

Cultural Materialism in the Production and Distribution of Exploitative Lesbian Film: A Historical Case Study of *Children of Loneliness* (1935)

Anna Fåhraeus, Halmstad University

Abstract

Raymond Williams developed a vocabulary and framework for analyzing the ideological forces at work in literature and art, as objects, but also in terms of their production and distribution. This article looks back at his elaboration of cultural materialism and its relationship to film in *Preface to Film* (1954), written with Michael Orrin, as a way of understanding the media traces of the lost film *Children of Loneliness* (dir. Richard C. Kahn). The film was an early sex education about homosexuality and this article explores its connections to early exploitation films as a cinematic form, and the dominant and emergent discourses that were used to promote it, as well as at structures of feeling that these discourses reflect.

Keywords: structure of feeling; history of film; *Children of Loneliness*; homosexuality

‘To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing.’
Raymond Williams¹

Introduction

Raymond Williams laid much of the groundwork for cultural studies and media studies with his work *Culture and Society* (1958), *Communications* (1962) and *Television* (1974). It is less well-known that from his university days in the 1930s he also worked with film and produced several important texts for Film Studies, including ‘Film as a Tutorial Subject’ (1953) and the volume, *Preface to Film* (1954), co-authored with his friend, the documentary filmmaker Michael Orrin. The book was a manifesto for the political potential of the form. Williams’s contribution was an essay entitled, ‘Film and the Dramatic Tradition.’ The main thrust is that in order to study the moving image as a cultural form, it needs to be understood in relation to the history of drama (Dolan

¹ *Resources of Hope*, published posthumously (1989: 118).

6-7). The dramatic form is that of narrative and it is this aspect that Williams was concerned with: the story that was being told and the aesthetic potential of new filmic techniques to tell transformative stories. Because the moving image can record human activities, he posited that there was a danger of being caught in a naturalism that reinforces existing beliefs. This insight makes his work particularly relevant when looking at a film like *Children of Loneliness* (dir. Richard C. Kahn), an early sex education film, and its relationship to exploitation films as a cinematic form as well as at structures of feeling in the societies where they are produced and distributed.

Children of Loneliness was produced as an American sex hygiene or education film about homosexual men and women. It was made by Jewell Productions in 1932 or 1933. The screenplay was written by Howard Bradford. The year of production for the film is variously reported as 1934, 1935 or 1937 in various sources, but according to the digital newspaper archives, it had at least one preview in 1933 in Paris, Texas (PN 7), but it was not submitted to the Library of Congress for copyright until March 1935 (O'Dell 2015). As an intended populist film, it exploited the popularity of Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), claiming it as its source. The novel was heavily remediated in the film but in contrast to films like *Call Her Savage* (1931), *All of Me* (1934) and *These Three* (1936), which were all based on contemporary lesbian stage plays, Kahn and Bradford did not excise the lesbian relationship in *Children of Loneliness*.² Instead, they highlighted it. This article explores this process through the lens of Williams' work on film.

Williams saw cultural forms as 'systems of signification' that are inextricably linked to the broader historical and social development of ideas but also as ways or modes for 'interpreting all our common experiences' (2006: 18). He viewed studying individual forms as an opportunity to think about how different ideas and meanings 'circulate and collide' as his editor Robin Gable phrased it in the 1988 collection of Williams' work *Resources of Hope*. In 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition,' Williams observed that, 'the dramatic conventions of any given period are fundamentally related to the structure of feeling of that

² The article, 'Straight Cinema Jackets for Lesbian Stage Productions in the 1930s' explores the relationship of the films to their lesbian stage sources (under review).

period' (quoted in Dolan 2013: 7). He continued by giving a definition of conventions as, 'the means of expression which find tacit consent,' thus indicating that silence or the lack of institutionalized social resistance to ideas are signs of conventionalized thought. In any study of structures of feeling, Williams's elaboration of the existence of dominant, emergent and residual ideas in a culture is also key. In the study of homophobic discursive practices, his definition of convention and chrono-typology for ideas allows for a structural division and mapping of discursive practices including silence in relation to *discursive tenacity*, a term that I would suggest can be used to describe a striking feature of some previously dominant ideas that not only remain as residual ideas but adapt to new contexts. They are residual discursive practices that have a latent power that can be activated under certain social conditions. In this article, I explore the dominant and emergent discourses that have left trace remains from discursive practices about homosexuality in advertisements for *Children of Loneliness* from the 1930s and 1950s. I also argue that some of this discursive residue is linked to urban grindhouse theatres in the 1930s, and that this material context matters for an understanding of how the discursive practices change in the 1950s yet remain similar in their intent to marginalize gay men and women.

Williams was critical of the term *mediation* but saw it as an improvement over the more static and deceptively objective term, *reflection*. In opposition to a general understanding of literature and the arts as reflecting 'immediate experience' (Williams 2006: 45), he argued that using the verb *mediate* allows for a recognition of the indirectness of the experiences narrated, of their character as being dependent on the mediation process. In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, first published in 1976, he discusses mediation and points to it as carrying a sense of something indirect or dependent (1981: 205). The form itself is part of a process, Williams observed, that is, it is not neutral but an active choice, just as the whole composition and production process is a series of choices, which alter what is mediated (205). He cited Adorno's observation that 'mediation is in the object itself, not something between the object and that to which it is brought' (206).³ He posited that a social materialist analysis of the mediation of an art object would reveal the dynamics of its ideological underpinnings. In this study

³ Adorno, *Theses on the Sociology of Art* (1967).

the mediation processes in focus are the production and distribution of the film *Children of Loneliness*. The distribution process is understood as having both a material presence in the media and a physical presence in the theatre venues. Both represent important loci of mediation and affect the interpretation of the film as a cultural object.

This article investigates these loci through the media traces in advertisements for the film and articles about it. The remains are scant, a few production related articles, marketing advertisements and two viewers' accounts. I will first examine the production background and what is known about the content and form of the film before proceeding to review the distribution practices by presenting a two-part case study of individual advertisements for the film. This case study is based on fifty-six newspaper advertisements and a handful of articles from between 1934 and 1961 that advertised or discussed the film. Because this material spans such a relatively long time period, even a relatively narrow analytical study of the material conditions and social discourses alluded to in the promotion of this *Children of Loneliness* provides a unique opportunity to look at changes in the dominant, emergent and finally residual cultural ideas about homosexuality that were used to market this film from 1934 until 1961. The scope of this article limits what can be looked at in detail. Thus, the analysis of specific advertisements focuses on three larger advertisements which were circulated in the 1930s, and three representative advertisements from the 1950s.

The Plot of Children of Loneliness

In the 1954 *Box Office Barometer*, *Children of Loneliness* is listed under a subheading for miscellaneous productions with the information that it is a drama and 59 minutes long. The film was presumably black and white, because the listing lacks the symbols used for designating colour photography. The entry names the actors as Wallace Morgan, Luana Walters, Jean Carmen, Sheila Loren and Allan Jarvis. A short description of the plot is given: 'Unnatural love impulses of one girl for another are repulsed and she throws acid at a favoured young man. Blinded when the acid is thrown back, she walks into a car' (126). This short description regurgitates the dominant ideas in the early 20th century that gay love is 'unnatural' and that lesbians are prone to excessive emotions and potential violence.

