
CITY
THAT
NEVER
SLEEPS

New York and the Filmic Imagination

EDITED BY MURRAY POMERANCE

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS
New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London

To Nellie, always,
and to Ariel, who has made New York his own

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

City that never sleeps New York and the filmic imagination/edited by Murray Pomerance.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8135-4031-3 (hardcover: alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8135-4032-0 (pbk.: alk. paper)

I. New York (N.Y.)—In motion pictures. I. Pomerance, Murray, 1946—

PN1995.9.N49C58 2007

791.43'627471—dc22

2006021862

A British Cataloging-in-Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

New York skyline chapter opening ornament used by permission. Copyright Art Parts/Ron and Joe, Inc.

Images on pages 21, 63, and 121 are digital frame enlargements from *Manhattan* (Woody Allen, Jack Rollins & Charles H. Joffe/United Artists, 1979).

This collection copyright © 2007 by Rutgers, The State University

Individual chapters copyright © 2007 in the names of their authors

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher. Please contact Rutgers University Press, 100 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8099. The only exception to this prohibition is "fair use" as defined by U.S. copyright law.

Manufactured in the United States of America

“Driver! Has this a peer in Europe or the East?”

“No no!” he said. Home! Home!

—Paul Goodman, “The Lordly Hudson”

Contents

Acknowledgments — ix

Prelude: To Wake Up in the City That Never Sleeps
MURRAY POMERANCE — 3

Memory All Alone in the Moonlight: City of Experience

“I Love New York!”: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*
PETER LEHMAN AND WILLIAM LUHR — 23

A Day in New York: *On the Town* and *The Clock*
SCOTT BUKATMAN — 33

Paradise Lost and Found: A Bronx Tale
BARRY KEITH GRANT — 49

There's a Place for Us: City of Characters and Spaces

Woody Allen's New York
WILLIAM ROTHMAN — 65

From *Mean Streets* to the *Gangs of New York*: Ethnicity and
Urban Space in the Films of Martin Scorsese
PAULA J. MASSOOD — 77

Can't Take My Eyes Off of You. Andy Warhol Records/Is
New York
DAVID A. GERSTNER — 91

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place: Hitchcock's New York
MURRAY POMERANCE — 103

Whispering Escapades Out on the D Train: City of Moves and Traps

“When We See the Ocean, We Figure We're Home”: From
Ritual to Romance in *The Warriors*
DAVID DESSER — 123

- He Cuts Heads: Spike Lee and the New York Experience
DAVID STERRITT — 137
- New York Class-Passing Onscreen in the 1930s
GWENDOLYN AUDREY FOSTER — 151
- Midtown Jewish Masculinity in *Body and Soul*
AARON BAKER — 167

Stayin' Alive: City of Danger and Adjustment

- City of Nightmares: The New York of Sidney Lumet
PAMELA GRACE — 183
- Urban Irrational: *Rosemary's Baby*, Polanski, New York
JOE McELHANEY — 201
- The City That Never Shuts Up: Aural Intrusion in New York
Apartment Films
ELISABETH WEIS AND RANDY THOM — 215
- Wretched Refuse: Watching New York Ethnic Slum Films in
the Aftermath of 9/11
STEVEN ALAN CARR — 229
- Night World: New York as a Noir Universe
WHEELER WINSTON DIXON — 243
- Works Cited and Consulted — 259
Notes on Contributors — 267
Index — 271

Acknowledgments

Nellie Perret and Ariel Pomerance inspired and supported this project of mine, as they have so many others, with patience, love, and—most importantly of all—quick wit. My knowledge of, and feeling for, New York City began in December of 1958 and over almost fifty years has been cultivated and tended by the best of urban gardeners, including:

