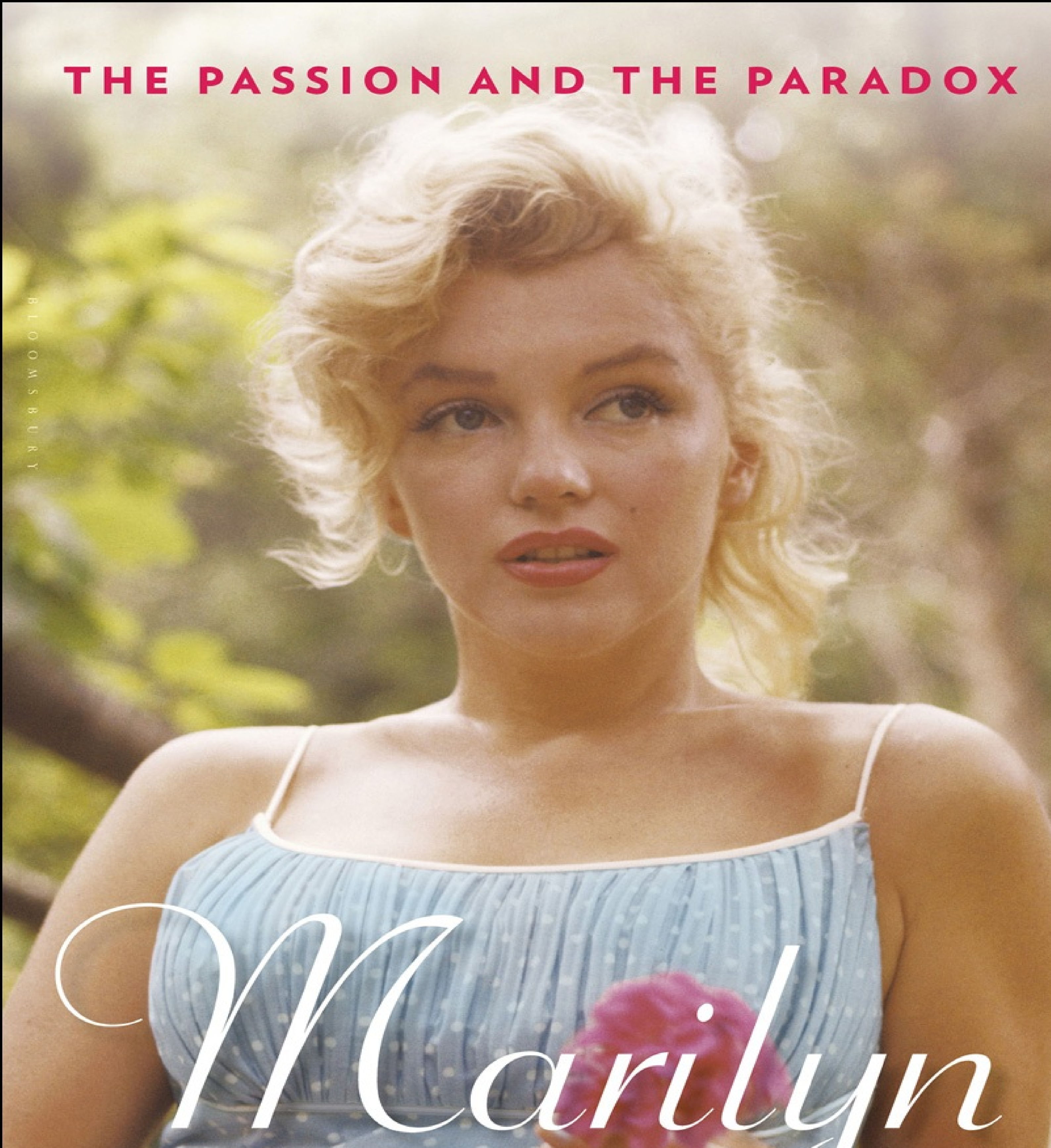

THE PASSION AND THE PARADOX

Marilyn

LOIS BANNER

BLOOMSBURY

Marilyn

The Passion and the Paradox

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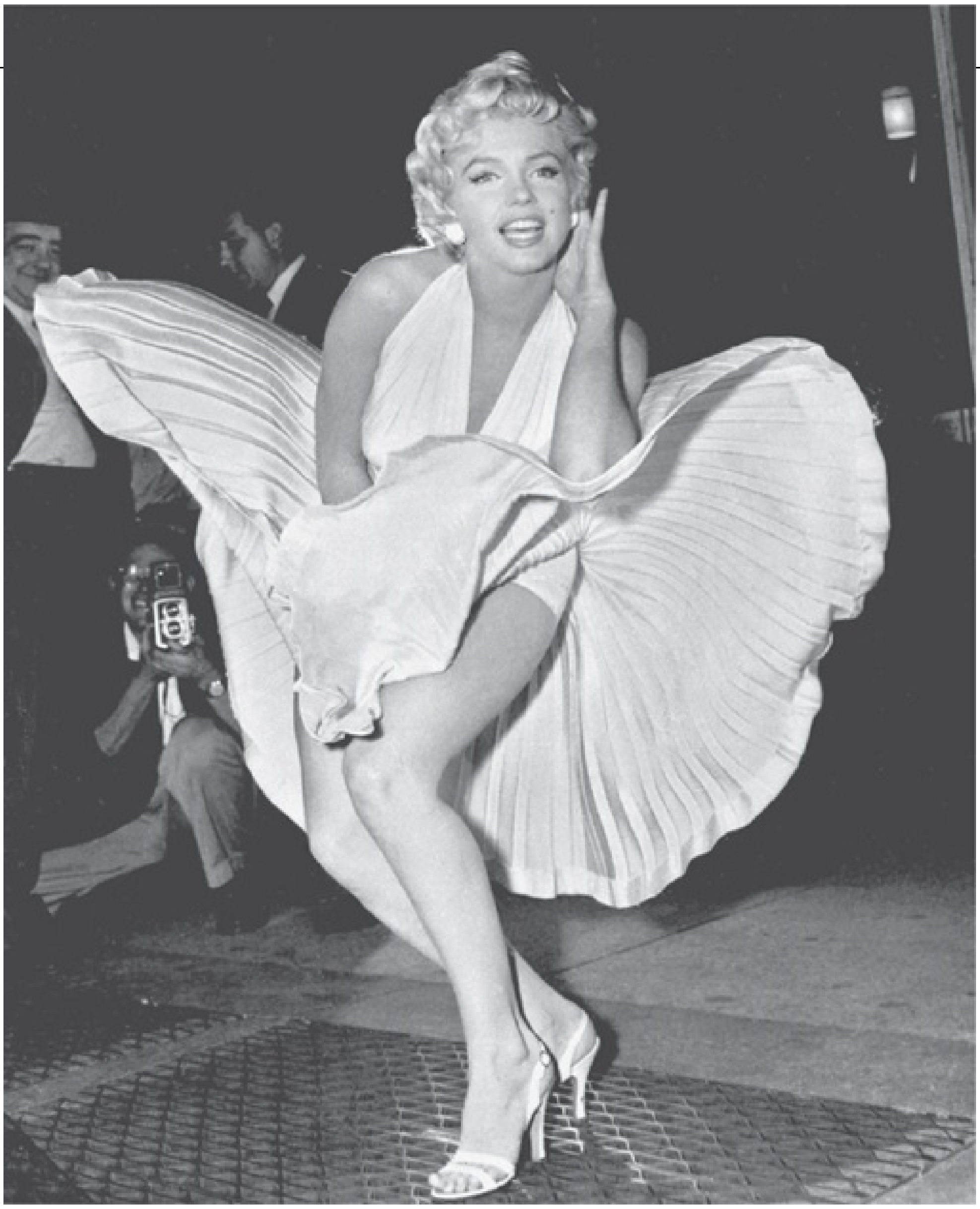
By the Same Author

To: Stacy Eubank, Mark Anderson, and
Greg Schreiner, with thanks and love.



Marilyn on subway grate; photo shoot for *The Seven Year Itch*, September 15, 1954. Photo by Sam Shaw.

