“It is hasheesh that makes both the Syrian and the Saxon Oriental”: Foreign Drugs, Savage Youth, and the Imperial and Eugenic Imperatives of the Early War on Drugs, 1870-1937

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Abstract

"It is hasheesh that makes both the Syrian and the Saxon Oriental": Foreign Drugs, Savage Youth, and the Imperial and Eugenic Imperatives of the Early War on Drugs, 1870-1937.

Alessandro Silvano Silvestri

This thesis argues that at the youth-at-risk rhetoric that has characterised anti-drug campaigns from the 1920s to the 2020s has its origins in the imperial and eugenic concerns of the early twentieth century. The first US federal drug policy was born in the colonial Philippines. Prior to annexing the archipelago in 1898, drug laws in the United States were scarce and limited to local governments. Nativist agitation against the Yellow Peril in the 1870s linked Chinese immigrants with opium dens and contagious degeneration, leading to the first municipal anti-narcotic ordinances in US history. These stereotypes were brought to the Philippines, where opium use was blamed on the ethnic Chinese population. The paternalistic imperialism adopted by the United States after 1898 framed Filipinos as children and wards of the state, and the decision to enact the first federal drug prohibition in US history was a direct result of this parent/child colonial relationship. To protect and civilise a less developed Other, it became imperative to guard them from the degenerative effects of foreign drugs. This, in essence, was the precursor to the youth-focused anti-drug campaigns that emerged in the 1920s. By the 1930s, the public campaign to eliminate the 'marihuana menace' relied on this 'protect the youth' paradigm as well as on Orientalist tropes about cannabis-induced violence and insanity, framing the drug as a eugenically degenerative agent. In these early twentieth century crusades, anti-drug crusaders warned that the United States' place in the global order and the supremacy of the White race depended on raising future generations of self-disciplined, hardworking, Christian, middle-class Americans. Eliminating drugs, the 'assassins of youth,' was critical in the fight to save America from national and racial degeneration. These rhetorical strategies have, in turn, shaped anti-drug propaganda and strategies to the present day. I conclude that the war on drugs was from the beginning conceived as a war against racial and national degeneration.

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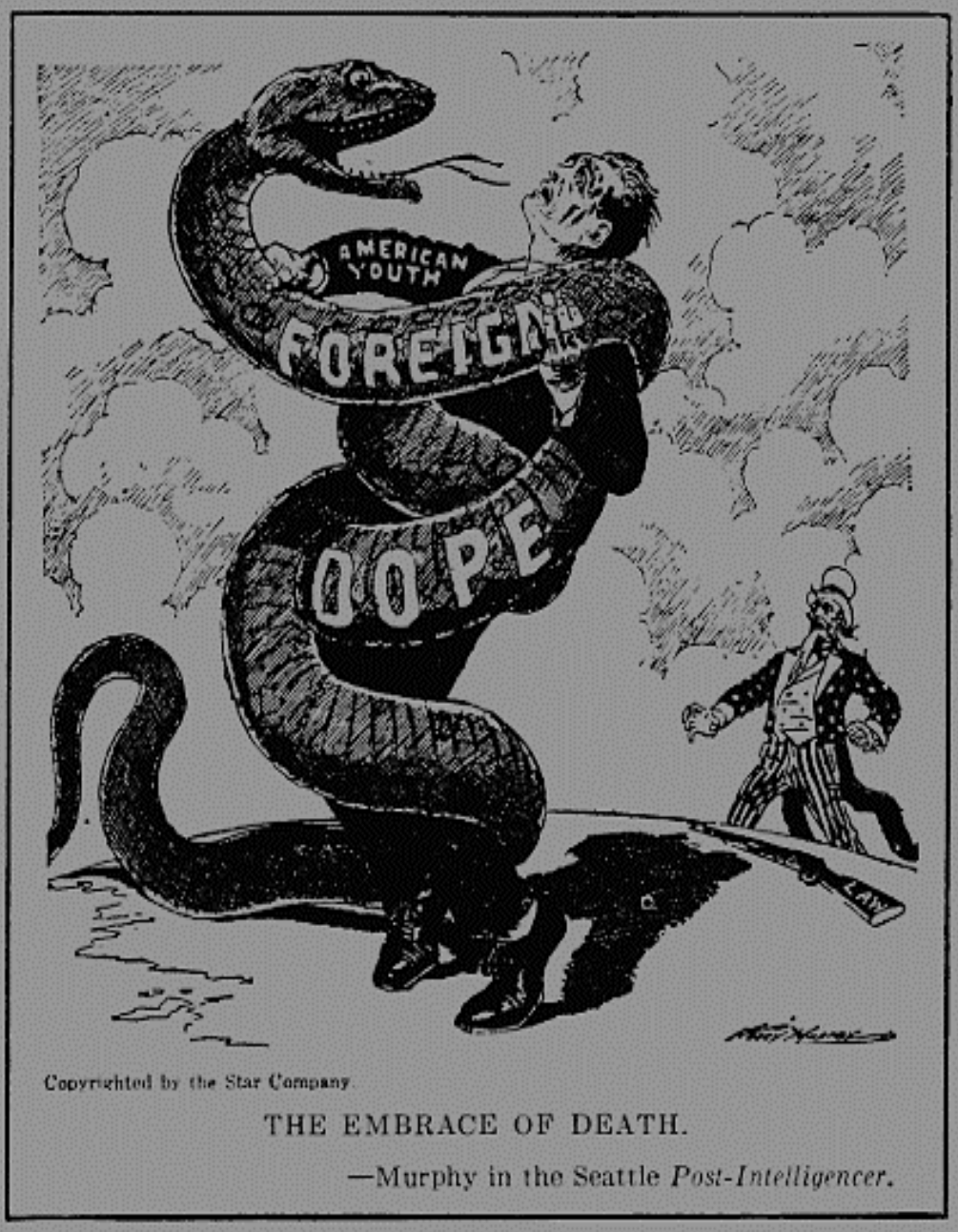

THE EMBRACE OF DEATH.

—Murphy in the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer.*

Source: "Ending the Narcotic Menace," *Literary Digest* 73 (June 10, 1922), 32, in David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (2001), 172.

Introduction

During a legislative coffee session on January 6, 2018, Zach Worf, president of the Finney County Democrats, proposed that legalizing marijuana could provide much-needed financial relief to "cash-strapped" Kansas. Before an audience of about sixty (none of whom were Black), State Representative Steve Alford replied that Worf and other pro-legalization advocates should look to the 1930s for a history lesson. Specifically, Alford wanted everyone to recall that the heightened awareness and efforts to regulate intoxicants at that time were intended to protect (presumably White) Americans from the dangers of drug abuse by "African-Americans."

> What you really need to do is go back in the '30s when they outlawed all types of drugs in Kansas [and] across the United States, what was the reason they did that? One of the reasons why, I hate to say it, the African-Americans, they were basically users and they basically responded the worst off those drugs just because [of] their character makeup, their genetics, and that. And so basically what we're trying to do [by legalising drugs] is we're trying to do a complete reverse with people not remembering what has happened in the past.[1]

Ignorance about the historical circumstances surrounding these early drug panics and prohibitions, according to Alford, was responsible for the about-face in public and political attitudes toward drug use and drug laws in the last decade or so. If the public would just understand that Black people were "users" and that they "responded the worst off those drugs just because of their character makeup [and] genetics," there would be no question as to whether the war on drugs was in the public's best interest. Alford later apologized and stepped down

1. Jonathan Shorman and Hunter Woodall, "Kansas Lawmaker Makes Racist Comments About African Americans, Marijuana," *The Kansas City Star* (January 8, 2018), https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article193611759.html

from two legislative committee leadership positions, though he did not give up his seat in the Kansas Legislature.

Alford's *perception* that certain populations are, by virtue of race or social disposition, susceptible to overindulgence in drugs echoed that of America's first drug czar, Harry J. Anslinger. In the 1930s, Anslinger's waged a public campaign against marijuana with two distinct messages. First, that marijuana use was "spreading like wildfire" among American youth, releasing their savage impulses and causing them to become insane, criminals, perverts, prostitutes, and/or murderers. Second, that marijuana was in fact hashish, the ancient drug responsible for much of the violence, decadence, depravity, and insanity plaguing the Orient. As Anslinger speculated, "I don't believe there would be so many youngsters who would 'try' a marihuana cigarette if they knew it is really hashish; the same stuff old Hassan Ben Sabbat fed his murderous crew in the eleventh century."[2] The two claims together evoke the largely overlooked role of Orientalism in the cultural, medical, and political construction of drugs and drug use in American thought. This Orientalised image of drugs, the product of nineteenth century French and British colonial science, helped anti-drug reformers express fears about White identity and hegemony inside the United States and about the nation's place in a shifting global order by prophesizing the collapse of American society through the drug induced Orientalisation of America's youth.

This thesis argues that the rhetorical strategies of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century anti-drug campaigns originated in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century campaigns to police the borders of national belonging and eugenically informed efforts to protect and

2. Hugh Pendexter, Jr., "Don't Be A 'Mugglehead'!" *Oakland Tribune* (Oct 11, 1936). https://www.newspapers.com/image/129556330

improve White American youths. The anti-marijuana propagandists in the 1930s inherited much of their rhetoric and style from the anti-opiate crusaders of the 1920s, who themselves drew on earlier discourses about Asian drug use and racial degeneration. The rhetorical construction of drugs as Oriental threats to American youth had been decades in the making, with roots in both the anti-Chinese "Yellow Peril" rhetoric of the late nineteenth century and imperial policy in the Philippines. The interwar drug menaces of heroin and marijuana built upon new theories that envisioned child development and racial evolution as analogous processes, based on older cultural analogies between the mentalities of children and "savages." Prominent figures in American developmental psychology like G. Stanley Hall saw adolescence as an intermediary stage not only between childhood and adulthood, but between savagery and civilisation. The juxtaposition of this 'youth-savage' narrative with tales of Oriental murder and insanity indicates that a tension between 'our' progeny (as the future of race and nation) and racial Others (as members of primitive or obsolescent races and nations) was being negotiated through anti-drug rhetoric. The protection and 'proper' education of American youth became paramount in the fight against moral and social decay at home and the quest for American hegemony abroad. The hyperbolic and sinister images of youth drug use reflected underlying preoccupations with purity (national, racial, moral, ideological) and superiority, suggesting that each of these drug threats was in fact understood as a eugenic, or racial, threat. These issues have been woefully understudied in the history of drug panics and prohibitions in the United States and of the origins of the war on drugs more broadly.

Situating the 'reefer madness' campaign of the 1930s in a longer and more global context complicates earlier historical interpretations and points to new ways of understanding both the spirit and tenacity of anti-drug sentiment in the twentieth-century war on drugs. In his seminal

work, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (2001), drug historian David T. Courtwright identified five common objections to non-medical drug use: the direct harm users do to themselves and to others; concern over social costs; religious disapproval; association of particular drugs with deviant or disliked groups; the perception that drug use endangers the future of the group—the tribe, the nation, or the race.[3] While the first two objections seem reasonable enough, problems arise when tales of drug-induced harm consist more of hyperbole than fact. The same can be said for concerns about the social cost of drug use. In the Depression-era United States, eugenic arguments for the exclusion, forced isolation or sterilisation of people deemed socially burdensome expanded to include drug users, immigrants, alcoholics, epileptics, paupers, and even people with "harelip." Religious disapproval has been directed at so many facets of culture (music, movies, books, sexuality, drugs…) that it has come to be expected. Moral disapproval, which encompasses religious disapproval, has more bearing on the subject at hand, as morality is frequently a tool used by dominant groups for social control by proscribing certain behaviours and sanctioning others. Taken together, the last two objections—associating certain drugs with deviant or disliked groups and believing that drug use endangers the future of the group—speak directly to the Orientalist and youth-at-risk motifs that are the focus of this thesis.

Historiography

The two leading theories about the origins of cannabis prohibition in the United States emerged out of the first wave of scholarship on the topic between the 1960s and 1980s. Pioneering research by sociologists in the early 1960s focused on the unusual legal history

3. David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 168-173.

surrounding the Marihuana Tax Act (MTA) of 1937. In his ground-breaking study *Outsiders* (1963), Howard S. Becker's analysis of the Marihuana Tax Act led him to argue that public policies can sometimes be attributed to the efforts of "moral entrepreneurs." For Becker, the Marihuana Tax Act's primary entrepreneur was Harry J. Anslinger, the first Commissioner of the new Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN), formed in 1930.[4] Scholars used this framework to argue that Anslinger and his fellow crusaders had been responsible for knowingly creating and disseminating propaganda linking marijuana to Mexicans and Black jazz musicians and painting it as an insanity-producing, murder-inciting public menace. This "Anslinger hypothesis" became a popular explanation for the MTA among scholars and the public alike, and so it remains.[5]

The second view has come to be known as the 'Mexican hypothesis.' According to this literature, marijuana use was brought to the United States around 1900 with the influx of Mexican immigrants, many of whom were casual users of the drug. The spread of marijuana in the United States was linked to the spread of these Mexican communities. Strong anti-Mexican sentiment, already firmly established in the US by the turn of the century, then focused on these immigrants' purported drug use as yet another example of their incompatibility with American life. This drug-focused xenophobia led to the earliest anti-marijuana legislation in the US, which both fuelled and was fuelled by racist associations between cannabis use and crime, insanity, and

4. Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2018), 129-148.

5. Recent examples of the persisting influence of the Anslinger hypothesis include: Johann Hari, *Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Alexandra Chasin, *Assassin of Youth: A Kaleidoscopic History of Harry J. Anslinger's War on Drugs* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Cydney Adams, "The Man Behind the Marijuana Ban for All the Wrong Reasons," *CBSNews.com* (November 17, 2016), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/harry-anslinger-the-man-behind-the-marijuana-ban/; Taylor Ridewood, "Who Exactly is Harry Anslinger?" *TheGreenFund.com* (June 4, 2020), https://thegreenfund.com/who-exactly-is-harry-j-anslinger; Jackson Tarricone, "Harry J. Anslinger and the Origins of the War on Drugs," *BostonPoliticalReview.org* (September 4, 2020), https://www.bostonpoliticalreview.org/post/harry-j-anslinger-and-the-origins-of-the-war-on-drugs; Laura Smith, "How a Racist Hate-Monger Masterminded America's War on Drugs," *Timeline.com* (February 28, 2018), https://timeline.com/harry-anslinger-racist-war-on-drugs-prison-industrial-complex-fb5cbc281189

violence—traits that had already been associated with Mexicans. By the 1930s, the spread of this 'roadside weed' (along with the foreigners who were said to use it) apparently so threatened the American way of life that officials and reformers called for federal intervention to 'save' the country.[6] The Mexican hypothesis has since monopolised popular and scholarly understandings of the origins and significance of the twentieth-century war on drugs, despite having "received virtually no scholarly criticism."[7] In an important critique of the Mexican hypothesis, drug historian Isaac Campos maintains that its tenets were heavily influenced by the countercultural ethos of the 1960s, where it first emerged among radical activist-minded scholars as both a critique of prohibitionist policies and, more broadly, against a White supremacist status quo that has historically done whatever was necessary to sustain the marginalization and exploitation of a largely Black and Latin underclass.[8] This narrative has been politically advantageous for critics of US drug policy, serving as crucial evidence of the racist, "irrational and even sinister origins" of the war on drugs.[9] While the Mexican hypothesis has buttressed legitimate critiques of the racism inherent in American drug laws, Campos reminds us that "finding any policy in the early 20th century that wasn't tainted by racism is really hard."[10] Campos' critique is important for understanding how the sociopolitical interests of a particular group of people in a specific historical context can become widely-held, uncritically accepted, and politically convenient matters of historical fact. Campos' argument rests on the fact that the Mexican hypothesis has relied on questionable evidence and "almost no knowledge of Mexicans, Mexico, or marijuana's

6. Isaac Campos, "Mexicans and the Origins of Marijuana Prohibition in the United States: A Reassessment," *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 32 (Winter 2018), 6. For a full overview of both the Anslinger and Mexican hypothesis, see Jerome L. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marihuana: Politics and Ideology of Drug Control in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).
7. Campos, "A Reassessment," 29.
8. Campos, 8.
9. Campos, "A Reassessment," 7.
10. Olivia B. Waxman, "The Surprising Link Between U.S. Marijuana Law and the History of Immigration," *Time.com*, April 20, 2019. https://time.com/5572691/420-marijuana-mexican-immigration/

history in that country."[11] Indeed, the crux of the hypothesis, that drug prohibitions are frequently fuelled by racism or classism in the US, is hard to dispute. However, proponents of the Mexican hypothesis have, despite themselves, left virtually unchallenged the premise that marijuana use was brought to the United States by Mexican immigrants—a claim that seems to have originated with anti-marijuana propagandists themselves. This, consequently, has served to perpetuate the narrative that drugs are foreign to the United States, a narrative that has remained essential to anti-drug discourse and policy in the country since the annexation of the Philippines in the late nineteenth century, if not earlier.[12] This assumption that drugs are inherently foreign has helped reinforce the idea that the drug problem was a Black and brown problem instead of a human problem and, on the flip side of the coin, the idea that White people were innately less drawn to drugs than other races or that drug use was more unnatural to Whites because of some vaguely defined racial or cultural superiority.

This has led drug historians into a presentist trap. Until the last decade or so, histories of the war on drugs had largely characterised it as a post-WWII phenomenon, with most of this literature clustered around the period after 1970—this even though the "big three" drug menaces, opium, cocaine, and cannabis, had all been subjected to strict federal regulation before the United States even entered the war.[13] Historians have also tended to (rightfully) focus on the anti-Black discourse employed in the campaigns to ban each of these drugs, though the

11. Campos, "Reassessment," 7.

12. See Anne L. Foster, "The Philippines, the United States, and the the Origins of Global Narcotics Prohibition," *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2019), 28.

13. See William B. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History* (London: Routledge, 2000); Jeremy Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); Matthew D. Lassiter, "Impossible Criminals: The Suburban Imperatives of America's War on Drugs," *Journal of American History* 102, no. 1 (2015): 126-140, and "Pushers, Victims, and the Lost Innocence of White Suburbia: California's War on Narcotics During the 1950s." *Journal of Urban History* 41, no. 5 (2015): 787-807; Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.* New York, NY: The New Press, 2012. ISBN-13 978-1595586438.

associations of opium with the Chinese and of Asians with drug use in general has seen less scholarly attention than those of cocaine with Black people and marijuana with Mexican immigrants. This makes sense, since Black and Latin folk are the largest and most visible racial minority groups in the United States, and since the punitive apparatus of the modern war on drugs has disproportionately targeted and incarcerated members of these communities. Indeed, the systematic mass incarceration of people of colour in the US in the last decades would not have been possible without the militarised enforcement and draconian penalties of the modern war on drugs.[14] A newer cohort of drug historians have sought a broader approach to the history of drugs by widening the established periodisation and exploring the interrelationship between various psychoactive drugs, medical and scientific knowledge, and cultural perceptions of addiction and of the function and value of drugs.[15] Understanding the deeper cultural and political sources of anti-drug discourse and the prohibitionist approach to drug control will offer more insight into the war on drugs, its historical significance, and its longevity. This is not to say that these issues are not important, and since these groups remain disproportionately persecuted and incarcerated in the United States it is evident that we have much to learn from further study. Although today, one might not think of Asians as the major targets of the drug war, this study incorporates ideas about the 'Oriental' in American thought that were developed in close proximity to the issue of drugs and addiction in order to shed light on the significance of Orientalist and anti-Asian rhetoric in the anti-marijuana campaign of the 1930s. Furthermore, even though anti-drug efforts and propaganda have been chiefly directed toward young people, age has been almost entirely ignored as a category of historical analysis in the history of the war

14. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 59.
15. See David Herzberg, "Boundaries in the History of Alcohol, Drugs, and Medicines," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2012).

on drugs. This thesis foregrounds constructions of age in anti-drug discourse and brings it into conversation with cultural fears of the racialized Other to show how the rhetoric of 'protecting the youth' has bolstered support for an uncompromising, century-long expansion of state power over the minds and bodies of American citizens.

Some scholars have argued that the origins of federal cannabis prohibition were rooted in legislation at the state level.[16] While this claim has merit, sources suggest that even in these early state laws and local campaigns, the drug threats were understood as having national, racial, even civilizational implications rather than solely local ones. State-level drug restriction laws were rooted in an economic, cultural, and racial nativism, typically couched in racist and xenophobic language that reflected a common understanding of Americanness based on an ostensibly sober, White, middle-class, moral (Christian, domestic), masculinity. One of the first anti-cannabis laws in the United States was passed in California in 1913. The Poison Act, as it was called, was originally proposed by California State Board of Pharmacy member Henry J. Finger, who is appropriately if unimaginatively remembered as "the author of California's pharmacy law regulating sale of poisons."[17] Expressing concern over the increasing numbers of "Hindoo" immigrants entering the state, Finger protested that there had arisen "quite a demand for cannabis indica; they are a very undesirable lot and the habit is growing in California very fast."[18] If the cause for worry were not clear enough, Finger then pointed out that the threat posed by this recent wave of South Asian migrant labourers had less to do with *their* use of cannabis than it did the risk of "initiating *our whites* into this habit".[19] Unless "our whites" referred only to

16. See Dale Gieringer, "The Forgotten Origins of Cannabis Prohibition in California," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 26, no. 2 (1999).
17. Gieringer, " Forgotten Origins," 250.
18. Gieringer, 237; Alexandra Chasin, *Assassin of Youth: A Kaleidoscopic History of Harry J. Anslinger's War on Drugs*, 104.
19. Chasin, *Assassin of Youth*, 104; emphasis added.

Californians, Finger's words implied that his concerns stemmed from racial or civilizational insecurities far more than they did a concern for the state. Finger's efforts caught the attention of government officials, which resulted in his appointment as one of three delegates sent to represent the US at the International Opium Conference at the Hague in 1911 along with Missionary Bishop Charles Brent and Opium Commissioner Hamilton Wright.