Leslie Barker (Southampton); the late Wayne Barker and Susan Burgwyn Barker (Amagansett); Elliot Bien (Scarsdale and Novato); the late Heywood Hale Broun (Woodstock); the late Craig Claiborne (East Hampton); Larry Fine (Brooklyn); Krin Gabbard (New York); Peter Geffen (Forest Hills); Peter Glassgold (New York); the late Robert Gooblar (Hamilton and Toronto); Sally Goodman and the late Paul Goodman (New York and North Stratford, N.H.); the late Hoffman and Juliet Hays (East Hampton); Dave Heath (Toronto); the late Paul Levy (Hamilton and Toronto); the late Teresa Liss (Amagansett); Judith Lowry (New York); William Luhr (Floral Park); Ron and Howard Mandelbaum (New York); Mark Crispin Miller (New York); Stephen Miller (New York and Cape May); Mordecai Newman (New York); Jonathan Panitz (Paterson); the late Claironel Foster Perret, George Albert Perret, and Gabriel Aimé Perret (Amagansett and New York); Helen Selden Rattray and the late Everett T. Rattray (Amagansett); Peter and Mercedes Ribicoff (New York); Ken Robbins (New York and Springs); Ron and Joe (Santa Ana); William Rothman (Miami); Tom Rush (New York); Murray Rutner (New York); Steven Schneider (New York and Los Angeles); the late John and Margit Slade (East Hampton and New York); J. David Slocum (New York); Theodore Solotaroff (New York); Claire Smith (Brooklyn); David Sterritt (Baltimore); Jane White and the late Alfredo Viazzi (New York); Anita Herzog Weiner and the late Eugene Weiner (Hamilton, New York, Haifa); Burton Weiss (New York).

To make a book requires loving collaborators, such as my talented and committed friends at Rutgers University Press: Arlene Bacher, Christina Brianik, Marilyn Campbell, Gary Fitzgerald, Trudi Gershenov, Alison Hack, Anne Hegeman, Kenya Henderson, Adi Hovav, Donna Liese, Leslie Mitchner, Alicia Nadkarni, Eric Schramm, J'Aime Wells, and Winnie Westcott. Further, a measureless gratitude is owed my skilled and ingenious assistants Nathan Holmes, David Kerr, and Nay Laywine for the myriad searches, inspections, verifications, and appraisals I have needed from them. I have received generous support from



The tenement as "breeding ground" seen with a naturalist flourish: an immigrant adjusting undergarments while talking to a neighbor in a window above, in *Street Scene* (King Vidor, FeaturePro Inc./Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1931). Digital frame enlargement.



Wretched Refuse

WATCHING NEW YORK ETHNIC SLUM
FILMS IN THE AFTERMATH OF 9/11

STEVEN ALAN CARR

Within American popular culture, the image of the city traditionally has expressed the displaced fears and desires of a society undergoing rapid economic and demographic transformations. The image of the city is as central to muckraking journalism, social realism in literature and art, much of early American photojournalism, and such film genres as the screwball comedy, the crime film, the social problem film, and film noir as it is to the larger themes—alienation, the failure of the American Dream, protest—evoked by these forms. New York City is arguably the archetypal metropolis, but for the emotions inspired by the urban image, the archetype is really no more than a series of fragmented images that could stand in for any city: the filthy and crowded tenement room, the corner bar at 3 A.M., the deserted back alley, or the bustling, haphazard open-air market. Such images aggregate to express the deep-seated yearnings and misgivings of a culture in the throes of radical shifts taking place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: from rural to urban; from a decentered agrarian economy to a relatively centralized system of urban consumers, commodities, and consumers as commodities; from a cohesive, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant national identity to a melting pot of immigrant ethnic diversity. The ethnic slum, in particular, has served as useful shorthand for expressing concerns over the unbridled shifts taking place over the past 150 years. A metonym for both the city itself and the social problems that plague it, the cinematic slum eventually lost its power to galvanize audiences once those audiences moved in droves to the suburbs.

While as a real city—however one might define its urbanity—New York might not be particularly distinctive, as the basis and inspiration for the *cinematic city* it is of the greatest importance. New York is the site of transference for the fears and desires of a culture in the throes of massive social shifts. As the site of transference, New York inspires ambivalence in much the same manner that, as Freud observes, some patients come to emotionally identify with a psychoanalyst in ways that they identified earlier with a parental authority figure. As an American ideal, New York is the setting for Horatio Alger dime novels, whose rags-to-riches

accounts, brandished to recent immigrants, offered a seductive formula for success. With the right proportions of luck, stamina, stalwartness, virtuousness, and resourcefulness, anyone in America, no matter how poor, could pull himself or herself up by the bootstraps. Immigrants and ghettos are key to understanding the importance of New York as a city, or more precisely, the importance of ambivalent and even divergent national attitudes that transfer national fears and desires onto New York.