Even though the film *Children of Loneliness* is no longer extant, there is a longer descriptive review of the film in the first issue of a pioneering lesbian magazine, *Vice Versa* from 1947. The magazine was edited by Edith Eyde under the pen name Lisa Ben. She comments that the acting was very poor and that the only thing the film had in common with its source material, Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, is the name of the main female character, Gordon (Ben 1947: 9). Her review represents a single viewer's opinion and cannot be understood as definitive of the general viewer experience of the film, but her account does provide descriptive detail about the plot.

It could be claimed that Eyde's position as a lesbian affected her view of the adaptation. However, at least one homophobic viewer shared her sentiments albeit for different reasons. In the early 1950s, *Children of Loneliness* had two shorter runs in New York and Washington, D.C. When the film was screened at the Embassy Newsreel Theatre in New York City in 1953, a woman named Kate Cameron wrote a complaint to the *Daily News* about the decision to show the film (DN 1953: 55). She had read *The Well of Loneliness* and part of what disturbed her was the lack of respect the film had for the advertised source material. She interpreted Well's novel as a story about the grim torment of being lesbian, and expressed her anger and shock that the Embassy Newsreel Theatre was willing to show a film where heterosexual people are 'tragically affected by the perverted emotions' of gay people. Her reaction reflects the obtuse blindness of homophobic discourses that insist on under-reading a novel like Hall's, and fail to see the connections made so clearly in the novel between the depictions of psychological torment and living in an oppressive, homophobic society. However, her account also corroborates the claim that promoting the film as based on the novel was false advertising.

Eyde's description states that in the film, Eleanor Gordon consults a psychiatrist because she dislikes men and because Bobby, a girl at the office where she works, is offering her 'love and protection' (Ben 1947: 10). Eyde continues with the observation, 'Of course the psychiatrist warns Eleanor against this "barren and shallow imitation" of love and advises her to seek the companionship of some nice young man.' Gordon does and fires Bobby. While with Dave, Gordon eventually meets 'a sensitive artist' who takes Gordon to a gay café and when Eleanor asks who the couples are, he remarks, 'These are the Children of Loneliness,

Nature's tragic mistakes, trying to forget...' (Ben 1947: 11). Eventually Bobby finds Gordon at her office and demands her job back. She is hysterical and tries to throw acid in Gordon's face. Gordon is rescued by Dave and the acid spills onto Bobby, who runs into the street screaming and is hit by a car. Gordon and Dave kiss while in the background Bobby is shrieking.

The second half of the movie is about the young artist, Paul. He is described as a gay man with feminine mannerisms. A famous art critic comments at his first exhibition that the works must have been created by a woman using a man's name. Paul feels exposed and decides to engage openly with the gay world by consuming copious amounts of alcohol at the gay café and 'consorting with laddies even more neurotic and unhappy than himself' (Ben 1947: 12). His story ends after he has a conversation with the valet at his apartment building after attending a drag show. The valet asks if he had a good time and Paul, drunk again, replies that it was 'disgusting.' The valet responds that that is 'too bad, sir.' Eyde does not remark on the seeming acceptance of the valet to Paul's night out except to react to the poignancy of Paul's rejoinder when the valet tells him that he enjoys going out with his girlfriend. Eyde focuses on the poignancy of Paul's response, 'You can have a girl. You can be married. You can—have—children—'. The words are an articulation of thoughts that are recognizable in the gay community among older gays and lesbians in particular, but the emotional overtones matter, and the context in which they are uttered and understood matters. Contextually, Paul is constructed as tormented by his own sexuality rather than as raging against an unfair society. The valet goes out with his girlfriend. Paul goes into his apartment and commits suicide. The film ends melodramatically with a shot of his hand clutching a lacy scrap of clothing (Ben 1947: 12).

The Production Process

Children of Loneliness is often reported as the first domestic film in the United States about homosexuality. However, a search through the archives reveals an earlier film called *Chained*, which was an adaptation of an unnamed stage play. The play had apparently had a successful run at Shubert's Central Theatre in New York (MC 1931: 21). The theatre owner, Lee Shubert, was also the owner of the Maxine Elliott Theatre, where Lillian Hellman's play *The Children's Hour* would be produced in

1934. The advertisement for *Chained* highlights that it was about ‘the THIRD SEX,’ and claims that it revealed ‘The Cause of Effeminate Men!’ and ‘The Story of Unnatural Lovers.’ This sets *Chained* apart from the 1934 film with the same name, and that starred Joan Crawford and Clarke Gable.

Neither *Chained* nor *Children of Loneliness* should have been possible under the Motion Picture Production Code from 1930. The Code is colloquially known as the Hays Code, and was, along with the Catholic Legion of Decency, the main force of censorship in American cinema between 1930 and 1968 (Mintz et al. 2016: 83). The Legion was established in 1934 because prominent Catholics were unhappy with the degree of self-censorship by the studios. The Legion was thus set up as a threat to theatre revenue unless films adhered to the Code. The Code itself was drafted by William H. Hays and Joseph Breen for the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). It was not a legal document but a list of moral guidelines for self-censorship that was applied by the major Hollywood studios. Joseph Breen was given the task of ensuring that every film produced through the studios was verified with a Code seal of approval (Mintz et al. 2016: 84). Without the seal, a film would find it difficult to find a venue and pass state censorship boards. In 1968, this system was replaced with the MPAA film rating system, which rates the suitability of films for different audiences (age groups).

The Code prohibited homosexual relationships to be shown in films by exclusion rather than by directly naming homosexuality or talking about homosexual relationship. Homosexuality is indirectly referenced in two ways, both of which rely on the existence of institutionalized homophobic practices. The Code prohibited vulgarity and defined it as ‘low, disgusting, unpleasant subjects which decent society considers outlawed from normal conversation’ (Mintz et al. 2016: 129). The code also set up rules against any suggestion or reference to the obscene, and defined it as anything that was ‘against divine and human law’ (Ibid). These definitions gave ample grounds for distancing the MPAA and its members from homosexual content on the grounds that it was illegal, immoral (against Divine law) and taboo in ‘decent’ society. It also explicitly forbade films dealing with topics such as miscegenation, venereal disease and childbirth. All the prohibited topics would be featured in exploitation films marketed specifically as sex education

films. Many were imported from Europe while others were made in the United States.

Children of Loneliness was made despite the restrictions set out by the Code and in deliberate opposition to it. It was marketed as a sex education film and produced by the exploitation filmmakers, Jewell Productions. A contemporary exploitation filmmaker David F. Friedman characterized the early exploitation genre from the 1930s as defining itself against the Hays Code (Schaefer 1999: 3). The sex education or sex hygiene circuit as it was called at the time constituted and created a niche for exploitation filmmakers outside the main market (Schaefer 1999: 42-43). The filmmakers who were active in the production of these films were independent and thus worked outside the major film studios, and frequently also distributed their own films. As a result, they usually had much lower budgets, which led to creativity in the re-use of clips and film material. The Hays code created a market for films of topical interest related to sex, sexuality and human reproduction. Eric Schaefer states that exploitation films were characterized by catering to audience interest in, among other things, the 'unusual, aberrant, or forbidden', staying abreast of the new (timeliness), and knowledge ('veracity') (111). The line between sex education films and the early exploitation films was more theoretical than real in the 1930s. However, in his autobiography, Friedman observed that there was a difference by the 1950s: 'I'm afraid the public has forgotten the sex-hygiene pictures. Why would anybody pay a dollar for that sixty-four-page quasi-medical book when they can buy *Playboy* or any other similar magazine on any newsstand in the country?' (1990: 271). Hugh Hefner launched *Playboy* in 1953. The educational context for nudity or discussions about sex was no longer necessary to pass the censors.

