ed.), *Violence and the Mass Media* (London, 1968).

Lewis, Sian, 'Local Authorities and the Control of Film Exhibition in Britain in the Interwar Period', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 3 (2000), pp. 113-120.

Liljestrom, Rita, 'The Public Child, the Commercial Child, and Our Child', in Frank S. Kessel and Alexander W. Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions* (New York, 1983), pp. 124-52.

Low, Rachael, and Maltby, Richard, *The History of the British Film, 1918-1929* (London, 1971).

Low, Rachael, *The History of the British Film, 1929-1939: Film Making in 1930s Britain* (London, 1985).

Lucie-Smith, Edward, 'Eros & Innocence', *Index on Censorship*, 26, 2 (1997), pp. 139-44.

Luke, Carmen, *Constructing the Child Viewer: A History of the American Discourse on Television and Children 1950-1980* (New York, 1990).

Lumby, Catharine, 'No Kidding: Paedophilia and Popular Culture', *Continuum*, 12, 1

(1998), pp. 47-54.

Lyotard, J.F., 'Defining the Postmodern', in Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London, 1993), pp. 170-6.

MacKenzie, J.M. (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986).

McPherson, Don (ed.), *Traditions of Independence: British Cinema in the Thirties* (London, 1980).

Macey, David, 'Michel Foucault: *J'Accuse*', *New Formations*, 25 (1995), pp. 5-13.

Maltby, Richard, '*Baby Face*, or How Joe Breen Made Barbara Stanwyck Atone for Causing the Wall Street Crash', in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (eds), *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 164-83.

Mangan, J.A., *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (London, 1985)

Mangan, J.A. (ed.), *'Benefits Bestowed': Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988).

Mangan, J.A. (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990).

Marks, John, 'A New Image of Thought', *New Formations*, 25 (1995), pp. 66-76.

Mathews, Tom Dewe, *Censored: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain* (London, 1994).

May, Lary, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Oxford, 1980).

May, Margaret, 'Innocence and Experience: the Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Studies*, 17, 1 (September, 1973), pp. 7-29.

Mayne, Judith, *Kino and the Woman Question: Feminism and Soviet Silent Film* (1989).

Mayne, Judith, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (London, 1993).

Medhurst, Andy, 'Music Hall and British Cinema', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986), pp. 168-88.

Melling, P.H., 'The mind of the mob: Hollywood and popular culture in the 1930s', in P. Davies and B. Neve (eds), *Cinema, Politics and Society in America* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 19-39.

Miles, Peter and Smith, Malcolm, *Cinema, Literature and Society: Elite and Mass Culture in Interwar Britain* (London, 1987).

Miller, Frank, *Censored Hollywood: Sex, Sin and Violence on Screen* (Atlanta,

1994).

Mitterauer, Michael, *A History of Youth* (Oxford, 1992).

Moley, Raymond, *The Hays Office* (New York, 1945).

Monaco, Paul, *Cinema and Society: France and Germany During the Twenties* (New York, 1976).

Morton, Walt, 'Tracking the Sign of Tarzan: Trans-Media Representation of a Pop-Culture Icon', in Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim (eds), *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men* (London, 1993), pp. 106-125.

Murdock, Graham and McCron, Robin, 'The Television and Delinquency Debate', *Screen Education*, 30 (Spring 1979), pp. 51-67.

Murdock, Graham , 'Reservoirs of Dogma: An Archaeology of Popular Anxieties', in Martin Barker and Julian Petley (eds), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, 2e (London, 2001), pp. 150-169.

Murphy, Robert, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain, 1939-1948* (London, 1989).

Musgrove, Frank, *Youth and the Social Order* (London, 1964).

Neville, Richard, *Play Power* (London, 1970).

O'Brien, Patricia, 'Michel Foucault's History of Culture', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (London, 1989), pp. 25-46.

Onyx, Narda, *Water, World and Weissmuller* (Los Angeles, 1964).

Oswell, David, 'Early Children's Broadcasting in Britain: Programming for a Liberal Democracy', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 18, 3 (1998), pp. 375-93.

Perilli, Patricia, 'Appendix: Statistical Survey of the British Cinema Industry', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), pp. 372-82.