Prologue

Let Us Now Praise Famous Women[1]

In one of the most famous photos of the twentieth century, Marilyn Monroe stands on a subway grat trying to hold her skirt down as a gust of wind blows it up, exposing her underpants. The photo w taken in New York on September 15, 1954, in a photo shoot during the filming of *The Seven Year Itc* which stars Marilyn as a model and dog-faced Tom Ewell as a middled-aged editor of raunchy boo who is tired of his seven-year marriage and yearns for an affair with a sexy “girl.” In the scene bei shot, they leave a movie theater after seeing *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, a 1954 film about prehistoric Gil-man on the Amazon River who kills several members of the expedition sent to captu him. It’s a hot summer night, and Marilyn stands over the grate to cool off. A subway passi underneath supposedly produces the wind, which was actually caused by a wind machine under t grate.[2]

In her white dress, white underpants, white high-heel sling-backs, and white earrings, Marilyn is vision in white, suggesting innocence and purity. Yet she exudes sexuality and transcends it; poses fo the male gaze and confronts it. Her billowing skirt resembles wings. She might be a guardian ang from the Christian tradition, an Aphrodite from the classical tradition, or a Nike proclaiming victo in poetry or war, like the Winged Victory of Samothrace in the Louvre Museum, with the wi blowing back Victory’s wings and chiton. She might be an elegant ballerina on her toes or a worki girl standing on the Coney Island fun house ramp, where air gusts blew up the skirts of the women the ramp. Sam Shaw, who took the famed photo, derived Marilyn’s pose from that setting, though t effect had long been used on the burlesque stage and in pin-up photos to titillate men.[3] Above all, *T* *Seven Year Itch* photo reveals Marilyn’s complexities: her passion and her paradoxical nature, centr themes of this book.

The photo shoot was a publicity stunt, one of the greatest in the history of film. Its time a location were published in New York newspapers; it attracted a crowd of over a hundred ma photographers and 1,500 male spectators, even though it was held in the middle of the night to avo daytime crowds. Klieg lights lit the scene; spectators climbed to the roofs of buildings to get a go view; photographers elbowed their way through the crowd to stake out the best locations. Sam Sha the stills photographer for the movie, took the famous photo, but the other photographers there sh hundreds of variations. So great was the interest in all things Marilyn that barricades were put up, a police were on hand to contain the crowd.

Billy Wilder, the film’s director, did fourteen takes—pausing between them to let t photographers shoot. Every time Marilyn’s skirt blew up, the crowd roared, especially those up fro who could see a dark blotch of pubic hair through her underpants, even though she had put on t pairs of pants to conceal it. The draconian 1934 Motion Picture Production Code, enforced by t Production Board, forbade such a display. Any blotch of public hair in photos from the shoot had to airbrushed out.

Yet the scene in the shoot is naughty, with the phallic subway train, its blast of air, and Marilyn erotic stance. Yet she is in control. She is the “woman on top,” drawing from the metaphor f women’s power that runs through Euro-American history. She poses for the male gaze, but she is unruly woman—the Mere Folle of medieval Carnivale; the white witch with supernatural powers; t burlesque star in “an upside-down world of enormous, powerful women and powerless, victimiz men.” In the photo Marilyn is so gorgeous, so glamorous, so incandescent—as her third husband, t writer Arthur Miller, described her—that she seems every inch a star, glorying in her success.[4] Sh can now defy the people who had mistreated her: her father and mother, who abandoned her; fost parents who abused her; Hollywood patriarchs who regarded her as their toy; even Joe DiMaggio, th her husband, who physically abused her. Present at the shoot, he stalked off in a fury when her ski billowed up and revealed her underpants. She had, indeed, dramatized her childhood dream of walkin naked over a church congregation, lying on their backs, eyes wide open, looking up at her. It's powerful dream of exposure—and of a Marilyn in control.

But she holds down her skirt in the photo, suggesting modesty. In her only discussion of the sho —in a 1962 interview—she stated that she wasn't thinking about sex when she posed, only abo having a good time. It was the spectators, she claimed, who sexualized her. "At first it was a innocent and fun," Marilyn said, "but when Billy Wilder kept shooting the scene over and over aga the crowd of men kept on applauding and shouting, 'More, more Marilyn—let's see more." The Billy bought the camera in close, focusing on her crotch. "What was supposed to be a fun scene turne into a sex scene." "With her wry humor, Marilyn added "I hope all those extra takes are not for you Hollywood friends to enjoy at a private party."[5]

We are not accustomed to seeing Marilyn Monroe as being on top in any but the most superficial wa We view her as irreparably damaged, too victimized to have played much of a role either in launchin her career or reinventing herself on the silver screen. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Th Marilyn that emerges in *Marilyn: The Passion and the Paradox* is a woman who made herself into star, conquering numerous disabilities in the process, creating a life more dramatic than any role sh played in films. Her disabilities were many. She suffered from dyslexia and from a stutter mo severe than anyone has realized. She was plagued throughout her life by dreams of monsters an witches, horrible dreams that contributed to her constant insomnia and that I am the first to describ She was bipolar and often disassociated from reality. She endured terrible pain during menstruatio because she had endometriosis, a hormonal condition that causes tissue like growths throughout th abdominal cavity. She broke out in rashes and hives and eventually came down with chronic coliti enduring abdominal pain and nausea.

She surmounted all this, in addition to the well-known problems of her childhood—a mother in mental institution, a father she never knew, and moving between foster homes and an orphanag Playwright Clifford Odets stated that "she always traveled with a dark companion." People who sa "the gorgeous substrata of her life could not even imagine on what subsoil her roots were feeding. Then there were the drugs she took to cope, once she entered Hollywood and had to endure i pressures: she especially took barbiturates to calm her down; amphetamines to give her energy.

Significant among my discoveries about Marilyn are her lesbian inclinations. She had affairs wi many eminent men—baseball great Joe DiMaggio, playwright Arthur Miller, director Elia Kaza actor Marlon Brando, singer Frank Sinatra, the Kennedy brothers—and she married DiMaggio an Miller. Yet she desired women, had affairs with them, and worried that she might be lesbian b nature. How could she be the world's heterosexual sex goddess and desire women? How could sh have the world's most perfect body on the outside and have such internal imperfections a endometriosis and colitis? Why was she unable to bear a child? The adult Marilyn was haunted b these questions.

Yet in her career she exhibited a rare genius. Publicists marveled at her ability to genera publicity; makeup artists saluted her skill at their craft; photographers rated her one of the greate models of their age. She studied with top acting, singing, and movement teachers to create her era greatest dumb-blonde clown. Voluptuous and soft-voiced, the Marilyn we know exemplified 195 femininity. Yet she mocked it with her wiggling walk, jiggling breasts, and puckered mouth. Sh cou~~ld tone her blonde bombshell image down, project sadness in her eyes, and, like all great c~~lown play her figure on the edge between comedy and tragedy.

There were many Marilyns, not just one. Revealing and analyzing her multiple personas is a maj contribution of mine to Marilyn scholarship. As a pin-up model early in her career she posed for h era's most famous pin-up photo—a nude that became the centerfold for the first issue of *Playboy* December 1953. By mid-career she created a new glamour look that combined the allure of the pin-u with the aloof, mature sensuality of a glamour star of the 1930s like Greta Garbo. Another Marily had a talent for drama, evident in films like *Clash by Night* (1952) and *Bus Stop* (1956) and in h poses for celebrity photographers like Milton Greene and Eve Arnold. "Marilyn Monroe," her mo famous alter ego, was one among many.