Historians of drugs, however, have failed to note that these early anti-narcotic campaigns developed alongside new theories of racial and youth development. The relationship between the two is more than coincidental. Indeed, far more than the efforts of any one individual or a hatred toward any specific race or group of people, anti-drug activism and public support for uncompromising drug policies in the twentieth century have been more consistently driven by deep-seated insecurities about the decline of White/American identity and power. The recurrent use of stock imagery and symbolism to demonise drugs and addicts as foreign, subversive, contagious, and/or degenerative, combined with the interchangeability of drug-using racial Others in US drug panics since the late nineteenth century, indicates that the fear of drugs has been an important outlet (alongside other hot-button issues like reproductive rights, immigration, urban crime, language, and religion) for angry, insecure, or disillusioned Americans to articulate deeper fears about their own identities and their nation's place in the world. The drug issue also highlighted another important and time-honoured tenet in American culture: an aversion to the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake.[20] Without evidence of any actual threat of being undermined and/or invaded and/or dominated by Chinese, Mexican, Black, or any other specific racialized group, I argue that the war on drugs has been propelled by fears that White Americans themselves would succumb to temptation and idleness, that they would cease to be exceptional,

20. Becker, *Outsiders*, 130.

and that they themselves would undermine the hegemony of White culture in the United States and of the United States in the world.

American anti-drug crusaders explicitly articulated a belief that the national goals of economic and cultural hegemony and of raising future generations of dutiful, temperate, Christian, middle-class, White American children were fundamentally intertwined. It is the discursive interconnectedness of these goals and their significance in public attitudes toward drug use that I explore in this study. The emphasis on national, racial, and historical differences in drug habits serves as a meaningful chronicle of the anxieties over national identity and global ascendancy felt by many Americans during the interwar period. In the calls to 'protect' and 'educate' youth against drugs, these reformers also reveal their underlying belief that properly reared children would bring resolution to these concerns once and for all. As forces of degeneration, drugs could only be defeated in the long term by harnessing the power of generation. In the 1920s and 1930s, eugenic science promised to do just that. Conjuring up images of dangerous, drug-using Others to articulate fears about youth drug use suggests that at the core of the anti-opiate and anti-marijuana crusades was a fear of the downfall of American civilisation.

To understand the prevalence of Orientalist and youth-at-risk imagery in the public crusade against marijuana in the 1930s, I trace the history of American drug panics and argue that they have from the very beginning been informed by fears of racial degeneration. In a time when race was the language of power, White degeneration in the United States meant the collapse of the White supremacist status quo that privileged the majority. By the interwar period, the development or degeneration of races had a new name: eugenics. The eugenic paradigm fostered a belief that racially degenerative forces and other psychosocial afflictions (hereditary

disorders and pathologies, poverty, addiction, immigration, etc.) could be identified, countered, and eliminated.

Because this study examines the origins and evolution of anti-drug rhetoric between approximately 1870 and 1937, the primary source base is not limited to one area of coverage (e.g., news or government publications), but rather draws from all areas of public discourse. It also extrapolates from these sources by situating depictions of drugs and drug users within broader historical contexts and viewing them alongside changing cultural attitudes toward drugs and addiction. The primary sources used in the research of this thesis include examples of newspaper, academic, and governmental reports, congressional hearings and records, books and pamphlets, personal notes and correspondence, motion pictures, and film reviews. Newspaper reports feature most prominently in my discussion of anti-marijuana propaganda of the 1930s: mining the *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* and *Newspapers.com* digital databases, I analyzed at least 400 articles from around the United States that mentioned opium and opiates between 1870 and 1930 and cannabis between 1860 and 1941. I also studied numerous academic texts, including books and articles from the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The scholarly articles I analysed were pulled from journals including the *American Journal of Police Science* and the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*. This thesis further draws upon digitised copies of important anti-drug tracts, child and race development studies, governmental reports and congressional documents. Invaluable documents from these databases include the work of prominent child and race developmental theorist G. Stanley Hall; the writings of Temperance and anti-drug crusader Richmond Pearson Hobson; congressional hearings on the 1937 Marihuana Tax Act; and the report of the Philippine Opium Commission. I was also able to acquire copies of Harry J. Anslinger's personal papers from the H.J. Anslinger Collection at

Pennsylvania State University's Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Finally, I analyzed two exploitation films dealing with marijuana and the destruction of American youth, *Marihuana* (1936) and *Assassin of Youth* (1937). As diverse a source base as this is, it reveals persistent tropes and consistent underlying anxieties fuelling anti-drug convictions in the US, despite changing understandings of drug effects and perceptions of addicts. Two issues became increasingly central to anti-drug discourse during this period: first, the belief that these drugs degenerated users into insane, violent, savages; and second, that drug use was spreading "like wildfire" among young people, making 'race suicide' inevitable.

To understand the rhetorical significance of Asian drug use and youth degeneration in the 1930s anti-marijuana campaign, the first chapter focuses on the period between 1870 and 1930 and examines several major events informing the first local and federal anti-drug ordinances in American history. I argue that the early war on drugs was envisioned as a war against racial degeneration, or conversely, a war for racial progress. In other words, the depiction of cannabis as the 'Assassin of Youth' in 1930s propaganda was compelling because it was just another iteration of already familiar imperialist, Progressive, and eugenic arguments about 'Oriental' drugs, 'invading hordes' of immigrants, and racial/civilizational decline. Moreover, the early drug war's focus on youth and national decline was linked to a form of American Orientalism that simultaneously orientalised drug use and infantilised Asians. Through negative colonial stereotypes and associations of Asians with drug use, despotism, and civilizational decline, psychoactive drugs like opium and cannabis became thoroughly Orientalised and established in Western thought as markers of east/west difference. During the Yellow Peril of the late nineteenth century American workers and pandering politicians expressed economic and political concerns by scapegoating Chinese immigrants as racially inferior, parasitic hordes whose opium

dens would be the downfall of American civilisation. Imperialism in the Philippines forced the federal government to contend with the issue of opium smoking firsthand, as the habit was seen as antithetical to the ostensibly benevolent American approach to colonialism.

In 1914 Congress passed the Harrison Narcotics Act, the first use of federal law to restrict the nonmedical use of opiates and coca products. Before the Harrison Act, it had been a common and accepted practice for doctors to continue prescribing opiates or other narcotics to their addicted patients to prevent overdose and mitigate withdrawal symptoms. As the economy took a downturn in the 1870s, the Chinese migrants who had been vital to building the railroads into the United States' western territories became surplus labour. It was felt that these Chinese migrants were undermining the opportunities and standard of living of White Americans. Although the practice of smoking opium had long been associated with the Chinese, during the 1870s Americans explicitly linked the practice with a Chinese threat to American society and targeted it "as a method for controlling a troublesome minority."[21] Opium addiction was frequently cited as a main reason for China's inability to compete with the West as an intellectual, military, economic, and technological power.[22] This narrative, that Asian countries were inferior by virtue of their drug use, was not a uniquely American perspective, and nor was it new in the 1870s. Indeed, the introduction to an 1858 *Scientific American* article titled "Hasheesh and Its Smokers and Eaters" begins by explaining that "[t]he drowsy appearance and indolent character of Eastern nations is not only due to the climate of the countries, and the almost spontaneous production by

21. Eric Schaefer, *"Bold! Shocking! Daring! True!" A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 217.

22. As one reformer wrote of marijuana in 1939, "Its use has spread more swiftly in America than anywhere else on earth, and the end is not yet. It is the only 'dope' we grow within our borders. We see what opium has done to China. Unless we are more alert, marihuana will be to us what opium has been to China, only worse. While opium kills ambition and deadens initiative, marihuana incites to immorality and crime." 22 Earle Albert and Robert Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana: The Weed of Madness* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1939), 82. Digitized by the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/ontrailofmarihua0000unse

the earth of everything necessary for the life of man, thus in a great measure rendering labor unnecessary, but it is aided and increased by the use of powerful narcotic drugs."[23] Drawing on far older climatic theories of racial difference, drugs served as useful proxies for asserting the purportedly immutable racial and cultural differences between 'us' and 'them.' Compared to colder northern climates, warm climates provided an abundance of flora and fauna that precluded the development of ambition and persistence in their human inhabitants. This climatic dichotomy—temperate/torrid, industry/indolence, discipline/decadence—was particularly significant in the production of knowledge about cannabis. Opium, though less overtly constructed in terms of climatic difference, had its own, far older association with the Orient and was likewise used as a proxy to affirm a racial-political global hierarchy.

In the debates over whether to annex the Philippines and how to create an American approach to the civilising mission, ideas and arguments derived from such diverse fields as economics, ethnology, biology, history, pedagogy, developmental psychology, Orientalism, and progressivism were brought together to justify both overseas expansion and design policies to educate and 'civilize' Filipinos in the ways of American-style statehood. These discourses converged around the question of opium smoking and informed the strategies developed to deal with it; not least, the belief that eliminating Chinese presence in the Philippines, as in the US, was imperative in the fight to eliminate opium. The American approach to this issue—racial development through prohibition, surveillance, and enforcement—was a game-changer; it not only reimagined the ethos of colonialism and the relationship between coloniser and colonised, but it also pressured other colonial powers to submit to this new moral code. These early efforts

23. "Hasheesh and Its Smokers and Eaters," *Scientific American* 14, no. 7 (1858), 49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26142165.

set a precedent for national and international drug policies around the world that have persisted for over a century. Furthermore, the rhetoric of drug prohibition as a means of racial uplift established key assumptions, concepts, and tropes about drug use that re-emerged as core tenets in the crusades against heroin and marijuana in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively. The Filipino 'race' was regarded as childlike, stuck in an earlier stage of racial-civilizational development. Reflecting this view, the US government established a system of tutelage designed to guide that development in preparation for self-government in the 'adult world.' This did not only resemble a teacher-student or parent-child relationship; it was explicitly construed that way, based on assumptions about the analogous developmental stages of both children and 'savages.'

The Progressive movement, with its commitment to eliminating social ills through scientific planning and government intervention, brought the issue of drugs and addiction to public attention inside the US, particularly after the First World War. By the early 1920s many social reformers had been seduced by the new science of eugenics, which promised to wipe out the root causes of social problems like criminality, insanity, physical deformities, 'feeblemindedness,' and addiction through controlled reproduction. Temperance advocates argued the degenerative effects of alcohol on character, its role in causing violence and crime, and its toxic effects on the heritable 'germ plasm,' which produced 'degenerate offspring.' This language of heredity was carried over into the anti-drug crusade from the early 1920s. The campaign against drugs and addicts, composed of many of the same people and groups as the Temperance movement, made similar arguments about the corruption of White youth, the hijacking of their minds, morals, and reproductive systems, and the delinquent, savage offspring they would inevitably produce. The United States was on the precipice of global ascendancy, with new global influence and responsibilities as well as innovations in science and technology;

youth became central to the drug question because the US needed to breed future generations able to lead and cope with the responsibilities of a global hegemon. White, Anglo-American, Protestant, capitalist civilisation could not survive in a nation of degenerates.

The second chapter mines materials from the public campaign against marijuana in the 1930s to explore how Orientalist and child-savage discourses shaped the anti-marijuana narrative of the 1930s. Anti-marijuana propaganda was dominated by allegations that the Oriental murder drug was decimating American youth. The marijuana-crazed youth, who would not only "do anything that is asked of him no matter how wrong," but also be overcome with "an ardent desire to kill someone, something, anything; he may shoot his best friend or a total stranger … for no apparent reason" was a common trope in government reports, academic, print, and visual media. [24] Two interrelated desires are palpable in the public campaign against marijuana in the 1930s: a desire to protect young people from bad influences (like drugs), and a desire to protect ordinary (White) Americans from dangerous people, whether impulsive teenagers, hardened criminals, or unassimilable foreigners. These categories were not mutually exclusive. Almost without exception, academics, government officials, journalists, and reformers pointed to 'criminal' Mexicans and 'murderous' and 'decadent' Orientals as evidence of what the United States might look like should the supposed upsurge of marijuana use among young Americans continue. By juxtaposing the Oriental history of cannabis drugs with images of at-risk or lost youths, these claims indicated deeper-rooted fears about national decline and 'race suicide' that would result from the "mental, moral, and physical" degeneration of America's youth. The eugenic influence on anti-alcohol and anti-opium discourse was more implicit in the anti-marijuana campaign, but

24. "Charles Harris Discourses on Youth and Marijuana," *Williamsburg Shopper* (Williamsburg, IA), Nov. 21, 1940. https://www.newspapers.com/image/15218721

its influence is especially evident in the ubiquitous warnings of the degeneration marijuana inflicted on young people. These fears about foreigners, drugs, and the corruption of Whiteness predated eugenic science and outlasted it, showing that what American drug crises from the nineteenth century on had in common was a fear of degeneration. As such, they connect the 'marihuana menace' to a decades-old American tradition of expressing crises of identity, culture, and socioeconomic stability by waging war against the ever-present threat of drug use and drug users.

Fears of White degeneration, I argue, were more important in driving anti-drug activism and drug policy than hatred of any specific race or group of people. The racial aspect of drug panics cannot be denied, but nor should it be reduced to a White-Black-Latin framework. The imperial paternalism adopted by the United States after its annexation of the Philippines, particularly the belief that the evolution of 'lower' races could be guided through benevolent oversight, made it appear necessary to legislate against racially degenerative behaviours like opium smoking. This was the impetus for the first federal drug prohibition in American history. This becomes even clearer in the anti-marijuana propaganda of the 1930s which, while making frequent reference to the drug's association with Mexicans, made as many (if not more) references to the drug's Oriental origins, its links to murder and insanity, and, most of all, to the need to protect American youth from regressing to a marijuana-induced state of premodern savagery. The interchangeability of drug-using foreign Others in US drug panics indicates that the fear of drugs has always been tied to larger fears of race suicide and civilizational decline. Underpinning the construction of these various drug-using Others was the constant fear that White Americans themselves would give in to temptation and idleness, that they would cease to

be exceptional, and that they themselves would undermine the hegemony of White culture in the United States and the world.

Chapter One

Prohibition as Progress: Empire and the Making of American Drug Policy

In 1928, Captain Richmond P. Hobson, founder and president of the World Narcotic Defense Association and the International Narcotics Education Association, wrote a treatise on "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs" which he intended to have distributed to every student in the United States. Hobson's booklet told readers that, "[l]ike the invasions and plagues of history, the scourge of Narcotic Drug Addiction came out of Asia." He described how the Asian opium plague had "started centers of infection in [the] seaports of Europe and America," and had only become more contagious after Western chemists discovered how to synthesise its active alkaloids, morphine and heroin. Such narcotic poisons attacked the upper brain, the "tenderest, the most complex, and unstable [regions] which are developed latest in human evolutionary progress and distinguish the man from the brute … [and which] may be considered as the temple of the spirit, the seat of altruistic motives, of character, of those high, God-like traits upon which an advanced and enduring civilization are built." It was clear that opium use was the reason some "Chinese … look scarcely human". Obviously, "[t]he white man is in graver peril than the yellow man." The spread of this Asian "contagion" and its variants would inevitably "entail national degradation, ending in national death."[1] It was critical for students to learn that using these narcotics "destroy[ed] the powers of reproduction," for the "preservation of the race" depended on it. Hobson's fears that drug use would Orientalise White bodies and thereby undermine national strength call attention to the place of anti-Chinese nativism and the

1. Richmond P. Hobson, "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs," Remarks of Hon. Hugo L. Black of Alabama, United States Senate (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), 9-15; "Mankind's Greatest Affliction and Gravest Menace," (1928), reprinted in *Drugs in America: A Documentary History*, 273, edited by David F. Musto (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

colonisation of the Philippines in the making of American drug policy. This chapter details the transpacific imperial origins of drug prohibition and its subsequent domestication in the inter-war period.

The origins of US drug policy were influenced by the nativist-fuelled opium panics of the 1870s and the colonisation of the Philippine islands in 1898. Out of the former emerged concrete ideas about the racial, moral, and civilizational incompatibility between Chinese and Anglo-Saxons. Smoking opium became a widespread stereotype about the Chinese, and a symbol of their moral and racial inconsonance with White American ideals. The Chinese and their opium had to be banished, or else they would cause the collapse of American civilisation. In the latter context, the urge to reconcile a traditional anti-imperialist identity with a desire (and opportunity) for overseas expansion resulted in a consensus that American colonialism needed to reflect the superiority of American ideals over the corrupt and exploitative Old-World regimes. The United States infused its civilising mission in the Philippines with an unwavering sense of moral and humanitarian duty by asserting that the racial and civilizational development of colonised races was paramount over material gain. Most European empires professed to be engaging in civilizational uplift, but pro-expansionist Americans simultaneously emphasised their own morality, rationality, and benevolence while racializing and infantilising their Filipino colonial charges. The results of these developments on the American imagination were twofold: a markedly Orientalised perception of drug use and users, and a sense of paternal duty toward non-White societies, a duty to nurture 'higher' Anglo-Saxon traits in the 'lower' races.[2] 'Development' became the primary rationale of both foreign and domestic policy, and

2. Though foreign policy itself is not a central focus of this study, it is also worth noting that the view of the United States as a parent or guardian and the non-White world as children also contributed to the rise of 'development' as a cornerstone of US foreign policy, a 'development' that (at that time) was at once racial and national, or biological and sociopolitical.

prohibition became a cornerstone strategy for achieving it. The Philippines, as a result, became the setting of the first federal drug policy in the United States.

Drug prohibition was forged in an imperial context but traveled back to the United States in the form of new ideas surrounding drug use and new rhetorical strategies for its prohibition. The domestication of the 'child-savage' framed White American children as the target of benevolent governmental polices. While G. Stanley Hall warned that adolescence was a particularly important stage in an individual's development from wild child to civilized adult, anti-drug crusader Hobson framed drug use as the single biggest threat to adolescents. Hobson's rhetoric rested almost entirely on an understanding of drugs as agents of racial degeneration and on neo-Lamarckian notions of soft heredity, at the cost of sounder research on the actual consequences of drug use on individual and social bodies. The 'degenerate' victims of addiction were bitter reminders of the weaknesses in the race, living proof that its decline was assured.

Prohibition as a Programme of Racial Development in the US Colonial Philippines, 1870-1910

The Spanish-American War officially ended with the Treaty of Paris, signed on December 10, 1898. The treaty gave the United States control over the former Spanish East Indian colonies in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines archipelago. Many Americans, however, were suspicious of overseas expansion.[3] President McKinley allegedly proceeded with annexation after a prayer session in which God told him it was America's *duty* to "uplift,

3. See Kristin L. Hogenson, "The Problem of Male Degeneracy and the Allure of the Philippines," in *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 133-155; Susan K. Harris, *God's Arbiters: Americans and the Philippines, 1898-1902* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," *Journal of Southern History* 24, no. 3 (1958), 319–31.

Christianize and civilize" Filipinos.[4] This benevolent civilizing mission (as opposed to, for instance, settler colonialism and resource and labour exploitation) was attractive to the Americans participating in the new colonial project, many of whom rejected the European imperial model and sought instead to determine "what kind of colonial power the United States was going to be."[5] By absorbing Progressive ideals of social and institutional reform, pro-expansionists found support even among ardent anti-imperialists.

Many prominent pro-expansionist politicians, including Theodore Roosevelt, Secretary of State John Hay, and senators Henry Cabot Lodge and Albert T. Beveridge shared an ideological commitment to a patriarchal Anglo-Saxonism.[6] They divided humanity into to a hierarchy of races doubling as a chronology of human evolution from savagery to civilization. American officials cast Filipinos as stuck in an earlier stage of human evolution—children among races. While still governor of New York, Roosevelt remarked:

> The Philippines offer a yet graver problem. Their population includes half-caste and native Christians, warlike Moslems, and wild pagans. Many of their people are utterly unfit for self-government, and show no signs of becoming fit. Others may in time become fit but at present can only take part in self-government under a wise supervision, at once firm and beneficent. We have driven Spanish tyranny from the islands. If we now let it be replaced by savage anarchy, our work has been for harm and not for good.[7]

Pro-imperialists in the US read Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden" as a version of the nineteenth-century expansionist doctrine of 'manifest destiny' tailored to overseas conquest.[8]

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4. Charles S. Olcott, *William McKinley* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1916; reprinted 1972 by AMS Press, NY), vol. 2, pp. 110-111.
5. Anne L. Foster, "Opium, the United States, and the Civilizing Mission in Colonial Southeast Asia," *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 7.
6. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944; 2017), 179-180.
7. Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life" (April 10, 1899), *Theodore Roosevelt Association* (digitized). https://theodoreroosevelt.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=991271&module_id=339361
8. Michael T. Lubragge, "Manifest Destiny," *American History from Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond* (web), n.d., https://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/manifest-destiny/index.php

Kipling explicitly portrayed Filipino natives as child-savages in the opening verse, describing them as "Your new-caught sullen peoples, Half devil and half child."[9] This process of infantilising Filipinos was inseparable from that of articulating a paternalistic American identity and hegemony in directing global affairs. Powerful cultural analogies between childhood and 'primitive' or 'savage' peoples, combined with a view of human evolution as driven by racial competition, crystallised into an exceptionally American understanding of the civilising mission as one of preparing the colonised for self-government through benevolent and humanitarian guidance rather than deception and exploitation.

Almost immediately, Americans arriving in the Philippines began to report that there was an "opium problem" among the natives, exacerbated by the presence of ethnic Chinese inhabitants.[10] American officials, policymakers, and missionaries wanted to form an opium policy that was consistent with the US civilising mission, but their starting point was the opium farm infrastructure left over from Spanish rule. Most Southeast Asian colonial powers used some version of the opium farm system, which regulated use and distribution in the colonies by creating monopolies on opium sales. For some colonies, the opium farm was the "single most important, as well as most reliable, source of revenue."[11] The opium farm system in the Spanish Philippines operated much like those in other Southeast Asian colonies except for one key difference: smoking opium could only be legally bought and consumed by ethnic Chinese residents of the islands. Native Filipinos were prohibited outright.[12] This policy was based on a

9. Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition, 1885-1918* (Toronto: The Copp-Clark Co., 1919), Digitised by the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, CIHM/ICMH microfiche series; no. 77253 (1995). https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.77253

10. Hamilton Wright, quoted in Anne L. Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority: Policing Opium in South-East Asia, 1898–1925," *The International History Review* 22, no. 2 (2000), 258.