Peter, Bruce, *100 Years of Glasgow's Amazing Cinemas* (Edinburgh, 1996).

Petley, Julian, 'Cinema and State', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, 1986), pp. 31-46.

Petley, Julian, 'Us and Them', in Martin Barker and Julian Petley (eds), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, 2e (London, 2001), pp. 170-85.

Petrie, Ruth (ed.), *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader* (London, 1997).

Peukert, Detlev, 'Youth in the Third Reich', in Richard Bessel (ed.), *Life in the Third Reich* (New York, 1987).

Philips, Baxter, *Cut: The Unseen Cinema* (London, 1975).

Pinchbeck, Ivy and Hewitt, Margaret, *Children in English Society Vol.II: from the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948* (London, 1973).

Pollock, Griselda, 'Empire, Identity and Place: Masculinities in *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan*', in Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim (eds), *Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies and Women* (London, 1995), pp. 129-147.

Pollock, Linda A., *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983/1987).

Postman, Neil, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness* (London, 1985).

Prawer, S. S., *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* (Oxford, 1980).

Prince, Stephen (ed.), *Screening Violence* (New Jersey, 2000).

Pronay, Nicholas, 'The First Reality: Film Censorship in Liberal England', in K.R.M. Short (ed.), *Feature Films as History* (London, 1981), pp. 113-137.

Pronay, Nicholas, 'The Political Censorship of Films in Britain', in N. Pronay and D. Spring (eds), *Propaganda, Politics and Film*, 1918-45 (London, 1982).

Rabinow, Paul (ed.), *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought* (London, 1984).

Rajchman, John, 'Foucault Ten Years After', *New Formations*, 25 (1995), pp. 14-20.

Rapp, Dean, 'The British Salvation Army, the Early Film Industry and Working Class Adolescents, 1897-1918', *Twentieth Century British History*, 7, 2 (1996), pp. 157-88.

Reader, Keith, *Cultures on Celluloid* (London, 1981).

Richards, Jeffrey, *Visions of Yesterday* (London, 1973).

Richards, Jeffrey, 'The British Board of Film Censors and Content Control in the 1930s: Images of Britain', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 1, 2 (1981), pp. 95-116.

Richards, Jeffrey, 'The British Board of Film Censors and Content Control in the 1930s: Foreign Affairs', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 2, 1 (1982), pp. 39-48.

Richards, Jeffrey, 'The Cinema and Cinema-going in Birmingham in the 1930s', in J. Walton and J. Walvin (eds), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester, 1983), pp. 31-52.

Richards, Jeffrey, '"Patriotism with Profit": British Imperial Cinema in the 1930s', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), pp. 245-56.

Richards, Jeffrey and Aldgate, A., *Best of British: Cinema and Society 1930-70*

(Oxford, 1983).

Richards, Jeffrey, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (London, 1984).

Richards, Jeffrey and Sheridan, Dorothy (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies* (London, 1987).

Richards, Jeffrey, 'British Film Censorship', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* (London, 1997), pp. 167-77.

Richards, Jeffrey (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema 1929-1939* (I.B. Tauris, London, 1998).

Ridgewell, Stephen, 'The People's Amusement: Cinema and Cinema-going in 1930s Britain', *The Historian*, 52 (1996), pp.18-21.

Roberts, Robert, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Harmondsworth, 1971).

Robertson, James C., 'British Film Censorship Goes to War', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 2, 1 (1982), pp. 49-64.

Robertson, James C., *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896-1950* (London, 1985).

Robertson, James C., *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action, 1913-1972* (London, 1989).

Roddick, Nick, *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Brothers in the 1930s* (London, 1983).

Rose, Jacqueline, 'Peter Pan and the Commercialisation of the Child', in Tony Bennett (ed.), *Popular Fiction, Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading* (London, 1990), pp. 413-25.

Rowland, William, *The Politics of TV Violence: Policy Uses of Communication Research* (London, 1983).

Sanjek, David, 'Twilight of the Monsters: The English Horror Film 1968-1975', in Wheeler Winston Dixon (ed.), *Re-viewing British Cinema, 1900-1992: Essays and Interviews* (Albany, 1994), pp. 195-209.

