Murder of Women Is Not Erotic

Feminists against *Dressed to Kill* (1980)

"Dressed to Kill" will probably anger some women a great deal. Finally a filmmaker has come along who is attentive to women's fantasies and he turns out to be a malicious wit. . . . The violence of this movie, so wildly improbable, leaves one exhilarated rather than shaken. *David Denby,* New York *magazine*

From the insidious combination of violence and sexuality in its promotional material, to scene after scene of women raped, killed, or nearly killed, [Brian de Palma's] *Dressed to Kill* is a master work of misogyny. . . . If this film succeeds, killing women may become the greatest turn-on of the Eighties! Join our protest! *Protest Leaflet*

In late August 1980, almost a month after *Dressed to Kill* had opened in theatres across the country, feminists began planning a response to this movie that many felt promoted violence against women. On August 28, members of Women Against Violence Against Women, of Women Against Pornography, and of other groups rallied in front of theatres in Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Boston, inviting others to join their protest. In the violence

against women it depicted, they argued, *Dressed to Kill* had gone too far.

For many industry executives during the late summer of 1980, these feminist voices might have gone unnoticed and unheard among longer-lived and better organized demonstrations. Hundreds of out-of-work or underpaid actors marched and chanted in front of Disney, Universal, and other studios, demanding revised contracts; gays and lesbians had protested the stereotypes in *Cruising* and *Windows* less than a year earlier; and only the month before, Asian Americans had turned out to protest the racist overtones in *Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen*. It would be easy to suggest that the outcry against *Dressed to Kill* was inspired simply by a climate of protest. But many of the women who acted against *Dressed* had protested against other movies in the late 1970s; they knew the power of protest and the need for it. Though feminists' actions against *Dressed* would not reach the intensity of other groups' actions in ensuing years, they nonetheless helped women protesting against pornography test one method of confronting the misogyny of mainstream movies. More pointedly, they provided women against pornography and women against censorship an opportunity to seize some power, however limited or temporary, from a male-dominated, sexist movie industry at a time when many feared a backlash against feminism.

Recent studies have tended to construe censorship as an act performed by official institutions or dominant social groups.[1] Even those who reformulate film censorship—such as Annette Kuhn, who defends censorship as a "web of force relations" rather than a prohibitive act by a single institution—continue to associate censorship with cultural

dominance.[2] Such scholars overlook the attempts and successes of "minority" pressure groups to force the film industry either to censor its product rigorously or to allow protesters to do so. As I suggest in the following three chapters, censorship can also be a strategy of empowerment, a means through which historically marginalized groups can gain a measure of control over the way they are represented in dominant media.

The dynamic relationship between those who have held power and those who have sought to gain it has been more dramatic and long-lived in the case of sexual words and images than any other type of controversial expression. Until recently, women have had little opportunity to influence how their bodies and lives are depicted on screen. This was the domain of mostly male religious leaders, industry regulators, and state and local officials who fell repeatedly into heated disputes over the acceptable limits of cinematic treatments of sexual subjects. Among the most controversial imagery in the intriguing history of such censorship were the kinetoscope's seductive "Houchi Kouchi" dance (1894); the peep show *Love in a Hammock* (1896); Theda Bara's *Cleopatra* (1917); nearly all of Mae West's movies (late 1920s–early 1930s); John Hughes's *The Outlaw* (1943); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1950–1951); *The Moon Is Blue* (1953); and *Lolita* (1962). Two films released in the mid 1960s, *The Pawnbroker* (1965) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966), taxed the powers of an aging Production Code Administration (PCA).

The controversy over *The Pawnbroker* centered on a scene that showed a black prostitute stripping to her waist. When the PCA refused to give the film an official Seal of Approval unless the scene was excised, the film's producer, Ely

A. Landau, released the film anyway. Landau argued that in his movie the pawnbroker's sight of a naked woman reminds him of his own naked wife being forced to submit to Nazi guards, and that such a memory is crucial to the film's meaning. When Landau brought his case to the MPAA Appeals Board, the board ordered that a Seal be awarded his uncut film; members "recognized," as film historian Alexander Walker notes, "the unique nature of their verdict by passing the word back to the chief censor that one pair of naked breasts did not license a Saturnalia [sic] and he was to continue, as before, turning down scenes of undue exposure."[3] The Legion of Decency, however, who predicted that the *The Pawnbroker* decision would "open the flood gates to a host of unscrupulous operators out to make a quick buck," proved at least partially correct. Subsequent films such as *What's New, Pussycat* (1965) and *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965) reflected a new "morality crisis."[4]

The Pawnbroker's violation of the code's taboo on nudity did not prompt a code amendment, yet in 1966 the profane and blunt sexual language of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* did. After optioning the successful Edward Albee stage play for the screen, Jack Warner sent the playscript to the PCA for advice on the adaptation. On March 25, 1966, PCA president Jeffrey Shurlock sent Warner a long list of objections that took exception to such lines as "hump the hostess," "plowing pertinent wives," and "screw, sweety."[5] Warner acknowledged the difficulty of making *Virginia Woolf* as potent on screen as the play had been in the theatre while adhering to the PCA's restrictions on sexually charged language, and when Warner Brothers asked the playwright to change some of the dialogue so as to reduce its shock impact, Albee refused. Shurlock's letter to Warner stated plainly that *Virginia Woolf*, as di-

rected for the screen by Mike Nichols, was "unacceptable under code requirements" and would be denied a Seal. Only months after the brouhaha over *The Pawnbroker*, Warner appealed Shurlock's ruling to the PCA board. On June 10, 1966, Jack Valenti, newly appointed president of the MPAA, watched *Virginia Woolf* and deliberated over what to do with a film that blatantly violated the code yet stood (in many board members' opinion) an excellent chance for commercial success and an Academy Award. Finally, the MPAA board decided to grant *Virginia Woolf* a Seal with the proviso that Warner Brothers agree to several dialogue changes. A month later, the influence of both *The Pawnbroker* and *Virginia Woolf* appeals became clear. Valenti issued a streamlined code that, unlike its predecessor, "cast morality in a supporting—but not a leading role" and paved the way for the MPAA to develop a movie-rating system.[6] Rating a film had largely depended on its sexual imagery; under the system established in 1968, the task became increasingly subjective. But one thing was certain: the new system permitted much more latitude in mainstream movies than ever before.