When *Children of Loneliness* was shown, an educational newsreel preceded the film proper. Who produced the newsreel is unclear but according to Eyde, a doctor and a social worker in the reel warned against the dangers of homosexuality. Cary O'Dell (2015) states that the doctor was Dr. S. Dana Hubbard, author of *Sex Facts for the Young and Old* (1922). Eyde is not impressed by his competence or knowledge. She saw the doctor's 'smug' framing of the film as intended to teach viewers 'how to combat such abnormal love' (Ben 1947: 10) and 'reclaim them' (13). Being gay was presented as 'evil' and 'the depths of degradation' (Ben 1947: 10). As O'Dell remarks, the frame and the tone of the film

echo the same homophobic sentiments, and these are emphasized as intentional in the letter accompanying two copies of the 35 mm film when it was submitted for copyright to the Library of Congress: 'Children of Loneliness concerns itself with the story of those unfortunate members of society known as inverts whose sexual instincts have been misdirected to such an extent that they approach the state of degeneracy.' Copyright was given and the films returned. The term 'inverts' belonged to the discourse on homosexuality as either biological or psychological gender inversion, and 'degeneracy' was part of the contemporary dominant discourse on homosexuality as a pathological condition that leads to social and moral decline for the individual.

The production of the film appears to have used montage and mixed media. Eyde observes that the movie 'could have been a poignant, tender story of various loves' but instead it is 'a vicious piece of propaganda' (Ben 1947: 13). She reacts negatively to the scene in the café but states that it had a different photographic quality than the rest of the film and was 'seemingly unrehearsed' (9). This suggests that the producers inserted documentary-style film clips into the movie. This technique was common in exploitation films. In Eyde's opinion, the scenes from the café were likely to overall be judged as negative. The gays 'in the café scenes are depicted as a depraved, fiendish and drunken lot' (Ben 1947: 13).

Williams' early work on film with Michael Orrin (Dolan 2013: 3-5) suggests that he would have been positive towards Kahn's possible use of different genres of film (newsreel, drama, documentary). However, the transformative power of the montage technique that Williams promoted in his work (Dolan 2013: 9) is not leveraged in *Children of Loneliness*. The aesthetic rhetoric in capturing the interactions of real gay men and women in *Children of Loneliness* was instead made to serve the homophobic status quo. Looking at the accounts of the film that are still available, it seems that the film was progressive in terms of artistic experimentation in form for the 1930s, but it lacked radical political intent, and this weakened its social and cultural importance.

Distribution

A report in *The Film Daily* of April 4, 1934 supports the independent status of the film. If it had been produced by a major studio, it would have had established distribution channels. Instead, Kahn and Alfred N.

Sack personally took *Children of Loneliness* on a joint roadshow in May of that year. This mode of distribution is defined by Friedman as standard procedure for independent exploitation films: they were ‘distributed by roadshowmen’ and where a major studio would make 400 prints, an exploitation picture never had more than 15 or 20 (Schaefer 1999: 3). On the same tour, the production company Sack Amusement Entertainment was also marketing the film *Drums o’ Voodoo*. It was a screen adaptation of J. Augustus Smith’s Broadway play *Louisiana*. There is a short article on the *Drums o’ Voodoo* in *The Pittsburgh Courier* announcing a show on May 11th (1934: 8). This points to an early stop on the joint tour in Pennsylvania. This is relevant to *Children of Loneliness* because Kahn would presumably have tried to get a showing of his film there as well. However, there is no media record of an attempt. If he did try to get a screening for the film in Pittsburgh, the film did not make it past the state censor board. Unfortunately, censored films were not regularly reported in the media unless they had been scheduled and then cancelled. *Drums o’ Voodoo* reached Atlanta in the fall, but again whether Kahn tried and did not manage to get *Children of Loneliness* passed the state censorship boards is unclear (AC 1934: 10).

There is some evidence that the distributors marketed *Children of Loneliness* under different titles. In 1937, advertisements appear in Idaho Falls and Salt Lake City with an alternate title, *The Un-Natural Sin*. According to Schaefer, the film was also known as *Bewildered Youth*, *Strange Lovers* and *The Third Sex* (1999: 351). A search in the media archives gives some support for ‘The Third Sex.’ The *Box Office* from 1954 gives ‘The Third Sex’ as an alternate title for *Children of Loneliness* (126). *The Miami News* advertised a film under this title in 1961 and the reference to *The Well of Loneliness* makes it clear that it is the same film (MN 1957: 24). Other advertisements for *Children of Loneliness* use ‘The Third Sex’ as a subtitle or genretyping strategy. This can be seen, for example, in an advertisement in *The Times Standard* in Eureka, California, which states ‘The Third Sex full-length Hollywood feature’ before the title *Children of Loneliness* (TS, Eureka, 1957: 3).

A possible source of confusion when searching the media archives for the film *Children of Loneliness* under the title *The Third Sex* is a German film (*Anders als du und ich*) that Veit Harlan produced in 1957 (Kaliff 1957: 11). Despite the occasional poor review, Harlan’s film seems to have done well in 1959 and in 1960. This is somewhat

surprising considering the media debate on the anti-Semitism in Harlan's earlier work and a past charge for crimes against humanity in Hamburg, but perhaps this notoriety contributed to ticket sales and interest in his film. There are, in any case, numerous articles about the film, and advertisements in the media that attest to its distribution. The film had a strong summer in 1960 in California, where advertisements appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Los Angeles Times* throughout June and July. However, the announcements almost always had the tag that it was a German film, which helps to set it apart from *Children of Loneliness*.

The IMDB database gives the alternate title *Bewildered Youth* for Harlan's film. A closer look at the movie listings for the late 1950s shows that a film entitled *Bewildered Youth* was being screened across the United States but for the most part the advertisements are small and there is little information about the film except that it is shocking and for adults only. However, in a few advertisements, there is a reference to it being a German film or to the German actress Ingrid Stenn, who played Gerda Böttchner in Harlan's film (TR 1959: 52). Both make it clear that it is an advertisement for Harlan's film and not *Children of Loneliness*. Incidentally, on the same page as the referenced advertisement with Stenn's name is an announcement for *Some Like It Hot* (dir. Billy Wilder) with Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon in drag. That announcement is a clear indication that by the end of the 1950s, the Code was losing its grip on the film industry since comedy films that alluded to gender inversion was a special point for prohibition in the code.

The media archives do not show any records for 'Bewildered Youth' as an alternate title for *Children of Loneliness*. 'Strange Lovers' may have been a working title for *Children of Loneliness* but this cannot be ascertained definitively. The first appearance of 'Strange Lovers' as the title for a film in the news appears in 1963 (LAT 50). It was a film made up of three shorter films directed by Robert Stambler: two about gay men and one about a lesbian, all of whom meet tragic ends.