11. Anne L. Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority," 255.

12. Foster, 257.

Spanish racial logic which held that the Chinese racial constitution was better adapted to tolerate opium smoking than Filipinos.[13]

The Insular Government's approach to opium smoking in the Philippines took about a decade to settle. The Chinese presence on the islands brought the issue of opium smoking to the attention of American officials just as it had with the Spanish before them. Influenced by the Yellow Peril xenophobia of the 1870s, which had inspired the first drug and immigration restriction laws in US history, Americans arriving in the Philippines were already primed to see the Chinese as opium-peddling vampires. Initially, opium sales remained legal (only to Chinese, as it had been before US rule). It was during the deliberation over the meaning of 'civilizing mission' in the Asia/Pacific colonial context that the US officials settled on prohibition as "the only policy compatible with the civilizing mission."[14] Although Americans, too, believed that the Chinese handled opium better than the 'South Sea Malays,' the government still opted for a policy of total prohibition with no exceptions. The last thing officials in Washington wanted was for it to seem like the government was endorsing the habit. To reduce demand, the opium farms were eventually replaced with a prohibitively high tariff.[15] The tariff did not reduce demand, however. Between 1897 and 1901 legal imports of opium doubled, and the number of Filipino users also drastically increased.[16]

Shifting from regulation to prohibition was a means of combatting the degeneration caused by Chinese opium as well as a kind of proto-eugenic policy endeavouring to cultivate higher racial attributes in the Filipino people. These ideas about Chinese degeneracy and Filipino

13. Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority," 257.
14. Foster, "Opium, the US, and the Civilizing Mission in Colonial South-East Asia," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 17.
15. Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority," 257
16. Foster, 257.

childhood, as noted above, had been shaped by discourses that, over the previous decades, had become embedded in American culture. To many government officials, indigenous Filipinos were at best 'semicivilized,' and at worst one step away from irredeemable racial degeneration. The decision to annex the islands was largely justified by arguments that it was possible to prevent such a decline and to tutor the colonised in the ways of modern civilisation. This tutor/tutee relationship was heavily influenced by a historically powerful analogy between children and 'savages.'

The child-savage has been characterized as a "foundational trope" in cultural constructions of childhood, running parallel to other childhood archetypes like the competent child, the sinful child, the Romantic child, and the child as *tabula rasa*.[17] The flexibility of the child-savage trope has allowed it to be used to "demonize and to idealize both children and non-European, non-white peoples," and everything in between.[18] For the purposes of this study, the most significant function of this analogy has been to emphasize the supposed developmental deficiencies of children and non-Western populations, contributing to a cultural consensus that members of both categories "fall short of the standards set by modern Western man."[19] Such claims often elicited questions about what might be done to correct these deficiencies and guide the development of both groups toward some hegemonic ideal of 'maturity.' The analogy being rampant in the nineteenth century, colonised peoples were consistently depicted (to varying degrees) as children who lacked the competence to govern themselves. Elisabeth Wesseling is one of several scholars who have argued that overseas colonial regimes were an "outgrowth of the child-savage trope," and thus were often modeled on tutor-tutee and parent-child relations in

17. Elisabeth Wesseling (ed.), *The Child Savage, 1890-2010: From Comics to Games* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2016), 2.
18. Wesseling, *The Child Savage*, 5.
19. Wesseling, *The Child Savage*, 6.

the metropolis.[20] Karen Sánchez-Eppler likewise affirms that the projects of raising children and ruling natives were conceived as analogous practices in nineteenth-century American thought.[21]

The child-savage analogy was common in nineteenth century Western thought, used both colloquially and in popular and academic literature. The equivalence between domestic and colonial kinds of alterity was not only expressed through the child-savage analogy, however. Certain communities and different kinds of people *inside* the United States were also compared to 'savage' or 'primitive' man at different points in time. According to George Stocking, "…in addition to criminals, women, and children, it included peasants, rustics, laborers, beggars, paupers, madmen, and Irishmen".[22] It was only in the century's closing decades that the child-savage analogy would become "codified in an 'objective' and 'scientific' discourse," most notably in G. Stanley Hall's recapitulation theory of child development.[23] When there is high confidence in the redeemability of children and/or non-western peoples (through education, for example), the child-savage is reshuffled into the child-primitive.[24] While they are sometimes used interchangeably, 'savages' are distinct from primitives in that they exist "outside of history" and experience no change or progress—they already exist in either an "ideal state," having no need to, or in an irredeemable state and have no hope to.[25] Conversely, 'primitive' peoples *can* "participate in the history of progress," even though they still exist in a "primordial, rudimentary stage" of evolution.[26]

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20. Wesseling, *The Child Savage,* 9.
21. Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires Like Children: Race, Nation, and Religious Education," *American Literary History* 8, no. 3, 399-425.
22. George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 229.
23. Joshua Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage Goes to Hollywood: The Incorporation of Colonialist Discourse within American Exploitation Cinema, 1930-45," in Wesseling, ed., *The Child Savage,* 135.
24. Wesseling, *Child Savage,* 6.
25. Wesseling, 6.
26. Johannes Fabian, *Time and The Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), cited in Wesseling, 6.

This latter notion of a redeemable, childlike primitive aptly describes the way US officials perceived native Filipinos and lays the groundwork for thinking about how the relationship between the two countries evolved into one of parent/child or teacher/student. The civilising mission that emerged after 1898 revolved around ideas of 'uplift' or 'development' that continue to shape US foreign policy to this day. Yet these ideas did not arise in isolation; they were products of the intellectual, cultural, political, and economic contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Development and progress were imperative not only for improving 'inferior' or 'primitive' peoples, but also for preventing the racial and civilizational decline of the 'higher' ones. Seen this way, the 'total prohibition' approach toward opium, in the name of development, was in essence a way to assert and justify US global leadership and to protect White supremacy.

Some historians have focused on the concerns about declining 'manliness' in American culture and how they factored into pro-imperialist arguments.[27] Roosevelt, for example, regarded war, imperialism, and adventure as vital pursuits for counteracting the deterioration of American manhood, the fundamental building block of national well-being:

> A life of slothful ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual … a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it up lead clean, vigorous, healthy lives; when the children are so trained that they shall endeavour, not to shirk difficulties, but to overcome them; not to seek ease, but to know how to wrest triumph from toil and risk.[28]

Other imperialists took a less martial stance, arguing that the key to strong, courageous, manly progeny was by studying how to educate and develop young, immature minds; and not only

27. See Hogenson, "The Problem of Male Degeneracy."
28. Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life."

young American minds, but also the supposedly childish, underdeveloped minds of 'primitive' peoples. G. Stanley Hall spent his career advocating for this kind of programme for the mutual development of child and savage. Hall was a strong proponent of recapitulation theory and firmly believed that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," or that the stages of childhood development reproduced in miniature the historical stages of human evolution, from savage to civilized. Consequently, he was convinced that "the child and the race are keys to one another."[29] Since children and primitive races reflected the same stage of evolutionary history, research into child development had to be synchronised with knowledge about non-White peoples. This was the key to developing an effective educational model for both children and primitives, one that would instill the values and institutions that would set them on the right path toward maturity and the ability to command their own affairs in a civilised and democratic manner (American style). Hall argued that developing these so-called primitives would not only ensure that they would become 'civilised' and fit for the modern world, but this project would also, in turn, teach Americans themselves how to be strong, virtuous leaders.[30] Scholars have shown that Hall's views on benevolent imperialism and development, as progressive as they were in his time, were similarly rooted in an underlying assumption about the superiority of Whiteness and a simultaneous anxiety over the future of White American manhood.[31]

In addition to this view of imperialism as a project of mutual development (and of maintaining White patriarchal supremacy), a pre-existing missionary infrastructure provided a

29. G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, and Religion* (New York: London: D. Appleton & Company, 1904). vii, https://archive.org/details/adolescence02halliala

30. Joshua Garrison, "A Problematic Alliance: Colonial Anthropology, Recapitulation Theory, and G. Stanley Hall's Program for the Liberation of America's Youth," *American Educational History Journal* 35, no. 1 (2008), 140.

31. Mickenzie Fasteland, "Reading the Antimodern Way: G. Stanley Hall's Adolescence and Imperialist Reading for White American Boys," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 12, no. 1 (2019), 21.

ready-made framework for thinking about how Americans might approach this project of enlightening so-called 'heathens' and 'savages' both at home and abroad. This helped shape an American identity in global terms, one that was at once maternal (domestic and moral, based on a missionary approach) and paternal (nationalist and martial, based on an imperialist approach).[32] Examining nineteenth-century children's missionary literature, Karen Sánchez-Eppler writes that "even those texts most committed to a global spiritual 'family' and most critical of the strategies of conquest remain engaged in the project of delimiting a national identity, chauvinistically imagining the US as the ideal Christian nation."[33] These perspectives all employ familial language: American imperialism was discursively built on specific notions of maturity, such as asserting White manliness as the ideal for race, state, and individual development, and defining childishness as a cause for intervention. By enforcing maternalistic standards of morality and domesticity through paternalistic methods such as prohibition, surveillance, and discipline, American colonial rule was also styled as a form of parenting. To maximise human potential, proper nurturing, through moral, mental, physical, political and economic education was imperative if the students were to avoid the pitfalls of vice, crime, tyranny, and idleness, and truly become productive members of the global community.

This nascent conception of American imperialism as "the agency through which humanity is to be uplifted, through which despotism is to go down, through which the rights of man are to prevail," not only positioned the United States as arbiter of progress but also of what,

32. See Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires like Children"; Anne L. Foster, "The Philippines, the United States, and the Origins of Global Narcotics Prohibition," *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2019); Daniel J. P. Wertz, "Idealism, Imperialism, and Internationalism: Opium Politics in the Colonial Philippines, 1898–1925," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 2 (2013) pp. 467–499.

33. Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires like Children," 407.

exactly, constituted human improvement.[34] How else to decide what actions needed to be taken to achieve such progress than to identify and eliminate its impedimenta? As American colonial officials readily committed themselves to the work of purifying their new Oriental possession after the victory over Spain in 1898, they looked for ways to clean up "not only its public spaces, water, and food, but also the bodies and conduct of the inhabitants."[35] The presence of ethnic Chinese and their opium habits in the Philippines provided a clear target. They were singled out not because of anything the Chinese in the Philippines had done, but because of preconceptions linking Chinese migrants, opium, and racial degeneration that had crystallised back home over two decades earlier.

Nativism in the US had already begun to mount by the mid-nineteenth century in reaction to the influx of Irish-Catholic immigrants. Caricatures of drunken Irish with brutish or simian features were important propaganda devices for American Temperance reformers. This had the effect of increasing the appeal of prohibition as a concept, especially in anti-immigrant circles.[36] At the same time, another wave of immigration began entering the United States, this time from China. Between 1848 and 1888 around two million Chinese, predominantly single young men, left their increasingly populated homeland hoping to find work. [37] Many of these émigrés went to Indochina, the Malay Archipelago, the Philippines, Hawaii, California, and Australia, and before long established a global diaspora. By the end of the nineteenth century Chinese districts had

34. Senator Orville H. Platt (R, Connecticut) (1899), reprinted in John Hollitz, *Thinking Through the Past: A Critical Thinking Approach to U.S. History, Volume II: Since 1865,* 5th ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015), 101.

35. Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.

36. See John W. Frick, *Theatre, Culture and Temperance Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39; Philip McGowan, "The Intemperate Irish in American Reform Literature," *Irish Journal of American Studies* 4 (1995), 49–66.

37. David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 35.

formed in such major Western cities as Rotterdam, Amsterdam, New York, and London.[38] Opium smoking, a practice once only found in China, was introduced to all these places.[39] Overworked and in debt, with their familial, social, and romantic ties cut off, many of these demoralized young men found transitory relief in "a constellation of bachelor vices, including gambling, prostitution, and opium smoking."[40]

In 1873, the United States fell into its first economic depression. Xenophobia rose to a fever pitch as White Americans found employment harder and harder to come by. Chinese immigrants were accused of stealing jobs that many Whites believed were rightfully theirs. It was said that the Chinese worked too hard, and for too little money. Not only did they threaten the livelihoods of American men, but they also supposedly ensnared young, White, Protestant women, baiting them to enter their opium dens, where they were drugged and forced into sex slavery. A day before Christmas Eve of 1875, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported the discovery of "eight opium-smoking establishments kept by Chinese, for the exclusive use of white men and women … patronized not only by the vicious and depraved, but … by young men and women of respectable parentage."[41] This outcry against the Chinese spawned the first local anti-narcotics laws in the United States. Local ordinances were passed first in San Francisco in 1875 and a year later in Virginia City; other cities with large Chinese populations followed suit.[42] Since these early laws were meant to eliminate opium dens, they did not prohibit opium itself but

38. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, 35.
39. Courtwright, 35. Though there was no significant opium cultivation in the Western hemisphere until the 20th century, using opium was an established practice already in Europe. Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater* predated the influx of Chinese migrants. Note that this claim bears striking resemblance to the "Mexican hypothesis" which contends that marijuana entered the US with Mexican migrant workers.
40. Courtwright.
41. "San Francisco Opium Dens," *Concordia Empire* (Concordia, KA), Dec 24, 1875. https://www.newspapers.com/image/418968460/
42. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 76-77.

rather the practice of smoking it. This is an important distinction, since the practice of smoking (as opposed to eating, for example) opium was associated with the Chinese. Though political and economic grievances were an important factor in the rise of xeno- and Sinophobia at the time, these crackdowns on opium smoking were as importantly rooted in hyperbolic fears about Chinese opium dens and White slavery—or at least largely expressed that way.[43]

The image of the clandestine Chinese opium dens that lured in White people (especially women) from good families to corrupt and enslave them was a key element in both anti-opium and anti-Chinese propaganda of the 1870s. In the same year that San Francisco passed the nation's first anti-drug law, California congressman Horace F. Page introduced a bill that aimed to "end the danger of cheap Chinese labor and immoral Chinese women."[44] Signaling the end of open borders, the Page Act of 1875 was the first restrictive federal immigration law in American history, and it was designed with the intention of eliminating Chinese presence in the country.[45] Building on the Page Act, President Chester A. Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act into law seven years later, federally barring the entrance of all Chinese labourers into the United States in 1882. The squandered lives of White girls and "converts" from "the more respected class of families" at the hands of shady Chinese men and their mind-enslaving drugs were persuasive images that spoke to the racial and economic anxieties of White America and were important in galvanising and sustaining public support not only for the very first anti-drug laws in the country's history, but for Chinese exclusion laws as well.

43. Dale H. Gieringer, "The Forgotten Origins of Cannabis Prohibition in California," *Contemporary Drug Problems* 26 (Summer 1999), 238.
44. George Anthony Peffer, "Forbidden Families: Emigration Experiences of Chinese Women under the Page Law, 1875-1882," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 6, no. 1 (Fall 1986), 28.
45. "The Page Act of 1875 (Immigration Act)," 43rd Congress, Sess. 2, Ch. 141 (1875), published online by *Immigrationhistory.org*. https://immigrationhistory.org/item/page-act/

After 1875, authorities began to express concern about the supposed spread of the opium smoking habit to middle and upper-class Whites, especially women. In 1881 American physician H.H. Kane gave an account of how he believed opium smoking had jumped from Chinese immigrants to White Americans.

> Opium-smoking had been entirely confined to the Chinese up to and before the autumn of 1876, when the practice was introduced by a sporting character who had lived in China, where he had contracted the habit. He spread the practice amongst his class, and his mistress, a woman of the town, introduced it among her demi-monde acquaintances, and it was not long before it had widely spread amongst the people mentioned, and then amongst the younger class of boys and girls, many of the latter of the more respected class of families.[46]

Public concern over the supposed "idle rich" in New York, San Francisco, and other large American cities succumbing to the opium habit was coupled with fears of miscegenation. Rumours proliferated about how smoking opium excited sexual passions and how Chinese men coaxed young White women into their opium dens.[47] Dr. Kane thought it was "fascinating" how quickly the habit had spread across the US, "ensnaring individuals in all classes of society, leading to the downfall of innocent girls and the debasement of married women, and spreading its roots and growing" despite the measures taken to eradicate it.[48] Nearly thirty years later the head missionary at the Philadelphia Chinese mission, Frederic Poole, complained that "the white women who steadily cohabit with this [indolent] class of Chinese . . . are invariably victims to this pernicious habit, the indulgence . . . in many cases having been the first inducement to settle

46. "Dr. Harris of Virginia City, Nevada," quoted in H.H. Kane, *Opium-Smoking in America and China* (GP Putnam's Sons, 1881), 3. https://books.google.ca/books/about/Opium_smoking_in_America_and_China.html?id=nfnaKQyrAioC&redir_esc=y

47. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise,* 76; Dale H. Gieringer, "The Forgotten Origins of Cannabis Prohibition in California," 238, 241.

48. "Dr. Harris of Virginia City, Nevada," quoted in Kane, *Opium-Smoking in America,* 14.

down to a life of degradation."[49] All these stories boiled down to the same basic idea: Chinese men were seducing and corrupting White women and young people – the groups most integral to the propagation of the race. They were deviating these groups from the righteous path, leeching all their potential by recruiting them into adversary forces. Analogous to the threat posed by Chinese migration to American labour, opium dens were a menace to the nation because they threatened the survival of the Anglo-Saxon race. By the and of the nineteenth century the Chinese opium peddler was a common trope in popular and political culture. Progressive writers and reformers often juxtaposed Chinese and other racialized and immigrant communities with White Americans as a form of social critique. Danish immigrant and pioneering muckraker Jacob Riis included an entire chapter on New York's Chinatown in his influential 1890 photo essay *How the Other Half Lives.* Riis' photos recorded the grim conditions that recent immigrants to New York City were forced to live in and helped bring about reforms like the New York Tenement Act of 1901. His observations on the Chinese are worth quoting at length:

> The average Chinaman, the police will tell you, would rather gamble than eat any day … Only the fellow in the bunk smokes away, indifferent to all else but his pipe and his own enjoyment. It is a mistake to assume that Chinatown is honeycombed with opium 'joints.' There are a good many more outside of it than in it. The celestials do not monopolize the pipe. In Mott Street there is no need of them. Not a Chinese home or burrow there but has its bunk and its lay-out, where they can be enjoyed safe from police interference. The Chinaman smokes opium as Caucasians smoke tobacco, and apparently with little worse effect upon himself. But woe unto the white victim upon which his pitiless drug gets its grip![50]

49. Reverend Frederic Poole (leader of the Christian League of Philadelphia), Letter to Hamilton Wright, July 27, 1908, Records of the United States Delegation to the International Opium Commission and Conference (USIOC), 1909–1913, record group 43, National Archives, College Park, Md. Quoted in David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*, 77.

50. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, ed. David Leviatin (Boston; New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1994), 121-122.

Riis' portrayal contained an important assumption that, recalling the words of Kansas representative Steve Alford in the introduction to this thesis, continues to shape the ways in which people think and talk about drugs to this day. Not only did different races react differently to the same drug, but also that tolerance for a given drug is part of what separates one race from another. For Riis, like many others, tolerance for opium smoking was a defining feature of the Chinese racial constitution, but entirely foreign to White bodies. Whereas the Chinese race had evolved a unique tolerance to opium, its effects were disastrous to White or Nordic users and even more so to the races that were supposedly on lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder. By tying drug use and tolerance to racial traits, these kinds of claims reflected and contributed to a biological essentialist view of drug use. This image of the Chinese opium smoker became so firmly entrenched in turn-of-the-century American culture that the United States' first forays into federal drug policy were predicated on its underlying assumptions: first in the colonial Philippines, then with the 1909 Shanghai International Opium Conference, and finally, domestically, with the 1914 Harrison Anti-Narcotics Act. Concern over Chinese opium peddlers was central to these early efforts at international drug regulation in the Philippines, as they were blamed for importing opium to the islands and causing the degeneration of the native population. The nativist opium panic of the 1870s thus framed the 'opium problem' as indistinguishable from Chinese presence and influence. Their presence in the Philippines, it was believed, would obstruct American efforts to 'civilize' and 'uplift' the 'primitive' natives of the archipelago.

American drug policy in the Philippines started with a preliminary 1902 statute barring American traders from bringing guns, alcohol, and opium into the Pacific islands. A 1903 report indicating that American soldiers in the Philippines were using opium sparked even wider

concern.[51] Capitulating to the incessant lobbying from missionary groups and the "thousands of telegrams in support of anti-opium measures" sent to the White House, President Theodore Roosevelt organised a commission to study the opium issue in the region and to survey the opium policies of other colonial and sovereign governments. Headed by Bishop Charles Brent, the Philippine Opium Commission spent over four months interviewing local officials in Japan, Formosa (Taiwan), Shanghai, Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, Burma (Myanmar) and Java, resulting in a report nearly 300 pages long.[52] Anne L. Foster sees the commission's report as a turning point in the American approach to colonial governance, marking the birth of exceptionalism as a linchpin of US foreign policy. In their survey of opium policies in the region, members of the commission judged other colonial powers "almost solely on their ability to protect indigenous Southeast Asians from acquiring or maintaining the vice," leveraging morality to bolster US power in the Asia-Pacific region.[53] One major impact that the report had on how Americans understood themselves and the civilising mission was the belief that protecting indigenous Southeast Asians (but not other populations, such as the ethnic Chinese diaspora or Indians in Burma) from opium and other uncivilised habits was indispensable in the proper management of these populations. More broadly, the report was an important contributing factor to the transformation of American identity in the world—away from the earlier inclination to imitate European colonial policies, and toward a self-conception of the United States as "the model for the rest of the world."[54]

51. William L. White, "The Early Criminalization of Narcotic Addiction," *williamwhitepapers.com* (2014), 1; Courtwright, *Dark Paradise*, 117.
52. Foster, "Opium, the US, and the Civilizing Mission in Colonial South-East Asia," 13-14.
53. Foster, "Civilizing Mission in Colonial South-East Asia," 14, emphasis mine.
54. Foster.