Marilyn was nothing if not complicated and in ways that has never been revealed. She was shy a insecure, lacking self-confidence. But she was tough and determined. She had an ironic a sometimes ribald wit, engaging in puns and wordplay. She could swear like a trooper. She loved t play practical jokes. I have discovered that she could be an eccentric who followed her own irration logic. She sometimes was a party girl who did "crazy, naughty, sexy things," including engaging i promiscuous sex, displaying what we now call "sex addiction."[7] In her paradoxical manner, howeve she covered untoward behavior with a mask of good intentions, justifying her promiscuity throug advocating a free-love philosophy, which connected friendship to sex. That philosophy circulated su rosa among the avant-garde throughout the twentieth century. In another guise she was a trickster wh assumed aliases, wore disguises, and lived her life as though it was a spy story, with secret friends a a secret apartment in New York. "I'm so many people," she told British journalist W. J. Weatherby, " used to think I was going crazy, until I discovered some people I admired were like that, too."[8]

A spiritual Marilyn, never before revealed, studied mystical texts. A radical Marilyn pioneered th sexual revolution that erupted in the 1960s, appreciated her roots in the working class, and honore the men who made her a star through their fan mail—"the ordinary people, the working class, tho who struggled through wars and the Depression." She opposed McCarthyite oppression and support racial equality. In a play on the term "black face," Bruno Bernhard wrote that the intellectual, radic Marilyn was hiding under "black lace."[9]

Unlike all Marilyn biographers, except Gloria Steinem, I argue that the sexual abuse she endured a child was formative in molding her adult character. We now know that such abuse can produc lesbianism, sex addiction, exhibitionism, and an angry, frightened adult. It can fragment a personalit producing, in Marilyn's case, multiple alters, of which she was aware. However dominant, "Marily Monroe" was only one persona among many that emerged from and were created by the origin Norma Jeane Baker before her name was changed to Marilyn Monroe. That happened when Norm Jeane signed a contract with Twentieth Century–Fox in August 1946 and began her ascent to stardom

The 1950s was a paradoxical era. Americans were exuberant over victory in World War Two and th booming consumer economy, while they were frightened by the Cold War with the Soviet Union a the threat of nuclear destruction, and paranoid about homosexuality and internal communism in t United States. Marilyn's comic style soothed the nation's fears, while reflecting the 1950s "populux style in design, which spoofed consumption and laughed at fears through a populist version of luxur When she put on her Betty Boop character, whom I call Lorelei Lee, she was populuxe to the hilt.

Her innocent eroticism and joy made her the ultimate playmate for men in a postwar age worri about male feminization, as warriors became husbands with the end of the war. Beyond feminizati lay homosexuality, demonized in the 1950s as a perversion that threatened everyone. In her film

Marilyn often plays against an impotent man whom she restores to potency by praising his gentlene as ~~necessary to true masculinity, as she does for Tom Ewell in *The Seven Year Itch*. In real~~ life s often chose powerful older men as partners, overlooking their domineering ways in her quest for father, falling into sado-masochistic behavior patterns again and again.

As an exemplar of her age, she relates to 1950s rock ‘n’ roll musicians and beat poets that we forerunners to 1960s rebels, as did actors like Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando, who were bo identified with new, rebellious acting styles. From that perspective, joined with her support for sexu freedom, she was a rebel pointing to the radicalism and sexual rebellion of the 1960s.

I was drawn to writing about Marilyn because no one like me—an academic scholar, femini biographer, and historian of gender—had studied her. I was also intrigued by similarities between m childhood and hers. I grew up in the 1940s in Inglewood, California, a Los Angeles satellite city on a few miles from Hawthorne, where Marilyn spent her first seven years. Her Hawthorne family w fundamentalist Christian; so was my childhood family. Blonde and blue-eyed, I had her boo dimensions and won beauty contests. Like her, I had relatives in the film industry who encouraged m to aim for stardom. But I loved learning. After graduating from UCLA, I moved to New York t achieve a Ph.D. at Columbia University. Becoming a college professor, I remained in and near Ne York for the next twenty years. I married a Princeton professor and travelled in New York intellectua circle; I spent summers in rural Connecticut, as Marilyn had.

During those years I became a founder of “second wave feminism” and the new women’s history. dismissed Marilyn as a sex object for men. By the 1990s, however, a generation of “third wav feminists” contended that sexualizing women was liberating, not demeaning, for it gave them sel knowledge and power. The students I taught were swayed by this argument. Had I dismissed Marily too easily? Was she a precursor of 1960s feminism? Was there power in her stance as a sex object? T answer these questions, I decided to explore her life.

I began by joining Marilyn Remembered, the Los Angeles Marilyn fan club. Members shared the collections with me. Branching out, I interviewed nearly one hundred Marilyn friends and associate I researched archives in the United States and Europe. I gained access to never-before-seen collectio —including Marilyn’s personal file cabinets and the papers of Ralph Roberts, Stacy Eubank, Norma Mailer, Greg Schreiner, Antonio Villani, Peter Lawford, James Spada, Lotte Goslar, and many ne collections in the Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences ar elsewhere. I collected several hundred fan magazines with articles on Marilyn, buying many on eBa I bought Marilyn items at auctions. In an act of great generosity, Anthony Summers allowed m access to his over three hundred interviews for his biography of Marilyn, published in 1985. I four rich materials in those interviews that he hadn’t used.

I salute Marilyn for a major—and unacknowledged—feminist act. Sexually abused as a child, s named that abuse as an adult. She refused to keep quiet in an age that believed such abuse rare happened and when it did, the victimized girl was responsible. Such self-disclosure would becom important to the feminist movement in the 1970s. Neither Ruth Benedict nor Margaret Mead, emine American anthropologists and public intellectuals, whose lives I chronicled in a dual biograph disclosed the episodes of sexual abuse in their childhoods. I didn’t expect to find such episodes in a of these lives, but the rates of such abuse have been high throughout our history. In an act of gre bravery, Marilyn named the abuse she endured.

As a biographer, I follow the school of “new biography.” I analyze Marilyn in her historic context and in terms of her interactions with the men and women in her life, what I call t “geography of gender.” Throughout my book I present a new Marilyn, different from any previo portrayal of her, including my own, in my brief overview of her in *MM—Personal*. I probe her interi self ~~and see her life as a process of self-formation. I have identified all eleven families she lived~~ wi in her childhood—providing new information on them. I analyze the gender themes of her films ar explore the gendered personas of Hollywood producers and photographers, pointing out th homoeroticism endemic to many of them.

I have done deep readings of unexplored texts, like Arthur Miller's autobiography, *Timeben* Ralph Greenson's psychiatric writings, and the themes in the poetry and works of literature Marily read. I figured out why she extolled Eleanora Duse. I discovered Anna Freud's findings when sh analyzed Marilyn during a week in London in 1956. According to Anna, Marilyn was bisexual. H childhood dream of naked exposure to a church congregation was a product of the sexual abuse sl endured as a child.

I follow the chronological format standard in biography as a genre, although I innovate in adding section I call "entre'acte." I pause there to delve into her psyche and her historical resonance befo proceeding on. Like many world historical figures, Marilyn stood astride her age. She reflected i mores and helped to create them. Her glittering position partly explains why she has become an ico for our age. And I am amazed by what she accomplished in her brief lifespan of thirty-six year When she died she was hardly more than a child by our contemporary lexicon of the stages of life.

When Marilyn posed for *The Seven Year Itch* photo in 1954, she was Hollywood's preeminent sta She was "a national institution as well known as hot dogs, apple pie, or baseball" and "the nation celluloid H-bomb." Her fan mail, some ten thousand letters a week, surpassed that of any other sta Reporters called her "The Monroe" and referred to the "Monroe Doctrine," defining it as eroticis shrewdness, lack of materialism—whatever might sell a story and not be too farfetched. Her sexu double-entendres, called "Monroeisms," were famous. "What do you wear to bed?" photographe asked her. Her reply: "Chanel Number Five."[10] *The Seven Year Itch* photo ratified Marilyn's fam Within days it appeared in newspapers round the globe, from New York to Hong Kong, Los Angel to Tokyo. It was called "The Shot Seen Round the World." By the mid-1950s people everywhere cou identify "Marilyn" and "MM." She had become an American icon for the world.[11]

This book is about how Marilyn was created, how she lived her life, and how that life ended.

A Note on Sources

Readers familiar with the biographical tradition on Monroe will realize that I have not used memoi by Hans Jürgen Lembourn, Ted Jordan, Lena Pepitone, Robert Slatzer, or Jeanne Carmen. "Mimosa," his unpublished memoir of Marilyn, Ralph Roberts, her masseur and best friend, expose them as frauds. So did articles in *Runnin' Wild*, an early Marilyn fan magazine.

These five individuals knew Marilyn, but they weren't close to her. Danish journalist Lembour was on a State Department fellowship that sent him nationwide and didn't give him time for th liaison he describes. Ted Jordan, actor, was burlesque star Lili St. Cyr's fifth husband. He claimed t have had a three-way affair with Marilyn and St. Cyr. But both St. Cyr and her biographer dismiss h claim. Lena Pepitone, Marilyn's cook for several years in her New York apartment, didn't spea English and Marilyn didn't speak Italian. Jeanne Carmen was a trick golfer and high-priced call gi who lived in her Doheny Drive apartment complex in 1961. After she held an all-night party, Marily wouldn't speak to her. Carmen, Jordan, and Pepitone possess no photos of Marilyn with them, an Slatzer's one photo with Marilyn looks staged. Slatzer's claim that Marilyn married him in Tijuana the spring of 1952 is unsubstantiated.[12]

Recent Marilyn biographers overlook excellent earlier Marilyn biographies, especially those b Maurice Zolotow (1960), Fred Guiles (1969), Carl Rollyson (1986), and Anthony Summers (1985 They often disregard Marilyn memoirs written by close friends such as Louella Parsons, Susa Strasberg, Norman Rosten, Milton Greene, and Sam Shaw. Realizing their worth, I have used thes biographies and memoirs.