Case Study, Part 1: Material Conditions: The Newspapers and the Theatre Venues

The first part of the case study is an analysis of the material conditions for the distribution and screening of *Children of Loneliness* in the 1930s compared to the 1950s. The data is taken from advertisements for the

film, which highlight at least two material conditions that are relevant when looking at the film as a site for social contradiction and opposition: the social status of the newspapers and ownership of the theatre venues. The advertisements appeared in three different states in the 1930s: Iowa in 1936, California in 1937 and Utah in 1938. The advertisements from the 1950s also appeared in three different states: Utah in 1953, Florida in 1955, and California in 1957. Full descriptions of the advertisements are given in Appendix 1.

In relation to the desire to prevent the making and distribution of films that dealt with homosexuality as a topic that could be rated as morally unsuitable, vulgar, or obscene if seen through the eyes of the Hays Code, it is significant that all the newspapers that printed advertisements for *Children of Loneliness* were mainstream. They represent the center of their communities and their influence was openly acknowledged. They are all still in operation even if ownership in some cases has shifted hands.

In the 1930s, the advertisements in this study were placed in *The Des Moines Register*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*. In the 1950s, they appeared in *The Times Standard* in California, *The Tampa Times* and *The Salt Lake Tribune*. The ads in the newspapers were not hidden or sidelined, either in the 1930s or the 1950s. The theatre owners and distributors paid for relatively prominent placement, and the ads were of a competitive size. They are not the largest ads for films, but they are far from the smallest. Their placement is indistinguishable from that of other film ads. The main difference in the advertisements for the film and other feature films is that the ones for *Children of Loneliness* were all in black and white. This is particularly noticeable in the 1950s when more advertisements were in color. However, this difference was not unique to *Children of Loneliness*. Other films were also promoted in black and white. The existence of the advertisements indicates a cooperative relationship between those who placed the ads and the newspapers (though there may have been restrictions placed on what the ads could or should contain—see the social analysis below). In any case, there was sufficient cooperation for the papers to provide visibility for the film, despite the contemporary moral prohibitions against and debates about the nature of homosexuality.

The Theatre Venues

A major hurdle for the production and distribution of the film *Children of Loneliness* was the Hays Code. Yet, despite the Code restrictions, the distributors succeeded in placing the film in major theatre venues. The conditions under censorship seem to bear a resemblance to the conditions for bars and clubs under prohibition. There was a market for films that contravened the Hays Code. In his study about the history of exploitation films, Schaefer describes classical exploitation films as a separate film category with its own market, and states that the market evolved alongside that of the films produced by the major Hollywood studios (1999: 3-4). What is evident is that the material conditions for *Children of Loneliness* given in these newspapers point to a significant network of capitalist entrepreneurs and networks that wielded power in their communities through the businesses they owned. In the initial stages of this study, the anticipated result was that a film like *Children of Loneliness*, with its homosexual theme, would only have been shown in independent theatres, and these theatres would have been smaller and not centrally located. However, it quickly became evident that even if the theatres were independent, they were not necessarily small. It also became evident that in the distribution of *Children of Loneliness*, the relationship between the independent theatres and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (the MPPDA—an earlier incarnation of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) was complex.

Turning to specific advertisements from the 1930s, *Children of Loneliness* was shown at the Garden Theatre in Des Moines, Iowa in 1936. This theatre was one of the larger theatres in the city and was owned by the capitalist A. H. Blank, who was president of the Central States Theatre Corporation from 1931 to 1951 (QCT 1971: 22). He would later become a regional executive for the Publix Theatres controlled by Paramount (Abel 2006: 282), one of the major Hollywood studios. The president of the Publix Theatre Corporation was Sam Katz (Gomery 1979), who had a long-standing partnership with Barney Balaban. They started their first theatre company in Chicago in 1916 and by the 1930s it was owned by the Famous-Players Lasky Corporation, which was one of the largest producers and distributors of film in the United States. They controlled over 1,200 theatres in the United States and Canada. Paramount Pictures was part of Famous-Players. The

complexity of these relationships means that even if Blank's theatres were listed as independent in the 1930s, he was well connected to Hollywood and a member of the MPPDA. Blank should have been concerned about the Hays Code but at least in the case of *Children of Loneliness*, he was not.

The owner of the Criterion Theatre in Los Angeles in 1937 was William Fox and his company Fox West Coast Theatres, another Hollywood studio company. It was a Byzantine building seating around 1,800. Sol Wurtzel of Fox was part of the committee behind the Hays Code, which means that he also should have been against distributing a film that violated the Code. The fact that he was not may be explained by the off-Broadway location of the theatre and its B-film listings. From the movie listings, it appears to have been operated as an early urban grindhouse theatre. According to the L.A. conservancy records, it did very good business. The implication is that the potential profit from showing *Children of Loneliness* clearly superseded strict adherence to the Code.

The one truly independent theatre owner in the 1930s, who agreed to show *Children of Loneliness*, was H.E. Skinner in Ogden, Utah in 1938. He had no official ties to Hollywood and the *Colonial Theatre* showed both Hollywood studio films and independent films. Its financial solvency history shows some evidence of having fluctuated. Some articles online report the theatre as closed in the summer of 1938 but there are advertisements in the *Salt Lake Tribune* for the same period, indicating that it was open and showing a variety of films, including *Children of Loneliness*.

In contrast to the major studio links that appear when researching ownership in the 1930s, the theatres that screened *Children of Loneliness* in the 1950s were owned by independent entrepreneurs, who were not concerned about the Hays Code. Even though it was billed as an adults-only film, the screening in Salt Lake City in 1953 took place outdoors at the Airport Drive-In around dinnertime. The time slot is important from a film ratings point of view as six to eight p.m. is the premium slot for family movies. The theatre was run by George Zischank. It had one screen and a three hundred-car capacity. Drive-in theatres were extremely popular with families and teenagers in the 1950s particularly in more rural areas. *Children of Loneliness* had previously been screened at the Auto Theatre on Route 13 in Carbondale, Illinois in the days

before Christmas in 1950 (SI 17). When Zishank opened the gates in 1948, the films at the Airport Drive-in were mainstream but the advertisements show that it was not long before there was a gradual movement towards more B-listed films and exploitation films, such as *Jungle Virgin* and *Unashamed Women* (SLT 1954: 13). By the mid-1950s, it had become an urban grindhouse venue. One interpretation for why this change occurred is that the market could not sustain three drive-in theatres that were competing to show mainstream Hollywood movies. Zischank lost ground to his competitors, Redwood and Autorium.

In 1955, *Children of Loneliness* had a week-long run at another urban grindhouse theatre in Tampa, Florida; the State Theatre, which was part of the Claughton Theatre chain owned by Edward and Lillian Corbett. They specialized in B-listed and exploitation films and unlike the theatres in the 1930s, the location was in a part of town that was suffering from decreasing property values in the 1950s. The film would come back to Florida for a final week of screenings in May 1961 at Leroy Charles Griffith's 79th Street Art Theatre in Miami. Griffith's business was as a theatre producer and owner, but he worked with both film and live shows. His remit was burlesque and adult entertainment.

The most successful run for *Children of Loneliness* was from early December to late February in 1957, when it was screened at the Cinema Theatre in San Francisco in the middle of the Market Street movie palace district. Most of the advertisements for the film were small but at least one advertisement ran every day in *The San Francisco Examiner*. Unfortunately, no information is available about the ownership of the Cinema Theatre. It may have had links to the Hollywood studios or it may have been independent in relation to the MPAA. The only thing that it is possible to say is that the Market Street area was heavily populated with movie theatres in the 1950s, both independent studios and those with more direct links to Hollywood, and that the Cinema Theatre ran both A-listed and B-listed films.