Sarris, Andrew, 'Big Funderals: The Hollywood Gangster, 1927-1933', *Film Comment*, 13, 3 (1977), pp. 6-9.

Scheltze, Quentin J., Anker, Roy M., et al, *Dancing in the Dark: Youth, Popular Culture, and the Electronic Media* (Grand Rapids MI, 1991).

Sedgwick, John, 'Cinema-going Preferences in Britain in the 1930s', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An alternative History of the British Cinema 1929-1939* (London, 1998), pp. 1-35.

Sedgwick, John, 'Film "Hits" and "Misses" in Mid-1930s Britain', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 18, 3 (1998), pp. 333-51.

Sedgwick, John, 'The Comparative Popularity of Stars in Mid-1930s Britain', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 2 (1999), pp. 121-7.

Shaw, Colin, *Deciding What We Watch: Taste, Decency, and Media Ethics in the UK and the USA* (Oxford, 1999).

Shiman, Lilliam Lewis, 'The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working-Class Children', *Victorian Studies*, 17, 1 (September 1973), pp. 49-74.

Shindler, Colin, *Hollywood in Crisis: Cinema and American Society 1929-1939* (London, 1996).

Slide, Anthony, *'Banned in the USA': British Films in the United States and Their Censorship, 1933-1960* (London, 1998).

Smelsner, Neil, 'The Victorian Family', in R.N. Rapoport, M.P. Fogarty and R. Rapoport (eds), *Families in Britain* (London, 1982).

Snow, Robert P., *Creating Media Culture* (London, 1983).

Soper, Kate, 'Forget Foucault?', *New Formations*, 25 (1995), pp. 21-27.

Sorlin, Pierre, *The Soviet People and Their Society from 1917 to the Present* (1969).

Sorlin, Pierre, *European Cinemas, European Societies 1939-1990* (London, 1991).

Sorlin, Pierre, *Italian National Cinema 1896-1996* (London, 1996).

Springhall, John, *Youth Empire and Society: British Youth Movements*, 1883-1940 (London, 1977).

Springhall, John, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin, 1986).

Springhall, John, 'Building character in the British boy: the attempt to extend Christian manliness to working-class adolescents, 1880 to 1914', in J. A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class masculinity in Britian and America 1800-1940* (Manchester, 1987).

Springhall, John, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap, 1830-1996* (Basingstoke, 1998).

Stamp, Shelley, 'Moral Coercion, or the National Board of Censorship Ponders the Vice Films', in Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, 1999), pp. 41-59.

Staples, Terry, *All Pals Together: The Story of Children's Cinema* (Edinburgh, 1997).

Stark, Gary D., 'Cinema, Society and the State: Policing the Film Industry in Imperial Germany', in Gary D. Stark and Bede Karl Lackner (eds) *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany* (Arlington, 1982), pp. 122-66.

Stead, Peter, 'The People and the Pictures: The British Working Class and Film in the 1930s', in Nicholas Pronay and D. W. Spring (eds), *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-45* (London, 1982), pp. 77-97.

Stead, Peter, *Film and the Working Class: The feature film in British and American Society* (London, 1989).

Steadman, Raymond Williams, *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment*, 2e (Oklahoma, 1977).

Stickland, Irina, *The Voices of Children 1700-1914* (Oxford, 1973).

Stites, Richard, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge, 1992).

Storey, John, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 2e (Hemel Hempstead, 1997).

Street, Sarah, 'British Film and the National Interest, 1927-1939', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* (London, 1997), pp. 17-26.

Sutton, David, *A Chorus of Raspberries: British Film Comedy 1929-1939* (Exeter, 2000).

Tadmor, Naomi, 'The concept of the household-family in eighteenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 151 (May 1996), pp. 111-40.

Taylor, Richard, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (London, 1979).

Thompson, Denys (ed.), *Discrimination and Popular Culture* (London, 1973).

Thompson, Kenneth, *Moral Panics* (London, 1998).

Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past*, 2e (Oxford, 1988).

Tucker, Nicholas, *What Is a Child?* (London, 1977).

Turner, Graeme, *Film as Social Practice* (London, 1988).