From the late 1950s through the late 1960s, legal censorship of "obscenity" was also in a state of flux. The controversies over *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1957), *The Lovers* (1959), *I Am Curious—Yellow* (1968), and *Carnal Knowledge* (1972) forced the courts to define "obscenity" in increasingly permissive ways. The groundbreaking 1957 obscenity case *Roth v. United States*, while it did not concern a motion picture, would assist lawyers wishing to defend the sexual imagery in films. In *Roth*, in which the court debated whether to prosecute Samuel Roth for publishing allegedly obscene books, Justice William J. Brennan considered whether obscenity fell within the areas of protected speech and press. Recalling

that "all ideas having even the slightest redeeming social importance" are considered protected speech, Brennan made a distinction between sex and obscenity:

> Sex and obscenity are not synonymous. Obscene material is material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest. The portrayal of sex, e.g. in art, literature, and scientific works, is not itself sufficient reason to deny material the constitutional protection of freedom of speech and press. Sex, a great and mysterious motive force in human life, has indisputably been a subject of absorbing interest in mankind through the ages; it is one of the vital problems of human interest and public concern.

This observation led Brennan to conceive of an obscenity "test": a work could be found obscene if to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, its dominant themes appeal to prurient interest.[7] Brennan upheld the right of the government to enforce an obscenity statute punishing the use of the mails for obscene material and at the same time created a legal means to defend work that did not appeal merely to "prurient" interest.

Late in 1957, when the New York State Board of Censors denied a license to a film adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* because it represented adultery "as a desirable, acceptable and proper pattern of behavior," the defense drew on the distinction made in *Roth*. When censorship was lifted, this victory paved the way for prohibitions against censorship of sexual immorality and other instances of ideological obscenity. Movie censorship laws that were found to be forms of prior restraint were soon invalidated

in Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Georgia. While other films such as Louis Malle's *The Lovers (Les Amants)* tested the Brennan doctrine, and while censorship based on sexual imagery continued to occur, a predominately liberal Supreme Court made it easier for lawyers to successfully defend many movies against censorship challenges.

In the early 1970s President Richard Nixon appointed four conservative judges to the Supreme Court, which subsequently challenged the Brennan doctrine. The outcome of two cases tried in 1973—*Miller v. California* and *Paris Adult Theatre I v. Slaton*—sent a chill through the movie industry, particularly when a Georgia criminal court found "obscene" the studio-produced movie *Carnal Knowledge* (1972).[8] The conservative Justice Burger persuaded the court to judge the offensiveness of material against local, not national, community standards, thereby increasing the likelihood of municipal censorship. But the waves of censorship foreshadowed by the *Miller* redefinition of obscenity failed to reverse the legal victories of earlier decades.[9] In the 1970s and early 1980s, films of questionable artistic and social value such as *Deep Throat* (1972), *Caligula* (1980), and *Emmanuelle* (1981) were banned locally but ultimately freed from censorship when higher courts invalidated local laws and experts testified to several such films' artistic merits.[10]

In the late 1970s, as pornography mushroomed into a billion-dollar industry, it also became a major feminist concern. While conservative groups opposed pornography, feminists against pornography and feminists against censorship of pornography quickly dominated the public debate. Both groups perceived pornography as a cause for sexual discrimination in the United States, the most blatant

evidence of how representation leads to women's oppression in everyday life.[11] While many feminists participated in the prolific written debates over pornography, the more radical "antipornography feminists," as they came to be known, believed direct-action campaigns were the most effective means of publicizing their complaint. The year 1980 marked both the high point and the end of a brief period during which feminists against pornography, or mainstream movies that contained pornographic scenes, staged protests in front of movie theatres.

In what can be viewed as the beginning of a baffling cultural trend that started in the mid to late 1970s and has endured to the present day, two of the most unlikely groups—feminists and conservatives—suddenly had a common target, if not a shared cultural agenda. For conservative writers porn was a moral issue. Irving Kristol, a chief architect of neoconservatism, warned that "what is at stake is civilization and humanity, nothing less." Walter Berns finds porn capable of breaking down the "natural" feelings of shame we associate with sex that he believes are beneficial for a democratic polity because they promote self-restraint. Ernest van den Haag argues for censorship on the grounds that pornography supports "the pure libidinal principal," leads to "loss of empathy for others, and encourages violence and anti-social acts."[12]

The behaviorist suggestion of a causal connection between violence against women in pornography and violence against women in society was championed by antipornography feminists. Robin Morgan, a proponent of this view, suggested that "pornography is the theory; and rape the practice"—an early indication that feminists' and conservatives' positions were closer together than some feminists wanted

people to believe. Yet where conservative critiques of pornography were founded on a belief that porn is immoral and evil, antipornography feminists focused on its denigrating effects on women. For them porn promotes antifemale sexuality and therefore sexual inequality.

Gloria Steinem finds misogyny in the roots of the word *pornography,* which she compares to erotica. "Erotica is rooted in 'Eros' or passionate love, and this is the idea of positive choice, free will, the yearning for a particular person. 'Pornography' begins with a root 'porno,' meaning 'prostitution' or 'female captives,' thus letting us know that the subject is not mutual love, or love at all, but domination and violence against women."[13]

Steinem's definition is that reflected in the work of Kathleen Barry, Susan Brownmiller, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin, Susanne Kappeler, Catherine MacKinnon, Susan Lederer, and Dorchen Leidholdt.[14] Dworkin's views are the most extreme: pornography, she claims, shows women as colonized victims of male aggression and of the "brutality of male history." Specifically, "erotic pleasure for men is derived from and predicated on the savage destruction of women. . . . The eroticization of murder is the essence of pornography, as it is the essence of life."[15] For Leidholdt, along with members of Women Against Pornography (WAP), pornography is also integrally connected to the oppressive misogynist hegemony: "Within the predominant sexual system, articulated and reproduced in pornography, women are defined and acted upon as sexual objects; our humanity is denied and our bodies are violated for sexual pleasure; the bodies of our sisters are literally marketed for profit. We can't think away this system: it is practice as well as ideology, out there as well as inside.

What we can do is analyze it, challenge it, fight it, and ultimately change it."[16]

Such views faced tough challenges from an emerging group of feminists who sought to distance themselves from their antipornography sisters. Women who believed in the liberal soul of feminism, stood firmly against censorship. But in the late 1970s and in 1980, what the groups of women shared—a commitment to resist sexism in the media and in society at large—linked them in struggle and inspired them to more actively seek change.