The same city that provides the setting for Alger-like successes also hosted the filth and degradation of tenements and ghettos where immigrants lived. The influential twin to Alger's *Ragged Dick* series of dime novels, Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) reveals the importance of New York as the object of a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant gaze transfixed in horror upon what it perceives as the invading immigrant hordes. Riis's text and photographs beautifully fuse two attitudes—horror at the living conditions created by the rise of the city and horror at the immigrants who live there. So beautiful is this fusion that it at once makes natural and normal the seemingly implacable WASP gaze, a gaze that apparently has no need to distinguish the human beings it objectifies from the surroundings it deplors. Take, for example, the chapter devoted to what Riis, a police reporter for the *New York Sun*, calls "Jewtown." Riis's sympathy for the Jew and his money plays like pity typically reserved for a monster in a horror film:

Thrift is the watchword of Jewtown, as of its people the world over. It is at once its strength and its fatal weakness, its cardinal virtue and its foul disgrace. Become an overmastering passion with these people who come here in droves from Eastern Europe to escape persecution, from which freedom could be bought only with gold, it has enslaved them in bondage worse than that from which they fled. Money is their God. Life itself is of little value compared with even the leanest bank account. (*Other Half*, 86)

Quoting from the report of the Eastern Dispensary, a charitable organization providing free medical care to the poor, Riis observes that the document "told the whole story," as it observes that the diseases suffered by those in Jewtown "are not due to intemperance or immorality, but to ignorance, want of suitable food, and the foul air in which they live and work" (88).

Although little discussion has acknowledged it, a historical arc joins these early images of the Lower East Side—or Jewtown, as Riis prefers to call it—to the surge in nationalistic victim culture that rose in the aftermath of 9/11. Just as the post-World War II demographic shifts and social mobility moved families out of the city and neutralized widespread concern over the ghetto and slum as breeding ground, the response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 neutralized concern over the implosion of the urban downtown by collapsing the distinction between

urban and suburban spaces. The collapse of the Twin Towers quickly became a convenient shorthand for an imagined collapse in so-called spirituality, traditional values, hyper-nationalist patriotism, and perhaps even the simplistic egoism and quaint arrogance of what these monuments had come to represent: arguably, a naive faith in technology, capitalism, and unilateral globalism. Hardly exclusive to its physical locale in New York, the sight of the towers collapsing became a site of shared national mourning and identity formation around victimhood, which consequently served as the pretext for ongoing military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq and a wholesale dismantling of civil liberties and constitutional safeguards for foreign nationals as well as for U.S. citizens.

In placing Hollywood's image of the urban ethnic slum in relation—and perhaps in opposition—to the more familiar images of 9/11, this essay tries to accomplish two basic goals. First and foremost, it separates "a city that never sleeps" from the image of a city that is never far from our dreams. Walter Lippmann famously calls this dreaming "the pictures in our heads" (*Public Opinion*), and we still haven't awakened fully to its possibilities. The separation affords a clearer view of the pictures emerging from a broader historical continuum expressing the fears and desires of those living within and beyond the geographic borders of New York City proper. While the link between the images of 9/11 and the subsequent belligerent jingoism it inspired arguably requires little imagination, the connection between the images of 9/11 and the depiction of the slum in two screen adaptations of popular dramatic plays—*Street Scene* (1931) and *Dead End* (1937)—seems a bit more tenuous. Imagine that the representation of the city in these films has the same power to "reach out of the past to cripple, incapacitate, or strike down the living" that Richard Slotkin observed in American literature when studying this country's adherence to the "myth of the frontier." Just as the myth of America as a "wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self-reliant individual to thrust himself to the top . . . blinded us to the consequences of industrial and urban revolutions" (Slotkin 5), the twin to the structuring metaphor of the frontier, the myth of the city as a cramped, stifling, breeding ground for antisocial and even pathological behavior, has blinded us to the additional consequences of suburban revolutions, the rise of transnationalism, and the forces of globalization.

Street Scene and *Dead End*, part of the Hollywood social problem genre popular throughout the 1930s and 1940s, helped strengthen this familiar image of the city for an even wider audience. Both films depict the harsh, crowded, and animalistic conditions of New York tenement buildings, and both offer a solution to the problem of crowding and filth: escape from the city. A series of vignettes portraying the uneasy co-existence between New York's various immigrant groups, the minimal plot of *Street Scene*, directed by King Vidor and adapted by Elmer Rice from his Pulitzer Prize-winning play, revolves around a romance between

the Irish Rose Murrant (Sylvia Sidney) and the Jewish Sam Kaplan (William Collier Jr.); the marital infidelity of Rose's mother Anna (Estelle Taylor); and the threatening, violent, and eventually murderous rage that ultimately drives Rose's father, Frank (David Landau), to murder his wife.