My special thanks go to Anthony Summers, who gave me access to his many interviews f *Goddess*, his 1985 biography of Marilyn. He is a gifted interviewer, writer, and interpreter of Marily Although I don't always agree with him, I respect his work. He put many of the puzzles about Marily into perspective, enabling me to construct my narrative of her life.[13]

Part I

The Matrix, 1926–1946

Persons of genius with mysterious gifts: in many cases a wound has been inflicted early in life, whic impels the person to strive harder or makes him or her extra-sensitive. The talent, the genius, is th scab on the wound, there to protect a weak place, an opening to death. Men and women who com successfully out of misfortune, they have strength that is extraordinary.

Elia Kazan, Elia Kazan: A Life

Chapter 1

Mothers, 1926–1933

Marilyn Monroe was born Norma Jeane Mortenson in the charity ward of Los Angeles County Gener Hospital on June 1, 1926. Her mother, Gladys Monroe Baker, was a poorly paid film cutter in Hollywood editing studio. Her father never recognized her, and Gladys placed her in a foster hom when she was three months old. In 1933, when Norma Jeane was seven, her mother brought her to li with her in Hollywood. Soon after, Gladys broke down emotionally, leaving Norma Jeane with h best friend, Grace Atchison McKee. When Gladys was declared paranoid schizophrenic and admitte to a state mental hospital, Grace became Norma Jeane's guardian. During the next eight years, unt Norma Jeane married in 1942 at the age of sixteen, Grace placed her in eleven foster homes and orphanage. Why Gladys broke down and why Grace kept moving Norma Jeane are central issues examining her childhood.

Five women dominated Norma Jeane's childhood. They included Gladys and Grace, plus Del Monroe, Gladys's mother; and two of Norma Jeane's foster mothers, Ida Bolender and Ana Atchinso Lower, Grace McKee's aunt.[1] All five women were working class or lower middle class, with litt money or education. All moved to Los Angeles with their families from the Upper South and th Midwest between 1900 and 1920, during the great migration to the city. That movement turned small provincial city into a major metropolis, with suburbs and cities radiating out from a downtow core.

Della Monroe, Marilyn's grandmother, came from Missouri by way of Mexico in 1902, with h husband, Otis Monroe, and her daughter, Gladys, then two years old; they settled near downtown Lo Angeles. Grace came from Montana in the 1910s in her late teens, looking for a film career; sh settled in Hollywood. Ida, an Iowa farm girl, arrived with her husband, Wayne, in the early 1920s ar settled in Hawthorne, in the South Bay area southwest of downtown. Ana, considerably older than th other four, was born in 1880 in Washington State. She came to Los Angeles by way of Sacrament eventually settling in the Sawtelle area on Los Angeles's West Side.

Like most participants in the great migration to Los Angeles, these five hoped for better lives the Southern California paradise of beaches, mountains, exotic vegetation, and a Mediterranea climate. The Hollywood film industry was there, with its ethic of leisure and pleasure. So was a maj evangelical movement, among the largest in the nation, with imposing churches and a doctrine th promised individual rebirth through renouncing sin and uniting with Christ. The pulpit and the scre —an uneasy pair—would profoundly influence Norma Jeane.[2]

The story of Marilyn's childhood, like much of her life, contains texts and counter-texts, wi hidden episodes beneath surface narratives. Most families have secrets; alcoholism, marital discor and mental issues are possibilities. The Monroe family had all these, and more. Della and Gladys ha up-and-down moods. Both were divorced several times; in divorce petitions both accused husbands alcoholism and physical abuse. Ida, Norma Jeane's first foster mother, between 1926 and 193 disciplined her for childhood sexual experimentation, and Grace couldn't prevent her from bein sexually abused in several foster homes. Della, Grace, Gladys, Ana, and Ida clashed over religion. Id was an evangelical Christian; Della was a follower of evangelist maverick Aimee Semple McPherso Ana, who provided foster care for Norma Jeane between 1938 and 1942, was a Christian Scien healer, while Gladys and Grace were flappers who lived sexually free lives and didn't faithfully atte any church during Norma Jeane's early childhood. She got caught in the middle, a pawn for a while a rivalry among the five of them.

Marilyn's paternal ancestry is obscure because of uncertainty over the identity of her father. The be candidate is Stanley (Stan) Gifford, a supervisor at the Hollywood editing firm where Gladys worke Stan was Gladys's boyfriend and bed partner, although she had a husband from whom she wa separated, not divorced—Edward Mortensen, a meter reader for the gas company. Stan was born an raised in Providence, Rhode Island, the son of a wealthy shipbuilding family whose ancestry we back to the founders of Providence and beyond them to Pilgrims on the Mayflower. If Stan wa Marilyn's father, she came from revered American roots.[3]

Gladys Monroe, Marilyn's mother, also claimed distinguished descent. Her heritage came throug her father, Otis Monroe, who traced his roots to James Monroe of Virginia, fifth president of th United States. But Otis can't be trusted. Born in Indiana in 1866, he spent much of his adult life as itinerant painter, traveling through the Midwest and the Upper South, painting buildings to mal money and occasionally selling his landscapes and portraits. Wearing fancy clothes, he passed himse off as a gentleman and spun fantasies of moving to Paris and living on the Left Bank. His dea certificate lists his mother and father as unknown. Something of an eccentric, he was not the la unusual character in Marilyn's ancestry.[4]

On a swing through Missouri in 1898, Otis met Della Hogan. Born in 1878, she was twenty-tw still living with her mother and siblings. Her childhood had been difficult. Her father, Tilford Hoga was an itinerant farm laborer who worked long hours for low wages, following the harvests and doin odd jobs. He married Jennie Nance, a Missouri farm girl, in 1870. Living in tenant cabins and far shacks, they nonetheless had three children in eight years.

Yet Tilford's financial woes weren't unusual in post-Reconstruction Missouri. The building railroads as well as a dramatic population growth through immigration caused a rise in prosperity the state—for those able to exploit it. Most Missourians remained tenant farmers or landless labore employed part-time to harvest crops or do odd jobs. Pro-slavery and secessionist during the Civ War, Missourians remained loyal to the South for decades. Jennie Nance, Marilyn's maternal grea grandmother, was raised in Chariton County, settled by migrants from the Upper South who owne slaves. It was called "Little Dixie." As Tilford's wife, Jennie moved with him as he soug employment, often in Ozark hillbilly country, moving her children from school to school.[5] Whe Marilyn played Cherie, the hillbilly singer in *Bus Stop*, she could draw on her family's past to crea the character.

Tilford had a quirky independence and a love of learning. He taught himself to read and write that he could read the classics of Western literature. In an era when ordinary people memorize Shakespeare and distinctions between high and low culture weren't rigid, such learning wasn't th unusual.[6] He suffered from chronic arthritis but remained pleasant and well liked. But it wasn enough for Jennie. In 1890, after twenty years of a difficult marriage, Jennie and Tilford divorce violating the strictures against divorce in a region dominated by conservative Baptists. Each moved with a relative; the children went with Jennie, who showed an independent streak in divorcing Tilfor —a streak that would run through the Monroe women.

Nearly nine years after the divorce, in 1898, Otis Monroe appeared in Della's town and swept off her feet with his rakish, upper-class air, fashionable clothing, and fantasies about moving to Pari He was ten years older than she. He offered her a way out of Missouri, where she seemed stuck as old maid at the age of twenty-two. Captivated by him, disregarding the objections of her parents, overlooked the reality that he was, like her father, an itinerant laborer.[7]

The marriage was disappointing. Instead of moving to Paris, they moved to Mexico, to the town Porfirio Díaz, now Piedras Negras, on the border with Texas. Otis found a job there painting railroa cars for the Mexican National Railway. The town was dirty, with poor sanitation, and Della didn't lik it. Family lore held that, despite her discontent, she served as a midwife for impoverished Mexica women. Once her daughter, Gladys, was born in 1902, she and Otis moved to Los Angeles, where h found a job as a painter with the Pacific Electric Railway. That company operated the "red line trolleys that ran throughout the Los Angeles region, linking its far-flung, expanding communitie Otis and Della's son, Marion, was born in 1905. Shortly thereafter, Otis was promoted, and the bought a small house near downtown—or Otis built it himself.[8] They seemed to be achieving th American Dream.