The feminist demonstrations against pornographic imagery implied frustration with the ineffectiveness of written critiques as well as a need to go public with a resentment toward the producers and exhibitors of specific pornographic works.[17] In 1976, a billboard depicting a bruised woman in chains with the caption "I'm black and blue from the Rolling Stones and I love it" triggered a group of California feminists to demonstrate and to organize a national press conference that ultimately forced Warner Brothers to remove the offending billboard.[18] Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) formed shortly after this success. Members Diane Russell and Laura Lederer later explained the organization's goals as follows:

- To educate women and men about the women-hatred expressed in pornography and other media violence to women, and to increase understanding of the destructive consequences of these images;
- To confront those responsible—for example, the owners of pornographic stores and theatres, those

who devise violent images on record covers, newspapers that give a lot of space to advertising pornographic movies, politicians who give out permits for "live shows," pornographic bookstores, etc.;

- To put an end to all portrayals of women being bound, raped, tortured, killed, or degraded for sexual stimulation or pleasure. We believe that the constant linking of sexuality and violence is dangerous.

WAVPM further viewed pornographic depictions as "sexist lies about women and sex" and rape as one "consequence" of pornography.[19]

The first movie that ignited demonstrations was a low-budget, independently produced film entitled *Snuff*. Released in 1976 not long after the Charles Manson murders, it purported to show the actual murder or "snuff" of a young woman. While many film historians consider *Snuff* less an example of pornography than of the then-popular slasher genre, the subject of this film ignited feminists around the country. Kevin Thomas of the *Los Angeles Times* describes *Snuff*'s plot as follows:

> An American sex picture star goes with her producer to Latin America to make a movie. She has a romantic reunion with the son of a German munitions dealer, winds up pregnant either by him or his father and thus becomes the target of a sadistic Satanist and his equally kinky female followers. . . . The Satanist's girls do a lot of shooting and stabbing, finally catching up with the pregnant sex star. Just as the Satanist starts to stab her we abruptly discover we've been watching a

> move-within-a-movie. . . . The director of that movie becomes so carried away with the stabbing scene he starts hacking away at his star.[20]

Even though the press reported that the cinematic 'snuff' was a hoax and that the lead actress was alive and well in New York City, the film benefited from all the publicity and premiered to large crowds in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and other cities.

For its blatant depiction of violence against women, *Snuff* raised the ire of antipornography feminists, who took to the streets in front of many theatres showing the movie. Not long afterward, women with similar agendas in New York and San Francisco formed Women Against Pornography and Woman Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW). Laura Lederer, who later would edit the well-known antipornography feminist handbook *Take Back the Night,* recalls *Snuff* as "the powder keg that moved women seriously to confront the issue of pornography." Beverly LaBelle, recounting the butchery depicted in the film's final scene, agrees: "Such graphic bloodletting finally made the misogyny of pornography a major feminist concern.[21] Feminists in San Diego, Buffalo, Los Angeles, San Jose, Denver, Philadelphia, and Monticello and Rochester, New York, among other cities, protested in front of theatres showing the movie. Demonstrations in the New York area were the largest and best organized in the country; in addition to picketing, New York protesters also lodged complaints with the FBI, the police, the district attorney's office, Mayor Abe Beame's office, and the United Nations delegations from Argentina, where the film was allegedly produced. Protesters distributed leaflets that urged: "Stop Snuff. . . . This

movie makes money from the dismembering and murder of women. Is life that 'cheap'? Can we support murder as a business venture? Can we allow the murder of women to be used as sexual entertainment? Can we tolerate such atrocities against human life? Stop Snuff." The leaflet also posed and answered the question, Why are we here?

> We are opposed to the filming, distribution and mass marketing of the film "Snuff." . . .
>
> Whether or not the death depicted in the current film "Snuff" is real or simulated is not the issue. That sexual violence is presented as entertainment, that the murder and dismemberment of a woman's body is commercial film material is an outrage to our sense of justice as women, as human beings.
>
> We—and all are welcomed to join in our efforts—will leaflet, picket, write letters, to do what is necessary to prevent the showing of the film 'Snuff' in New York City. We can not allow murder for profit.[22]

Although the language in this leaflet suggests that these protesters aimed at censorship, other voices encouraged a broader view. Brenda Feigen Fasteau, a feminist lawyer, stated: "I want to emphasize that the First Amendment guarantees the right to view this stuff, but as feminists we have to look at the kind of society that is titillated by the idea of women being murdered. And we have to deal with the possibility that this film is going to create a demand for real snuff films and that real women are going to be murdered." Whatever protesters said, some of their protests did result in censorship. In Baltimore, a judge banned *Snuff* because of the film's so-called "psychotic violence." Responding to fem-

inist protests in Santa Clara, California, Philadelphia, and St. Paul, Minnesota, city officials forced theatres to close down *Snuff*. After a lengthy trial that followed protests in front of a Monticello, New York, theatre, local authorities summoned to court on obscenity charges the theatre owner responsible for exhibiting *Snuff*. In most other places, protests failed to prevent theatres from showing the movie.[23]

In 1977, Rochester-area feminists' protests against *Snuff* was the latest in a short but significant series of militant actions against sexual imagery. According to Martha Gever and Marg Hall, the first action occurred early in 1977, when ten women formed an ad hoc group in response to a billboard advertising a movie entitled *Penetration*. The ad's caption read, "Unbelievably violent . . . graphic . . . a double turn-on. He always hurts the one he loves. Some women deserve it." The women created a counterposter captioned, "The Monroe Theater's Movie Promotes Rape. *No* Women Deserve It." As a result of continued protest, not only was the ad for *Penetration* withdrawn but the movie was never shown. Later in 1977, Rochester-area feminists distributed leaflets that condemned *A Boy and His Dog*, a science fiction film exhibited at the University of Rochester that included such images as the cannibalization of a woman by a boy and his dog. The protest provoked debate within the university, where primarily men accused the leaflet distributors of censorship. That same year, after a local radio station advertised a movie entitled *Nazi Love Camp* using the line "Women beaten, women tortured, and more," Rochester-area feminists picketed in front of the theatre exhibiting the movie until police forced them to leave. Before they were taken away, however, one protester painted onto the side of a building, "Their Profit, Our Blood. This Movie is a Crime Against Women."[24]

In October 1977, poster ads for *Snuff* plastered the city, depicting a woman being cut to pieces by a pair of bloodied scissors and captioned, "The bloodiest thing that ever happened in front of a camera" (figure 3). This time, an-

Figure 3. One of several poster ads for *Snuff.*

tipornography feminists were ready, as two of the participants report: "Four of us went to the theatre, spray-painted the doors and chained them shut, put glue in the locks, broke the display window, and ripped up the poster. We were then arrested by plainclothes police, who had been told by a 'confidential informant' that some kind of 'covert action' was going to happen at the theatre."[25]

The women held responsible for the vandalism were fined $100, then released. When the case went to trial, an ad hoc group of Rochester-area feminists attended the proceedings to demonstrate solidarity with the arrested protesters. Soon afterward, another group was formed, Rochester Women Against Violence Against Women. In ensuing years, this group would claim responsibility for disrupting a Rochester porn bookstore and for forcing the University of Rochester to cancel a screening of *The Story of O.*

Actions against *Snuff* and other movies continued after 1977, but feminists' antipornography campaigns did not again reach such an intense pitch until the release of Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* in 1980, when once more the issue was violence against women.[26] This time the movie that ignited their rage was a Grand Guignol drama revolving around a successful male psychiatrist, Robert Elliot (Michael Caine), who by night becomes a vicious killer. Elliot's first victim is Kate Miller (Angie Dickinson), an attractive woman suffering from vivid erotic fantasies that she often can't separate from reality. Nancy Allen plays Liz Blake, a high-class call girl whom Elliott stalks and the police harass once it's known that she witnessed Miller's murder. The movie's intrigue lies in the question, Will Blake provide the key to the mysterious murders before she herself is murdered?