Thematically and stylistically similar to *Street Scene*, *Dead End* is a more intricately plotted drama that draws upon familiar motifs of the gangster genre, yet self-consciously engages social issues such as the gap between the poor and wealthy classes. Directed by William Wyler, *Dead End* has been justly celebrated for its elaborate recreation of the Lower East Side on a studio sound stage. Adapting the stage play by Sidney Kingsley, Lillian Hellman, a playwright herself, had to work within the recently imposed restrictions of the Production Code Administration. When gangster Hugh "Baby Face" Martin (Humphrey Bogart) returns to his old neighborhood and the breeding ground for his behavior, it sets into motion a plan to kidnap the nephew of a prominent judge whose elegant apartment towers over the squalor of the slum. Meanwhile, Martin's boyhood friend Dave Connell (Joel McCrea) is torn between two romantic relationships: one with a wealthy kept woman (Wendy Barrie), the other with Drina (Sylvia Sidney), an idealistic garment worker involved in union organizing. Also in keeping with the Production Code, the film elides—though it strongly suggests—that Baby Face Martin's one-time girlfriend (Claire Trevor) is now a prostitute suffering from the beginning stages of syphilis. The film is also notable in introducing the *Dead End Kids* (Huntz Hall, Billy Halop, Leo Gorcey, Bobby Jordan, Gabriel Dell, and Bernard Punsly), an ensemble of young actors who later starred in subsequent films and even their own series. While these later films domesticated the Kids' anti-social tendencies, *Dead End* brilliantly links the menacing and psychologically unstable Baby Face Martin to the uproarious pranks of the *Dead End Kids*. The film argues that what begins with boys forced to use the street as their playground ends in the criminal and menacing behavior of gangsters like Baby Face.

Just Saying "Shit": Naturalism and Social Thought

The city, of course, had a physical dimension of being cramped, stifling, and breeding various behaviors. The power of myth, however, rests not in its ability to fabricate but in its ability to shape and reinforce perceptions so that they may conform to, or resist, varying and competing ideologies. Here, one can read specific films like *Street Scene* and *Dead End* as symptomatic of a larger ideological arc within American culture. The ideological symptoms that these films represent provide an index of American attitudes and perceptions of the city—and, by extension, of the blandishment of a suburban existence. Ultimately, though, the films represent more than just the ideological underpinning for massive shifts from urban to suburban population centers. They comprise a larger system of myth-making that shapes consciousness, perception, and blindness to consequences.

The myth of the city is formed from a flexible and sophisticated process in which ideas emerge, morph, submerge, and re-emerge. The city-myth is its own form of ideological assimilation, absorbing oppositional social protest and domesticating it for assimilated middle-class audiences; razing whole ethnic neighborhoods to make way for the forces of global capital; and, eventually with 9/11, taking down global capital in what Jean Baudrillard calls "a triumphant globalization at war with itself" (14).

As part of the larger, ongoing arc from urbanization to globalization, the city-myth extends back, at least in its modern formulation, to the rise of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literary naturalism. Naturalism depicts human behavior as animalistic; the link intends to startle apathy and attack poverty and social injustice, making the assumption that human beings are driven to animal behavior by their living conditions. It was a way of confronting middle- and upper-class audiences by dispensing with stylistic sugar coating and rubbing the noses of these audiences in the filth and degradation of poverty and the brutal living conditions of the lower classes. In its broadest terms, naturalism emerged, at least in its American context, as an artistic response to sweeping social changes taking place at the end of the nineteenth century, in particular the rise of the city (Giles). Ratner observes that naturalism depicts individuals as "trapped in their biology or in the toils of economic and social determinism" (169). But naturalism, once and still easily dismissed as an outdated—and ill-advised—crude blend of racism, Social Darwinism, Social Realism, and psychology, has more recently undergone a reappraisal. One can view the determinism inherent in the naturalistic worldview not so much as rationalizing the status quo of harsh conditions and making them seem normal, but as a pointed and challenging response to the false hope, alienation, and vapid consumerism offered by modernity's indiscriminate celebration of individualism, freedom, and social mobility.