Then it fell apart. Otis began to suffer from memory loss, migraines, and bouts of mania. Seizur and paralysis followed. Della thought he was going insane. He was admitted to Patton State Ment Hospital in San Bernardino, a sprawling structure that housed several thousand patients. It was one seven such hospitals in the state built in the late nineteenth century to house the insane, chron alcoholics, aging people with dementia, and individuals with syphilitic paresis, the final stage syphilis, in which the infection destroys the connective tissues in the brain. Overcrowded, wi insufficient doctors or trained staff, the hospitals provided minimal treatment.[9]

Otis was diagnosed with syphilitic paresis, probably of the endemic variety, caused by a bacter spread by mosquitoes, not through sexual intercourse. He probably picked up the bacteria in Piedr Negras, with its poor sanitation. He died in 1909. To hide two shameful diagnoses—syphilis an psychosis—Della claimed that he had died from breathing paint fumes.[10]

With two children to support, Della cleaned houses and rented rooms in her house to ma boarders, while she looked for another husband. In 1913 she married Lyle Graves, one of Otis's co workers at the trolley company. A year later she divorced him on the grounds of "habitua intemperance" (alcoholism) and failure to provide financial support. The charge may have been tru or trumped up to obtain the divorce. Adultery, physical abuse, and alcoholism—these were the onl legal grounds for divorce in this era. Spouses wanting a divorce often colluded in making up tales bad behavior, and wives brought most of the actions because of the belief that men were more likel to be abusers and alcoholics than women. Della won by default, since Graves skipped town. He ma have had a nasty streak. According to Gladys he killed her cat by throwing it against a wall. Della the married a man named Chitwood, and she and her children moved with him to a farm in Orego Gladys liked Chitwood and the farm. She had happy memories of picking blueberries in Oregon as child. But Della soon divorced her third husband. The charge was alcoholism, which again may hav been true or trumped up, as was the custom, to provide a legal grounds for divorce.[11]

Della, not yet forty, was adventurous. Moving back to Los Angeles, she settled in Venice, a tow on the Pacific Ocean twelve miles west of downtown. A fantasy place dreamed up by developer Abbo Kinney, Venice combined the look of Coney Island in New York with Venice in Italy. Neo Renaissance buildings bordered canals where gondoliers plyed gondolas. There was a St. Mark Square with jugglers and mimes, a promenade along the beach, and a pier jutting into the ocea containing a large dance hall as well as concessions: rifle shoots, ring tosses, pretty-girl dunks, an penny arcades. Until the late 1920s, Venice had the largest amusement zone on the West Coast.[12]

It wasn't entirely honky-tonk. Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford had second homes on the canal and film scenes were shot there. Elite groups held dances in the dance hall on the pier, and film sta mingled with ordinary people on the streets. Colored eggs were handed out on Easter and flowers mothers on Mother's Day. There were bathing-beauty contests, boxing matches, bicycle races, and Mardi Gras festival each year.

Once in Venice, Della got a job managing a small apartment building. She sent her son, Marion, t live with a relative in San Diego; as a single mother she found raising a son difficult. Su arrangements weren't uncommon in that era. Child-care experts of that time didn't regard bondi with parents as necessary for a child's healthy development; living in an intact family was their on requirement.[13] Della, like her daughter, Gladys, and her granddaughter, Marilyn, was prone emotional highs and lows. Marion was also moody. Whatever mental issues Gladys and Mari inherited, their tumultuous childhoods didn't help them to cope with emotional ups and downs.

On New Year's Eve 1917, Della met her fourth husband, Charles Grainger, at the dance hall on th pier. Marilyn claimed that Della was the real beauty in the family, and she did, indeed, attract me Grainger was an oil driller for Shell Oil. A smooth talker, well dressed, he had just returned fro drilling jobs in India and Burma. Like Otis Monroe he was adventurous, with a similar air distinction. Some Marilyn biographers contend that Della and Charles never married, but on a 19 passport application Della gave the date of their marriage as November 20, 1920.[14]

Angry over her father's death, the two stepfathers, and the moving, Gladys became difficu Fifteen years old in 1917, she was a full-fledged adolescent. Like her mother, Gladys was small—fi feet tall—and she was beautiful, with a voluptuous body, green eyes, and reddish-brown hair. She als had a ladylike quality attractive to men, a quality that Marilyn internalized. Della had been raised Missouri, a border state influenced by the Southern tradition of tough women with genteel veneer She passed this gentility to Gladys. In 1946, Emmeline Snively, the head of Marilyn's first modeli agency, described Gladys as the most ladylike woman she had ever met.[15]

The Venice pier, with its temptations, was not far from their apartment, and Gladys often we there. In the 1910s urban adolescents, especially working-class girls, rebelled against Victori conventions by going to dance halls and amusement zones to meet men. The 1920s flappe independent and free, already existed before World War One, and female screen stars shaped he behavior. Gladys was passionate about films, and she avidly read movie fan magazines. Like ma girls of her era, she patterned her behavior after the stars.[16]

Then Gladys became pregnant. The father, John Newton Baker, called Jasper, was twenty-six yea old and the owner of the apartment building Della managed. They married on May 17, 1917. Why fifteen-year-old girl would marry a twenty-six-year-old man is puzzling, although Jasper had been officer in the army cavalry and a trick horseback rider; he had dash. In addition, bearing illegitimate child was a disgrace in that era. Even in the 1920s, when young people "parked" in ca with their dates and "petted," which could mean more than simply kissing, mainstream socie scorned unmarried women who became pregnant. They were considered outside the bounds respectability.[17]

Della swore in an affidavit attached to the marriage license that Gladys was eighteen. But she lie Gladys was fifteen. The lie was necessary to get around the law requiring girls to be sixteen to enga in consensual sex. Before then intercourse was classified as rape, and the man involved could brought to trial and sent to prison.[18] Gladys and Jasper's son, Jackie, was born seven months aft their wedding. A daughter, Berniece, was born in 1920.

With Della and Gladys married, the Monroe women seemed stable. But the stability didn't las Both of them were difficult and moody, hard to live with. Della and Charles began arguing, and Del moved to a house they bought in the newly developed city of Hawthorne, southwest of downtown, n far from the beach and on the trolley line. It was a good investment, although Charles wasn't the that much. Still, the 1925 Hawthorne City Directory lists him as living there with Della.[19]

In 1922 Gladys experienced a mother’s worst nightmare. She threw the pieces of a broken drinkin
class into a trash can, and Jackie rummaged through the trash and embedded a shard of glass in a
eye, damaging it. Several months later, Jasper and Gladys drove to Flat Lick, Kentucky, h
hometown, for a visit. On the way there they quarreled ferociously, failing to notice that a back doo
to their car had opened and Jackie had fallen out, injuring his leg. Jasper and Gladys didn’t have
good marriage, and they struggled with alcohol, violence, and appropriate parenting.[20]

Once in Flat Lick, Gladys went hiking with Jasper’s brother, unaware that she was violating th
community’s strict moral code. When she returned from the hike, Jasper beat her publicly with
horse bridle, asserting his marital rights. No one stopped him; the Flat Lick residents approved h
action. That was enough for Gladys. Once they returned to Venice, she filed for divorce. She charge
that Jasper was a drinker who beat her, while he countercharged that she was an unfit mother who le
her children with neighbors and went to the pier to have fun. He didn’t mention that she often we
there to tend a concession that he owned. The judge accepted her version of their issues, giving Glady
custody of the children, with Jasper given visiting rights. (The decree also forbade Jasper from sellin
his concession on the pier without Gladys’s consent.)

But Gladys’s problems hadn’t ended. During a visit, Jasper kidnapped the children and took the
to Kentucky to live with him. From his point of view Gladys wasn’t a good mother, and he had had
with the “pleasures” of Venice, which he now regarded as immoral. He wanted his children to b
raised with conservative values. He married a Kentucky woman seventeen years his senior, saying h
was fed up with child brides.