Dressed sparked controversy months before its late sum-

mer release. After the first cut of the movie was submitted to the MPAA Ratings Board, De Palma was informed that his movie would probably receive an X rating but not why. Since he knew that an X—the designation for hard-core pornography and extreme violence—would almost surely mean commercial failure, he returned to the edit room, reexamining the three murder sequences, the nude shower scenes, and every frame of spurting blood. He carefully reedited the shower sequence, eliminating all frames showing Angie Dickinson's pubic hair, and dubbed over many expletives with milder language. The resubmitted film received an R (restricted) rating, meaning moviegoers under seventeen could be admitted to the theatre accompanied by an adult. Still not happy, De Palma argued that the controversy over William Friedkin's *Cruising* earlier in the year (see Chapter Four) had made the ratings board more repressive and tougher on his movie. Jack Valenti, president of the MPAA, related the board's decision to give *Dressed* an X to cultural politics: "The political climate in this country is shifting to the right, and that means more conservative attitudes toward sex and violence. But a lot of creative people are still living in the world of revolution."[27] While Valenti's assessment would prove correct not long after Ronald Reagan was elected in November, *Dressed*'s performance at the box office demonstrated that moviegoers' taste for explicit sex with violence, no matter what institutional changes were taking place, had waned not at all.

The film's lurid ad campaign generated excitement and further controversy. While *Dressed* cost only $6.5 million to produce, Filmways Pictures, its distributor, spent $6 million on a poster, print, and television campaign. To test the market, Filmways tried three different print ads, two of which

appeared in the August 4 issue of *New York* magazine. The first, widely used, showed a woman in a shower with the shadow of a man coming toward her cast on the wall beside the shower door. The copy read, "Brian De Palma, the modern master of the macabre, invites you to an evening of extreme terror." The second similarly slick ad displayed a woman peeling off her stockings, while a man lurked in the doorway. Its copy read, "Brian De Palma, master of the macabre, invites you to a showing of the latest fashion . . . in murder." In daily newspapers, a third, bolder ad presented a woman in dark glasses holding a straight razor that reflected a screaming Angie Dickinson. The caption here read, "The second before she screams will be the most frightening moment of your life."[28] Visually, all three ads conflated sex and violence against women. As commentators later noted about the visual power of any poster, the medium operates similarly to most advertising, which aims to construct a pleasure for a viewer and mobilize that pleasure as the desire of a consumer."[29] Filmways's three poster ads were initially thought to excite precisely this type of pleasure, though they targeted distinctly different moviegoer types: the two slick ads aimed at the sophisticated, urban market; the third, more straightforwardly exploitive, ad aimed at Middle America.

The rating controversy, the lurid ads, a high-profile director, a summer film season widely perceived as the dreariest and least lucrative in nearly a decade—each of these factors help explain Filmways's high hopes for *Dressed to Kill* when it opened in 660 national theatres July 25, 1980. While the opening weekend box office was a modest $3.4 million, in the second week the national box office reported a 7 percent increase in ticket sales. One reason for this unusual in-

crease was word-of-mouth advertising; another may have been Filmways's revamped ad strategy. Noting that box office receipts were higher in urban than in rural areas, Filmways had employed only the most exploitive ad outside the major cities that second week. The distributor had realized that for *Dressed* to reach blockbuster status, it needed to bring in "the less demanding audience that would respond to its thrills" rather than to its slick filmmaking technique and repeated homages to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and other films.[30]

Dressed's box office receipts also increased during its second week in release because of overwhelmingly positive reviews, particularly from the eastern establishment press, including some of the notoriously toughest critics from the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and *New York* magazine. Vincent Canby began his commentary by ruminating on the "two Brian De Palmas," one with a propensity for "anarchic, essentially formless comedies full of low jokes and sometimes inspired satire," the other for "psychological thrillers and horror films executed in the manner of Alfred Hitchcock." He praised De Palma for fusing his two seemingly divergent styles into "a witty, romantic, psychological horror film," *Dressed*, the work of an "unmistakable talent." The *New Yorker*'s Pauline Kael was ecstatic about De Palma's latest exercise in the macabre:

> What makes *Dressed to Kill* funny is that it's permeated with the distilled essence of impure thoughts. De Palma has perfected a near-surreal poetic voyeurism—the stylized expression of a blissfully dirty mind. He doesn't use art for voyeuristic purposes; he uses voyeurism as a strategy and a theme—to fuel his satiric

> art. He underlines the fact that voyeurism is integral to the nature of movies. In the Metropolitan sequence, we catch glimpses of figures slipping in and out at the edges of the frame, and there are other almost subliminal images.