Vasey, Ruth, *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939* (Exeter, 1997).

Vasey, Ruth, 'Beyond Sex and Violence: "Industry Policy" and the Regulation of Hollywood Movies, 1922-1939', in Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, 1999), pp. 102-129.

Vaughn, Stephen, 'Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code', *Journal of American History*, 77, 1 (1990), pp. 39-65.

Vidal, Gore, *Screening History* (Cambridge Mass., 1992).

Walker, John (ed.), *Halliwell's Film and Video Guide*, 13 edn (London, 1997).

Walkerdine, V., *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture* (London, 1997).

Walvin, James, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Harmondsworth, 1982).

Walvin, James, 'Children's Pleasures', in J. Walton and J. Walvin (eds), *Leisure in Britain, 1780-1939* (Manchester, 1983).

Wartella, Ellen and Reeves, Byron, 'Historical Trends in Research on Children and the Media: 1900-1960', *Journal of Communication*, 35, 2 (Spring 1985), pp. 118-33.

Wartofsky, Marx, 'The Child's Construction of the World and the World's Construction of the Child: from Historical Epistemology to Historical Psychology', in Frank S. Kessel and Alexander W. Siegel (eds), *The Child and Other Cultural Inventions* (New York, 1983), pp. 188-223.

Waters, Chris, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1884-1914* (Manchester, 1990).

Waters, Harry, 'What TV Does to Kids', reprinted in James Monaco (ed.), *Media Culture* (New York, 1978), pp. 241-61.

Welch, David, *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1985).

Welch, David, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London, 1995).

Wertheim, Albert, 'Childhood in John Leech's "Pictures of Life and Character"', *Victorian Studies*, 17, 1 (September 1973), pp. 75-87.

White, Hadyen, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (London, 1978).

Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution* (Chatto, 1961).

Williams, Raymond, 'British Film History: New Perspectives', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London, 1983), pp. 9-23.

Wilson, James Q., 'Violence, Pornography, and Social Science', *The Public Interest*, 22 (Winter 1971), pp. 45-61.

Winick, Mariann Pezzella and Winick, Charles, *The Television Experience: What Children See* (London, 1979).

Wyatt, Justin, 'The Stigma of X: Adult Cinema and the Institution of the MPAA Ratings System', in Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick, 1999), pp. 238-63..

Yandell, John, 'Doh Guys! Get with the Toons!', *The Guardian* (23 February 1998), pp. 12-13.

Young, Robert J.C., 'Foucault on Race and Colonialism', *New Formations*, 25 (1995), pp. 57-65.

Youngblood, Denise J., *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 1992).

Zelizer, Viviana A., *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York, 1985).

Zinman, David, *Saturday Afternoon at the Bijou* (New York, 1973).

Theses

Kuhn, Annette, *Censorship, Sexuality and the Regulation of Cinema 1909-1925* (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1986).

Narver, Lindy Jean, *Cedric Gibbons: Pioneer in Art Direction for Cinema* (MA Thesis, University of Southern California, 1988).

Websites

http://vic.uca.org.au/ecrp/panics.html
Peter Horsfield, 'Moral panic or moral action? The appropriation of moral panics in the exercise of social control'.

http://www.chatdanger.com/parents/main.htm
'Chat Danger – Parent's Guide'

http://www.chriswillis.freeserve.co.uk/pennydread.htm
Chris Willis, 'Penny Dreadfuls and Video Nasties: A Return to Victorian Values?'

http://www.cnn.com/2001/LAW/01/26/wrestling.death/index.html
CNN, 'Defense to appeal boy's murder conviction in "wrestling death"' (26 January 2001).

http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2000/09/youthviol.htm
Federal Trade Commission, *Marketing Violent Entertainment To Children: A Review Of Self-Regulation And Industry Practices In The Motion Picture, Music Recording & Electronic Game Industries: A Report Of The Federal Trade Commission* (September 2000).

http://www.meridian.tv.co.uk/pdf_files/consumer/sortedchildinternet.pdf
Meridian Tonight, 'Children and the Internet', 10 July 2001.

http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html
David Satcher, The Surgeon General, *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General.*