In an effort to get Berniece and Jackie back, Gladys moved to Kentucky, settled near her childre
and found a job as a housekeeper and child tender. Unlike today, the courts didn’t track down childre
kidnapped by a divorced spouse. After a few months Gladys gave up and returned to Los Angeles. Sh
ran out of money; she was afraid of Jasper; and she was only twenty years old. She may have alread
been involved with Stanley Gifford, and he may have wanted her back. Marilyn often criticize
Gladys in later interviews, but in this case she preserved the fantasy that her mother, like Barba
Stanwyck in the movie *Stella Dallas*, gave up her children to their father so that they would have
better life. The truth is that their stepmother was kind to them, but Jasper had difficulty holding dow
a job. He did drink a lot, and he probably wasn’t a good father.[21]

Meantime, the middle-aged Della, involved in another difficult marriage and looking for upli
became a follower of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, who combined Hollywood spectacle wi
faith healing in her Foursquare Gospel Church. Sister Aimee’s Angelus Temple, located in Echo Par
on the trolley line near downtown, drew crowds of worshippers. A Christian fundamentalist ar
millennialist who viewed Christ’s second coming as imminent, she used theatrical backdrops ar
mechanical devices to illustrate her sermons. Actors in costumes played out topics for mor
instruction such as the fleshpots of Egypt and the temptations of the jazz age. The divorce
McPherson had no use for marriage or for women’s traditional roles. Moreover, she ran a home fo
unwed mothers and a Big Sister League for wayward girls. Women were the majority of h
congregation.

This was a transitional era after the women’s suffrage amendment had finally passed in 192
Women’s reform groups proliferated, while the sexual revolution of the decade both advanced ar
impeded women’s progress, as it substituted sexual freedom for legal and political gains. Gladys ar
her friend Grace didn’t think of themselves as feminists, a new term for that age, although they we
working women, belonging to unions. Nor did Della, despite her woman-centered faith.[22]

Back in Los Angeles from Kentucky, Gladys found work as a cutter and paster of film negatives ~~Consolidated Film Industries. Directed by a senior editor—always male—the cutters remov~~ unwanted frames from reels and pasted the reels back together again in an approved order. The wo was monotonous and poorly paid. When the production schedule was heavy, cutters worked ten hou a day and a half day on Saturdays. The editing labs were dark, without windows, to prevent light fro damaging the negatives. The cutters wore white gloves so that perspiration on their hands wouldn harm the film. The darkness of the labs could cause depression, as could the smell of the glue. Almo all film cutters were women.[23]

In its early days the film industry was composed of independent producers in small studios wh hired men and women equally as production assistants, screenwriters, editors, and the like. But in process of consolidation typical of the growth of monopoly capitalism in many industries, by 19 smaller companies were being combined into larger ones. By the late 1920s Wall Street money w financing films, and film studios were listed on the stock exchange. By the 1930s the hundreds studios that had existed in the industry's formative years had been reduced to five major studios MGM, Twentieth Century–Fox, RKO, Warner Brothers, and Paramount—and three minor one Columbia, United Artists, and Universal, with others, such as Republic Studios and Samuel Goldwy mainting their ground. The majors had larger production facilities and more employees than t minors, and they owned both the agencies that distributed their films and the theaters that show them. The minors didn't. They had to use independent theaters or make deals with majors to sho their films.

Driven by the profit motive, the studios became like factories, with films their products, a employees, including actors, their workers. Most of the studios were run by East European Jews w had been born to poor families in Poland and Russia and had migrated to New York in the 1890s a 1900s. With little education or money but with immense intelligence and drive, they realized t potential of the nickelodeons that were opening in immigrant enclaves and of the flickering images the film reels shown on large screens at these places. They raised the money to buy both nickelodeo and film reels. As the images were developed into feature films, these entrepreneurs marketed a distributed them. Finally, they created chains of movie theaters, and they built studios in Hollywoo Thus the movie industry was born. Shrewd and combative, men like Louis B. Mayer at MGM, J Schenck at Fox, and Harry Cohn at Columbia consolidated the industry and ruled their studios wi iron hands, turning themselves into what film historians call "the moguls."[24]

As often occurs during the process of monopolization, the film business became gendered. M took over supervisory positions, with women their subordinates—aside from departments like make and costume design, associated with female activities. By the early 1920s the negative film cutte were women and the editors who decided on the cuts were men, a division that continued through t 1950s.

Gladys seemed content with her job; she remained a film cutter for the next ten years, shifting the editing studio at Columbia shortly before Norma Jeane's birth and later to the one at RKO. S was a good worker, but she wasn't ambitious and wasn't promoted. After losing her children to h husband, a shattering experience, she liked routine, the security of repetition. She tolerated the da editing studios and the smelly glue.

There were compensations. In his 1922 novel *Souls for Sale*, screenwriter Rupert Hugh celebrated Hollywood's female film cutters as models for the "new women" of the age who we entering the workforce and, adopting flapper behavior, were rebelling against Victorian convention Watching film fantasy all day on the reels they cut, they saw "battles in Chinese opium dens; L Chaney as the monstrous Frankenstein; glamorous women living in luxury." By the mid-1920s th were cutting and pasting the many films being made about “flappers.”[25]

According to Hughes, the film cutters lived like men, scorning convention. They participated what was called the “new paganism,” evident in avant-garde communities like Hollywood and Venic They drank, danced, and wore makeup and the new, daring short skirts that rose above the knees. Th was, after all, the “roaring twenties.” But there were limits. According to Hughes, the film cutte respected their “health” and “personal reputation.” (I read “health” as meaning venereal disease ar “personal reputation” as meaning avoiding pregnancy and the reputation of being a “slut.” Tl implication is that they used birth control.)[26]

Gladys was especially drawn to the “new paganism” once she met Grace McKee, one of the fe women to hold a supervisor position at Consolidated. Twice divorced, five years older than Glady Grace was a leader among a group of Hollywood workers who went out after hours to night spots ar dance halls in Hollywood and Venice. In Gladys’s eyes Grace was dazzling. She was energeti birdlike, and tiny, hardly five feet tall, with a high voice and peroxide blonde hair, a daring color f that era. A co-worker at Consolidated called her “a sparkling lady.” “Her energy and cheerfulnes bubbled at you, and her laugh was contagious, so even if you didn’t know what you were laughir about, you were still laughing.”[27] Both Gladys and Grace were passionate about films, and both rea the movie fan magazines. Two months after Gladys began at Consolidated, they were sharing a apartment.

Coming to Hollywood from Montana in the 1910s, Grace joined the legions of young women fro throughout the nation who moved to the film capital hoping to become stars, following the mytholog of the American Dream: anyone could make it if they had talent and gumption. Like most of ther Grace didn’t succeed in the movies; but she found work in the industry and didn’t have to wait c tables or enter the sex trade, which was flourishing in Hollywood. Grace was a take-charge perso and she took Gladys under her wing. During her years in Hollywood Grace had learned how to cop the dress styles and makeup of the stars, and she liked to make over her friends. Gladys welcome Grace’s control, but she sometimes became angry at her domineering ways.

When Gladys first came to Consolidated, she was depressed over her failure to retrieve h children. Her co-workers remembered her as mousy, with straggly brown hair—until Grace persuade her to dye her hair red and to dress in the latest fashions. Male co-workers charged that she and Grac smoked, drank to excess, and were promiscuous.[28] Women coworkers said they were hardworking ar conscientious. But their work was volatile: layoffs were called when film production was slow; tl studios closed down during the month of March to avoid California taxes; and the cutters frequent switched from one editing studio to another.

Gladys was ambivalent about the “new paganism” of the 1920s, just as she had been of two min about the pleasures of the Venice pier when she married Jasper Baker. Once settled in Hollywood, sh looked for a husband. Her best bets were Edward Mortensen, a meter reader for the Southe California Gas Company who hung out with the film crowd in Venice, and Stanley Gifford, supervisor at Consolidated Films, where Grace and Gladys worked. Both became involved wi Gladys; on their death beds, each claimed to have sired Marilyn.[29]

In the competition between the two men, Stan won hands down. Mortensen was good-looking, b he was only a meter reader. Tall, dark, and handsome, Stan came from Rhode Island wealth. He own his home in Culver City and was on the Santa Monica equestrian polo team. Two of his sisters worke in film editing, one of them at Consolidated, with Gladys and Grace. By 1923, however, he was goir through a messy divorce. His wife charged that he drank and abused her, neglected their children party in Venice, and was a heroin addict. Stan denied the charges and filed countercharges, but h wife won and he had to pay her alimony and child support. He was in no position to make commitment to Gladys.[30]

In October 1924, Gladys married Mortensen. Della, worried about Gladys’s up-and-down mood advised her to do so because he was stable; Grace advised her against the marriage because he w boring. Grace was right. After a few months of marriage, Gladys walked out. An angry Mortense filed for divorce in May 1925, charging that she had “willfully and without cause deserted [him].” The final decree wasn’t granted until 1928, because Gladys paid no attention to the divorce action ar Mortensen let it ride, hoping she would go back to him.