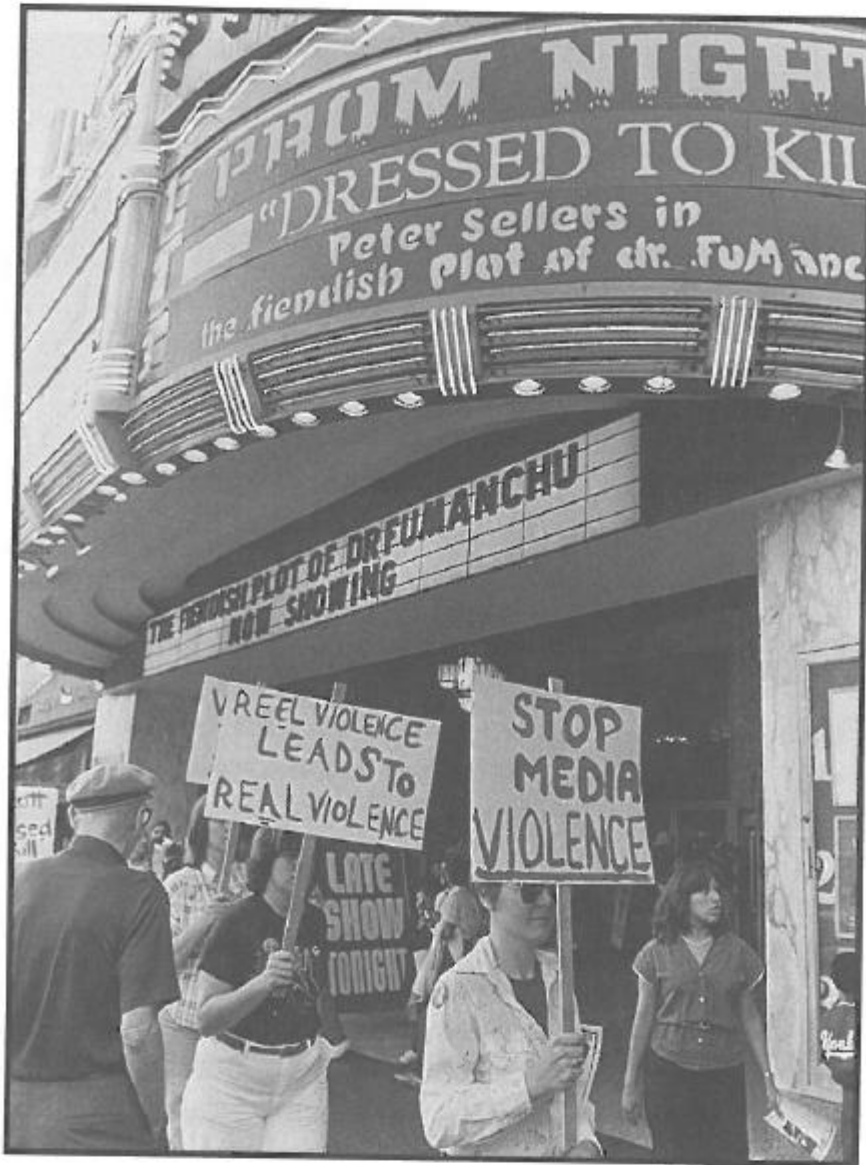
David Denby of *New York* magazine began his glowing but provocative review: "'Dressed to Kill' . . . is the first great American movie of the eighties. Violent, erotic, and wickedly funny, 'Dressed to Kill' is propelled forward by scenes so juicily sensational that they pass over into absurdity. De Palma releases terror in laughter: Even at his most outrageous, Hitchcock could not have been as entertaining as this." Later in the review Denby accurately forecasted women's groups' angry responses to the film: "De Palma may be the first director to use pornography as a way of dramatizing the unconscious . . . he flirts more than once with actual pornography, putting us into a muzzy trance and then jerking us out of it with a derisive laugh. . . . A bad boy, that De Palma. If the anti-porn feminists, the pressure groups, and the more earnest writers at the 'Village Voice' get hold of him they'll tear him limb from limb."[31] If Denby was baiting the antipornography feminists, inviting a debate over free speech and censorship, he would soon get one. While not every review of *Dressed* was favorable, positive reactions spread by word of mouth, and Filmways spared no expense in advertising the film's success. During the first weeks in August, the company purchased full-page ads in the *Hollywood Reporter* and *Daily Variety*. One read, "Dressed to Kill': 10 days, 9 million dollars. That's showing your legs!" To the movie industry, it was clear that the director of the critically acclaimed *Carrie* had done it again.

But a backlash against the movie was slowly building, reflected at first in a few angry remarks by feminists, then in a slew of negative reviews by such critics as Richard Corliss in *Time*, Dave Kehr in the *Chicago Reader*, Archer Winston in the *New York Post*, and Rex Reed and Kathleen Carroll in the *New York Daily News*. Andrew Sarris of the *Village Voice* attacked *Dressed* in highly opinionated reviews. In the second and stronger of the two, "Dreck to Kill," Sarris takes pains to distinguish his criticism of the film from a moral stance about both film and filmmaker. "That De Palma mucks about with soft-core porn and hard-edged horror . . . does not mean in and of itself that he is a raunchy ghoul. Nor does the fact that he mutilates and murders women on screen mean that he hates women off screen." It is the film, Sarris explains, not its effect on viewers, that ought to be under attack: "I do not hold it against De Palma that he imitates Hitchcock, but, rather, that he steals Hitchcock's most privileged moments without performing the drudgery of building up to these moments as thoroughly earned climaxes. . . . De Palma is simply cashing in on the current market for 'grunge,' a term connoting the dispensing of blood and gore like popcorn to the very young." Taking fellow reviewer David Denby directly to task, Sarris ends his review, "coherence, credibility, sense, structure, wit, complexity—are such qualities too much to expect in these so-far awful '80s?"[32]

Such criticism not only represented a backlash against all the film's critical acclaim but showed support for the film's detractors—mainly feminists. Responding to claims that his movie was misogynist, De Palma told *Newsday*'s Judy Stone: "I think you should be able to make a film about anything. Should we get into censorship because we have movies that

are going to upset some part of the community? The ERA people could get a lot more upset about practically anything that comes out of TV and movies in relationship to women. All the media forms are male-dominated."[33] Was De Palma acknowledging and then justifying his misdemeanors because others indulged in them as well, or merely doing what Denby had done: baiting antipornography feminists and inviting a debate over whether pornographic imagery should be censored or celebrated in mainstream films?

Antipornography feminists did not take immediate action. Nineteen days into the release, with the movie's gross at nearly $15 million, there were no protests. None of the published commentary discusses the reason for the slow start. Perhaps antipornography feminists were waiting to see whether the film would score or languish at the box office. Perhaps they were unsure that protesting was the right or necessary response. But it is clear that their decision to protest was fueled by the film's commercial success and high praise by some of the nation's top movie critics. Moreover, they were angry about the content, which they believed was as harmful to women as the worst hard-core pornography. By late August, feminists confronted the critics and public that could find humor in violence done to women—if only, as one protester wrote, "to present an opposing voice in the din of critical acclaim that has helped make *Dressed to Kill* a major box office success."[34] On August 28, feminists staged protests in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Boston, among other cities (photos 2 and 3). The New York protests were the largest, best organized, and most noticed by the press. Several New York antipornography feminist groups, spearheaded by WAP, banded together in front of the 57th Street Playhouse to picket *Dressed*



Photos 2 and 3 (photo 3 on next page). Members of Women Against Violence Against Women gather in front of the Hollywood Pacific Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard in protest against *Dressed to Kill.* Los Angeles Times Photographic Morgue, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