The Opium Commission Report claimed that opium smoking was not as common a habit in the Philippines as elsewhere in the Orient, but still recommended regulatory policy to make sure the habit did not spread. Their final report recommended a three-year plan to gradually stamp out the traffic of opium into the Philippines.[55] The Civilian Governor-General of the Insular Government, William Howard Taft, suggested that the US follow the European model and establish an opium monopoly to generate revenue. The difference between Taft's proposal and the established European opium farm system lay in what these funds would be used for. Taft wanted the revenue to be allotted toward a programme to curb opium smoking on the islands by educating Filipinos about its dangers.[56] President Roosevelt was not keen on either proposal, and in 1905 Congress passed a law banning all "non-medical" opium use by native Filipinos. The law also set a three-year plan in motion aiming to gradually suppressing opium use among non-Filipino (primarily ethnic Chinese) residents. These policies were designed to protect and uplift native Filipinos from Chinese opium smokers, just like White women and young men needed protection from the opium dens back in the United States. Notably, "the most common result of the US-initiated prohibition of opium in the Philippines was the arrest of Chinese opium users who lived on the Islands."[57] Working under two familiar assumptions—that the opium habit was endemic to the Chinese race, and that the childlike Filipinos were particularly vulnerable to harmful influences—the Commission Report warned that if the Chinese living in the Philippines had continued access to opium, its spread to the native population was inevitable. Filipinos had to be "preserved from what would be as disastrous to them as a fire to the forest; for an individual or a people with a relatively low degree of vitality suffers palpably from the inroads of

55. William White, "Criminalization of Narcotic Addiction," 1; Anne L. Foster, "Origins of Global Narcotics Prohibition," 25-27, 34.
56. White, "The Early Criminalization of Narcotic Addiction," 1.
57. White, "Early Criminalization of Narcotic Addiction," 1.

a vice like this more than those whom nature has more richly endowed with powers of resistance."[58]

Premised on the idea of a hierarchy of races, the authors of the report believed that the racially 'underdeveloped' Filipinos were incapable of the kind of self-control that would be needed to resist the temptation of opium smoking; such powers of restraint were more characteristic of the 'higher' races. As a result, they were especially vulnerable to the dangers of opium. The Report continued to outline the racial arithmetic that they had based their recommendations on. The question when comparing the effects of opium on different races was "not only *to* what but also *from* what do men fall," since "[d]egradation, like poverty, is relative."[59] A Chinese smoker could lose "ten per cent" of the abilities endowed to their race, reducing their physical and intellectual capacities to the level of "the Malay … who by the same vice reduces his vitality but in doing so touches the bottom of worthlessness."[60] According to this logic, preventing the spread of opium addiction to Filipinos was vital to the success of the US civilising mission; should the US fail, their colonial subjects would be reduced to little more than beasts. Opium, then, had to be forbidden to all. Through judicious, humanitarian, and rational reforms, a given race could be lifted above its station, or at least remain afloat in the racial evolutionary struggle. There was still hope for the Philippines; but to many, the Chinese were hopelessly, irredeemably Other (not savages per se, but at best degenerated relics of a once-great civilisation). Opium was labelled a racial pollutant. As a Chinese export, it could only hinder the

58. Philippine Opium Investigation Committee, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Philippine Commission to Investigate the Use of Opium and the Traffic Therein and the Rules, Ordinances and Laws Regulating Such Use and Traffic in Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Hongkong, Saigon, Singapore, Burmah, Java, and the Philippine Islands*, 41 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1905), digitised by Google Play Books. https://play.google.com/store/books/details/United_States_Philippine_Commission_1900_1916_Opiu?id=_rMRAAAAYAAJ

59. Philippine Opium Investigation Committee Report, 41.

60. Philippine Opium Investigation Committee Report.

'normal' racial and national development of Filipinos. True progress, the kind that led individuals and races from savagery to civilisation, was only possible by attacking the root of the opium problem. This was a watershed moment in US drug policy, when the rationale for eliminating drug use began to rely on an infantilised image of the nation's subjects—innocent, vulnerable, and on the borderline between savagery and civilisation—and on an understanding of drugs and addiction as forms of biological warfare.

The scope of the Chinese Exclusion Act was extended to the Philippine islands after American annexation in 1898.[61] Inspired by the Japanese policy in Formosa which registered all known opium smokers and then closed the registration lists, the Commission recommended that the Insular Government also register all addicts in the Philippines.[62] As long as the Chinese smokers already living in the Philippines were accounted for and their consumption regulated, the habit would not spread to Filipinos; and "as long as the present Chinese exclusion act continues in force, there can be no influx of opium smokers from without."[63] Since the American civilising mission was informed by a sense of racial duty to educate and civilize Filipinos, then it logically followed that 'Chinese' vices like opium had to be eliminated. Opium prohibition in the Philippines officially took effect in 1908. In 1909, the first federal bill restricting the use and trade of opium preparations in the United States was passed. In the same year, the United States called the first international conference on drug control, the Shanghai Opium Conference. The plan was to enlist other colonial powers in the region to cooperate in curbing the opium traffic. Just as they did at home, American officials concluded that the source of the narcotic problem in

61. Wertz, "Idealism, Imperialism, and Internationalism," 482-83. It is also interesting to note that Japanese law in Formosa permitted only Chinese residents to legally buy and smoke opium, so the association between China and opium-smoking was not exclusive to Western cultures.
62. Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority," 259.
63. Commission Report, quoted in Foster, 259.

the Philippines originated *outside* its borders. As Foster notes, that this assumption would remain unchallenged and become a central feature of American drug policy until the present day.[64]

The idea that 'unwelcome' foreigners (Chinese in particular) were agents of mental, physical, and moral corruption, like an invasive species out to decimate the native ecosystem, had become embedded in American culture. Now, it had been exported into its overseas territory and used as a basis for policy. The stated goal of American imperialism was to teach the colonised how to govern themselves. Yet one official reported to the Opium Commission that so many Filipinos in his district had fallen to the opium habit that he found it "impossible to find any one eligible to a municipal office, since they are all opium habitues and incapacitated through lack or moral and physical energy."[65] Notably, both the Commission's recommendations and the final policies instituted in the American Philippines to deal with the opium situation were based on a crude racial arithmetic: Opium + Chinese = Malay. Opium + Malay = Irredeemable.

But what about White Americans? To what rung of the racial or civilizational ladder would they fall by using drugs like opium? This drive to prohibit drugs as a way of protecting a juvenile, less developed Other was in essence a prototype for the youth-focused anti-drug crusades that surfaced later, back home in the United States. Race development was not just for non-White peoples; it was understood as a project of mutual improvement from the outset. Having gained some experience with 'civilising' childlike savages abroad, these techniques were then applied to civilising savage-like children at home. The emergence of eugenics as a promising mechanism for racial and national progress only encouraged people to see others in

64. See Anne L. Foster, "Origins of Global Narcotics Prohibition," 13-36.

65. Philippine Opium Commission Report, quoted in Wertz, "Idealism," 483. Foster also quotes Hamilton Wright's observations in 1900 that "the vice of opium smoking was spreading rapidly to the native Philippine population, with the result that whole communities were becoming impoverished and rendered unfit for any part in the life of the islands." See Foster, "Prohibition as Superiority," 258.

terms of good and bad traits, healthy and unhealthy bodies, 'normal' or deviant minds. It also galvanised many to look for decisive (or final) solutions.[66]

From Colonial Children to Teenage Savages: Eugenics and the Domestication of Drug Prohibition (1920-1930)

> "A citizen asset, becoming an addict, is turned into the worst form of liability. The economic wastage is heavy, the producer becoming not only a dependent, but a destructive parasite … It would be conservative to estimate at one-third of the total burden of crime the part that comes from DRUG ADDICTION. THE PUBLIC HEALTH is equally menaced, the drug addict becomes the principal incubator and carrier of vice diseases as well as the other diseases that menace the public health. PUBLIC MORALS suffer from the prevalence of drug addicts even more heavy than the health and the public safety. Before drug addiction, all the moral and spiritual attributes of men upon which the institutions of civilized society are built, utterly disintegrate. A sufficient spread of drug addiction must insure the disintegration and obstruction of any civilization."
>
> — Captain Richmond Pearson Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction and Gravest Menace" (1928).

After the First World War, the child-savage underwent a process of 'domestication' in the United States. The more explicitly racial overtones of the metaphor were coded through other markers of alterity and deviance, often in "animalistic" physical characteristics but also in movie monsters and through social and psychological pathologies.[67] This shift uprooted the child-savage from its colonial context and linked it more closely to developments on home soil. This domestic child-savage was tailored to national problems, rather than imperial ones. During this period young people's behaviour came under unprecedented political, scientific, and public scrutiny, and they were both publicly demonised and idealised, depending on the perspective of

[66] My use of the term 'final solution' here is not to trivialise the horrors of Nazi Germany, but rather to indicate the myriad ways in which eugenic and race development principles were interpreted and applied during this period, and to suggest that the influence of these disciplines was more far-reaching, insidious, and long-term than it may seem—in approaches to drug policy, for instance.

67. Wesseling, *Child Savage,* 14.

the speaker.[68] So many temptations were now accessible—the pool and dance halls with gambling, alcohol, smoking, drugs, outrageous music, and unfamiliar people; the mass production of affordable products that made life more comfortable; and the automobile that had made the world significantly smaller. Life was accelerating at a blistering pace. It is no surprise that many Americans were less than optimistic that postwar youth would be adequately prepared to be ideal citizens and strong leaders.

The focus on youth and degeneration that characterised anti-drug discourse in the 1920s and 1930s was grounded in two distinct yet interrelated constructions of youth: the youth-as-future-self (individual-national focus) and the youth-as-undeveloped-Other (imperial-evolutionary). The youth-as-future-self spoke to concerns about the future of American families and, by extension, the future of the nation. By propagating the physical and intellectual traits and nourishing the moral and ideological principles that supposedly made the United States a superior nation, each successive generation, it was hoped, would be stronger and smarter than the last, improving upon the stock of the parents and giving rise to a more powerful and sovereign nation. Linked to the colonial policies created to promote the 'development' of infantilised and racialized subjects in the Philippines, the youth-as-undeveloped-Other expressed the same concerns but had less to do with *hope* than it did with *fear* about the future. Young people were not fully civilised, yet not fully savage. As a group, they represented an Other inside American borders. As such, it was imperative that they be educated, supervised, and controlled because, it was feared, their savage urges were too strong and too tempting. These two constructs reflect the dual focus of Hall's evolutionary and developmental theories, particularly the notion that the

68. Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 17-52.

child and the race were keys to one another. The child-primitive, representing the unpolished, still-ripening stages of humanity, became a particularly salient concept after the United States acquired control of the Philippines in 1898. The development of individual youth, too, became a subject of heightened public concern in the early decades of the twentieth century. By the interwar period, young people were seen as both vulnerable and volatile. This delicate delinquent needed protection and guidance. If urbanisation and affluence bred immorality before the Great Depression, unemployment and immigration made it seem virulent. "Protect the children" started to become a rhetorical tool for compelling others to cooperate with a given social, political, or ideological agenda, and as a result youth were increasingly thrust into the centre of larger social debates over the terms of modern subjecthood, the boundaries of American identity, and the course of the country's future.[69] Propelled by Progressive reformers, this phenomenon was only amplified with the shift toward interventionalist policies after Roosevelt's New Deal. Young Americans, caught between savagery and civility, needed guidance as they went through the 'natural' stages of development. Their nature had to be carefully nurtured, lest their healthy and 'normal' development be corrupted by temptation; youth, like so-called 'primitive' races, were especially susceptible to their 'natural' primal urges, magical thinking, and to unwholesome social environments. In pedagogy, psychology, and politics, child development came to be seen as a means of carrying out a programme of social hygiene, and young people as sites for constructing and preserving racial, national, and ideological hegemony.

Deliberation over how to develop these dual forms of youth intersected perhaps most clearly in the discourse of 'race development,' which combined notions of social and racial

69. Legal scholar Scott Beattie has argued that classifying children as pure innocents in need of protection can be seen as a kind of obsession over the concept of purity. See Beattie, *Community, Space and Online Censorship: Regulating Porntopia* (London: Routledge, 2009), 165–167.

improvement. Moreover, alcohol and drug prohibition and anti-drug education (or propaganda) became essential to the project of racial development, first with America's colonial 'children' in the Philippines, and then for young people in the metropole. Rudyard Kipling's characterisation of Filipinos as "half devil and half child" speaks directly to the prominence of the child-savage analogy in American culture. The *Journal of Race Development* (*JRD*), published between 1910 and 1919, is a particularly striking example of the interwovenness of race and child development discourses in the early twentieth century United States. The journal was co-founded and co-edited by G. Stanley Hall, one of the leading psychologists of his time. An ardent critic of European colonialism and the subordination of non-White peoples both overseas and in the United States, Hall was known foremost as a Progressive-minded psychologist and pedagogist. This should not be taken to mean that he thought of non-Whites as biologically equal; it would be fairer to say, rather, that he believed all races, 'lower' and 'higher,' possessed the same potential and deserved equal opportunity to progress. Like many of his peers, Hall understood race to be the fundamental building block of human evolution and argued that it was the duty of the more 'evolved' races to educate and uplift the 'undeveloped' ones in the grander interest of human progress. Hall advocated for the advancement of all races; but he envisioned this progress in terms of White supremacy. He saw both 'primitives' and 'youth' as immature and vulnerable, people in need of benevolent guidance. He was not alone; the *JRD* and its contributors exemplified this very spirit. Indeed, according to the journal's founding editor, George Blakeslee, the *JRD* aimed to "present … important facts which bear upon race progress, and the different theories as to the methods by which developed peoples may most effectively aid the progress of the undeveloped."[70] Other noteworthy contributors to the *JRD* included W.E.B. Du

70. Quoted in Jessica Blatt, "'To Bring Out the Best That is in Their Blood': Race, Reform, and Civilization in the Journal of Race Development (1910–1919)," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 5 (September 2004), 691.

Bois, Franz Boas, John Dewey, and Ellsworth Huntington (who would later serve as president of the American Eugenics Society).[71] These intellectuals agreed with the journal's premise that scientific knowledge could be used to influence the 'natural' course of human evolution. Most subscribed to neo-Lamarckian ideas of trait heredity and rather archaic climate-based theories of evolution and wrote enthusiastically about "'civilizational' progress and degeneration."[72]

Robert Vitalis and Marton T. Markovits have situated the *JRD* within a larger network in the early twentieth century that they call the "lost world of development theory in the United States." Private and public parties, academics, and other groups in the United States rallied around issues relating to the "development of backward states and races […] and what kinds of interventions if any are effective" in bringing positive change.[73] It is important to note that the boundaries between nature and nurture in early twentieth century thought were, in Jessica Blatt's words, "fuzzy."[74] For many of these thinkers, human evolution was teleological, and the biological and the social "did not so much overlap as flow seamlessly one into the other."[75] Blatt argues that the *Journal of Race Development* "grew out of and depended on that fuzziness" in ways that continue to influence our understanding and approach to 'development' and 'modernization' to this day.[76] This "fuzziness" between nature and nurture is apparent throughout the history of drug policy in the United States and beyond. In the Philippines, supposed "natural" characteristics determined Filipinos' racial inferiority and "nurture," or the civilising mission, was the supposed rationale behind the US government's decision to annex the

71. Jessica Blatt, "Journal of Race Development," 692.
72. Blatt, 692.
73. Vitalis and Markovits, cited in Blatt, 692.
74. Blatt, 693.
75 Blatt, 692.
76. Blatt, 693. The *JRD* changed its name to the *Journal of International Affairs* in 1919, and in 1922 it became *Foreign Affairs*, which is still in publication and widely read today.

Philippines and the policies they instituted there, including the United States' very first venture into international drug policy.

Hall's 1904 monograph, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and* Education, had a momentous and lasting impact on the image of the American teenager. Hall argued that adolescence was a decisive stage in human development, a period when every person could potentially fold under the emotional and social pressure. In his words, "…every step of the upward way [to adulthood] is strewn with wreckage of body, mind, and morals."[77] For Hall and his peers, degenerate youths—delinquents, 'hoodlums,' and criminals—had deviated from the normal progression from savagery to civilization.[78] Teenagers needed to be protected from this wreckage, Hall argued, and the American approach to education would require a complete overhaul if it were to stand a chance at moulding these volatile beings into a strong future citizenry. He maintained that education should be based on scientific understandings of child development and of evolutionary theory, fields of knowledge that he and many others believed were fundamentally intertwined. The only way to truly guarantee that the savage child could be refined into the civilised adult was to understand how civilisation evolved out of its own savage past.[79] Hall's theories relied on the race-based criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso, and some have credited him with helping inspire early efforts to deal with juvenile delinquency based on the theories and methods of

77. Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), quoted in Kenneth B. Kidd, *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 139.

78. Hall was the most well-known, but far from the only one to advocate for a child development programme based on understandings of the stages of human evolution. See, for instance, a socialist interpretation of the child-savage analogy and its value in child development in J. (John) Howard Moore, *The Law of Biogenesis: Being Two Lessons on the Origin of Human Nature* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, Co-operative, 1914), 70. https://books.google.ca/books?id=uVguAAAAYAAJ&vq=higher+races&source=gbs_navlinks_s

79. Daniel E. Bender, *American Abyss: Savagery and Civilization in the Age of Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 175.

Lombroso's atavistic model of criminality. Jeffrey Moran observes that Hall's views on teen sexuality were taken up by social hygienists when they began to create proscriptive programmes for sex education based on notions of 'civilised' and 'savage' behaviour. Though he only touched on drugs and addiction tangentially, this way of seeing teenagers' urges and appetites, as manifestations of atavistic traits that need to be suppressed, established a "connection between adolescence and social decline that would remain in many people's minds for decades to come."[80]

Mickenzie Fasteland argues that Hall's work on adolescence "demonstrates how the American adolescent character was tied to American imperialist success" from the very beginning.[81] For many Progressives, ranging from influential scholars like Hall to political leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, only the strongest, cleverest, and most resolute races stood a chance at evolutionary survival. The United States needed to cultivate the healthiest bodies and minds from the 'highest' racial stock to ensure that it would steer the course of human progress, not be driven to "race suicide." Hall was concerned about the fate of White American teenage boys. For Kenneth Kidd, the image of the adolescent that Hall propagated was a representation of "both self and Other . . . a model of middle-class WASP identity . . . [and its] deviations."[82] The child-savage analogy that underpinned Hall's work resonated with American academics, officials, and ordinary folk who were concerned about juvenile delinquency and the corruptive influences of industrialism and urbanisation and drove

80. Jeffrey Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century* (Harvard University Press, 2000), 62-63.
81. Mickenzie Fastemann, "Reading the Antimodern Way," 21.
82. Kenneth B. Kidd, *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 142, 145

them to demand institutions and policies that could vigilantly protect and supervise adolescents through those volatile intermediary years of life.

American attitudes toward drug addiction underwent a sea change over the first decades of the twentieth century. Before 1900, ideas about addiction and the people it affected largely revolved around the iatrogenic addiction of Civil War veterans, upper-middle-class women, and even children, all of whom found themselves dependent on their prescribed medicines at the hands of imprudent, prescription-happy physicians—not unlike the narrative surrounding the present-day 'opiate epidemic.' Up until World War I, many still saw addiction in the United States as a medical issue that afflicted vulnerable fellow citizens. Addiction outside the US was, as we have seen, taken as evidence of 'their' inferiority; it was expected of 'them,' but an anomaly for 'us'; normal 'over there' but abnormal 'over here.' Between 1900 and 1920, contemporary social commentary shifted from rhetorical attacks on the Chinese to identifying other marginalized groups as scapegoats. Black and lower-class White cocaine "fiends" were accused of terrorizing respectable White communities. Press reports that a strange 'loco weed' had been introduced to the US by Mexican migrant workers began to proliferate, peaking after the Great Depression when Mexicans were assigned the role of unwelcome job-stealers that the Chinese had held in the 1870s. Still, most White, middle-class opiate addicts were "usually seen as pitiful unfortunates living failed lives as a result of their habits."[83] However, increasing rates of addiction, whether real or imagined, indicated to many that the degeneracy of 'those' people was infiltrating the minds and bodies of American citizens. These once sympathetic, or at least

83. Susan L. Speaker, "'The Struggle of Mankind against Its Deadliest Foe': Themes of Counter-Subversion in Anti-Narcotic Campaigns, 1920-1940," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 3 (Spring, 2001), 592. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789819.

mostly benign, figures came to be seen as mindless, dehumanised brutes. Addicts joined the likes of the insane and mentally ill, undesirable immigrants, deviants, and criminals.

Apart from the influence of imperialism in the Philippines, this shift was in large part a product of the Progressive-era drive to purge and detoxify American cities, schools, businesses, and politics. Though Progressives were divided on important national issues such as import duties and imperialism, consensus did emerge within the movement on two important policies, immigration restriction and alcohol prohibition, that epitomise the some of the dominant cultural fears of the early twentieth century—national degeneration, sociopolitical disruption, economic decline, and race suicide.[84] The social focus of Progressivism had its counterpart in eugenic science, which promised to eradicate social problems by eliminating their root hereditary causes. Eugenic considerations influenced the decisions to enact restrictive immigration laws, introduce national alcohol prohibition, and develop new anti-drug discourses in the 1920s. The period between 1900 and 1930 was characterised by a tension between environmental (euthenic) and hereditary (eugenic) approaches to solving social problems.[85] This had important effects on perceptions of drug addiction, especially since the problem was already established as one related to racial supremacy and geopolitical power. Opium Commissioner Hamilton Wright made this clear in 1911, writing that "the opium and morphine habits have become a National curse, and in some way they must certainly be checked, if we wish to maintain our high place among the nations of the world and any elevated standard of intelligence and morality among

84. The United States had already established outright prohibition as the only approach that was congruent with the moral and benevolent imperial identity established in the decade after 1898. Social and racial progress in the Philippines were contingent upon the elimination of 'illegitimate' opium use among indigenous Filipinos and of the Chinese people who spread it to them, further justifying the need for immigration restriction laws. In the early to mid-1920s, both immigration restriction and prohibition re-emerged as desirable federal policies for national development.