In France, for example, where naturalism had a much more delineated cultural history than in the United States, naturalist author Emile Zola implored a younger generation of more genteel Symbolist writers to just "say shit to the century" and all of its so-called progress (Kleeblatt). "Just say shit" offered up frankness as a weapon against decorous disregard for the truth of human suffering and social injustice. To "just say shit" epitomized what naturalism represented as an artistic style: an attempt to deflate the willful blindness of progress and prosperity with a pointed and magnified attention to the details of what human suffering was like when trapped within circumstances beyond one's control. Shit could signify a chain of other signifiers: human excrement; vile, animal-like living conditions; a basic function of all human bodies; a reminder of what makes humans animals. In addition to its frankness, shit could also signify waste and excess. Described in profuse detail, it could rub one's nose in the less pleasant and comfortable aspects of human existence. But most of all, at least in the context of Zola's message, saying shit meant a politicized provocation to authority,

apathy, and the convenient societal self-deceptions camouflaged as decorum. *Street Scene* and *Dead End*, critically acclaimed Samuel Goldwyn film adaptations of two stage plays (the first written and directed on Broadway by Elmer Rice, with Beulah Bondi; the second written and directed by Sidney Kingsley, with a cast including Sidney Lumet), draw upon this sensibility to heighten our awareness of tenement life in New York, and demand our close scrutiny of immigrant living conditions.

As in any civil society, one must negotiate the complexities of both shit and shifts amid the swirling flows of imagery and discourse. As modern American society underwent profound shifts throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the ethnic immigrant often served as an acute focal point of representation. The representation of the ethnic immigrant provides a safe surrogate to express concern over modernity, displacing such concerns away from the diffuse but deeply felt structures of lived experience and onto the visible, squalid bodies of marginalized ethnic Others. The image of the ethnic immigrant represents not just the Other but the position from which one sees this Other. This position operates in constant flux, subject to ongoing ideological negotiation. Thus, while naturalism could inflect *Street Scene* and *Dead End*, their naturalist inflections could serve different ends from Zola's initial project. If Zola intended to say shit to progress and modernity, both Goldwyn-produced films were saying shit to the ghetto for its incompatibility with progress, modernity, and being American. While naturalism used graphic imagery to rail against social conditions brought about by progress, opposition to naturalism re-contextualized this imagery. Renegotiating the meaning of filth and excess, subsequent appropriations of the naturalist style subtly altered the visceral signifiers of poverty from indicting to affirming the status quo of social relations. Now, people came to be disparaged for failing to conform to that newly esteemed status quo.

Emphasis upon spectacle allowed naturalism to resonate with a discourse on photography. Both naturalism and popular photography posited a scientific, objective stance from which to conduct observation. In establishing the position of an unseen, dispassionate, and detached observer, both objectivities arguably shared the same ideological blind spot. Any framing—literary or visual, and no matter how avowedly objective—exerts its own highly selective subjectivity. The scientific veneer of this objectivity in naturalism played out as a confrontation between the observer and the selected, sordid, and magnified details of the observed. Confounding aesthetic expectations of the time, naturalism substituted science for melodrama, creating an emotional catharsis through the shock value of spectacle. Popular photography—the countless postcards, stereoscopes, and even early film—achieves a similar end, paralleling the emergence of modern incarceration and the Panopticon, an architectural design articulated by Jeremy Bentham. The layout of this modern prison affords an ideal position from which a supervisor

may survey deviant bodies. The Panopticon arranges these bodies into individual cells, illuminated with backlight and encircling a central guard tower. While photography does not of necessity imprison in a literal sense, it does parallel the function of arranging “spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and recognize immediately” yet at the same time see subjects who do not see back. Under this arrangement, the Other is “the object of information, never a subject of communication” (Foucault 200).

Naturalism and Immigration Discourse

Both naturalism and photography remained uniquely suited to the discourse on immigration to the United States, and the fascination of this discourse with the immigrant body as foreign Other. Needless to say, New York is a central punctum in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century immigration movements, and films about immigrant life in New York, such as *Street Scene* and *Dead End*, intensively illuminate the naturalist depiction of the urban ethnic immigrant. Coinciding with the emergence of scientific racism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anti-immigration arguments expressed concern over what an incoming flood of foreigners would do to the essential character of the nation. Yet annual figures for immigration between 1881 and 1910—the greatest in this country's history—never accounted for more than one to two percent of the entire U.S. population. In fact, after a devastating economic depression in 1897, immigration had dropped from 790,000 in 1882 to below 230,000 in 1898. Of course, annual immigration continued to rise in successive years, reaching 1.3 million by 1907. Even this figure, however, never amounted to more than a few percent of the total population (Joseph 174). Nevertheless, many believed an immigrant flood was washing over the land, bringing with it a torrent of socially undesirable consequences.