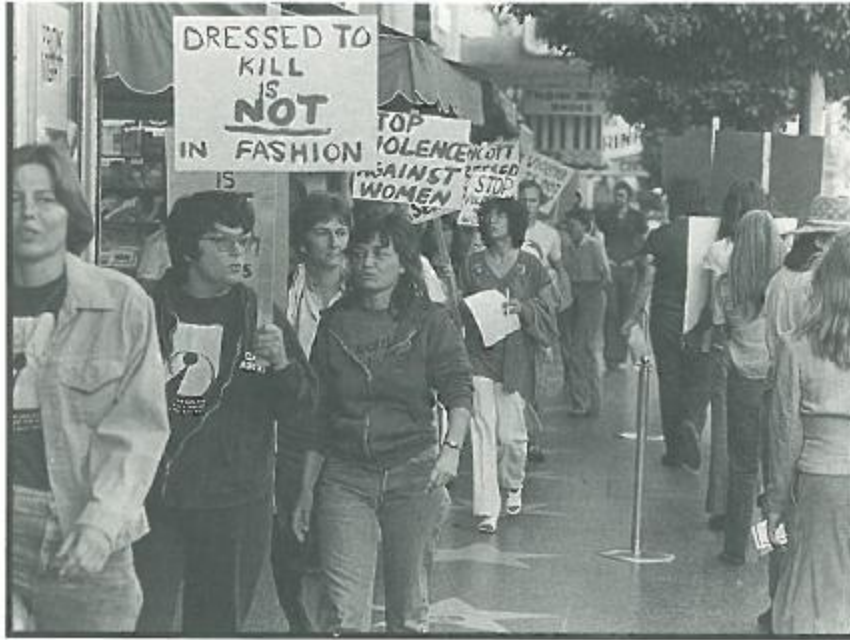


Photo 3.

to Kill. An estimated 100–150 protesters carried such placards as "Murder of women is not erotic," "*Dressed to Kill* is a racist and sexist lie," and "Women's slaughter is not entertainment but terrorism."[35] They chanted, "Murder isn't sexy, murder isn't funny, but that's how Hollywood makes its money," and "No more profits off our bodies, no more pleasure off our pain."[36] The protesters also called on supporters to convey their anger in writing to Brian De Palma, care of Filmways, and to boycott the film.

A WAVPM protest leaflet distributed in San Francisco coupled with statements made by WAVAW members Dorchen Leidholdt and Stephanie Rones suggest that the intent of antipornography feminists' actions against *Dressed to Kill* was not to remove the film from theatres. WAVPM's leaflet details the group's objections to the film:

> From the insidious combination of violence and sexuality in its promotional material to scene after scene of women raped, killed, or nearly killed, *Dressed to Kill* is a master work of misogyny. . . . Though Kate Miller [Angie Dickinson] dies and Liz Blake bleeds time and again, three scenes—the rape, the necrophilia, and a slashing scene—were to have happened in women's minds. As if the eroticization of violence were not enough, *Dressed to Kill* asserts that women crave physical abuse; that humiliation, pain, and brutality are essential to our sexuality. . . . If this film succeeds, killing women may become the greatest turn-on of the Eighties! Join our protest![37]

Nowhere in this leaflet does WAVPM state any intention other than to picket. Countering charges made by Andrew Sarris in The *Village Voice,* Dorchen Leidholdt of WAP insisted that none of the three national organizations protesting against *Dressed* had "anti-libertarian overtones":

> All are opposed to censorship; all respect First Amendment strictures against the imposition of prior restraints on any form of speech; all are opposed to general prohibitions of the production, distribution, and display of pornographic materials. . . . The demonstrations against De Palma's exercise in misogyny and bigotry were intended only to present an opposing voice in the din of critical acclaim that has helped make *Dressed to Kill* a major box office success. Although we feminists would have preferred to sit back, like Mr. Sarris, and dismiss the film as "unbearably tedious and inept," his brethren would not let us.[38]

Stephanie Rones similarly defended feminists' protests while deriding film critics' reviews: "A movie like 'Dressed to Kill' encourages and perpetuates violence and pairs it with sexuality by having vicious acts instead of loving and caring. Film critics have enormous responsibility and often write about what they see in a very narrow sense, reviewing only the artistic relevance and ignoring the social relevance. . . . Is a woman being slashed in an elevator funny or erotic or entertaining? Critics should look at these films on a broader level." Rones, who works with battered women at the Harriet Tubman Center in downtown Los Angeles, said that "the movie preys off the fear of people who go out at night and women who go out at night alone. . . . The title of the movie itself suggests women can bring on rape by how they dress, that women are dressed to be killed." She dwelled on the film's advertising and the correlation between violence depicted on screen and in everyday life. "The ads come into your home and lay around. . . . Violence becomes fashionable, a vogue. The ads are all attractive; you don't see underneath the real image of a brutalized woman. . . . We simply feel there's a correlation between what people see and how they act. 'Dressed to Kill' is not a documentary. It entices, eroticizes and perpetuates violence." Rones also denied that WAVAW intended to censor *Dressed to Kill:* "We're only asking for responsibility from film critics," she told a *Los Angeles Times* reviewer. "What people see on the movie screen is more than art: its messages influence society."[39]

Far from causing theatre managers to close *Dressed to Kill* or dissuading producers from making similar films, protests against the movie seemed only to increase its box-office profits. During the week when the protests against *Dressed* were largest, the movie rose from third to first place on *Va-*

riety's weekly listing of top-grossing films, ahead of *Airplane* and *The Empire Strikes Back.* When I interviewed Leidholdt over the phone in October 1992, she lamented the fact that feminists' protests had assisted *Dressed* in becoming a commercial success: "After *Dressed to Kill,* we realized that protesting the eroticizing of violence in Hollywood films was not effective. We had been especially scared about *Dressed to Kill* and wanted to educate the public that these movies were doing exactly what so much of violent pornography is doing. We thought Hollywood might listen. But they didn't. They just kept producing one film after another." Leidholdt said that after the protests against *Dressed* had backfired, WAP changed its view of protest campaigns in general. From 1980 on, her organization carried out no further protest in front of theatres. The dearth of feminist protests against the sexual imagery in specific movies during the 1980s confirms her claim.[40]

In the years since 1980, written debates over sexual imagery in mainstream movies such as *Body Double* (1985) and *Fatal Attraction* (1987), and over pornography in general, have come to replace street protests.[41] As strategic attempts of some feminists to gain power over how the media represented women, protests disappeared almost as quickly as they had emerged, but not without antipornography feminists learning that protests do not pay, that they tend to help publicize the movie under attack rather than feminists' complaints against it, and that, to achieve widespread change, efforts would be best spent rewriting the laws governing pornography.