After its San Francisco run, two private entrepreneurs, George Mann and Robert Selig tried to capitalize on the successful Cinema run. The film was screened at the Liberty Theatre in Eureka California, which was a large, single screen theatre operated by the Redwood Theatres Corporation. The corporation was listed as a 'foreign production company' owned by George Mann in Reno, Nevada in 1927 (Reg. C0123583). Mann ran movie theatres but also imported films. His

listings include several foreign films that would not have been given the Hays code seal. According to the Clarke Museum, the Liberty Theatre was reportedly suffering financially by the late 1950s and its offerings were reduced to B-list and exploitation films (CHM website 2018). *Children of Loneliness* was there for a limited run of two nights. The film was then moved to another Redwood Theatres Corporation venue in March. During the same time period, it was also shown at two drive-in theatres, the Bel Air in Fontana in southern California and the Humboldt in the northern part of the state (TS 1957: 3). Both were large drive-in theatres owned by Selig.

Case Study, Part 2: Social Norms and Changing Discourses

The second part of this case study is a social discourse analysis of the advertisements and related commentary in the 1930s compared to the last ads that appeared between 1952 and 1961. In terms of accessing the discourses used in relation to the film, the same advertisements are used as in the analysis of the venues. In a cultural discourse analysis of film in the media, minutiae like time slots for screening and clothing of the women portrayed in the advertisements matter. They are signs of broader social discourses and can be linked to normative views related to sexuality but also to more general cultural perceptions of the normal and abnormal, and the acceptable and unacceptable.

Ratings and Time Slots

The advertised rating and the time of day for a movie screening point to specific social norms linked to material conditions that can reproduce but also disrupt the social order in a community. In this case, the cultural context is the historically dominant discourse on homosexuality as abnormal and as socially taboo, and the desire to suppress gay visibility as the official position of the MPAA. The one concession made by all the theatres to this dominant discourse and the Hays code from its first screenings in the 1930s until the last screening in 1961, is in the rating. The film is listed as being for adults only across almost every advertisement. However, the act of showing the film at all and the advertised time slots disrupt an easy reading of the theatre owners as submitting to the desire to suppress gay visibility. The time slots vary from matinee and early evening, which historically was reserved for

family films, to later in the evening, which is the more traditional slot for films for adults. This is true both in the 1930s and in the 1950s.

The reason the film was shown early in the day in the 1930s can possibly, in part, be explained by the sex hygiene frame used to promote the film discussed earlier under the 'Production process'. There is a separate short article in *The Des Moines Register* in 1936 where the reader is told specifically that *Children of Loneliness* is 'a picture built along educational lines but told by a dramatic story' (*DMR* Oct. 10, 1936: 10). Promoting the film as a sex education film was a way of circumventing and placating censorship boards. In California and Utah, the sex hygiene frame was not made explicit in the promotion of the film. Neither state's advertisements gave any concession aside from age, and the distributors did not mention the film's ostensible educational value, nor the presence of a sex hygiene adviser on stage though the newsreel still preceded it when it was shown.

In the 1950s, the sex education frame was gone as an explicit frame in the advertising but as Ben aka Eyde's review in *Vice Versa* (1947) makes clear, the newsreel is still present in the film.

Dominant and Emergent Discourses

There are traces of emergent discourses in the advertisements for *Children of Loneliness*. The 1937 California advertisement seems to contextualize the film more objectively when it points to a thematic connection both to Lillian Hellman's stage play *The Children's Hour* (1934) and to Radclyffe Hall's novel. The language referencing these works in the advertisements is neutral and points toward the future where cultural works depicting lesbians are presented without resorting to homophobic discursive practices. Laura Doan's study in 2001 on the reception of *The Well of Loneliness* in England supports this view that media reports about the novel were sometimes fairer and more positive than has generally been thought.⁴ Both the play and the novel contributed to the visibility of lesbianism, but they were also both involved in very public legal scandals. Herbert Schumlin's production of *The Children's Hour* was banned in several cities, including Boston. The attempt to stop *The Well of Loneliness* from being imported to the United States and the

⁴ *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*. Columbia University Press.

ensuing trial was reported across the States. Referencing the play and citing the novel as the source material of *Children of Loneliness* made sense from a topical and financial point of view for the producers of the film. The novel would remain in the media as a favorite in book clubs through the 1930s and 1940s, ensuring its continued value as a point of public recognition for the lesbian theme in advertisements for *Children of Loneliness*.

What complicates an easy reading of any surface neutrality in the advertisement for the first day of *Children of Loneliness* in Los Angeles is that the same advertisement announces that this is the last day to see *The Love Life of a Gorilla* (*The Times* 1937: 27). As stated earlier, the Criterion Theatre appears to have been operated as an early urban grindhouse theatre and this film supports that image. It was an exploitation film about the sex life of gorillas. Its proximity placement to an advertisement for a lesbian film is suspect because of the discourse that connected homosexual love to bestiality. For lesbians, a particularly coarse reproduction of this discourse was to be found in the drawings made by the well-known artist Steele Savage for the popular Tiffany Thayer novel, *An American Girl* (1933). The inside cover of the first edition of this novel depicts naked men and women with performing gorillas. The narrative suggests bestial sexual acts. Thayer wrote several popular novels with lesbian characters and always constructed them as desperate, degenerate and monstrous in different ways. His popularity is evidenced by sales figures, media coverage and the adaptation of a few of them into Hollywood movies. For someone working in film in the 1930s, his work would have been known.

From a discursive perspective, the 1938 advertisement in Ogden shows that the distributors of *Children of Loneliness* were willing to use both dominant and emerging discursive practices and the owners of the papers were willing to let their editors publish both. The anti-homosexual practices are evident in the text preceding the title of the film: 'LIFE'S A GRIM JEST!' and 'LOVE'S A HIDEOUS TRAGEDY! FOR THE CHILDREN OF LONELINESS' and this is followed by the exhortation, 'EVERY *NORMAL* PERSON SHOULD SEE THIS AMAZING PICTURE.' This could be interpreted as a push for sex education but it could also be interpreted as a marketing gambit to leverage the sex hygiene angle for financial gain. Gays or homosexuals in this view are clearly marked as deviant and abnormal. The word choices are clear

signs of a condescending negative discursive practice that acknowledges the existence of gays but assumes and reproduces the narrative that all they can expect is a grim life of loneliness.

Significantly, however, the advertisement does not deny that love can exist between people of the same sex. At the top, is the unfinished assertive clause 'CAPABLE OF LOVE BUT...' The sentence is finished in the main background: 'INCAPABLE OF MARRIAGE!' Beneath, this is the additional text: 'Born to Tragedy! Their love outlawed by a world that refuses to understand!' This suggested that the tragedy was not in the love but in the lack of acceptance from those around them. The alternate story of gay love as possible and that homosexuals are not necessarily tormented even if they are persecuted would not be told as its own story until the 1950s when novels such as *Quatrefoil* (1950) by James Barr aka W. Fugaté and Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt* (1952) appeared. Because neither side is modulated in the 1938 ad but both are left to stand in stark contrast to one another, the silence between the discourses functions as a sign of the socially pervasive practice to ignore the undesirable. Yet both discourses are present so that advertisement is in its own way subversive of the dominant homophobic discourses even as it reproduced them.