With the rise of race science in the nineteenth century, many viewed immigrants as racially inferior to people of Anglo-Saxon heritage. Others—including President Woodrow Wilson—feared that the so-called hyphenated American would bring Old World animosities to a New World melting pot. Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* furthered concern over immigrants and the ghettos in which they resided. Riis argued that the living conditions of the tenements bred disease—in terms of both individual health and social vice. The book's photographs sought to depict the tenement dwellers in a matter-of-fact, objective, and perhaps even scientific style. Riis's book led to widespread social reforms in housing and education. It also established a seemingly detached way of discussing and looking at immigrants that nevertheless betrayed fascination, disgust, and empathy for these lower-class subjects.

The powerful convergence of immigration, photography, and the flexibility of naturalism created a compelling stance from which to view the city and convey a

uniquely American city-myth. Unflinchingly realistic and exhaustively researched, stage productions of *Street Scene* (1929) and *Dead End* (1935) borrowed extensively from naturalism to expose the negative effects of the ghetto environment. In Elmer Rice's autobiography, one sees the underpinnings of a naturalist sensibility and its concern for how environment determines behavior when he explains the conception for *Street Scene*:

The house was much more than a background; it was an integral part of the play. It might almost be said that it was the play. I had been strongly influenced by the work of the seventeenth-century French painter Claude Lorraine, in most of whose pictures there was a dominant architectural unit, usually ornate and romanticized; in the foreground were groups of figures, seen always in relation to the pervasive structure. Though it was a far cry from the idyllic classical painting of Claude to a realistic play about modern New York, I was excited by the concept of a large number of diverse individuals whose behavior and relationships were largely conditioned by their accidental common occupancy of a looming architectural pile. (Rice 237)

Furthermore, the intensity of detailed observation plays a central function in both works. Early scenes in both *Street Scene* and *Dead End* show an elderly woman taking food away from a baby. In a dramatic moment from *Dead End*, one of the characters goes to visit her lover, a starving artist. She runs out of the apartment building, however, after recoiling at the sight of a cockroach. Frequent allusions to animal and insect imagery in depicting tenement life provided more than just a backdrop to suggest various taboos. This imagery reinforces the message that the ghetto is a breeding ground for anti-social behavior. In *Street Scene*, an adulterous affair triggers violent domestic abuse. In *Dead End*, a gangster returns to the neighborhood where his juvenile delinquency began and his early life of crime was bred. A band of juvenile delinquents in the latter play parallels the gangster's own boyhood. Indeed, an added subtitle to the 1940s re-release of the film emphasized *Dead End* as "The Cradle of Crime."

This detailed observation of tenement life and its stark contrast to urban prosperity insisted on the power of social conditioning to influence the individual. Shortly following the triumphant debut of *Dead End*, Sidney Kingsley wrote a piece for the *New York Times* in which he defended the new approach of a "theatre unshackled by formula" by implicitly invoking the setting for his new play:

Here is the river, a brown river mucky with refuse and offal and variegated filth, swirling scum an inch thick. Little boys, a strange race of hairy apes, splash about in this filth. To the left, arching the river, is Queensboro Bridge, spired, delicate, weblike in its stone and concrete, which it plants like giant uncouth feet on the earth. In its hop, skip, jump over the river it has planted one such foot on that island called, ironically, Welfare. Down this chute it

drops broken men and women, destined to the hospital, the insane asylum and the prison. (2)

Both *Street Scene* and *Dead End* received critical and popular accolades. Rice won the 1929 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and Kingsley's play enjoyed almost seven hundred performances. The popularity of both plays appears to capitalize upon different images of the immigrant. *Street Scene* makes much of how various ethnic groups remain crowded together, mistrustful and barely tolerant of one another. Part ethnic comedy, part assimilation tragedy, and part inter-ethnic romance, *Street Scene* emphasizes the value of assimilation. The first half of the play treats ethnic differences comically, with Jews, Italians, Germans, Norwegians, and Irish broadly displaying their respective cultural traits. A romance between Rose Marrant and Sam Kaplan alludes to another phenomenally popular play of the day, *Abie's Irish Rose*. The cross-ethnic romance articulates the assimilationist ideal, in which the next generation will cast off the Old World ways of the parents to better integrate with society. By comparison, *Dead End* elides ethnicity even though Kingsley sets the drama on New York's Lower East Side. Without overt ethnic attribution, the play much more self-consciously addresses the ghetto as both breeding ground and social problem. However, Kingsley's play does allude to some vestiges of ethnicity. For example, the sympathetic character of Drina is both a garment worker and a labor activist, two occupations closely associated with Jews throughout the thirties.