In retrospect, the *Dressed* controversy can be viewed as one among several defining moments in the developing conflict between women against pornography and against

its censorship, and, more important here, as a flash point in the emerging culture wars. If women against censorship stood on the sidelines of the controversy, intellectually they were unavoidably caught up in it. In 1980 all feminists shared serious concern for the effects of violent images on women. Debate about sexuality and aggression, feminists would agree, was a good thing, and an explosive debate along those lines would follow at Barnard College in 1982.[42] In later years, however, anticensorship feminists, whose position found articulate expression in the writings of members of Feminists Against Censorship Taskforce (F.A.C.T.), argued that banning pornography "diverts money and attention from programs and services that women really need."[43] These women held the liberal view that censorship is antidemocratic and in fact threatens feminism's fundamental aims: real equality and real power. By mid-decade, the louder voices were those of antipornography feminists, who unabashedly took procensorship positions, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon drafting antiporn legislation in Minneapolis and Indianapolis. In later years, the gap between feminists on the two sides of the debate would grow wider still. But in the late 1970s and in 1980, as neoconservatism began to sweep the country, feminists' collective rallying against several pornographic movies brought cohesion, recognition, and focus to a minority constituency committed to fighting sexism in the male-dominated media, and in society at large.

muster: They are neither justified by a compelling government purpose nor narrowly tailored. We also hold that the regulations are void for vagueness under the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment. The regulations are so ambiguous that they provide USIA officials with a virtual license to engage in censorship. In this case, that license has been exercised." Wallace Kendall, "Appeals Court Invalidates U.S. Rules Used to Block Educational Films," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1986, sec. 6.

CHAPTER 2

1. In the field of film censorship studies, see, for example, Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), and Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990).

2. See Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship, and Sexuality, 1909–1925* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 7. Broader works on censorship outside of film studies that share this view include Richard O. Curry, ed., *Freedom at Risk: Secrecy, Censorship, and Repression in the 1980s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), Sue Curry Jansen, *Censorship: The Knot That Binds Power and Knowledge* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), and Michael Parenti, *Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988).

3. Alexander Walker, *Sex in the Movies: The Celluloid Sacrifice* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), 187. For more on the controversies surrounding *The Pawnbroker*, see Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono*, 251–54, and Murray Schumach, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor: The Story of Movie and Television Censorship* (New York: Morrow, 1964), 4–14.

4. *Variety*, April 4, 1965. Quoted in Walker, *Sex in the Movies*, 187, 190.

5. Gerald Gardner, *The Censorship Papers: Movie Censorship Letters from the Hays Office, 1934 to 1968* (New York: Mead, 1987), 199–200.

6. Shurlock to Warner, October 9, 1965, *Virginia Woolf* papers (23B), Lehman Collection. Quoted in Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono*, 250, 254.

7. Edward de Grazia and Roger K. Newman, *Banned Films: Movies, Censors, and the First Amendment* (New York: Bowker, 1982), 96. See *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476, and the companion case, *Alberts v. California*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957). See also de Grazia and Newman, 95–97, 104–7, and Richard S. Randall, *Censorship of the Movies: The Social and Political Control of a Mass Medium* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 55–58.

8. See *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15 (1973), and *Paris Adult Theatre I v. Slaton*, 185 S.E. 2d 768 (1971); affirmed 413 U.S. 49 (1973). For more on these cases, see Edward de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius* (New York: Random House, 1992), 565–75.

9. See de Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films*, 141.

10. From 1972 to 1981, *Deep Throat* was banned in twenty-one states and resulted in more legal action than any film since *The Birth of a Nation* (de Grazia and Newman, *Banned Films*, 141), yet it grossed more than $25 million. Other commercially successful films originally censored for their sexual content include Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (banned in Montgomery, Alabama, and Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1973), *Caligula* (banned in Atlanta in 1981), and *Emmanuelle* (banned in Covina, California, in 1981). Each of these films, originally rated X by the MPAA, were freed from censorship. The state laws enabling courts to ban *Last Tango* were invalidated; *Caligula* was found obscene after prominent university professors testified to its artistic value; and *Emmanuelle* was freed from legal restraint after an Atlanta zoning ordinance was amended to allow exhibition of X-rated films "so long as [they did not] amount to a preponderance of films whose dominant theme was the depiction of specified sexual activities or anatomical areas" (380). Although the revised ordinance saved *Emmanuelle*, the Supreme Court's decision in *Young v. American Mini Theatres* made like zoning ordinances more popular methods of restricting sexually explicit imagery. For further information, see 143–45.

11. This argument is prominent in much of Catherine MacKinnon's writing. See, for example, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987). Other feminist scholars who share this view include Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1978); Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975); Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon, 1984); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Perigee, 1979); Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981); Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Susan Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York: Morrow, 1980); and Dorchen Leidholdt and Janice G. Raymond, eds., *Sexual Liberals and the Attack on Feminism* (New York: Pergamon, 1990).

12. See Fred Berger, *Freedom, Rights, and Pornography: A Collection of Papers by Fred R. Berger*, ed. Bruce Russell (Boston: Kluwer, 1991), 135, 136.

13. Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape," in *Take Back the Night*, ed. Lederer, 139. Gloria Steinem, "Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference," in ibid., 37.

14. I refer to the books by these authors listed in note 11.

15. Quoted in Williams, *Hard Core,* 68; Andrea Dworkin, "Pornography and Grief," in *Take Back the Night,* ed. Lederer, 289–90.

16. Dorchen Leidholdt, "When Women Defend Pornography," in *Sexual Liberals,* ed. Leidholdt and Raymond, 131.

17. In her attempt to define hard-core pornography, Linda Williams writes, "How can we adequately discuss the pornographic without making some stab at a description of specific pornography?" (*Hard Core,* 29).

18. Lederer, *Take Back the Night,* 15.

19. Diane Russell and Laura Lederer, "Questions We Get Asked Most Often," in ibid., 24, 27.

20. Kevin Thomas, "Controversial 'Snuff' Opens Run," *Los Angeles Times,* March 19, 1976, sec. 4.

21. Lederer, *Take Back the Night,* 292. Beverly LaBelle, "Snuff—The Ultimate in Woman-Hating," in ibid., 274.

22. Leaflet, "Snuff, c. 1976" vertical clipping file, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, Library of Performing Arts, New York City.