85. For more on the shift from social reform to eugenics during this period, see Bender, *American Abyss*, esp. 9-11.

ourselves."[86] These narcotics were a curse to national sovereignty and to the intelligence and morality of citizens.

Between approximately 1907 and 1937, eugenics reached the height of its influence in American scientific, political, and popular thought. Over this period thirty-two states passed legislation mandating sterilisation for people deemed to be at risk of birthing "defective" or "socially inadequate" children. Several states also criminalised marriage and intercourse between "epileptic, imbecile or feebleminded" individuals.[87] Eugenic thought was important in providing scientific legitimacy to the Jim Crow system of racial segregation in the US; it also helped rationalise anti-immigrant sentiment and labour grievances by essentializing negative stereotypes and 'undesirability' of certain groups. The biological rhetoric of protecting White American stock from "pollution" resulted in the federal quota system of immigration restriction that was instituted in the mid-1920s.[88] According to legal historian Paul A. Lombardo, the average American in the early twentieth century was drawn to eugenics "not because of its intellectual pedigree . . . but because so much of what it meant to them fit neatly within ideas they already held" about heredity and social and racial degeneration.[89] The possibility that social problems like criminality, addiction, and poverty could be solved through selective breeding was also an attractive idea to supporters of the wider reform movement that continued to gain traction in

86. Edward Marshall, "'Uncle Sam is the Worst Drug Fiend in the World': Dr. Hamilton Wright, Opium Commissioner, Says We Use More of That Drug Per Capita Than the Chinese," *New York Times* (Mar 12, 1911), *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. https://lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Funcle-sam-is-worst-drug-fiend-world%2Fdocview%2F97199807%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D10246.

87. Paul A. Lombardo, "The Power of Heredity and the Relevance of Eugenic History," *Genetics in Medicine* 20, no. 11 (2018), 1306.

88. Lombardo, 1306; Douglas Clark Kinder, "Shutting Out the Evil: Nativism and Narcotics Control in the United States," *Journal of Policy History* 3, no. 4 (1991).

89. Lombardo, 1306.

response to the dizzying pace of industrialisation, urbanisation, immigration, and all their attendant vices.[90]

Drug historian David Courtwright acknowledges the influence of heredity and eugenics on Anglo-American perceptions of intoxication and addiction. Noting that the view of addiction as a pathology with exogenous (induced by chronic exposure to the drug itself) rather than endogenous (inherent mental or moral deficit driving the individual toward addiction) origins first began to take shape around alcohol during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Courtwright affirms that by the dawn of the twentieth, "specialists had extended it to nearly all psychoactive drugs" in a condition referred to as "inebriety."[91] Many came to the conclusion that healthy individuals were as susceptible to addiction as those with fragile constitutions. Many theorised that the physical, mental, and moral degeneration in habitual drug users could be passed on to their children. Courtwright remarks that "ideas about the heritability of acquired traits declined after 1910."[92] This might have been true for elite academics and specialists, but in popular discourse, Lamarckian heredity remained influential. As Chief Justice Harry Olsen of the Chicago municipal court opined in the *New York Times* in 1923, Americans needed to "reverse the Chinese custom of reverence for our ancestors" and to "idealize our posterity" instead.

> At the present time the defectives are multiplying as never before in the history of the race. A great part of the earnest and zealous thought and effort of the community is bent upon enabling this degenerate stream to become wider. The limitation of offspring foolishly has been called race suicide. But race suicide, we now find, lies in the encouragement of the propagation of the unfit.[93]

90. Lombardo, 1306
91. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit*, 180.
92. Courtwright, 181.
93. Harry Olsen, "Check on Society's Defectives Seen as Urgent Need of Nation; Laboratory Experiments in Chicago Show That Aid for the Unfit Encourages Their Spread — How Municipal Chief Justice Would Curb the Subnormal and Develop Better Stock," *The New York Times* (September 2, 1923), p. 7. https://www.nytimes.com/1923/09/02/archives/check-on-societys-defectives-seen-as-urgent-need-of-nation.html

Contemporary social commentators carried on a vigorous debate over whether addiction *caused* the moral, mental, and physical degeneration of the addict or whether individuals of inherently weak constitution were *drawn* toward addiction; that is, whether drugs bred degeneration or if degeneration led to drug use. The addiction issue, to many, was a eugenic issue. American psychologist and eugenicist Albert E. Wiggam wrote in 1927 that "Prohibition is above all a Eugenical question."[94] Eugenicists were divided into 'wet' and 'dry' camps on the prohibition question but were united in their conviction that these addicts contaminated the racial stock. Alcoholism was a "racial poison," as were opiates and cocaine. This compelled people to think about how to inoculate against such a fate. To stop the traffic in drugs, the United States had to compel other nations to capitulate to the goal of total prohibition and increase control over its borders. To eliminate addiction, users and sellers had to be removed from society and either treated, incarcerated, or deported, and young people had to be taught to fear drugs and shun anyone associated with them. Since instilling fear (or 'knowledge about the evils') of drugs was, for many, the goal of anti-drug education, exaggerated and sensationalised claims about drugs and users were strategic, not necessarily malicious. If all of this could be accomplished, future generations would be born into a better, drug- and crime-free world.

Concerns about the degenerative influence of foreign people and cultures shaped the new image of the drug user that emerged alongside the 1914 Harrison Narcotics Act, that of the hale and hearty, city-dwelling young male from the lower and/or 'criminal,' classes.[95] This young, usually White male 'should' have been on the path to becoming a productive, loyal, and upright

94. Quoted in Bartlett C. Jones, "Prohibition and Eugenics, 1920-1933," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 18, no. 2 (April 1963), 170.

95. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise,* 88-91. The Harrison Act was the first federal drug restriction law in US history, named after its sponsor, Francis Burton Harrison. It is worth noting that Harrison was governor-general of the Philippines when the Act was ratified, further demonstrating the role of the Philippines as a laboratory for drug policy.

citizen, but instead, succumbed to the destructive influx of foreign drugs and people that turned him into an agent of chaos, a threat to American values, ideals, and institutions. The image of drug use that crystallized between 1900 and 1920 was one directly responding to the prevailing concerns of the time. Contemporary critics argued that nonmedical drug use was tantamount to slavery, particularly since it made users dependent on a foreign power and incapable of participating in the economic, political, and social growth of the country. Addiction, like slavery, was tantamount to "social death."[96] Shiftless, immoral 'criminal classes' that populated and defiled American cities were, like the Chinese in the Philippines, spreading moral degeneracy, crime, and indigence. "A consensus had emerged," wrote Richard Bonnie and Charles H Whitebread II in 1974. "[T]he non-medical use of 'narcotics was a cancer which had to be removed entirely from the social organism."[97]

By the interwar period, addiction was increasingly attributed to some form of mental or social pathology—inherent criminality, deviance, or neurasthenia, for example. By 1919, the transformation in public attitudes about intoxicants and addiction had been so drastic that addicts were being referred to as "dope fiends" even in government documents. By 1920 the discursive construction of the "drug fiend" as a "twisted, immoral, untrustworthy" Other was complete. The late filmmaker and documentarian Mike Gray once likened this new 'drug fiend' that emerged in the early 1920s to another widely known and culturally constructed villain—the vampire. "Like

96. I refer to Orlando Patterson's link between slavery and social death, a parasitic relationship in which a master's power over a slave relies on their social dehumanisation. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Though this might not be the best comparison, addicts were often portrayed as slaves serving some clandestine master by addicting others, alienating them from their families and social circles and making them loyal to the drug/master alone. Moreover, addiction was explicitly called a form of "social death."

97. Richard J. Bonnie and Charles H. Whitebread II, *The Marihuana Conviction: A History of Marihuana Prohibition in the United States* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 17.

vampires, they infected everything they touched. There was no room for compassion here. The only way to get rid of a vampire is to drive a stake through his heart."[98]

The drug-user-as-vampire trope was a powerful image in garnering public attention and support for government intervention to deal with this social menace, and its influence can largely be traced to the influence of Spanish-American War hero Richmond Pearson Hobson. Dubbed "The Father of American Prohibition," Hobson became something of a celebrity after the war and began touring the country to recount his experiences. He became a regular in the speaking circuits, and in time his focus shifted from telling war stories to warning Americans of the Yellow Peril. This shift reveals deep fears about the downfall of American civilisation that would come to define the rest of Hobson's public career. Hobson successfully translated his celebrity into a career as a Democratic congressman in 1906.[99] During his political career, the Alabama representative introduced amendments for national alcohol prohibition over twenty times. Hobson and Morris Sheppard together introduced an amendment in 1914 that was eventually ratified as the 18th Amendment in 1919.[100] Hobson often fell back on the familiar racial formula used to determine a drug's meaning in culture and law. In 1914, while still a member of Congress, he argued for alcohol prohibition on the basis that its degenerative effect "…is the same on the white man [as on other races], though the white man being further evolved it takes longer time to reduce him to the same level." The exception to this was young people. Young people were not fully developed, the savage urges in them still not entirely restrained; this meant that the effect of alcohol on youth was comparable to those on primitive or savage races.

98. Mike Gray, *Drug Crazy: How We Got into this Mess and How We Can Get Out* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 56.

99. United States, House of Representatives, History, Art & Archives, "The Most Kissed Man in America," *Whereas: Stories from the People's House* (May 24, 2013), https://history.house.gov/Blog/2013/May/5-23-Hobson-Kissed/. Accessed August 28, 2021.

100. Sheppard authored the bill, making him the *other* father of national Prohibition.

"Starting young," Hobson argued, "it does not take a very long time to speedily cause a man in the forefront of civilisation to pass through the successive stages and become semicivilized, semisavage, savage, and, at last, below the brute."[101]

After leaving Congress in 1915, Hobson used his public platform to champion American naval supremacy and the Temperance cause.[102] Of the more than two thousand public speakers paid by the Anti-Saloon League, Hobson was the highest earner. He founded the American Alcohol Education Association in 1921, serving as general secretary. After the Volstead Act was passed, he redirected his activism to support the anti-drug movement throughout the 1920s and until his death in 1937, actively lobbying Congress for anti-drug legislation, speaking before religious and civil associations, and giving speeches on the radio. The primary targets of his crusade were opiates, especially heroin, but he tended to lump all 'narcotics' together when discussing the ramifications of widespread addiction in the United States. Hobson brought to his anti-narcotic crusade not only all the passion and moral-political principles typical of his alcohol speeches, but as David Musto noted, all the "exaggerated fears … and pseudoscientific warnings" as well.[103] He founded and chaired the International Narcotic Education Association in 1923 and the World Conference on Narcotic Education in 1926, and in 1927 formed the World Narcotic Defense Association, intended "to be a center of control to promote the defense, relief, safety, and immunity of mankind from this universal menace."[104] Not only a skillful orator, Hobson was also an impassioned anti-drug author whose books included such titles as

101. United States, Congress, Senate, 63rd Cong., 3rd sess. *Congressional Record* 52, pt. 1 (December 7, 1914, to January 6, 1915), Bound (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 6, 1915), 605-606.
102. US House of Representatives, History, Art & Archives, "The Most Kissed Man in America."
103. David F Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 326, n. 41.
104. Richmond Pearson Hobson, "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs," Remarks of Hon. Hugo L. Black of Alabama, United States Senate. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928), 4. Digitized on Google Play Books: https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=PgyUSt1HazIC.

Narcotic Peril (1925), *The Modern Pirates—Exterminate Them* (1931), and *Drug Addiction: A Malignant Racial Cancer* (1933).[105]

Nearly every author who has written about Hobson has mentioned these three books, and some have offered glancing summaries of their contents, but not one of these works provided citation information so that others could locate them, so I could not verify their contents.[106] It is unfortunate that copies of these books are nearly impossible to track down, but the 1933 title alone should serve as a strong enough indication of Hobson's eugenic and imperialist commitment to racial and civilizational progress. His 1931 book calling for the 'extermination' of traffickers, peddlers, and addicted recruiters confronts us with the reality that the historical trajectory of anti-drug discourse in the United States cannot be fully understood in isolation from the influence of eugenics. Eugenics allowed social problems and potential solutions to be expressed in the language of genetics and heredity. Hobson's activism against alcohol and drug addiction was in fact a non-scientist's attempt to advocate for euthenic reform to combat what was, based on his understanding, a eugenic enemy.[107] Hobson drew on ideas of both social and

105. These books are extremely hard to find, and I was unable to access any copy. As a result, I was forced to rely on excerpts and quotations published in secondary sources, especially Edward Jay Epstein, *Agency of Fear: Opiates and Political Power in America* (Verso, 1990); and David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

106. For example, see Stephen J. Hartnett, ed., *Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex: Activism, Arts, and Educational Alternatives* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 101; Ross Coomber, *The Control of Drugs and Drug Users: Reason or Reaction?* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2020); Michael Woodiwiss, *Organized Crime and American Power: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), esp. chapter 2 (n.p.); Richard Davenport-Hines, *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Social History of Drugs* (London: Orion Books; Phoenix, 2012), n.p; and Edward Jay Epstein, *Agency of Fear: Opiates and Political Power in America* (New York: Verso, 1990), 33.

107. Chicago Chief Justice Harry Olsen described the social dimensions of eugenic reform, what I refer to in this text as euthenics, as the "prophylactic" and "positive" methods. "Positive" eugenics included "biological education in school and university research work, a reduction in taxation for large families of good stock, and mothers' pensions," while the "prophylactic" method entailed the "enactment and enforcement of laws directed against industrial poisons, sexual diseases, narcotics and alcohol, marriage and divorce laws that will conserve health and other public health regulations." Negative eugenics refers to the more familiar method of "segregating and sterilizing defective stocks so that they may not reproduce their kind." Olsen, "Check on Society's Defectives Seen as Urgent Need of Nation," *New York Times* (Sep. 2, 1923).

eugenic reform to express his deep fears about civilizational decline. He imagined addiction as a racial cancer and routinely equated addicts to lepers and zombies.[108] He never missed an opportunity to declare that "in scientific circles, addicts are referred to as the 'living dead.'"[109] As he posited in his writings and speeches, drugs fundamentally altered the psychology of addicts, turning them into *recruiting agents* for the enemy.

> …what is more alarming and biologically supreme in importance is that he has a psychology that compels him to be a recruiting agent. I do not mean simply like any addict, that he desires to have those close to him become addicts; I do not mean that he has an obsession, merely; but I mean that he has a mania to see others become addicts.[110]

This recruitment was being done right under the American people's noses. "On account of secretiveness no one knows just how many heroin addicts there are in the country. We know it is an army."[111] The recruiting mania was a deliberate act of war, meant to undermine American institutions, since "[a] citizen asset, becoming an addict, is turned into the worst form of liability. The economic wastage is heavy, the producer becoming not only a dependent, but a destructive parasite."[112] Moreover, enemy armies, in Hobson's experience, were frequently Asian. Maintaining the assumption that the drug problem was inherently foreign, the former Yellow Peril alarmist stressed that, "[l]ike the invasions and plagues of history, the scourge of Narcotic Drug Addiction came out of Asia."[113] "The white man is in graver peril than the yellow man," he

108. "Heroin addiction can be likened to a contagion. Suppose it were announced that there were more than a million lepers among our people. Think what a shock the announcement would produce! Yet drug addiction is far more incurable than leprosy, far more tragic to its victims, and is spreading like a moral and physical scourge." Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction and Gravest Menace," (1928), reprinted in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America: A Documentary History*, 274.

109. Hobson, "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs," (1928), capitalisation in original; Hobson frequently recycled material from his anti-drug writings and speeches, which in turn were often recycled from his earlier anti-alcohol arguments.

110. "He thinks, he dreams, he plots to bring all whom he contacts into addiction." Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction and Gravest Menace," (1928), reprinted in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America,* 274.

111. Hobson, "Peril of Narcotic Drugs," 10.

112. Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction," in Musto, ed., 273.

113. Hobson, "Peril of Narcotic Drugs," 10.

continued, resurrecting the racial arithmetic that had rationalised the United States' approach to opium policy in the Philippines by once again framing drug use as something natural for Asians, but abhorrent for 'civilised' folk.

Hobson's greatest concern was inoculating young people against the drug scourge through education, since he saw them as both victims and agents of the drug traffic. "Heroin," he wrote in a pamphlet intended for distribution to American students, "usually catches the boy and the girl between 16 and 20, or even younger, like the young bird before it has learned to fly, and the new homes are never built."[114] His concerns about youth were essentially Progressive concerns about the eugenic impact of drugs and addiction on "the future of the race," in line with the fixation on national and racial degeneration that pervaded his personal war on intoxication throughout his public career. In the same 1928 pamphlet, Hobson described the spread of addiction as an invasive eugenic threat, connecting the health of individual bodies to the health of race and nation:

> The average standard of character of the citizen determines the stage of civilization. The spread of morphine addiction tends to bring social disorders and gradual decay. The spread of heroin besides lowering the standard of citizenship of necessary hastens social death by stopping the reproduction of homes. It is with the Nation as with the individuals and the families that compose the Nation. The unchecked advance of addiction must entail national degradation, ending in national death …The spread of addiction in any land must be regarded as the approach of the 'living death' to that people.[115]

For people like Hobson, this was a watershed moment in the evolutionary struggle against regression to savagery. The narcotic menace had created "a new environment of peril for which [humanity] is not adapted. Adaptation to this environment is a biological necessity if the race is

114. Hobson, "Peril of Narcotic Drugs," 10.

115. Hobson, 10. Morphine was first isolated from opium in the early nineteenth century and had only been in wide use since the invention of the hypodermic syringe in the 1850s, so it is not very clear what instances of morphine-induced gradual decay he was referring to.

to live and flourish upon the earth."[116] Hobson believed that restrictive laws were helpful, but their effectiveness limited. As young people were vulnerable to exploitation by the 'enemy,' he believed their minds needed to be inoculated against these anti-civilisational forces. The only way to truly eradicate the evil was to recruit America's youth into the fight against drugs through education, since "no normal youth, or for that matter, normal adult would deliberately embrace this 'living death' if he knew what it meant. The whole recruiting system is based on the ignorance of the victims, and thorough education would literally sweep away the very foundation of this hideous traffic."[117] As Hobson often maintained, it was through education alone that a 'race consciousness' about the dangers of drugs could be instilled in future generations.

> You let a peddler bring a rattlesnake or a copperhead up to a youth and suggest, "Take a shot." You know that the motive of self-preservation, aroused at once, would make the youth start back with horror. There is a race consciousness of the danger there. There is no race consciousness of the danger in drug addiction. Now, the elemental knowledge that would be conveyed by a little book, the effect of the drug on the brain and on the organs of reproduction, of children, and children's children, will have its effect. Give the youth this knowledge and the knowledge of the bondage from which there is no escape, this motive of self-preservation for the individual, the motive of self-preservation for the family and for the country would be aroused. Those motives will be his real protection, and then he can walk immune in the midst of any terror of narcotics today or in the future.[118]

Illuminating the persistent influence of Lamarckian heredity, Hobson's vision for anti-drug education was to breed into posterity a revulsion of drugs by teaching young people to think in terms of reproduction and heredity in their own life choices. Hall similarly believed it was

116. Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction," in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America*, 275.
117. Hobson, "Peril of Narcotic Drugs," 10.
118. Hobson, "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs," in Senate Committee on Printing, 68th Cong., 1st sess., "Use of Narcotics in the United States," Hearing on S. Con. Res. 10, "A Resolution to Print Fifty Million Additional Copies of an Article Entitled 'The Peril of Narcotics — A Warning to the People of America,' By the International Narcotics Education Association," June 3, 1924 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1924), 19. Google Books: https://www.google.ca/books/edition/Use_of_Narcotics_in_the_United_States/3H3aAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP3&printsec=frontcover.

plausible that offspring could inherit parents' memories. The student would learn that "the use of narcotic drugs destroys the power of reproduction, and this will give him the scientific basis for understanding the disastrous effects of drug addiction upon the preservation of the race."

> The narcotic poison penetrating the upper brain naturally inflicts the deepest and swiftest injury upon the parts that are the tenderest, the most complex, and unstable, which are developed latest in human evolutionary progress and distinguish the man from the brute. This part of the brain may be considered as the temple of the spirit, the seat of altruistic motives, of character, of those high, God-like traits upon which an advanced and enduring civilization are built.
>
> The transformation in character is swift in the young, and swifter with cocaine and heroin than with the other narcotics. In an incredibly short time a youth of either sex "hooked" with the "snow gang" [heroin] loses the results of good heredity and of careful home training.
>
> Self-respect, honor, obedience, ambition, truthfulness melt away. Virtue and morality disintegrate. The question of securing the drug becomes absolutely dominant. To get this supply the addict will not only advocate public policies against the public welfare but will lie, steal, rob, and if necessary commit murder. Thus we can understand how intimately addiction is connected causatively with crime.[119]

Heredity and degeneration were core concerns for Hobson, as the cultivation of American ideals, norms, and standards in children was imperative to White American hegemony. These very same commitments to warding off destructive foreign influences and purifying American society and citizens, which had informed the nation's earliest federal anti-opium laws, were being re-framed in the language of war, euthenics, and eugenics by Hobson in the 1910s and 1920s. This framing of the drug problem remained central to the way Americans conceived of drugs and drug users into the 1930s (and beyond).[120]

119. Hobson, "Peril of Narcotic Drugs," 14.

120. This did not only apply to drugs and drug users, but more broadly, these hereditarian and imperialist tenets both relied on and propagated much older Orientalist tropes pitting Eastern despotism, idleness, and decline against Western liberty, productivity, and progress. Today's 'war on terror' is largely predicated on this historical paradigm.