The arc from overt depiction of ethnicity to the self-conscious social problem film parallels a shifting discourse on immigration. In 1924, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, which established a quota system that limited immigration to no more than two percent of any one nationality residing in the United States in 1890. Once Congress effectively terminated immigration to the United States, the discourse began to shift from one that fretted over ethnic difference to one that asserted a cohesive national identity. A naturalist style could remain consistent with both overt depictions of ethnicity and a more streamlined depiction of the ghetto as social problem. In both *Street Scene* and *Dead End*, the ghetto determines human behavior. The way in which the ghetto determines behavior differs in the two films: harboring Old World hatreds in *Street Scene*, and in *Dead End* standing in marked contrast to the encroaching gentrification of high-rise apartments built along the river by the wealthy.

Naturalism and 9/11

Film adaptations of these stage productions could heighten their incipient realism, yet such potential remained bounded by a series of cultural and institutional constraints upon the motion picture industry. Produced at a time of remarkable cultural ferment within U.S. culture, both films promised radical critiques of American society. Both *Street Scene* and *Dead End*, for example, feature characters

who espouse anti-capitalist rhetoric. Such dialogue resonates with the efforts of the Popular Front, a leftist attempt of the early to mid-1930s to articulate a Marxist perspective through popular culture. At the same time, however, the statements of *Dead End*'s Drina and Abe Kaplan (Max Montor), the elderly patriarch of *Street Scene*, remain subordinate to other narrative functions. Drina emerges as a low interest of the play, while the film version of *Street Scene* emphasizes comic aspects of Abe's thick, guttural accent.

In certain other respects, *Street Scene* remains a franker attempt to depict the ghetto than *Dead End*. *Street Scene* predates the strict enforcement of the Production Code in 1934. In response to a threatened boycott by the Catholic Church, the film industry created a self-regulatory censorship arm. Among other things, the Code forbade sympathetic depictions of adultery, a key element of the narrative of *Street Scene*. In 1937, *Dead End* could escape some Code strictures through cinematic gestures: it is when she moves into a harsh shaft of light that both the spectator and Baby Face Martin discover his ex-girlfriend has become a diseased prostitute. Of the two films, at least in spirit *Dead End*'s narrative hews more closely to the Code, turning its crippled-artist hero into a struggling architect. Such alterations operated consistently with the Code precepts of presenting "correct standards of life" and not engendering "sympathy" for the violation of what the code referred to as "natural law." Similarly, it is after his own mother disowns Baby Face Martin that police officers can safely unload their rounds into the gangster.

Visually, naturalist tendencies link both films in powerful ways. Both films share many of the production personnel responsible for their respective looks, unsurprisingly since independent producer Samuel Goldwyn made both films. Sylvia Sidney stars in both films, although in *Street Scene* she plays Irish love interest Rose Maurrant while in *Dead End* she plays a character whose ethnicity must be read in terms of her politics and her occupation. Richard Day designed elaborate sets for both films, which earned a great deal of applause for their realism. Gregg Toland, the cinematographer for *Dead End*, studied extensively under *Street Scene*'s cinematographer, George Barnes. As adaptations of stage plays, both films construct a kind of naturalist panopticon to look at the ghetto and tenements. Each film begins with a similar establishing shot of Manhattan. In both films, there follows a montage of successive dissolves, in which the camera tracks downward, locating the street of key narrative focus. This macroscopic to microscopic trope remains consistent with the scientific veneer of naturalism. The trope suggests the possibility of surveillance, in which the one who sees can obtain an ideal position without being seen.

The cinematography—particularly the camera angles—extends this trope. Both films include one extreme, low-angle shot of a tenement building. In *Dead End*, motivation for this point-of-view shot remains unclear. In *Street Scene*, however, a nearly identical angle and framing occurs, but includes the body of an

immigrant with her back to the camera. In a naturalist flourish, the shot depicts the immigrant obviously adjusting sweaty undergarments as she talks to her neighbor in a window above. The neighbor in the window clearly does not see this take place; only the audience does. From its ideal vantage point, the audience can survey this animal-like behavior of the immigrant body. In keeping with the Production Code strictures of good taste, the low-angle shot in *Dead End* effectively erases the body and movement of the immigrant from its view. Yet it leaves the construction of the viewing position in place. A way of looking thus triumphs over what one sees. Just as one could use the characteristics of naturalism to espouse an anti-naturalist position, one could also deploy naturalist flourishes in such a way that did not challenge power, but rather reinforced its ideology.