In contrast to the Utah advertisement, most ads for *Children of Loneliness* in the 1930s generally relied more heavily on the negative discourses, particularly the medical discourses current at the time that strove to explain the existence of homosexuality as an aberration. *Homosexuality* and *heterosexuality* are terms that were coined by Karl-Maria Kertbeny in 1869 but there was for a relatively long time some confusion about what was meant by heterosexuality. By the mid-1930s there is a growing acceptance of the word but in the second edition of Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary in 1934, the word is defined as 'normal sexuality' (Katz 1995: 92-93). Heterosexuality as dominant and ideologically preferable is upheld. Jonathan Katz' history of the use of the word heterosexual sheds light on the resistance to a need for it and the evolution of its usage in relation to the understanding of homosexuality. The idea that heterosexual love is normal and other forms, such as homosexuality, are not is pervasive in the advertisements in this study whether they are from the 1930s or 1950s.

The epithet 'nature's tragic mistakes' in the Iowa ad in 1936 was a calling card for the contemporary medical discourse that both

acknowledged the existence of homosexuals and strove to argue in different ways that they were deficient. Medical professionals and institutions had the prerogative to diagnose homosexuality and what would later be called gender dysphoria. One of the more appalling reports was prepared by The Clearing House for Mental Defectives at the Post Graduate Hospital, in New York, and published in 1918. It illuminates the threat of institutionalized homophobia. The hospital reported that of the ten thousand patients referred to them and examined for the study, 1,153—more than one in ten of the patients—were diagnosed as cases of ‘Sex instability, including homosexuality’ (SFE 1918: 76). The recommended treatment was institutionalization and sterilization. For a contemporary gay or queer person this article would have made for demoralizing reading. Significantly, from a political point of view, the majority of the patients referred to the hospital, according to the article, were from homes that were under the radar of the social services or the police.

An alternate term for homosexuality that appeared in advertisements for the film in Idaho and Utah in 1937 is ‘the third sex.’ The term can be linked back to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs’ 19th century work on homosexual men. He presented his theory on male homosexuality in a series of pamphlets. It was a complex but sex-positive theory. It is relevant here because he developed a tripartite axis system for sexual orientation, preferred sexual behaviour (active or passive) and gender characteristics. The term the third sex became part of the cultural vocabulary for homosexuals but the rest of the theory did not. However, an important question that prompted Ulrichs’ development of the axis system did: what is the relationship between biological sex and sexual orientation? This is evident by the discursive practice of arguing about whether homosexual women were women or men. The underlying assumption that lesbians and gay men experience gender confusion is expressed in the 1936 Iowa advertisement through the picture of the split head with a question mark in the space between the two halves. On the left is a blond woman with cropped hair, and on the right is a man with dark hair. Above the head is the question in bold, ‘MAN OR WOMAN?’ A counter reading of this discourse is that it is not about the uncertainty of lesbians or gay men about their own gender identity but about the uncertainty among heterosexuals about how to read the gender of lesbians and gay men.

There were different theories about what caused homosexuality. One biological explanation was that it was related to hormones and the adrenal glands. The overproduction of testosterone in women could lead to lesbianism. This discourse is also alluded to in a brief article about *Children of Loneliness* in California on Nov. 6. The anonymous writer remarked that the film deals with ‘men and women who have been termed biological misfits’ (LAT 1937b: 23). Articles appeared periodically into the late 1950s pushing those who identified as the third sex to seek hormone treatment (Steincrohn 1957: 13).

Another theory was that the explanation behind homosexual desire was psychological. The advertisement for the film in Ogden in 1937 alludes to this theory when it calls the film, ‘A STRANGE STORY OF WOMEN WITH THE SOULS OF MEN and MEN WITH THE SOULS OF WOMEN’ (OSE 1938b: 3). The phrasing ‘who have been termed’ suggests that there might be an alternative view, and as such points to a potential debate, though this is not articulated. The sexologist John Money would introduce the terminological distinction between sex and gender identity into the public debate in 1952.⁵ In the 1930s, homosexuality as a maladaptation was the core idea, whether the reasons were purported to be biological or psychological.

Significantly, the term ‘the third sex’ was still prominent in advertisements for *Children of Loneliness* in the 1950s. Both in Utah in 1953 and in California in 1957, the discursive practice that understood or presented homosexuality as gender confusion was used. There is in the phrases ‘NATURE’S TRAGIC MISTAKES!’ and ‘hidden queer mysteries’ allusions to the discourse that claimed homosexuality as something unnatural. The 1953 Utah ad reprinted the 1930s image of the split head, while calling the film ‘Hollywood’s New and Startling Motion Picture.’ In both advertisements, the contexts given for understanding homosexuality in the 1950s were thus historical even at the time.

The 1950s discourses used to contextualize and promote *Children of Loneliness* also show strong traces of new discursive contexts for films with lesbian content. Though not negative in the same way as the earlier discourses, they still sought to marginalize and de-value homosexuality

⁵ *Hermaphroditism: An Inquiry into the Nature of a Human Paradox*. Ph.D. thesis. Harvard University.

in general and lesbianism in particular. Sexual dysfunction, nightclub entertainment and sex are three key discourses triggered by the advertisements that frame *Children of Loneliness* in the 1950s. This is done by association as the film was run as part of a different double feature in each state. In Utah, the film it was paired with was *A Modern Marriage* (1950, dir. Paul Landres and Ben Parker), which is about a couple suffering from sexual dysfunction with the woman bearing the larger share of the responsibility for the couple's problems. She is helped by seeing a therapist. This plot links the older discourse of psychosexual abnormality with successful therapeutic dialogic intervention: psychoanalysis. The older discourse of pathology did not fade so much as adapt itself to a new environment. Diagnostic psychology was paired with curative treatment in a more open, explicit mass media discussion. Despite its production in the 1950s, this film can be linked to the older style of dramatized sex education film. It also repeats one of the narrative motifs found in *Children of Loneliness* where Judith laments that Paul did not speak to her about his inner crisis (Ben 1947). Talking to someone and finding help in overcoming homosexual tendencies was the understood answer. The discourse of a talking cure for homosexuality moved from its emergent status in the 1930s where drugs and surgery had a stronger public face (and legal support) towards a dominant public position in the 1950s.

In Florida in 1955, the second film was *Paris Nights* (1920, dir. Unknown) with its images of lightly clad dancing girls, suggestive of a nightclub. The ad claims that the filming occurred at the Folies Bergères and Casino de Paris. It seems likely that it was the silent 1920 film of nightclub acts in Paris with an added audio track.⁶ Paris nightclubs were associated with socially transgressive and undesirable behaviour. The linking of *Children of Loneliness* to *Paris Nights* was a marginalizing and social distancing move in relation to publicly accepted forms of behavior. It finds its mark and confirmation in the film itself in the café scene. The choice by Kahn to include clips of drunken behaviour in the gay café is itself a sign of a confirming bias that worked to endorse a homophobic discourse that associated the gay lifestyle with poor life choices and irresponsible behaviour. On the other hand, the association

⁶ A clip from the original film is available online through the Huntley Film Archives. <http://www.huntleyarchives.com>, nr. 1000840.

between social/sexual transgression and nightclubs was also part of a growing oppositional discourse supporting greater freedom and fewer social constraints linked to fun and good times.