Conclusion

The project of forging a distinctly American version of the colonial civilising mission helped to cement the assumption that the drug problem was a foreign problem, one of the epistemological cornerstones of modern drug policy to this day.[121] This allowed American officials to admit that addiction was a problem among their subjects while denying that the problem was 'natural' or endemic. Hedonism, addiction, crime, idleness, degeneracy—a state of affairs normal for *outsiders*, but the United States was supposed to be better than that. The racially juvenile Filipino natives could not be expected to know better. When American officials began expressing concern over an 'opium problem' among their colonial children, they blamed the Chinese for preying on the underdeveloped, defenseless Filipinos. The association between 'bad' immigrants, bad drugs, and lost youth that had helped bring about the first anti-drug and anti-immigrant laws in the United States was codified in the imperialist policies established in the name of racial and civilizational development. These associations would continue to inform not only how Americans thought about psychoactive drugs, but also what they chose to do about them.

Like the United States' colonial children in the Philippines, the development of American youth, through education, surveillance, and prohibition was seen as a critical part of the wider goal of ending human suffering through scientifically and morally backed reform. Nurturing their nature, so to speak, was imperative for creating adults prepared to face the challenges of the future, and through them, a better world. Ideal citizens were intelligent, physically and mentally healthy, morally upright, family-oriented, and hardworking. A shift in public opinion toward addicts that occurred over the first two decades of the twentieth century cast them as the very

121. Foster, "Origins of Global Narcotics Prohibition," 27.

opposite of the ideal American citizen. In the 1920s, it was frequently claimed that addiction inevitably caused criminality, antisocial behaviour, dependence, and mental, moral, and physical degeneration. Addicts begot more addicts, either by birthing them or by recruiting others. On the one hand, they produced offspring that could inherit their degenerated traits or propensity for addiction and criminality; on the other hand, it was claimed that drug addition made users into agents of contagion. Hobson was clear in his belief that heroin "drags [young users] into a bondage worse than death, from which no escape has yet been found, transforming the promising youth into a potential murderer, daring, cruel criminal, and turning him into an active recruiting agent and drug peddler, to seize in turn his companions and prey upon society."[122]

Postwar youth came to bear the burden of all these anxieties and more. As a group of people defined by their immaturity and incomplete development, not only did young people need to be protected from harmful influences, but they also needed to be carefully guided and moulded into a hegemonic ideal of American adulthood: White, middle-class, Christian, and (mostly) sober. The twin desires to protect young people from bad influences like drugs and to protect ordinary Americans from dangerous, impulsive teenagers are palpable in the public campaign against marijuana during the 1930s. Almost without exception, academics, government officials, journalists, and reformers pointed to 'criminal' Mexicans and 'murderous' and 'decadent' Orientals as evidence of what America might look like should the supposed upsurge of marijuana use among young Americans continue. A twofold version of the teen-

122. Hobson, "Peril of Narcotic Drugs," in Senate Committee on Printing, 68th Cong., 1st sess., "Use of Narcotics in the United States," Hearing on S. Con. Res. 10, "A Resolution to Print Fifty Million Additional Copies of an Article Entitled 'The Peril of Narcotics — A Warning to the People of America,' By the International Narcotics Education Association," June 3, 1924 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1924), 59.

savage was constructed during this process that varied, seemingly without contradiction, between a teen-*savage* and a teen-*primitive*.

The policies and methods developed through colonial management in the Philippines, as I have argued in this chapter, influenced approaches to drugs and addiction in the continental United States. Imperial paternalism shaped and was shaped by emerging theories of race development, which were in turn tied to non-medicinal opium use. Drug use became linked to racial degeneration and civilizational decline. Stereotypes about Asians and drug use have a long history in the West, but the at the turn of the twentieth century American imperial paternalism forged a cultural and legal distinction between legitimate and illegitimate drug use that was strongly correlated with the different modes of drug consumption between Western and Eastern peoples. Back home, it helped spark a transformation in the public perception of drugs and addicts, so much so that by 1920 the image of the "drug fiend" dominated cultural and political discourse. Imperialism in the Pacific also established prohibition as a fundamental strategy for foreign and domestic drug policy, both of which were rooted in assumptions about the degenerative effects of drugs and a belief in the United States' exceptional destiny to lead the progress of the world. The war on drugs, from the beginning, has been a war against degeneration, with opium, marijuana, and other psychoactive drugs cast as foreign instruments of biological warfare.

Chapter Two

The Assassin of Youth

This chapter turns from opiates to cannabis, the drug at the center of the 1930s anti-drug crusade. Marijuana began to be reported as a dire social menace from the early 1920s, but the movement for its national prohibition really took hold in the 1930s. Though the more explicitly racist claims had softened, the anti-marijuana campaign exhibited its racial, eugenic, and colonial heritage; this was especially true in the ubiquitous claims of its widespread use among American youth and the Orientalist mythology that nearly always accompanied these claims, which depicted drug cannabis as an instrument of recruitment and of political and ideological subversion. Like opium, American ideas about cannabis were rooted in older Orientalist discourses but would become linked to fears of eugenic decay inspired by new constructions of adolescence in the interwar period. Hall's developmental theories suggested that adolescence was an intermediary stage between childhood and adulthood akin to the transition from savagery to civilisation, turning adolescence into a site for negotiating the tension between civilised American modernity and backward foreign barbarism. With drug use already tied to foreign degeneracy, drug legislation and enforcement sought to protect the next generation of American leaders, White youth, from the degenerative influence of drugs. White youth in the interwar period became symbolic and legal wards of the state, much like Filipinos had become after 1898. Further fueling the anti-cannabis drug crusade was the projection of the Yellow Peril's horde of foreign invaders onto the new image of the "drug addict" as an attacking vampire or zombie.

Anti-drug reformers understood youth as more vulnerable than ever in a rapidly changing world of modern commodities, commercial amusements, and challenges to the gender, racial, and familial status quos. Reformers characterised spaces of consumption as dangerous both *to*

young people and capable of *breeding* dangerous young people.[1] "To the poolrooms, public dance halls, and taverns go the avaricious and unscrupulous peddlers," wrote religious anti-drug reformer Earl Albert Rowell and his son Robert in 1939. "Any youth's presence in such a place advertises the fact that he is in a questing mood. Here all the peddler needs to do is whisper that he has a 'special cigarette,' and a new victim is his."[2] The anti-drug rhetoric that had begun to crystallize in Richmond P. Hobson's propaganda was ineluctably informed by these fears about brainwashed youth. In the anti-marijuana propaganda of the 1930s, warnings of the newest drug menace built upon these anxious discursive foundations of foreignness, subversion, degeneration, and stolen progeny to express the same fears—namely, that future generations of Americans would not be strong enough to resist the 'easy,' idle, savage lifestyles of inferior races and criminals, and would degenerate until the United States was no longer a beacon of White civilisation.[3]

This chapter offers a close reading of government documents, academic literature, and cultural artifacts including newspapers, magazines, and feature films to explain why the Orientalist rhetoric and symbolism constructed around cannabis and cannabis users over the

1. Interestingly, industrialisation and technological innovation were cited as both contributing to social decay and as evidence of the evolutionary superiority of certain races. Hobson took both sides on this issue, taking industrialists to task for exploitative business practices while simultaneously maintaining that the menace of drug addiction was Asian in origin and typical of 'lower' races.

2. Earle Albert and Robert Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana: The Weed of Madness* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1939), 56-57.

3. As far back as 1857, the American bohemian writer Fitz Hugh Ludlow asserted that "[i]t is hasheesh that makes both the Syrian and the Saxon Oriental." In 1860 an anonymous article on the "Psychology of Opium and Hasheesh" appeared in *The Dial*, a short-lived American periodical. The writer found it "very remarkable [that] the manifestations of hasheesh almost invariably take an Oriental form," a phenomenon that "may very naturally lead to the supposition that this narcotic has exerted a peculiar influence in the formation of Eastern character and institutions." See Fitz Hugh Ludlow, *The Hasheesh Eater: Being passages from the Life of a Pythagorean*, reprinted in *The Annotated Hasheesh Eater*, edited by David M. Gross (United States: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 1857; 2007); "Psychology of Opium and Hasheesh: Hasheesh," *The Dial: A Monthly Magazine for Literature, Philosophy and Religion* 10 (1860), 609. https://lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fmagazines%2Fpsychology-opium-hasheesh%2Fdocview%2F89637692%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D10246

nineteenth century was resurrected in the rhetoric of the 1930s American anti-marijuana crusade. Although the campaign for marijuana prohibition was not the work of any one individual, it was given purpose and coherence through the fervent efforts of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) and its first commissioner, Harry J. Anslinger. Anslinger and the FBN curated and circulated information (and disinformation) about marijuana to newspapers, magazines, school boards, religious groups, women's clubs, and other organizations across the country, resulting in a relatively uniform and highly effective propaganda campaign about marijuana, its history, its evil effects, and its national and racial implications. This chapter also takes a close look at two of the three major films released in the 1930s that centered on the issue of marijuana, *Marihuana* (1936), and *Assassin of Youth* (1937), the lesser-known sister films to the more notorious *Reefer Madness* (1936). These films re-hashed old tropes about cannabis as a gateway to Oriental slavery, despotism, idleness, and violence. Despite the comparatively limited knowledge about the operation and effects of cannabis on the body and mind, the fact remains that claims about the menace of marijuana, especially after 1930, were unduly and unscrupulously exaggerated. Anti-drug reformers were not typically marginal fanatics but educated and well-connected members of the upper or middle classes who often held significant political power and/or public influence.[4] What turned otherwise reasonable concerns about the social repercussions of drug use into a war to save America's children and future from an enemy of apocalyptic proportions? Behind the sensationalism and hyperbole, the sources reveal underlying concerns about the changing face of American culture, challenges to traditional values, foreign or subversive influences, and a growing disconnect between adults and young people resulting from urbanisation, the decline of traditional family-based social life, and the emerging culture of

4. Speaker, "'The Struggle of Mankind'," 602.

leisure and mass consumption. As we shall see, the marijuana panic, like the drug panics before it, was a racial panic. The claims made about the drug were always more about reasserting and protecting White American identity and national sovereignty than the drug's actual effects.

Stoned Cold Killers

The crux of this chapter centers around a moniker given to marijuana by its opponents, the "Assassin of Youth." Most people are familiar with the sensational depictions of marijuana use encapsulated in the term 'Reefer Madness'—that the drug made young people and minorities insane, murderous, promiscuous, and/or peons in service of a growing criminal underworld. 'Assassin of Youth' was another such term used by anti-drug reformers. It encapsulated not only the purportedly evil effects of cannabis drugs, but also advanced a specific interpretation of the drug's history, one far more revealing of the motives of anti-marijuana crusaders and the anxieties about American society that fed anti-marijuana propaganda. Besides the obvious homicidal implications, the word 'assassin' alluded to an early nineteenth century Orientalist etymology that linked the European word 'assassin' to a legendary medieval Shi'ite faction of political assassins whose alleged use of hashish supposedly earned them the nickname 'hachichins,' or hashish-eaters, among their contemporaries. "Assassin of Youth" conjured these Orientalist myths about ancient Persian murder cults, cultural tropes about Eastern despotism, savagery, and subjugation, and the recruitment of young followers through drug-fuelled brainwashing. In cannabis' history, activists in the 1920s and 1930s found historical evidence of the 'armies of addicts' that Hobson had been warning of, confirming the fears of foreign subversion and the nascent image of addicts as mindless subversives who, as Hobson said of

heroin addicts, possessed "an absolute mania for recruiting."[5] That American youth were framed as the greatest targets of this clandestine plot had far less to do with an actual rise in addiction and crime among young people than with what young people had come to represent in interwar America. Faced with the prospect of losing an entire generation to poverty, illness, addiction, or subversive ideologies, authorities conferred upon American youth the weight of the nation's future and, even further, the future of the White race and of Western civilization itself. All of these identity markers—American, Christian, White, Western, ambitious, industrious—were absorbed into the fashioning of an 'us' that was ostensibly under siege by the forces of some nefarious 'them.'

A good starting point for understanding the convergence of Orientalist and child-savage discourses in the 1930s war on cannabis is with the originator of the term "Assassin of Youth," America's first drug czar and most notorious anti-pot crusader Harry Anslinger. Anslinger centered his entire public propaganda campaign around cannabis' Oriental history and the idea that adolescents were at once the most vulnerable targets of the marijuana traffic and the drug's most potentially dangerous users. This is evident in an article that Anslinger co-authored with Courtney Ryley Cooper, a journalist, social critic, and vocal opponent of crime and non-medical drug use throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s. Their article "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth" was first published in *The American* magazine in 1936, with a condensed version appearing in *Reader's Digest* a year later. Most texts about cannabis featured some version of this origin story which connected the origins of the word 'assassin' to the word 'hashish.'

> In the year 1090, there was founded in Persia the religious and military order of the Assassins whose history is one of cruelty, barbarity, and murder, and for good reason. The members were confirmed users of hashish, or marihuana, and it is

5. Richmond P. Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction and Gravest Menace," (1928), in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America: A Documentary History*, 274.

> from the Arabic 'hashshashin' that we have the English word 'assassin.' Even the term 'running amok' relates to the drug, for the expression has been used to describe natives of the Malay Peninsula who, under the influence of hashish, engage in violent and bloody deeds.[6]

In 1936 the *Oakland Tribune* printed a full-page spread on the dangers of marijuana, bearing all the hallmarks of FBN propaganda. A quote from Anslinger himself provides a solid indication as to what lesson he wanted the public to take from the drug's Oriental history: "I don't believe there would be so many youngsters who would 'try' a marihuana cigarette if they knew it is really hashish; the same stuff old Hassan Ben Sabbat fed his murderous crew in the eleventh century."[7] Who was this Hassan, and what was Anslinger trying to say?

In May of 1809, French linguist Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, dubbed the 'father of Oriental Studies,' gave a lecture at the Institut de France in Paris on "the Dynasty of Assassins and the Etymology of their Name."[8] In his lecture, de Sacy read word for word from Marco Polo's fourteenth-century account *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* in which Polo recounted his travels through Persia. During the eighteenth century, numerous French scholars published papers on the assassins of Alamut in Northern Persia and their ties to the Nizari Ismai'li sect of Shi'a Islam. This body of literature endowed Polo's account with historical context and academic credibility. De Sacy quoted five pages in which Polo described the Ismai'li faction's leader, Hassani-I Sabbah, infamously known to Europeans as the 'Old Man of the Mountain.' De Sacy's audience were probably familiar with the lore surrounding the medieval cult of Islamic Assassins, as the story had circulated widely across Europe since the fourteenth century. In these

6. Harry Jacob Anslinger and Courtney Ryley Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," reprinted in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America,* 435.
7. Hugh Pendexter, Jr., "Don't Be A 'Mugglehead'!" *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), 11 Oct 1936, 79.
8. Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, « Mémoire sur la dynastie des Assassins et sur l'origine de leur nom, » Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt (University and State Library of Saxony-Anhalt) (January 1809). https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=kwk-AAAAcAAJ

five pages, Polo detailed the Old Man's "fortress paradise" in Alamut; most notably, his method of entrancing unsuspecting young followers into blind obedience by dosing them with an "intoxicating poison" that turned them into "mindless assassins."[9] The sheikh would give unwitting young men a hashish-laced drink, the legend goes, and once they had lost their senses, had them carried into his extravagant gardens. There, the young recruits found themselves surrounded by exotic flowers and fountains overflowing with honey and milk. Beautiful women lounged around the utopian grounds, ready to make the young men's dreams come true. All that they coveted could be found in this Edenic garden. The recruits were made to believe, in their stupor, that they had tasted Paradise, before being drugged again and carried back to Hassan's court. Upon awakening, the 'Old Man' promised the young men they would return to Paradise, but only if they loyally and blindly followed his orders.

Until de Sacy's lecture, no one had been able to shed much light on the origin of the word 'assassin.' Nor had anyone identified what exactly was in the mysterious preparation that the Old Man used to drug and dupe his disciples.[10] The 'Father of Orientalism' asserted that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Arabic texts referred to the Ismai'li assassins as "al-Hashishiyya," which he translated to "hachichins" in French. The name, de Sacy claimed, was derived from the group's "regular and ritualistic" use of hashish. The linguist concluded his lecture by positing "that among the Ismailis, called Hachichins or Haschasch, there are people that are specifically raised to kill, that were delivered, through the use of hashish, to this absolute resignation to the will of their leader."[11]

9. David A. Guba, Jr., "Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy and the Myth of the Hachichins: Orientalizing Hashish in Nineteenth-Century France," *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 30 (2016), 50-51.
10. Guba, "Orientalizing Hashish," 51.
11. Guba.

This connection between hashish and the fabled twelfth-century sect of Islamic assassins, historian David Guba argues, became a *fait prouvé* requiring no citation or reference by the mid-nineteenth century. Several scholars have shown that not only was Marco Polo's original account of the Old Man of the Mountain drawn from "bits and pieces of information or disinformation as well as misunderstood rumours, hostile allegations and exaggerated half-truths … picked up locally and orally," but de Sacy also based his studies of the Nizari Isma'ili assassins on "Orientalized fantasies rather than facts."[12] The result was a misguided portrayal of "hashish as an evil intoxicant used by certain Muslims to transform disciples into blindly obedient and bloodthirsty murderers."[13] De Sacy's claims would profoundly influence the construction of an imagined Orient, a place where reality was fragile, and life dream-like—the antithesis of Occidental temperance and industriousness. Indeed, Edward Said called de Sacy one of "Orientalism's inaugural heroes," affirming that "every major Arabist in Europe during the nineteenth century traced his intellectual authority back to him."[14] Ernest Abel noted this phenomenon back in 1980, pointing to Viennese Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's 1818 book *The History of the Assassins,* the first full-length European monograph on the Nizari Ismailis, as an early instance of a European author capitalizing on the popular fascination with hashish and the Assassins. Von Hammer-Purgstall's book was so widely read that it was translated into English and French by the mid-1830s.[15] From then on, writes Abel, "[t]he link between hashish and the Assassins became firmly soldered in cannabis folklore".[16] By mid-

12. Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends* (London: New York: I.B Tauris & Co, 2011), 94; Guba, "Orientalizing Hashish," 52.
13. Guba, 50.
14. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1978; 2003), 122; 129.
15. See Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Die Geschichte der Assassinen* (Stuttgart-Tübingen, 1818), pp 211-14. English trans., *The History of the Assassins*, tr. O.C. Wood (London, 1835, reprinted, New York, 1968), pp 136-8.
16. Ernest L. Abel, *Marihuana: The First Twelve Thousand Years* (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, 1980), 150.

century the myth of the Old Man of the Mountain and his assassins began to appear in English and American publications as well. Already in 1860 one American author, writing about hashish, remarked that "[w]e know what mighty results were wrapped up in its use by those Ishmaelitish Assassins (*Hasheeshins* or *Hashashins*) over whom the Old Man of the Mountain bore sway."[17]

De Sacy's work remained the authoritative account for over a century after its publication, as evidenced by the widespread appropriation of the Assassin mythology by American anti-marijuana crusaders in public speeches, books, essays, magazines, newspapers, and congressional testimony. Harry Anslinger was one of many who felt that the story of the Old Man of the Mountain and his purported method of using hashish to recruit a blindly obedient militia should have a starring role in the anti-marijuana narrative. This may well have been due to its convenient associations with the immoral, uncivilized habits of ancient or supposedly 'degenerate' races, or to its effectiveness in creating fear around cannabis and its users. Most likely, however, is that both were true. The idea of a nefarious master recruiting otherwise devout youth into a clandestine faction of mentally enslaved murderers bears obvious parallels with the heightened xenophobic fears of the interwar period. The Old Man of the Mountain legend would have conjured up images of the underclasses and 'undesirables' inside the United States (Mexicans, Black Americans, criminal gangs, deviants, drug peddlers, etc.) and their proximity to and influence on White youth. Nothing was safe, no matter how seemingly innocent—not even schools. In 1939 a physician and "national authority on marijuana," Dr. Charles B. Holman, spoke to the Kiwanis Club in Blytheville, Arkansas. In a "blistering and highly factual indictment" of the drug, Holman informed attendees that the "introduction of the drug to school children had been one of the most repulsive methods employed by traffickers,"

17. "Psychology of Opium and Hasheesh: Hasheesh," *The Dial,* 609.

who sneakily spread the habit "in such 'pleasant' ways—in ice cream, candy, drinks and tobacco." [18] Commissioner Anslinger stood before the House Committee in 1937 and read aloud from his personal handwritten notes such unsubstantiated claims as "Colored students at the Univ. of Minn, partying with female students (white) smoking and getting their sympathy with stories of racial persecution. Result pregnancy."[19]

By injecting the legend of the Persian assassins into the anti-marijuana narrative, Anslinger was framing America's young people as simultaneously potential victims and potential criminals, the targets of some insidious foreign plot to extinguish the bright futures of America's young people and to coerce them into undermining American ideals and institutions. "How many murders, suicides, robberies, criminal assaults, holdups, burglaries and deeds of maniacal insanity it causes each year, especially among the young, can only be conjectured," Anslinger wrote in "Marihuana—Assassin of Youth." And conjecture he did. The Anslinger-Cooper piece in the *American Magazine* marked the official adoption of the Old Man of the Mountain legend into marijuana discourse at the federal level. The article went on to lend its title to the 1937 exploitation film *Assassin of Youth (*a *Reefer Madness* clone), marking the transference of 'official' anti-marijuana discourse into popular culture.

Anslinger was not the only one who recognised the value of this Orientalist legend to help secure public support for the federal prohibition of marijuana in the United States.[20] In fact, for the first few years of his tenure as Federal Narcotics Commissioner, Anslinger was among

18. "Tells Civic Club Marijuana is Most Dangerous Narcotic in Indictment of Marijuana," *The Courier News* (Blytheville, AK), Jul 20, 1939, p. 5. https://www.newspapers.com/image/13602.