Neither *Street Scene* nor *Dead End* functions in a particularly unique manner in condemning the ghetto. In *What Makes Sammy Run?* (1941), author Budd Schulberg answers the eponymous question about the amorality of Sammy Glick—the novel's central character—by having the book's narrator return to "the breeding ground for the predatory germ that thrived in Sammy's blood, leaving him one of the most severe cases of the epidemic."

As I have argued in *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism*, *What Makes Sammy Run?* does not demonize Glick for the sake of demonizing Jews, as much as it demonizes the Jewish Glick to convey a critique of the American Dream. The book's narrator, Al Mannheim, is particularly hostile to Glick's immigrant background. He thinks of

Sammy Glick rocking in his cradle of hate, malnutrition, prejudice, suspicions, amorality, the anarchy of the poor; I thought of him as a mangy little puppy in a dog-eat-dog world. I was modulating my hate for Sammy Glick from the personal to the societal. I no longer even hated Rivington Street but the idea of Rivington Street, all Rivington Streets of all nationalities allowed to pile up in cities like gigantic dung heaps smelling up the world, ambitions growing out of filth and crawling away like worms.

At a time when many Jews placed nationality above ethnicity, the highest form of assimilation would be to renounce one's ethnic roots. Schulberg's vision of this renunciation, seen through Mannheim, greatly values the assimilation process. Not only does Mannheim deny ethnic identity as compatible with Americanism; Schulberg appropriates antisemitic imagery to show how ethnic identity provides the breeding ground for all that is at odds with the American Dream.

Few discourses operate in a completely stable fashion. In this context, the appropriation and sublimation of a naturalist style in the representation of immigrant bodies is noteworthy. What once meant to challenge power eventually functions as surveillance meant to disempower. What once could just "say shit" to the

century eventually came to mean a faith in progress and modernity at odds with the Old World ways of the ghetto and, by extension, one's immigrant heritage. The World Trade Center became the ultimate manifestation of this logic, as this 1960s urban renewal project condemned the neighborhood, ending decades of skirmishes between city leaders and the largely ethnic communities and markets that thrived there.

In a remarkably lucid essay following September 11, Jean Baudrillard observes that the attack on the World Trade Center represented not a war between the West and Islam, but a "triumphant globalization at war with itself." According to Baudrillard, globalization remains just as responsible for terrorism as it does for erecting the once monumental towers. "When the world has been so thoroughly monopolized," he notes, "when power has been so formidably consolidated by the technocratic machine and the dogma of capitalism, what means of turning the tables remains beside terrorism?" (14).

In the West and particularly in the United States, most discussions of globalization tend to locate its effects as a recent phenomenon. While the phenomenon of globalization has achieved great momentum in the past decade, the belief in its recent emergence is a luxury held by the centers of cultural and economic power that for centuries have colonized, slaughtered, and exploited indigenous peoples across the globe. Despite conventional wisdom, the destruction of the World Trade Center represents not an alleged Islamic hatred for the West but, as Baudrillard describes, the very process of globalization itself. The platitudes of U.S. foreign policy notwithstanding, no one explanation can ever fully render this complex set of circumstances. However, one can better understand the new globalism by taking a closer look at its assumptions, and how these assumptions are the culmination of a much older, more extensive, and multifaceted process spanning hundreds if not thousands of years.

In the past century, globalization has arguably achieved an accelerated momentum, in large part due to significant shifts in political, economic, and cultural life. The vicissitudes of the World Trade Center are part of a larger narrative involving the rise and fall of an American assimilationist fantasy set against the backdrop of the city-myth. And this assimilationist city-myth is apotheosized in the image of New York, particularly as it is treated in films like *Street Scene* and *Dead End*. Built atop the remnants of turn-of-the-century ethnic immigrant urban neighborhoods and haphazard patchworks of ethnic markets, urban revitalization projects such as the Twin Towers realized the Horatio Alger-like success of a melting-pot America by erasing the ethnic urban identities that once occupied its ground-level foundation. The erasure was hardly accidental. Obliterating the ghetto, urban revitalization dreamed of replacing Old World squalor with a sleek architectural monument to a burgeoning internationalism, modernity, technocracy, and global capital. When the towers collapsed, so too did the idea of inventing and inverting urban

space from old world ghetto to a new world global financial center. If moving out of the tenement and into the suburbs turned out to be an unrecognized American Nightmare that allowed revitalization finally to crush urban ethnic immigrant neighborhoods beneath the massive shining skyscrapers of progress and modernity, 9/11 delivered a startling awakening into the harsh light of a new global era.