23. Fasteau is quoted in "'Snuff' Film Stirs the Wrath of Feminists," *New York Post,* February 21, 1976, sec. C. For more information on the Maryland ban, see Lou Cedrone, "Maryland Bans 'Snuff' Based on Its 'Psychotic Violence,' " *Variety,* April 7, 1976, and "Snuff Ban Is Upheld by Baltimore Judge," *Box Office,* April 5, 1976. On Monticello, see LaBelle, "Snuff," 278. One commentator suggests that distributors of *Snuff* themselves organized protests in front of various theatres around the country to stimulate box-office profits. See "'Snuff' Biz Goes When Pickets Go," *Variety,* March 24, 1976, and Gerald Perry, "Women in Porn: How Young Roberta Findlay Grew Up and Made 'Snuff,' " *Take One,* September 1978, 28–32.

24. Martha Gever and Marg Hall, "Fighting Pornography," in *Take Back the Night,* ed. Lederer, 279, 281, 284. For information on Rochester feminists' resistance to other billboard images and to materials sold in porn bookstores, see 279–85.

25. Ibid., 284, 285. A more widely distributed advertisement for *Snuff* depicts a woman's neck caught between the blades of a film production slate. See "Snuff, c. 1976."

26. When *Snuff* opened in August 1983 at Greenwich Village's Eighth Street Playhouse, for example, WAP and the National Organization of Women (NOW) protested, leafleted, and demanded that the theatre owner, Steven Kirsh, close the film. NOW president Jennifer Brown called the film "especially insidious because its audience was made up primarily of adolescent boys and younger men." Kirsh agreed to close *Snuff* down, stating that "some members of the community have found this film offensive, and we

don't want to offend anybody." See Laurie Johnston and Susan Heller Anderson, "Snuff Is Snuffed," *New York Times*, September 6, 1983, sec. C. In Los Angeles, the Coalition Against Violence Against Women joined homosexual groups in protesting *Windows* (1980), a film that many believed perpetuates pernicious lies about lesbians and rape; they also joined gays in protesting the stereotypes in *Cruising* (1980). See Charles Schreger, "Gays, Feminists Protest Two Films," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1980, sec. V. In a telephone interview on October 7, 1992, WAP founder Dorchen Leidholdt told me that her organization protested against *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, among other slasher movies, crediting such protests with the decline of the slasher genre in the early 1980s—a bold claim, to say the least. WAP, WAVAW, and WAVPM, however, are no longer active organizations and the history of their actions against slasher and other movies is largely unrecorded.

27. Peter Wood, "How a Film Changes from an 'X' to an 'R,' " *New York Times*, July 20, 1980, sec. C.

28. See Gerald Laurence, "Dressing 'Dressed' to Sell," *Box Office*, September 1980, 26.

29. Tony Bryant and Griselda Pollack, " 'Dressed to Kill' Window Dressing . . . A Poster Competition," *Framework* 15–17 (1981):28.

30. Gregg Kilday, "Dressing Down," *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, August 18, 1980. See also "Filmways Dresses Down Its Ads for 'Dressed to Kill,' " *Variety*, August 4, 1980, and Steven Ginsberg, " 'Countdown' Leads Five Pics Bowing Nationally; 'Kill' up 7% 2nd Weekend," *Variety*, August 5, 1980.

31. Vincent Canby, "Film: 'Dressed to Kill,' De Palma Mystery," *New York Times*, July 25, 1980, sec. C. Pauline Kael, "Master Spy, Master Seducer," *New Yorker*, August 4, 1980, 68. David Denby, "Deep Threat," *New York*, July 28, 1980, 44.

32. Andrew Sarris, "Dreck to Kill," *Village Voice*, September 17–23, 1980, 43–44.

33. Judy Stone, "Interview: Brian De Palma," *New York Newsday*, August 17, 1980.

34. Dorchen Leidholdt, "Women against De Palma," letter to the editor, *Village Voice*, October 1, 1980, 3.

35. See Peter Lester, "Redress or Undress? Feminists Fume While Angie Scores in a Sexy Chiller," *Camera 5*, Fall 1980, 71–72, 81; Sarris, "Dreck to Kill"; and Leidholdt, "Women against De Palma."

36. Michael Musto, "Drag Stir," *Soho Weekly News*, September 3, 1980. More militant protests against *Dressed to Kill* occurred outside the United States. In England, "several hundred Leeds women last month stormed movie houses showing 'The Beast' and 'Dressed to Kill,' horror films in which women are raped and killed. They pummeled men in the audiences and

hurled red paint at the screens before police dragged them out." "Dressed To Kill Protested," *Boston Globe*, December 8, 1980.

37. Reprinted in Chuck Kleinhans, "Dressed to Kill Protested," *Jump Cut*, no. 21, September 1980, 32.

38. Leidholdt, "Women against De Palma." For Andrew Sarris's criticism of WAP and other feminist protests against *Dressed to Kill*, see Sarris, "Dreck to Kill."

39. Lee Grant, "Women vs. 'Dressed to Kill': Is Film Admirable or Deplorable?" *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1980, sec. 6.

40. One exception was feminists' protests against *Once Upon a Time in America* in 1984; another came when members of NOW joined gay and lesbian protesters against *Basic Instinct* in 1992.

41. The debates over pornography, *Dressed to Kill*, and De Palma's films are explored in: David Denby, Alan Dershowitz, et al., "Pornography: Love or Death?" *Film Comment* 20, 6 (November–December 1984): 29–47; Marcia Pally et al, "Sex, Violence, and De Palma," *Film Comment* 21, 5 (September-October 1985): 9–13. The first issue features a dialogue between Marcia Pally and Brian De Palma; the second contains articles by legal scholars, antipornography and procensorship feminists, and other figures in the debates. Among the writers included are Alan Dershowitz, Edward Donnerstein, Dorchen Leidholdt, Marcia Pally, Janella Miller, Lois P. Sheinfeld, and Ann Snitow. For information on feminists' objections to *Fatal Attraction*, see Susan Faludi, "Fatal Distortion," *Mother Jones* 13 (February–March 1988): 27–30. Also see Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991), 126–39.

42. I borrow this idea from Giovanna Asselle and Behroze Gandhy, "Dressed to Kill," *Screen* 23 (September-October 1982):137–43, an article focusing on the controversy *Dressed* aroused in England. For information on the sexuality debates, see Estelle Freedman and Barrie Thorne, "Introduction to 'The Feminist Sexuality Debates,' " *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10 (1984):103–15.

43. Undated F.A.C.T. pamphlet.

CHAPTER 3

1. See Mary Kasdan, "Asians Protest 'Year of the Dragon,' " *Los Angeles Daily News*, August 23, 1985, sec. F.

2. D. W. Griffith, *The Rise and Fall of Free Speech in America* (Hollywood: Larry Edmunds Bookshop, [1916] 1967).

3. Grace Kingsley, "The Splash of Saffron," *Photoplay Magazine*, March