Born on June 1, 1926, Norma Jeane was conceived in late August or early September 1925, thre months after Mortensen filed for divorce. Mortensen claimed paternity on his death bed, and so d Stan Gifford, as he lay dying. Gladys maintained that Gifford was Norma Jeane’s father. The tru depends on the extent of Gladys’s promiscuity after she left Mortensen, and the reports we have o that subject are conflicting. But Marilyn was convinced that Gifford was her father. She was thu “illegitimate,” a terrible stigma in that day. Marilyn called herself a “love child” and a “mistake indicating that if Gladys and her partner had used birth control, it hadn’t worked.[32]

The emotional Gladys made a hash of Norma Jeane’s birth certificate when filling it out at th hospital after giving birth. She listed Edward Mortensen as Norma Jeane’s father—although sl spelled his name *Mortenson*, causing confusion in her own day and ever since, because an Edwa Mortenson lived in Venice at the time and was no relation to Edward Mortensen. And she listed he children in Kentucky as dead, although they were very much alive. Having relinquished them, th may have been how she dealt with her guilt for failing to retrieve them. She didn’t derive Norm Jeane’s name from film stars Norma Talmadge and Jean Harlow, as is often assumed. Norma Jean was the name of the child Gladys had cared for as a nanny in Kentucky and had left behind when sl returned to Los Angeles—a child to whom she had been close. Now she had her own Norma Jeane.[33]

According to Stan Gifford’s relatives, he loved Gladys, but she didn’t give him time to sort out h feelings. During the winter of 1925, he took her to the Gifford home to meet his family. H pregnancy upset Stan’s mother and sister, who were deeply religious. They reminded Stan that he ha just gone through a difficult divorce and that Gladys was the mother of two children being raised b someone in another state. Torn between his loyalty to his family and his love for Gladys, Giffor didn’t know what to do. In an attempt to keep everyone happy he refused to marry Gladys, but l offered her money. In a moment of anger, he made the mistake of telling her she was fortunate sl was still married to Mortensen, so she could use his name on the birth certificate and register the chi as legitimate.[34]

That callous statement made Gladys so angry she refused the money and walked out on Sta Stubborn, sometimes set in her ways, she engaged in a defiant gesture that only hurt her. She bore th child by herself and didn’t allow Stan to see the baby. Della missed the birth, since she was in Borne chasing Charles Grainger, who had gone there for an oil-drilling job. Grace also was absent, althoug one of Gladys’s co-workers may have been present, since the cutters at Consolidated Films took up collection for the baby.[35] Stan seems to have been devastated by the situation. He gave up regul work, floated for a while, and drank heavily, until he settled down, married, and bought a dairy far in Hemet, near Palm Springs, which he operated until he died many years later. Gladys never saw hi again, and he refused to see the adult Marilyn when she contacted him. He was sorry not to see her, l stated on his deathbed, but he didn’t want his wife to know he had an illegitimate daughter.

The birth shook Gladys, who developed such a severe post-partum depression that she neglecte her baby. When Grace chastised her, Gladys became so angry she picked up a knife and tried to sta her. Grace took the knife away from her before anything happened and calmed her down, but th ~~episode was alarming. Della then suggested that Gladys board Norma Jeane with Ida Bolender~~. Del lived in Hawthorne, forty minutes by the Red Car trolley from Hollywood, and Ida ran a foster hon across the street from her. The efficient Ida, Della thought, would be a good caretaker for Norm Jeane. Della could help with her care, and Gladys could visit on the weekends. Placing the child in da care didn't seem a possibility. In 1926 day care centers were few and far between; they we associated with Soviet communism, already feared and despised in the United States. Foster care w the most available option.[36]

For the next seven years, until Gladys took Norma Jeane to Hollywood to live with her, the chi lived with the Bolenders. During those years, Gladys never missed paying Ida twenty-five dollars month for her care. And Gladys clung to the dream that she could save enough money from her sala to buy a house, bring her children together, and establish a family.

In 1926, when the Bolenders began caring for Norma Jeane, Hawthorne had open fields, small farm unpaved roads, and excellent trolley service. Children roamed at will; I remember that halcyo freedom from my childhood in nearby Inglewood. Marilyn biographers who describe Hawthorne as slum are mistaken. I was there; I walked its streets. Small frame bungalows sat on large lots. Like m family and many others in the area who had been farmers before they moved to Los Angeles, th Bolenders raised vegetables and chickens to supplement the food they bought in a local store. The weren't wealthy, but they weren't poor. Wayne was a postman; he had a secure civil service jo throughout the Great Depression.

Enterprising and hardworking, the Bolenders took in children partly for the money but also becau they loved children and Ida seemed unable to conceive. Their house wasn't fancy, but it had s bedrooms, enough to accommodate a number of children if they shared bedrooms, a common practic in that era. During the six years she lived with the Bolenders, Norma Jeane usually shared a bedroo with Lester Bolender, a foster child who had been born the same week as Norma Jeane and wh looked like her. The family called them "the twins"; Lester's last name was Bolender because the adopted him. Norma Jeane played with the Bolender brood and with children in the neighborhoo They climbed trees, built forts, and played fantasy games.[37]

"I was a shy little girl," Marilyn stated. "While very young, I developed my make-believe worl Every afternoon when I took my naps, I would pretend things. One day, I would be a beautif princess in a tower. Or a boy with a dog. Or a grandmother with snowy hair. And at night I would l and whisper out, ever so softly, the situations that I had heard on the radio before bedtime." Sh listened to *The Lone Ranger* and *The Green Hornet*. Those programs were about male adventure an bravado. But it wasn't "the chases and the horses" that excited her. It was the drama she liked; sh would pretend to feel what she imagined each character in the radio show had felt.[38]

Norma Jeane liked to play house because she could make her own rules. She could be mothe father, or child—whatever she wanted. She had control—unlike in real life, where she had to obe others. Sometimes she pretended to be Alice in Wonderland after she fell down the rabbit hole an wound up in an unreal world. She stood in front of her mirror, wondering if the image in the mirro was really she. "Could it be someone pretending to be me? I would dance around, make faces, just see if that little girl in the mirror would do the same," she said. She was a leader among the childre because she always thought up interesting games. "Even if the other kids were a little slow on th imagining part," she asserted, "you could say 'Hey, what about if you were so and so and I were su and such—wouldn't that be fun?' "[39]

She felt part of the Bolender family, but she knew that Ida and Wayne weren’t her parents. Whe she ~~called Ida “Mother,” she was told not to. The “lady with red hair,” she was told, was her mothe~~ but Gladys, sometimes responsive, sometimes not, came and went. Norma Jeane was allowed to ca Wayne “Daddy”—because she didn’t have a real father, they said—and she and Wayne became close He was gentle and caring, though not much of a talker, but he loved Norma Jeane, who was bright ar inquisitive. She was always asking questions, always wanting to know about everything.

Still, Norma Jeane wanted her own father. She decided that the man in a picture on the wall of h mother’s living room was her father. Over the years she developed fantasies about this “father,” male figure who spoiled her and made her feel safe. He wore a jaunty slouch hat. He never took it of no matter how much Norma Jeane asked him to. When she was in the hospital in 1933 to have h tonsils removed, he was there with her in her daydreams. She gave him dialogue to say: “You’ll b well in a few days, Norma Jeane. I’m very proud of the way you’re behaving, not crying all the tin like other girls.” The man in the picture looked like Clark Gable, and Norma Jeane developed th fantasy that Gable was her father.