19. John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), 53.

20. Isaac Campos, *Home Grown: Marijuana and the Origins of Mexico's War on Drugs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 12-13.

those who wrote off cannabis as a mostly harmless habit that, if anything, distracted from the more important war against opiates and cocaine. The first stages of the marijuana panic began in New Orleans during the late 1920s and early 1930s, through the efforts of a relatively small group of physicians and city officials. Among these was Eugene Stanley, district attorney for the Parish of Orleans. Stanley's 1931 article "Marihuana as a Developer of Criminals," published in the *American Journal of Police Science*, was a key source in Anslinger's arsenal. His account sheds light on the relevance of the Assassin legends to the American marijuana 'problem':

> At the time of the founding of the religious sect or order of "Assassins" in Persia, by Hassan Ben Sabbat, young men whom the sheik desired to subjugate were given this drug, and when under its influence, were taken, blindfolded, into the garden of the sheik, where every pleasure which appealed to the senses awaited them. When complete indulgence in these pleasures were had, they were taken from this garden, and so eager were they for a further opportunity to use this drug and a repetition of these pleasures, that they were under the complete domination of the sheik … and gladly followed his will, even to the extent of sacrificing their lives if he commanded them to … At the present time, the underworld has been quick to realize the value of this drug in subjugating the will of human derelicts to that of the master mind. Its use sweeps away all restraint, and to its influence may be attributed many of our present day crimes.[21]

Stanley's version offered a bit more detail than Anslinger's about the way hashish was supposedly used to create assassins. Most importantly, his essay drew a direct connection between the medieval sheikh's nefarious tactics and interwar American fears of subversive, criminal plots against their country. Hassan-I Sabbah supposedly manipulated young followers into blind obedience with a drug, knowingly taking advantage of their youthful abandon and naïveté, to build his personal army of mercenaries. According to this version of the drug's history, the supposed spread of marijuana to middle-class White youth by foreigners, deviants, and criminals could only mean one thing: there were twentieth-century Hassan-I Sabbahs

21. Eugene Stanley, "Marihuana as a Developer of Criminals," *American Journal of Police Science* 2, no. 3 (1931), 256, emphasis added. Accessed December 12, 2020. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1147208.

prowling across the United States, looking to disrupt, sabotage, or downright overthrow the land of the free—and by turning their own progeny against them, no less. The growing crime problem, rather than a by-product of modernisation, was evidence of an insidious marijuana plot. Stanley's influence extended beyond Anslinger. His claims about marijuana-related crime, questionable as they may have been, were among some of the most widely quoted in courtrooms and anti-marijuana propaganda.[22]

Stanley relied heavily on the work of another influential figure from the New Orleans crusade, Dr. A.E. Fossier. Described as a "hellfire-and-brimstone physician," Fossier was an early adopter of Orientalist tropes about drug cannabis as a way to underscore its insidious effects to the public—most notable of which being de Sacy's etymology of the word 'assassin':

> During the time of the Crusades, [the Assassins] resorted to every kind of violence. Their utter disregard for death and the ruthlessness of their atrocities presented a formidable obstacle to the arms of the Christians, because under the influence of hashish those fanatics would madly rush at their enemies, and ruthlessly massacre everyone within their grasp.[23]

Having established the 'history' of the drug, Dr. Fossier informed his audience that hashish-fuelled murder and depravity still plagued the Orient and, more alarmingly, had now infiltrated the United States. Fossier established the claims, repeated later by Stanley, that the "underworld" had discovered that marijuana stripped the user of their inhibitions, especially in individuals "of inadequate personality." Recognising its value for criminal pursuits, some "master mind" was using marijuana to dupe "human derelicts" into becoming their foot-soldiers. Also noteworthy was Fossier's Hobsonesque assertion that marijuana was, for lack of a better word, an 'de-

22. Ernest Abel, *Marijuana*, 218.
23. A. E. (Albert Emile) Fossier, "The Marihuana Menace," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 44 (1931), 247; see also Abel, *Marijuana*, 216-218.

civilising' agent. Marijuana addiction destroyed "[t]he moral principles or training initiated in the mind from infancy [which] deter from committing willful theft, murder or rape".[24] Traits that supposedly marked the evolutionary superiority of the White race, recapitulated in the development of individuals from infancy to adulthood, were obliterated by this despotic Eastern drug, leaving in its wake an impulsive, vicious savage. As Anslinger later told the House Committee during the Marihuana Tax Act hearings, opium had "all of the good of Dr. Jekyll and all the evil of Mr. Hyde" because its medicinal value made up for its dangers; marijuana, though, "is entirely the monster Hyde, the harmful effect of which cannot be measured."[25]

According to the message put forth by these crusaders, the criminal underworld—the modern Assassins—had expanded their operations and were now recruiting otherwise well-raised and well-intentioned (if a little reckless) young Americans into the ranks of the modern Old Man of the Mountain's mercenaries. Although it cannot be said for certain to what extent the New Orleans anti-marijuana movement as a whole was driven by racist sentiment, it is probably fair to say that assumptions about White supremacy were integral to the arguments of some of its most prominent and influential voices, including Dr. Fossier's.[26] In keeping with the tradition of rationalising White supremacy in terms of divergent drug choices, Fossier asserted that:

> The debasing and baneful influence of hashish and opium is not restricted to individuals but has manifested itself in nations and races as well. The dominant race and most enlightened countries are alcoholic, whilst the races and nations

24. Fossier, " Marihuana Menace," 249.

25. U.S. Congress, House Committee on Ways and Means, *Taxation of Marihuana: Hearings, Seventy-fifth Congress, First Session, on H.R. 6385* (April 27-30 and May 4, 1937) (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), 19. Google Play Books: https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=OpMWAAAAIAAJ

26. Though it is beyond the scope of this study, it is interesting to note that the association of marijuana with Black jazz musicians might have had something to do with the fact that both jazz music and the anti-marijuana crusade originated in New Orleans. Investigating whether the New Orleans anti-marijuana movement may have been, at least in part, a reaction to the escalating popularity of jazz music and Black cultural influence might be a fruitful avenue for future research.

> addicted to hemp and opium, some of which once attained to heights of culture and civilization, have deteriorated both mentally and physically.[27]

Framing cultural and racial difference as resulting from drug use had become the default reaction of American thinkers by the twentieth century. In his anti-marijuana talk before the Blytheville Kiwanis Club, Dr. Holman, like most of his contemporaries, recited the Oriental history of hashish—yet his version of events included a notable departure from the standard narrative. Perhaps attempting to tailor his anti-marijuana message to his Bible Belt audience, Holman claimed that "the Bible refers to the drug in the name of hashish by which it was known in ancient times." Such a claim alone, although demonstrably false, was not that outlandish relative to what many others were saying at the time, nor to what he said next, according to a Blytheville newspaper:

> …differences over the drug helped cause the split between Christians and Asiatic monks that led to the formation of the Christian religion. He explained that the Asiatic monks were users of hashish, that they chewed the plant and "hopped up" on the drug, claimed to commune with God or the Father. . . [Holman] said that Christians would have nothing to do with this hashish inspired type of religion and opposed the "faith healers" and types who used hashish.[28]

Apart from revealing a rather significant historical illiteracy, Holman depicted hashish as the source of moral, religious, and (presumably) racial divergence between the West, the Middle East and the Far East, or between Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The Japanese and Chinese rejected hashish—or marijuana—because they preferred, according to Holman, the dreamy, peaceful effect caused by use of opium or the poppy.[29] Although making no mention of Islam per se, Holman drew a clear line by describing 'Asiatics' as distinct from the Japanese and Chinese, who already had a preferred intoxicant in opium. The 'Asiatic' monks believed they had

27. Fossier, "Marihuana Menace," 257.
28. "Tells Civic Club Marijuana is Most Dangerous Narcotic."
29. Ibid.

discovered their own shortcut to piety and pursued a "hashish inspired type of religion." This left the early Christians, whose supposed devout temperance in the face of hashish became a foundational value and identity marker for Christianity. Holman conspicuously failed to mention the sacramental wine consumed during Christian mass. Hashish, in Holman's view, was an agent in the historical and ongoing 'clash of civilizations' between East and West. Its rejection by early Christians was a defining moment in the fashioning of the Western identity and values embodied by the United States. "Great nations have slept themselves out of existence in centuries past by the use of narcotics," Holman concluded.[30]

"It Breeds Criminals!": Marijuana as a Degenerative Force

> Youth know, for thus we teach them, that some diseases are contagious, some substances are poisonous. They are taught that they must shun such contagious diseases as smallpox, scarlet fever. When they realize that marihuana is a virulent poison and that its use produces a disease culminating in insanity, they will recoil in horror from the rascally peddler who offers it.
>
> Wrong habits are as contagious as diseases, some of them as fatal as poison; in fact, the use of narcotics involves the taking of a poison. The formation of good health habits and the development of desirable character traits are the major objectives of education, whether given in school or at home. As long as we neglect narcotics education, we shall fall short of these laudable aims.
>
> We must realize and teach that narcotics education allies itself with physiology, hygiene, health, citizenship, economics, chemistry, biology, psychology, and international problems. It has to do with social customs, crime, public welfare, broken homes, white slavery, prostitution, venereal diseases, and eugenics.[31]
>
> – Earle Albert & Robert Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana: The Weed of Madness* (1939), 77.

In 1933 Harold VanDyke Smith, head of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Narcotic Drug Control, published an article in *The Yorker Magazine* warning readers of a growing new drug menace, the "Arabian Nights Drug." Newspaper advertisements for Smith's article played on

30. "Tells Civic Club Marijuana is Most Dangerous Narcotic."
31. Rowell and Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana: The Weed of Madness*, 77.

public fear of invasive criminal elements to push magazine sales: "Read how this doped cigarette evil is invading York. It breeds criminals!"[32] Reporting five years later on the "Fight Against Marijuana," the *Selma Times-Journal* warned readers that marijuana cigarettes contained "hashish—the crime-producing drug, under the influence of which assassinations are frequently committed in eastern countries."[33] An article published later that year in *The American Scholar* put marijuana's infiltration of the US in perspective, reminding readers that marijuana was "no other than hashish," a term that "we associate … with life in the Far East."[34] The complete erasure of the historical distance between the medieval Shi'ite sect and twentieth-century Asians indicates the way that the American public interpreted the "Assassin of Youth" narrative. The Orient was stagnant, unchanging, stuck in a savage past, and cannabis had something to do with it. Drug use had either prevented these societies from developing at the same pace as the West or caused their regression to a previous state of evolution. That this substance which supposedly characterised "life in the Far East" had invaded the United States was a sure sign that the same fate awaited their own country, since the drug had already "been held responsible for murders, robberies and sex crimes."[35] This was what the Rowells believed, writing matter-of-factly that marijuana's "history for three thousand years has been the same—aberration, abnormality, murder, rape, degradation, and horror. In coming to America, marihuana has not changed its nature."[36] The plant was inherently hostile and malignant, even without human consumption. Not only did its presence in the US threaten the social order, but also the order of nature, since "it

32. "Arabian Nights Drug," *The York Dispatch* (York, PA) (Oct. 27, 1933). https://www.newspapers.com/image/615115276/
33. "Fight Against Marijuana," *The Selma Times-Journal* (July 14, 1938). https://www.newspapers.com/image/570091916
34. Maud A. Marshall, "Marihuana," *The American Scholar* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1938-1939), 96. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41206469
35. "Fight Against Marijuana."
36. Rowell and Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana*, 17.

grows in abundance as a wild weed—tall, rank, tough—competing even with giant ragweed for supremacy."[37]

Evidently, observers incorporated the colonial and Orientalist mythology surrounding cannabis and its associations with certain races, classes, and behaviours into the interwar eugenic paradigm. Marijuana was not only a threat in and of itself but was also fashioned as a token of a racially and ideologically impure United States. Cannabis invoked an urgent need to address other social issues like immigration, criminality, social hygiene, and moral turpitude. One Kansas physician was reported to not only have discovered that "the rythm [*sic*] of such dances as the shag, the jeepers and the little peach is essentially the haywire kick of the marijuana weed," but also posited that a "planetary social disturbance may be caused by a derangement of the genes in the hereditary life cell which threatens the sanity of the world."[38] Marijuana was not just an ancient, foreign, violent drug—it *was* the foreigners, it *was* backwardness, it *was* crime, murder, lost youth, unproductivity, subversion, and any number of other frightening prospects. That Commissioner Anslinger and others connected these themes in a similar way as earlier writers did is less surprising in this intellectual and historical context.

In a recent essay, Lauren MacIvor Thompson showed how the early twentieth-century campaigns for "temperance, anti-Prohibition, and birth control … shared a focus on eugenics as a central underpinning."[39] Prohibition advocates from the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) based their arguments on Lamarckian soft heredity, a theory of evolution according to which characteristics acquired during an individual's lifetime may be passed on to their

37. Rowell and Rowell, 25.
38. Edwin C. Hill, "Human Side of The News," *Valley Morning Star* (Oct. 6, 1938).
39. Lauren MacIvor Thompson, "'The Offspring of Drunkards': Gender, Welfare, and the Eugenic Politics of Birth Control and Alcohol Reform in the United States," *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 49 (2021), 361.

offspring. The WCTU's public messaging assumed that any physical, mental, and moral degeneration acquired through a person's "bad environment and bad choices" could be inherited by their children. The success of the WCTU's public campaign was, in part, due to the enduring popularity of Lamarckian thought in American culture.[40] Indeed, eugenic discourse provided Hobson with a framework for his crusades against alcohol in the 1910s and opiates and cocaine in the 1920s. The overarching ambition to cultivate humanity's fullest potential by identifying and removing undesirable traits from society (and sometimes the human gene pool) effectively delimited who was or was not American. In the shadows of those traits that were targeted for eradication by both eugenicists and social reformers, the hegemonic virtues and ideals that needed to be protected and propagated—those most important to maintaining the traditional White supremacist, Protestant, capitalist status quo—can be uncovered.

Eugenicists framed addiction as either a disease or a symptom of inferior racial stock—either way, it needed to be bred out of existence.[41] These views persisted well into the 1930s, and addicts continued to be targeted for forced sterilisation policies. A 1936 report in the Texas *Longview Daily News* remarked that aside from the "principal" cause for sterilisation, feeblemindedness, people with other conditions were also being ordered sterilised, including individuals with "deformities such as harelip and midget growth" and diseases like alcoholism: "A reformed drunkard, who has become a total abstainer, was ordered sterilized here last October because the court decided his descendants might inherit a propensity for alcoholism."[42] Belief in the inheritance of acquired traits was still influencing legislative and judicial decisions,

40. Thompson, "'The Offspring of Drunkards'," 360.
41. See Thompson, "'Offspring of Drunkards',"; and Bartlett C. Jones, "Prohibition and Eugenics, 1920-1933," (1963): 158-172.
42. "Eugenic Courts Test Germans on Brook and Pond Difference; Also 'Why is it Day or Night'?" *The Longview Daily News* (Longview, TX), May 31, 1936. https://www.newspapers.com/image/180435966

and addiction remained, to many, a prime example of the confluence of environment and heredity in propagating degenerate strains in the American racial stock. These concerns were not always expressed in the language of eugenics, however, and though many anti-marijuana crusaders warned of the drug's effects on heredity, the most commonly stated fear was of degeneration. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hobson invoked the language of race development to hyperbolise the de-civilising effects of heroin on users; once hooked, "a youth of either sex … loses the result of good heredity and of careful home training. Self-respect, honor, obedience, ambition, truthfulness, melt away. Virtue and morality disintegrate."[43] They became the "living dead." Hobson had passed away by the time Earl Albert and Robert Rowell published their anti-marijuana tract *On the Trail of Marihuana: The Weed of Madness* in 1939, but in their words his efforts lived on. The Rowells argued that drugs like marijuana transformed the user "into in an insensate lump of flesh, with less understanding than a jungle beast" by crippling the "higher instincts of ambition, reason, conscience, judgment, will, self-criticism, self-control, and, above all, the higher emotions of love, joy, and true courage."[44] This reveals an important detail about the alleged eugenic effects of drugs like heroin and marijuana. Eugenic science was primarily concerned with reproduction, so fears about the purported damage that drugs caused to a person's sexual desires and reproductive capacities make sense in that context. But what about the more prevalent fears about the moral and mental degeneration of young drug users? Changing a person's brain chemistry to turn them from a promising youth into a savage brute does not seem like a eugenic problem, at least not in the short term. Following the logic advanced by Hobson and the Rowells, however, heroin and marijuana *reversed* any progress that could be made through controlled eugenic reproduction. Young people may have been born from

43. Hobson, "Mankind's Greatest Affliction and Gravest Menace," in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America*, 274.
44. Rowell and Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana*, 79.

the ‘best’ racial stock, but once tainted by these drugs, it made no difference. They became no better than the progeny of the lowest stock. Degeneration could occur at the individual, social, and racial levels.

During the congressional hearings on the Marihuana Tax Act, Anslinger was asked whether cannabis was “used by the criminal class”. It was, he replied, and it was “particularly dangerous to the criminal type, because it releases all of the inhibitions.” Anslinger then read from a report to the League of Nations by one Dr. J. Bouquet, hospital pharmacist and inspector of pharmacists at Tunis, alleging that the drug “has serious social consequences (abandonment of work, propensity to theft and crime, disappearance of reproductive power).”[45] Also in Anslinger’s cannabis scrapbook was an excerpt from Louis Lewin’s seminal work *Phantastica*:

> The habitual use of Indian hemp … changes the character in a humanly and socially unpleasant direction. Moroccans who were in the service of Europeans proved serviceable and reliable until they smoked kif. […] In [habitual] users the intellectual faculties are weakened, and … bad habits and spiritual debasement are produced so that they sink below the level of mankind. The whole populations of villages round the basin of Kassai are morally and physically ruined by hemp, and it is reported of the Wanyamwesi that a great part of them have become half imbecile through its abuse. […] The offspring of inveterate hemp-smokers are liable to be of inferior quality if conception took place during inebriety. Among the Riff pirates scrofulous children are known as “Uld l’Kif”, i.e. son of kif. What can be considered true for alcohol in this respect is also valid for hemp … The spermatozoa are subjected to the injurious effects of the active principles of hashish and are in this state conveyed to the ovuls. It seems to me probable that the craving for hemp can be inherited.[46]

45. Statement of H.J. Anslinger, Commissioner of Narcotics, Bureau of Narcotics, Department of the Treasury, *Taxation of Marihuana, Hearings, 75th Congress, 1st Session, on H.R. 6385*, United States Congress, House Committee on Ways and Means, 21.

46. Excerpt from *Phantastica: Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs, Their Use and Abuse* (1931) by Louis Lewin, P.H.A. Wirth (trans), p. 122, box 9, folder 24, “Effects of Marijuana,” 1, 3, in H.J. Anslinger papers, Collection 01875, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. Lewin cited late 12th century writer “Ebn Beithar,” probably referring to the Andalusian Arab physician, pharmacist, and botanist Ibn al-Baytar (1197-1248). As for the claims about moral, physical, and mental devolution in Central and East Africa, no citation or reference was provided. It is also unclear whether the use of “scrofulous” to describe the ‘sons of kif’ was a reference to scrofula, a disease in which tuberculosis causes symptoms outside the lungs, or the

A 1939 article in *The American Scholar* made a similar claim, possibly based on information provided by Commissioner Anslinger. The author, Maud A. Marshall, wrote that "[c]hildren of addicts are said to be inferior; in some parts of India, where hashish has long been used to excess, whole communities are imbecilic and morally degraded."[47] But this degeneration caused by cannabis was also visible much closer to home. The *Valley Morning Star* alerted Texans about the "fire-breathing demon" drug that was striking "in the dark … [in] practically every … American community." The paper cited statistics from Lower Valley law enforcement claiming that "probably 80 per cent of crime in this section is traceable to marihuana," and, more jarringly, "that it is in substantial part responsible for the backwardness of a portion of the Latin-American population."[48]

Claims about the eugenic effects of cannabis predate the word 'eugenics' itself. As early as 1881, H.H. Kane's monograph *Drugs That Enslave* linked cannabis drugs to heritable degeneration:

> Wasting of the muscles, sallowness of the skin, hebetude of the mind, interference with coordination, failure of the appetite, convulsive seizures, loss of strength, and *idiotic offspring*, seem, from all accounts, to be the uniform result of the long-continued use of this drug.[49]

Anslinger's personal files on marijuana contained several excerpts from Kane's book. Kane also suggested that the habit of "haschisch taking" was a "common practice in some of the far Eastern

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colloquial definition of 'morally contaminated,' but I do not think it would be unfair to presume the latter. Either way, the message is the same.

47. Maud A. Marshall, "Marihuana," (1938-39), 97.

48. "Blow in the Dark," *The Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen, TX), Aug. 17, 1938. https://www.newspapers.com/image/51492174/.

49. Dr. H. H. (Harry Hubbell) Kane, "The Hashisch Habit," in *Drugs That Enslave: The Opium, Morphine, Chloral, and Hachisch Habits* (Philadelphia: Presley Blakiston, 1881), 218; emphasis mine. This excerpt from Kane was also clipped into Anslinger's marijuana folder. See H.J. Anslinger papers, box 9, folder 24, "Effects of Marijuana."

countries [but] comparatively rare among the people of civilized nations."[50] "There are those who use haschisch steadily the year round, as many of our countrymen use alcohol," he continued, "but this is due more to moral depravity than to any special morbid craving for the substance used."[51] Note the implication of White or Western supremacy evident in this contrast between 'their' and 'our' intoxication habits. Anslinger and other anti-marijuana latched onto claims like these which supported their own narrative about marijuana. The Rowells maintained that marijuana was a parasite that damaged a user's more civilized higher mental faculties like empathy and self-restraint, reducing them to a less developed state. In contrast to alcohol, which "breaks down the moral standards," marijuana "not only breaks them down, but sets up in their place standards diametrically opposed."