In California in 1957, the older style advertisement for *Children of Loneliness* was run as a double feature with an advertisement for a second older film produced by Jewell Productions in 1933: *Children of the Sun* (Schaefer 1999: 351). It was distributed in cooperation with the Public Welfare Pictures Corporation (PWPC), whose name seems to reference an education service but the company was instead a production house for early exploitation films. In the advertisement for *Children of the Sun*, sexual transgression and immorality are alluded to more directly through the interaction of the language and image. The filmmakers and distributors took advantage of American preconceptions of Europe as a place where there were fewer constraints on nudity and sex. The advertisement shows the outline of a nude girl coupled with the phrase ‘AUTHENTIC and ACTUAL SCENES—The FRENCH NUDIST COLONIES THAT HAS (sic) CREATED A WORLD-WIDE SENSATION’ (TS 1957: 3). These descriptive and relatively neutral linguistic signs were meant to signal transgressive foreignness and shocking behaviour. The signs interacted in the American imagination with the public heteronormative structure of feeling that insisted on connecting nudity to sex, and in particular female nudity as a signal for desiring male sexual attention.

Concluding Discussion

As Raymond Williams stated in a 1960s BBC radio talk, ‘the great new movements begin in popular interests; that they are carried through by new kinds of arts, from outside the traditionally cultivated class’ (2013: 20). Jewell Productions had produced a new kind of film about a new, taboo topic. It was an exploitative film and participated in the discourses that were an obstacle to change for gays but it also contributed to their visibility and to the discussion about what it means to be gay. The distribution of *Children of Loneliness* is an important piece of social and cultural history as it contributes to our understanding of the adaptability of discourses and the gradualness of change.

In this study, the advertisements, reviews and other accounts related to *Children of Loneliness* are viewed through the lens of Williams’ conception of media as not only a technical form of representation but as

a capitalist production forum or medium for advertising (Williams 1981: 203). The distribution process is understood as having both a material presence in the media and a physical presence in the theatre venues. Both represent important loci of mediation and affect the interpretation of the film as a cultural object. Using Williams' work as a lens to understand production and distribution as processes of mediation illuminates the value of thinking in terms of structures of feeling and a chrono-typology for ideas.

As stated earlier, in a study of the material conditions of production of a cultural object, what seems like minutiae, theatre ownership and time slots matter to an understanding of power relationships in society. In looking at traces of discriminatory practices and marginalization, details can tell a story. What is interesting about the results from this study of remnants related to *Children of Loneliness* is that the film travels in the opposite direction from what one would assume in terms of where it was shown. Despite problems in finding distribution in the 1930s, when it was screened, it was shown in regular theatres as a matinee or early evening film. By the late 1950s, it was being shown in urban grindhouse venues with all-day viewing. The context for marketing the film was sex hygiene in the 1930s (and the 1940s) but by the 1950s, two highlighted contexts are nightclubs and sex. The residual idea from the 1930s of homosexuals as tormented by gender confusion was present in the 1950s but compromised by the inaccuracies of the advertisements that report the film as new when it was already twenty years old. Friedman's advice to update the advertisements so that the film did not 'look as if it had been made in the forties, which they were'—or in this case the thirties—was not heeded (1990: 35).

What is significant about the time slots is that the shift from regular theatres to urban grindhouse venues coincides with when the film has all day and late-night viewings. The temporal movement of the shift is, however, the reverse of what has been postulated. O'Dell claims that the most common time slot was at midnight, but the advertisements found in the archives do not support this as a general rule. In the 1930s and 1940s, the film was shown for the most part during the day and in the primetime slot between 7-9 p.m. The movement towards later in the day occurs in the 1950s when the film becomes available for all day viewing, from about noon until the close of business. This can be seen in the Tampa

movie listings (TT 1955: 9), the San Francisco advertisements (SFE 1956: 36) and Miami advertisements (MN 1961: 9).

The identification of the venues in the 1930s as large theatres, their central locations and the professional reputations enjoyed by their owners were also unanticipated results that point to professional connections and negotiations between exploitation producers and theatre owners that were complex in relation to the Hays Code. Despite affiliations with the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America, theatre owners chose to show the film. Schaefer remarks that, even as the Hollywood studios sought to construct a public image that fit the demands of the Legion of Decency through official endorsement of the Code, exploitation film-makers embraced their marginalized position and used it (Schaefer 1999: 4-6). What this current study shows is that theatre owners affiliated with the MPAA also sought to take advantage of the market for exploitation films through screenings at their privately-owned venues. As Schaefer also states, sex hygiene and exploitation filmmakers had their own distribution circuit and used it, but what this study points out is that sometimes the people and theatres involved were playing both sides of the fence. At least in the case of *Children of Loneliness*.

O'Dell (2015) claims that the distribution of *Children of Loneliness* was limited, but this is a relative term. A search of the newspaper archives indicates that the film was distributed to at least seven states and the District of Columbia. Despite having only a handful of screenings each year, the distributors were persistent and their efforts resulted in hundreds of screenings across the United States even if it was over a period of twenty-five years. The production and distribution of the film contributed to the increased visibility of gays even as it exploited both the existence of gay desires and people and the growing interest in homosexuality among heterosexuals. The results of this study show that there were changes in the structure of feelings that determine discursive changes related to lesbians and gays between the 1930s and the 1950s. It reproduced and contributed to the biological and psychological discursive practices of homosexuality, but also helped to shift the anti-homosexual discourses towards licentiousness and pornography in the 1950s.

In 1938 in Ogden, *Children of Loneliness* shared billing with the B-film *Here's Flash Casey* (dir. Lynn Shores, Grand National) as the

second feature. The plot is an action romance that centres on a photographer and the desire by various people to suppress his pictures for various reasons. Compared to the films that were screened with *Children of Loneliness* in the 1950s, the film chosen in the 1930s provided a social stabilizing force. The negative effect provoked by homosexuality was so strong that the distributors wanted to dilute the reaction as much as possible. The value of *Here's Flash Casey* lies in there being nothing about it that would have drawn negative attention. The same logic can be applied to the reputable theatre venues. By the 1950s, the films chosen were provocative and intended to contextualize *Children of Loneliness* more strongly within a sexually and socially transgressive arena. Officially, the Motion Picture Production Code would not be repealed until 1968, but after the Second World War its hold on the film industry was relatively weak. The choice of such films as *Children of the Sun* with the explicit reference in the advertisement to real images from French nudist colonies indicate that the threshold for public outrage had been raised significantly.

The effects associated with the discourses and expressed through the advertisements in the 1950s are mainly horror and an absolute pity that sees no redemption. In the 1950s, the main discourse referred to medical issues, but psychology was dominant rather than biology. The effects associated with homosexuality were contempt and social pity, but the contexts were social. Sexual transgressive exploration was presented as exciting and fun. The ads point to the emergence of discourses that were lessening the stranglehold of institutionalized justifications for marginalizing and silencing gays. There was a long way to go until the riots at the Stonewall Inn in 1969 would begin to turn the tide for gay voices in the media more definitively, but by 1960 the media was reporting that the lesbian Daughters of Bilitis was a national organization and that it was seeking 'to promote the integration of the homosexual into society'—even if it is in an article about license withdrawals for half of the '30 so-called "gay" bars for homosexuals in San Francisco' (SFE 1960: 8).