In 1931, five years after Norma Jeane arrived at the Bolenders’, another child, Nancy, became Bolender foster child. (Her surname is Bolender because, like Lester, they adopted her.) Nanc Bolender contends that Ida and Wayne were model parents and they didn’t spank the childre Faithful to the Bolenders, she may overstate her case. Children were spanked in this era, mostly wi an open hand on the backside. The enforcement of discipline was especially important to evangelic families, who expected their children to “follow God’s rules.” More humiliating than painfu discipline was meant to curb rambunctious behavior. On the other hand, Marilyn later alleged magazine interviews that she was beaten by the Bolenders (without mentioning them by name), ar that description may also be an overstatement. Yet Ida told Marilyn biographer Fred Guiles tha Norma Jeane was a mischievous child who had to be disciplined.[40]

The Bolenders were evangelist Christians who attended the Hawthorne Community Church, most Baptist in orientation. They took the children in their care to Sunday services and Sunday school ar to prayer meetings during the week. On special occasions they attended the Church of the Open Do in downtown Los Angeles. Located in a multistory edifice that dominated the skyline, that church wa the center of evangelism in the West. Marilyn biographers have incorrectly identified the Bolende as Pentacostal. On the contrary, they were followers of Dwight Moody, the Chicago evangelist.[41]

Unlike many evangelists, Moody didn’t practice faith healing or Pentacostal speaking in tongue although he held mass revivals and sent missionaries throughout the nation from his Moody Bib Institute in Chicago. Several Moody missionaries traveled to Los Angeles, and in 1920 they founde the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola) as a seminary for preachers. It evolved into Bio University, still in operation, located in Orange County. Nancy Bolender graduated from Biola with B.A.[42]

Moody was a fundamentalist who attacked Darwinian evolutionism and the “new paganism” of th 1920s. He emphasized the “original sin” of every human—supposedly inherited from Adam and Ev when they took the forbidden fruit from the serpent in the Garden of Eden and ate it to ga knowledge of worldly matters. He anticipated a Final Judgment, when Christ would appear on earth send believers to heaven and unbelievers to hell. In the words of Reuben Torrey, longtime pastor the Church of the Open Door, hell was a place of utter agony that lasted for eternity.[43]

“What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” That ver from the Gospel of Mark was a favorite text of the adult Marilyn, as well as of Biola preache Reuben Torrey described individual souls—and the external world—as battlegrounds between goo and evil, God and the devil, and described the devil as an invisible demon bent on seducing huma into ~~violating God's rules. The Moody god was unrelenting, but salvation could be gained throug~~ faith in Jesus Christ. He was the "good shepherd" who had been crucified on the cross to exonerate t sins of humans. He represented the gentle part of the deity. He showed by his example how huma should live their lives.

The Bolenders quoted scripture. They taught their children Bible passages and held fami devotions, reading Bible passages and reflecting on them, every evening. They had their charges kne by their beds to recite the prayer that generations of Christian children have recited every night ov the centuries—before they ask God to bless each member of the family.

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

That prayer is soothing, but its allusion to death can be disturbing. Marilyn didn't forget th prayer when as an adult she dealt with her "sins," with nightmares, and with insomnia—the inabili to go to sleep and the fear of doing so. That prayer links sleep to death and asks God's grace keeping the supplicant safe. It also alludes to his possible vengeance in refusing what is asked for—ascent to heaven, not descent to hell.[44]

Marilyn biographers have overlooked the influence of evangelist religion on her, but Arthur Mille considered it a central factor in the creation of her adult self. In his autobiography, *Timebends*, repeated a tale she often told him about sin and salvation. When she was six, she participated in children's chorus at an Easter sunrise service at the Hollywood Bowl. The children stood in the shap of a cross, and they wore black capes. As the sun rose, they removed the capes to reveal the whi clothes they wore underneath. Changing dark capes to white clothing symbolized that with the dawn-and Christ's resurrection after he had died on the cross—darkness had become light; Christ had rise from the grave; purity had triumphed over sin. But Norma Jeane forgot to remove her black robe. Sh stood there, humiliated, the only child in black rather than white. Chastened by Ida for her mistak she felt that God had abandoned her.[45]

When Marilyn told Arthur the story, she laughed with sympathy for the little girl caught in th wrong. Yet he sensed that anger and guilt lay beneath her laughter: guilt at having failed th assignment; anger because she felt unfairly condemned. No matter what she did, Miller stated, sh had to deal with her sense that she had sinned and had to defend herself against the "condemnation religion." "And the stain kept reappearing like a curse," he wrote.[46] In *After the Fall*, Arthur's pla about their marriage, he identified Marilyn's sin as refusing to admit her complicity in acceding men's sexual demands, a complicity that made her as guilty as the men in the dishonorable se behavior they had engaged in. But Arthur's interpretation was colored by his own puritanism, h sense that honorable men and women had to admit guilt for bad behavior as a way of reattaining th innocence of the original state of grace—the purity accorded all humans at birth. Yet beneat Marilyn's adult promiscuity lay the trauma of her childhood, a trauma that scarred her soul.

What was that trauma? Was it connected to Ida Bolender? In her stories about her childhoo Marilyn remembered the Bolenders as fanatical Christians who chastised her when she forgot to tal off her black cape at the Hollywood Bowl Easter celebration. That sounds like a "screen memory"—term coined by Freud, still in use today, that refers to the brain substituting a false memory for a re one to conceal trauma. Sex can be a difficult issue for evangelical Christians, particularly someo like Ida, raised in the Midwest Bible Belt. Nineteenth-century evangelists condemned masturbation "the ~~secret sin." They believed it could cause insanity and send those who practiced it to hell~~. Su beliefs still existed in the mid-twentieth century.[47]

The recently published *Fragments*, containing scraps of Marilyn's writings in the form of fugitiv essays and autobiographical musings, provides insight into her Hollywood Bowl memory. In a piec dated 1955, Marilyn states that she had strong sexual feelings as a child. She also relates that she w caught in a sex act and was spanked and threatened with being sent to hell, where she would "bu with dirty bad people." She felt as though she was one of the "dirty bad people." The fragment refe either to masturbation or to childhood sex play. Marilyn wrote about such play in *My Story*, h autobiography, with a boy who may have been Lester Bolender. Such play is normal and innocent, b the evangelistic Ida Bolender may have punished Norma Jeane for it. In another fragment Marily wrote that Aunt Ida had whipped her for having touched "the bad part" of her body. She was left, sh said, with a lifelong fear of and fascination with her genitals. She expressed such feelings in acts public exposure in her later life.[48]

When Norma Jeane moved out of the Bolenders' home in 1933, she was a loving child, still happ still asking questions all the time, as she had with Wayne Bolender. Whatever flaws there were i Ida's child-rearing, it was more positive than negative for Norma Jeane. Ida realized that, given th child's background—the mental instability in her family and her status as illegitimate, stigmas in th 1930s—Norma Jeane might have difficulties as an adult. She attempted to neutralize those difficulti by raising her to be self-reliant.

Ida had other sides. Both she and Wayne were antiracist, even though evangelical Christians ofte held racist views and the South Bay area in which Hawthorne was located was a center of the Ku Klu Klan. Wayne's postal route was in Watts, which was becoming African-American by the 1920s. H delivered mail mainly to black households. A gentle man and a devout Christian, he became close t the people on his route. They gave him cards and gifts at Christmas, and he helped them when the were in need. Ida and Wayne believed that Christ's love extended to all humans, regardless of ski color. They held no discriminatory attitudes. They were Democrats and enthusiastic supporters Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal. They were upset for a long time after Roosevelt died.[49]

Gladys didn't desert Norma Jeane when she left her with Ida, as some biographers charge. Once h daughter moved in with Ida in 1926, Gladys moved in too, sharing a bedroom with Norma Jeane for time. Perhaps she nursed her daughter and needed to be with her. When her workload increased early 1927, six months after Norma Jeane's birth, Gladys moved back to Hollywood. By then she ma have weaned her daughter. Still, she visited Norma Jeane: She went to Hawthorne Saturday afternoon when she was finished with work and stayed overnight, attending church with the Bolenders Sunday morning. Sometimes she took Norma Jeane on outings—to the beach, to Venice, Hollywood. Nancy Bolender remembers Gladys often spending the night at their house.[50] By 192 Gladys and Grace were roommates again, and Grace sometimes went along with Gladys and Norm Jeane on their excursions. But Grace also spent time with two nieces, who functioned as her surroga daughters until they moved away from the area in 1934.

Some people who knew Gladys during these years described her as cold, with little affect, seemin to exist in her own world. Yet Reginald Carroll, a co-worker at RKO, recalled her as having twinklin green eyes and a lively spirit. Leila Fields, another cutter there, thought she was the most beautif woman she had ever met. Gladys was delightful, Fields said, smiling and friendly. She always had joke to tell to cheer you up if you were down.[51] Both Carroll and Fields remembered Gladys bringi

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