Children of Loneliness disappeared from the market after 1961 when it had its last shows in Miami. Its status is listed as missing.

Abbreviations

AC	Atlantic Constitution
DMR.	The Des Moines Register (Iowa)
DN	Daily News (New York City)
LAT	The Los Angeles Times
MC	The Morning Call (New Jersey)
MN	The Miami News
PC	The Pittsburgh Courier
PI	The Philadelphia Inquirer
PN	The Paris News (Texas)
OSE	Ogden Standard-Examiner (Utah)
QCT	Quad-City Times (Davenport, Iowa)
SFE	San Francisco Examiner
SI	The Southern Illinoisian
TS	The Times Standard (Eureka, California)
TT	The Tampa Times

Advertisements for Children of Loneliness

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⁷ Exact URLs cannot be given because Newspapers.com is a digital archive subscription service and the links would not work.

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Appendix 1. Descriptions of the advertisements

Advertisement 1—Iowa

Source: The Des Moines Register

Dates: Oct. 4, 1936

The frame: At the top is the name of the theatre with its slogan, 'GARDEN: THE SIGN OF GOOD TIMES' in a white font against a black background. At the bottom separated from the main ad by a thick black line is the information, '**IN PERSON RADIO'S FRIENDLY ADVISER.**'

The title: The title takes up a quarter of the advertisement and shares the centre space with the image above it. The title is given with an introduction, 'HOLLYWOOD'S NEW AND STARTLING MOTION PICTURE—REVEALING CHILDREN of LONELINESS.' The introductory clause is written in a font that is about a quarter of the size of the title and in normal font where the title itself is in bold.

Image: A quarter of the advertisement is taken up by the drawing of a split head shot with a question mark between the two halves. On the left side is a blond woman with cropped hair and on the right is a man with dark hair who appears to be wearing a suit. Above the head is the question in bold, '**MAN OR WOMAN?**'

Other text: Below the top bar is the statement in italics, '*NATURE'S TRAGIC MISTAKES!*' In much smaller print the source for the film is given, '*Inspired by the Well Known Book, "WELL OF LONELINESS"*'. Above the thick line at the bottom is a storyline, '*AN UNUSUAL STORY OF UNNATURAL AND FORBIDDEN LOVE*' in normal, that is, paler font and the restriction '*ADULTS ONLY*' in bold.

Time of show: no dates or times are given in the ad

Advertisement 2—California

Source: Los Angeles Times

Dates: Nov. 8, 1937

The frame: At the top is the name of the theatre, 'Tally's CRITERION' and the address in a white font against a black background. There is no bottom bar.

The title: The title is foregrounded by being written in a white font against a black background that has a circular shape. It takes up almost half of the space in the advertisement.

Image: Below the circle taking up the width of the advertisement are two prone women in low cut evening gowns. Both have bob cuts. A blonde woman is lying on a coat or blanket with her left arm raised above her head, her hand in her hair. The dark-haired woman is sitting next to and leaning over her with her hands placed on either side of the blond woman.

Other text: Below the top bar there are two statements and the admonition, 'ADULTS ONLY.' The first statement is contextualizing, 'More Dramatic Than the Stage Play 'Children's Hour'.' The second is a reference to the origins of the film, 'A picture inspired by the much discussed book 'WELL OF LONELINESS'.'

Time of show: The information 'STARTS TUESDAY MATINEE 1 P.M.' is given in a black font in a white rectangle that is set at an angle against the top left of the black circle. The rectangle is a third the width of the advertisement.

Advertisement 3—Utah

Source: *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*

Dates: July 11-15, 1938

The frame: The theatre's name 'COLONIAL' followed by 'Now playing!' and then a caveat: 'NOTE! Although there is nothing to offend the most refined of tastes.' The title *Children of Loneliness* is given twice at the top and bottom of the frame as for ADULTS ONLY!

The title: The title of the film has central placement; a white font against solid black.

Image: a head to shoulder shot of two women, a blonde in a suit with a tie and a dark-haired woman with a conservative Victorian style dress. The blonde is behind the dark-haired woman and has her right hand on the woman's right shoulder. Both have their hair up in conservative buns.

Other text: Discussed below under social conditions.

Time of show: not given.

Advertisement 4—Utah

Source: The Salt Lake Tribune

Dates: Sept. 29, 1953

The frame: At the top is the name of the theatre, 'AIRPORT Drive-In' with the address in a white font against a black background. The opening of the box office, the screening time and the cost, 'PRICES THIS ENGAGEMENT 75 cents.' At the bottom is the restriction 'ADULTS ONLY.'

The title: The title takes up a quarter of the advertisement and shares the centre space with the image above it. The title is given with an introduction, 'Hollywood's New and Startling Motion Picture—Revealing CHILDREN of LONELINESS.' The introductory clause is written in a font that is about a quarter of the size of the title and in normal font where the title itself is in bold.

Image: A quarter of the advertisement is taken up by the drawing of a split head shot with a question mark between the two halves. The left side is a blonde woman with cropped hair and the right is a man with dark hair who appears to be wearing a suit. Above the head is the question in bold, 'MAN OR WOMAN?' Below is the phrase, 'THE THIRD SEX.' Alongside the head the word 'NOW' is written vertically.

Other text: Below the top bar is the statement, 'NATURE'S TRAGIC MISTAKES!' In much smaller print is the comparison, 'A Film as Sensational as the play, "Children's Hour."'

Time of show: 'At Dusk.'

Advertisement 5—Florida

Source: The Tampa Times

Date: Aug. 11, 1955

The frame: At the top is the name of the theatre, 'STATE' in white against a black bar. The address is given and there is information that the theatre is air conditioned and that the film will be screened that day.

The title: The title takes up half of the allotted space in the advertisement for the film and is given in white caps in a thick black bar. Above the title is the text, 'Exclusive First Run Showing' Will not be shown in any other Theatre in Tampa area.'

Image: there is no image.

Time of show: The 'Early Bird Matinee.' The time slot 11:45 - 2 p.m. will let them show a one-hour film twice.

Advertisement 6—California

Source: The Times Standard

Date: Feb. 8, 1957

The frame: At the top is the name of the theatre, 'Liberty THEATRE' in a white font against a black bar. The opening of the box office, the cost and information that the film will be showing tonight and Saturday. The restriction 'ADULTS ONLY' appears before the ad proper. The film is part of a double feature and has second billing (it comes second in the advertisement).

The title: The title is given in a relatively small font but in bold. Above the title is a phrase in citation marks: 'THE THIRD SEX.' It is in bold capitals that are twice the size of the title.

Image: Half of the advertisement is taken up by a black and white drawing of two women lounging and stretching towards each other in evening gowns. One has a dark bob cut. The other a blonde wavy bob. They appear to be sitting on a podium. At a glance they appear almost like Greek statues.

Other text: Alongside the image in small cursive print is the statement: '*Never before have these hidden queer mysteries of SEX been revealed!*' Below the top bar is the statement, '*NATURE'S TRAGIC MISTAKES!*' In much smaller print is the comparison, 'A Film as Sensational as the play, "Children's Hour."'

Time of show: the box office opens at 6:45 p.m. which implies an evening screening.