> Under alcohol it is all right to disregard that which is moral and right; under marihuana *it is not only right to do wrong, but it would be wrong not to do wrong.* […] Intoxicated by liquor, a crime may be committed because moral restraint is not functioning; under the spell of marihuana, the crime *must* be committed because it is the right thing to do, and it would be wrong not to do it.[52]

The effects of cannabis that reformers and the media chose to highlight reveal a central fear in the anti-marijuana campaign: that the drug obstructed or reversed the development of 'civilised' traits in young people, who would then inevitably find themselves institutionalised for crime or insanity instead of becoming upstanding, contributing citizens. Media depictions of marijuana's history and effects on young people indicate an assumed consensus that Oriental races were backward, savage, or degenerate, lacking in the higher or civilised mental faculties that White Americans stood to lose. A Louisiana newspaper reported in March of 1938 that "[t]he destructive effect of the use of this narcotic, said to be used in the manufacture of some

50. Kane, *Drugs That Enslave*, 206.
51. Kane, 207.
52. Rowell and Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana*, 47-78. Emphasis original.

brands of cigarettes, is to release the base impulses and desires from those moral controls and inhibitions developed in the civilized man."[53] The implication being, of course, that the pinnacle of human evolution—"civilized" [white] man—was degenerated, de-civilised by the use of marijuana. The premise was that those who habitually used it outside of the 'civilised' world lacked the higher cognitive and moral faculties of the civilised world, so cannabis use would not have made that much of a difference from their natural state; alternatively, civilisations of the East had evolved in symbiosis with the plant, resulting in their failure to achieve the civilizational heights that the alcoholic White races had.

Cannabis' discursive framing as an Oriental menace over the nineteenth century made it an easy choice for reformers seeking to uphold particular forms of national ideology and identity.[54] Hegemonic markers of American identity were expressed in contrast to long-established constructions of the Oriental Other, and these in turn were projected onto American youth. As both potential criminals and potential victims, American youth were a central focus of the anti-marijuana movement. This youth-at-risk rhetoric was constructed to reflect the discursive dichotomy that characterized cannabis itself. Bearing the responsibility for the nation's future, young people became at once a critical national resource, needing careful guidance and protection from this "murder weed," and a public enemy—too curious and easily tempted, their malleable young minds were being moulded into antisocial criminals and even

53. "Marihuana A National Peril," *The Eunice News* (Eunice, LA), 8 Mar 1938. https://www.newspapers.com/image/669561655

54. Only recently have historians begun to focus on the Orientalisation of drug cannabis over the nineteenth century and the impacts this process had on cannabis prohibitions over the twentieth. See Bradley J. Borougerdi, *Commodifying Cannabis: A Cultural History of a Complex Plant in the Atlantic World* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018); David A. Guba, Jr., *Taming Cannabis: Drugs and Empire in Nineteenth-Century France* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

murderers, enslaved by the influence of an Orientalised and Orientalis*ing* substance.[55] In newspapers and magazines, on the radio, and on the silver screen, the American public was frequently warned that this subversive influence needed to be eliminated. Marijuana, the "new threat to our American civilization," as one physician described it in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, was so menacing because it targeted the most undeveloped and vulnerable minds—this applied to young people, but also to domestic and foreign Others.[56] According to the *Nashville Graphic,* the drug made "perverts and demons out of its victims."[57] The assistant director of health education at Tennessee's State Board of Health estimated that the number of marijuana addicts in the US was "more than 100,000, the majority of whom are of high school and college age." This was a cause for concern, of course, because "Orientals long ago learned that hashish produced the proper mental and emotional state for committing crimes of the most heinous nature."[58] A college student's essay on "youth and marijuana," reprinted in an Iowa newspaper, asserted that not only did marijuana drive users to "do anything that is asked of him no matter how wrong or peculiar," but more alarmingly, it triggered "an ardent desire to kill someone, something, anything; he may shoot his best friend or a total stranger."[59] The desire to kill did not always subside along with the intoxication, causing users to become long-term menaces to society.

The belief that cannabis was a degenerative agent was not unique to the United States. As Isaac Campos has argued, fears of degeneration were a primary motive for Mexico's prohibition

55. Dr. A.W. (Arthur Wakefield) Slaten, "This World of Ours: Marihuana – The Murder Weed That is The New Threat to Our American Civilization," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (14 May 1938), 44.
56. At various times these domestic Others included Black Americans, Mexicans, women, criminals, the mentally ill, Africans, Asians, 'primitive' and 'savage' colonized peoples, the poor and working classes.
57. "Solemn Warning Against 'Marihuana' is Sounded," *Nashville Graphic* (Feb. 10, 1938). https://www.newspapers.com/image/340881503.
58. "Solemn Warning Against 'Marihuana'."
59. Charles Harris, "Discourses on Youth and Marijuana," *The Williamsburg Shopper* (November 21, 1940), 10. https://www.newspapers.com/image/15218721

of marijuana in 1920, a full seventeen years before the American Marihuana Tax Act. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Mexican newspapers regularly reported "marijuana users degenerating into a more primitive state of being."[60] These claims went largely unchallenged, especially among members of the upper and elite classes, due to the "overwhelming" cultural association of marijuana with prisoners, soldiers, and *herbolarias* (practitioners of traditional indigenous medicine) and the environments in which these people lived. These people, their lifestyles, and their environments "occupied uncertain space at the juncture between civilization and barbarity, a space where Mexico's claim to modern, European states might be questioned."[61] More than marijuana itself, it was the *fear* of marijuana's impact on national sovereignty and prosperity that crossed the border into the United States in the early twentieth century. Instead of prisoners, soldiers, and indigenous herbalists, the marijuana-crazed brutes took the form of familiar American Others—immigrants, 'Orientals,' non-Whites, non-Christians, and nonconformists. Still, hereditary degeneration was far from the only concern of American anti-marijuana crusaders. Young, already-born Americans were the main concern, since their naïve, curious, and rebellious adolescent minds were most vulnerable to the de-civilising effects of the drug.

The Teen-Savage

Teenagers were not only seen as victims of evil marijuana peddlers; in fact, and not unlike so-called primitives and savages, teenagers were seen as a threat to themselves. Almost by definition, they were both civilised and savage. Adults feared that young people were not only too easily tempted but also that they actively sought out new thrills and took unnecessary risks, a

60. Campos, *Home Grown*, 124.
61. Campos.

result of the "atavistic tendencies that defined savage psychology and lay latent in all developing individuals"—including both young people and 'savages.'[62] Adolescence and young adulthood were critical because the lessons learned and choices made during this volatile stage would determine whether a criminal, insane, deviant, or civilised adult would emerge on the other side of it. This again indicates the tenacity of Hall's notion of adolescence, which was "preeminently the criminal age when most first commitments occur and the most vicious careers are begun."[63] A certain amount of rebellion and mischief was to be expected during these formative years, since a natural part of learning right from wrong was making mistakes. However, "eventually, they would need to learn how to settle down, check their impulses and delay gratification."[64] Young Americans required the same treatment as colonised Filipinos, and for the same reason. That was why it became so important for parents and educators to provide careful and rational oversight to guide the precarious teenage mind out of this 'primitive' and "quasi-criminal stage."[65] This was premised on the recapitulatory theory advanced by Hall, who held that socially problematic groups like addicts, deviants, hoodlums, "the mature recidivist [and] the clinically insane had failed to pass successfully out of adolescence and into adulthood."[66]

The cultural construction of marihuana as a social menace did not arise out of some spontaneous, widespread consensus but was rather the result of the efforts of a relatively small but unrelenting group of progressive-traditionalist moral reformers. These government officials, educators, academics, physicians, media outlets, and citizen groups incited a moral panic, and more specifically, a "drug crisis." According to Bryan Denham, "[d]rug crises allow public

62. Joshua Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage Goes to Hollywood," in Wesseling, ed., *The Child Savage,* 140.
63. Hall, quoted in Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 141.
64. Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 141.
65. Garrison, 140-141.
66. Hall, quoted in Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 141.

officials to take a stand against those who would corrupt the most vulnerable members of society, rallying constituents with dramatic anecdotes of individuals who die as a consequence of substance abuse."[67] Moral entrepreneurs in the 1920s and 1930s took a moral and racial stand against drugs and their purveyors, who ostensibly sought to "corrupt the most vulnerable members of society"—not the poor, the handicapped, or the marginalized (who, if anything, would have been seen as the main consumers of drugs like marijuana and thus hereditarily undesirable), but American youth, whose lives and futures came under increased scrutiny, burdened not only by their parents' expectations but also by public and political ones. Over the 1920s and 1930s, young people came to be considered both a protected class and a problem in the United States.[68]

The perceived excesses of the 'roaring' twenties, the rise of jazz, swing, and Black cultural influence, the rise of cinema, pool halls, dance halls, and other leisure activities filled interwar parents with apprehension. Concern over these issues and about the degeneration of White youth who flocked to these new scenes pervaded public discourse. Parents, educators, and other authority figures saw White kids dressing and dancing provocatively in dance halls to the shrieks of saxophones that they called 'hot jazz,' embracing "Negro lewdness [and] sensuous movement." Their speech was "slangy, coarse, often profane, and not infrequently lewd."[69] Bobbed hair, short skirts, and other displays of 'flapperhood' showed the disregard for

67. Bryan E. Denham, "Amplifications of Deviance Surrounding Illicit Drug Use: Conceptualizing a Role for Film," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 3, no. 4 (2010), 487; emphasis added.

68. The moral panic over marihuana – and the emphasis on protecting the youth – coincided with the emergence of the image established by Hall of children and teenagers as vulnerable humans-in-progress, and with the heightened emphasis on parenting and education in the 1920s and 1930s. See Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s*; Kriste Lindenmeyer, "New Opportunities for Children in the Great Depression in the United States," 434-450 in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, edited by Fass (Taylor and Francis, 2013).

69. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 22.

convention among young women. A draft from Anslinger's personal papers, which appears to have been written by him, offers important insight into what marijuana represented in the FBN chief's mind, and particularly how it related to the 'youth problem,' lewd social environments, and ancient Oriental decadence. Anslinger usually titled his notes with one-word descriptions (e.g., "Effects," "Medical," "Insanity," or "Youth,"), sometimes typed, sometimes scrawled across the top of the paper. This one, titled "Music," read:

> private
> Musicians and dancers gather at /parties,
> the crowd hums, hands clap and dancing
> begins to weave in sensuous rhythms.
> Sensuousness the beginning of the thought,
> marihuana carries the theme through. Unbelievably
> ancient indecent
> the/ rites of the East Indies are resurrected.[70]

In another note titled "Musicians," Anslinger was more specific about the kind of music attracting young people to these sensuous marijuana orgies – jazz and swing, unsurprisingly. "Music hath charms," he wrote, "but not this music. It hails the drug. The well informed would just as soon hear a song about sitting in the pleasant shade of the hood of a cobra." He went on to list several songs about marijuana, including titles like "Reefer Man," "Smokin' Reefers," "Muggles," "Vipers Drag," and "Texas Tea Party."[71]

While post-war youth rejected the traditional sources of social and ideological authority – family, church, and school – the Great Depression also took a toll on family life. With rampant unemployment, the effects of poverty on children became increasingly visible. Without economic stability, many Progressive era achievements, including child welfare reforms, appeared unsustainable. According to an estimate by the US Children's Bureau, up to twenty

70. "Marijuana Users – Music," H.J. Anslinger papers, box 9, folder 54.
71. "Marijuana Users – Music," H.J. Anslinger papers. 'Reefer,' 'Muggles,' and 'Tea' were common slang terms for marijuana, while a 'Viper,' would be referred to today as a 'pothead' or 'stoner.'

percent of preschool and school children exhibited symptoms of malnutrition, sub-standard housing, and inadequate medical care by 1932. Grace Abbott, head of the Children's Bureau, argued that affording economic security to American children was "one of the most important responsibilities of government because it would help to secure the nation's future."[72] Marijuana was added to the laundry list of vices symptomatic of the ever-increasing, unregulated pace of life and the dearth of economic opportunity. A 1935 *Washington Post* report on the marijuana menace claimed that "[a]uthentic figures from the records of the United States Department of Justice reveal a growing tendency on the part of the youth of America to adopt crime as a career." [73] In a report that Anslinger submitted to the Committee on Ways and Means during one of the Marihuana Tax Act hearings, a New York City physician named Dr. Walter Bromberg wrote:

> Young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five are frequent smokers of marihuana; even boys of ten to fourteen are initiated (frequently, in school groups); to them, as to others, marihuana holds out the thrill but not the evil connotation that morphine or cocaine has. Since the economic depression has to a certain degree disrupted family life in America, the number of marihuana smokers was increased by vagrant youths coming into intimate contact with the older psychopaths.[74]

The college student mentioned above also wrote that this "killer drug" was responsible for breeding an entirely new generation of criminals, the likes of which had never been seen before. "It is not the hardened criminals that are committing the murders, thefts, and sex crimes, but young boys and girls who should have no connection with crime!"[75] Anslinger painted a

72. Lindenmeyer, "New Opportunities for Children in the Great Depression in the United States," 434-435.
73. Edward F. Atwell, "America Declares War on Dope, the Mighty Maker of Criminals: An Army of Peddlers are at Work Recruiting New Addicts Among the Young," *Washington Post*, Mar. 24, 1935. Accessed April 8, 2021. https://www-proquest-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/docview/150677695/80F5C9F01B3A4C1BPQ/14?accountid=10246
74. Quote attributed to "Dr. Walter Bromberg, distinguished psychiatrist of New York City," in "Medical," H.J. Anslinger papers, box 9, folder 24, file 17.
75. Harris, "Discourses on Youth and Marijuana."

similarly distressing picture. “It is the useless destruction of youth which is so heart-breaking to all of us who labor in the field of narcotic suppression. The drug acts as an almost overpowering stimulant upon the immature brain.”[76]

Marijuana symbolised a foreign threat and provided officials, educators, and parents with something tangible to blame for the perceived rise in juvenile delinquency and decline in parental authority. It was something that could be located and eliminated. “Parents have become too concerned in enjoying the fleshpots of the age to give proper attention to their offspring,” said J. Edgar Hoover in 1936. “Discipline must be re-established in the American home. The father thinks too much about golf to care what his son is doing; the mother who is so eager for bridge that she pretends her daughter in a parked car beside the roadway is merely indulging in a bit of harmless petting, must recast their ideas or realize that they are unable to govern the human beings for whose existence they are responsible.”[77] These kinds of adult reactions to the burgeoning youth subculture reinforced patriarchal and racist sentiments about social degeneration and national decline. Indeed, writes historian of childhood and youth Paula Fass, “[j]azz and modern dancing were the sign of American decadence heralding the collapse of civilized life.”[78] Different schools of thought crystallized around the ‘youth problem’ and how to deal with it in the 1920s and 1930s, but it seems that most adults, whether progressive or traditionalist, agreed that post-war youth were different in some way than previous generations,

76. Anslinger and Cooper, “Marijuana—Assassin of Youth,’ in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America*, 437.
77. “Chief ‘G’ Man Asks Catholic Society to Aid Fight on Crime,” *Salt Lake Tribune* (Sep. 20, 1936), 12. https://www.newspapers.com/image/598545918
78. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 22; see also Suzanne Wasserman, "Cafes, Clubs, Corners and Candy Stores: Youth Leisure-Culture in New York City's Lower East Side During the 1930s," *Journal of American Culture* 14, no. 4 (1991), 43-48. Hobson’s idea of a proper anti-drug education programme included teaching students “desirable habits” that would help keep them away from drugs and temptations. One such desirable outcome was that young people would find their “keenest enjoyment in outdoor sports, such as skating, swimming, riding, etc.” instead of “indoor amusements” like soda shops, dance halls, radio, and film. See Hobson, “The Peril of Narcotic Drugs,” (1928), 12.

and that the outcome of these formative years would define the future of the nation.[79] In the 1930s, this new image of youth made the connection between young people and drug cannabis all the more compelling, as the drug was endowed with all the degenerative powers of modernity and savagery and with all the forces that threatened American hegemony abroad and White, Protestant, middle-class hegemony at home.

The idea that the spread of marijuana was part of some subversive plot was frequently expressed in the outrage over the alleged targeting of children and teenagers by drug peddlers. Anslinger's 'Assassin of Youth' propaganda captured traditional American fears of subversion, degeneration, and foreignness.[80] He also provided source material and information to newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, and any other outlet seeking to report on marijuana. Not only was the drug ancient, Oriental, and evil; not only was it being secretly cultivated and smuggled all over the country; but, most ominously, it was driving otherwise innocent youths to commit unthinkable acts of wickedness and brutality. Anslinger kept a dossier in which he collected the most heinous stories about marijuana-related crimes, which he affectionately called his "Gore File." This file, along with other newspaper clippings and excerpts from scientific papers that conveniently supported his views on cannabis, made up the great majority of the evidence that Anslinger presented to the House Committee during the Marihuana Tax Act hearings. Reading from his "Gore File," Anslinger told the congressmen about a Chicago policeman who was murdered by two boys under the influence of marijuana. He told them about a fifteen-year-old who had been purchasing marijuana from "some man" on a playground and

79. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, esp. 13-25. This was not unique to the 1920s; as John Muncie has observed, adults have been complaining about 'kids these days' for centuries. See John Muncie, *Youth and Crime,* 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 52.

80. For more on the relationship between anti-drug sentiment and traditional American enemies, see Susan L. Speaker, "'The Struggle of Mankind against Its Deadliest Foe': Themes of Counter-Subversion in Anti-Narcotic Campaigns, 1920-1940," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 3 (Spring, 2001), 591-610.

went “insane” from repeated use.[81] The message was clear: a generation of promising, self-respecting youths was being stolen by this drug that turned normal teens into vicious savages. The most careful home training and the best heredity did not stand a chance against this foreign menace. America’s only hope was stricter laws and their uncompromising enforcement.

Anslinger’s favourite case was that of twenty-one-year-old Floridan Victor Licata. Dubbed the “Dream Slayer” by the press, Licata brutally murdered his family on October 17, 1933, taking an axe to his father, mother, sister and two brothers.[82] Tampa police found him the next day “crouching on the floor” somewhere in the family home, “calmly smoking a cigaret".[83] Reports on the day after the murders offered wildly different takes on what caused Victor’s actions. They can be separated into two general groups: those pointing out his history of mental health problems, and those painting him as a dangerous, drug-addicted miscreant. Among those that made no mention of drug use, the consensus seems to have been that Victor committed the murders “in a fit of insane frenzy.”[84] Most included statements from neighbours that Licata had been “under a physician’s care” in the two years before the murders. In some accounts, Licata’s neighbours “did not know the nature of his illness,” while others claimed the youth “was known to have been insane.”[85] Though “[l]unacy charges” had previously been filed against Licata, “the

81. “Taxation of Marihuana,” *Hearings before the Committee on Ways and Means, 75th Cong., 1st sess., on H.R. 6385* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, April 27-30, and May 4, 1937), 23.

82. Newspaper headlines provided the sensationalised nicknames “Dream Slayer” and “Dream Killer” to Licata. It is unclear whether they were intended as an allusion to the idea that hashish produced a dreamlike state in its users, a hallmark of nineteenth and early twentieth century European discourse on cannabis drugs, or whether the ‘dream’ in question simply referred to the hallucinations caused by Licata’s supposed insanity. See “Dream Slayer Talks in Cell: Licata Tells How He Slaughtered Family of 5,” *Tampa Daily Times* (Oct 18, 1933). https://www.newspapers.com/image/333513651/.

83. “Youth Is Arrested in Five Ax Deaths,” *Okmulgee Daily Times* (October 18, 1933); “Insane Youth Slays Five of the Family,” *Oshkosh Northwestern* (Oct. 17, 1933). https://www.newspapers.com/image/708100046.

84. “Insane Youth Slays Five of the Family,” *The Oshkosh Northwestern* (October 17, 1933). https://www.newspapers.com/image/245678097.

85. “Neighbors told Police Chief Logan that Victor had been under a physician’s care for about two years, but did not know the nature of his illness.” See “Four of Family Killed with Ax,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (Oct. 18, 1933). https://www.newspapers.com/image/573371174; “He was known to have been insane, they said, but the slain family had refused to place him in an institution.” See “Crazed Man Kills Five of Family,” *Vidette-Messenger of Porter*

slain family had refused to place him in an institution."[86] Still, at least one newspaper reported that "members of the family had expressed fear for their lives."[87] Despite citing the same newswire source, other newspapers like *The Knoxville Journal* were more interested in publishing allegations that he has been an "insane drug addict." According to these reports, not only had friends and neighbours known about Licata's mental health, but that they had also "told police that Victor was a habitual smoker of Marajuana [*sic*]".[88]

As if to dispel any remaining doubt that Licata's case was a watershed moment in the twentieth century drug war, a headline on the front page of the next day's *Knoxville Journal* announced that a "War Against Drugs Follows Slayings."[89] This was corroborated by the *Tampa Daily Times*. One day after Licata killed his family, the *Daily Times* printed a quote from Tampa police chief A.C. Logan pledging that he would "use the police vice squad, automobile theft bureau, detective force and every other agency at my disposal to see that the sale of marijuana is stopped," and confirming that he had enlisted the help of city, county, state, and federal authorities. The *Tampa Daily Times* was uncompromising in its stance that Victor had been a bad seed, blaming the killing spree on a nightmare caused by "a deadly combination of raw moonshine and dope" that had "snapped the last bit of sensibility out of his dope-tortured brain and made him a butcher."[90] Licata, on his part, insisted that he "never killed anybody."[91] He only

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County (Oct. 17, 1933), https://www.newspapers.com/image/332981175/; "Insane Youth Slays Five of the Family," *Oshkosh Northwestern*; "Maniac Slays Five," *Kane Republican* (Oct. 17, 1933), https://www.newspapers.com/image/50193925.

86. "Lunacy charges were filed against Victor last year, but had been withdrawn at the request of the family." See "Youth Is Arrested in Five Ax Deaths," *Okmulgee Daily Times*.

87. "Four Persons Slain," *The Emporia Gazette* (Oct. 17, 1933), https://www.newspapers.com/image/11142248.

88. "Youth Batters Five to Death," *The Knoxville Journal* (October 18, 1933), https://www.newspapers.com/image/586431204.

89. "War Against Drugs Follows Slayings," *The Knoxville Journal* (October 19, 1933), https://www.newspapers.com/image/586431397.

90. "Dream Slayer Talks in Cell," *Tampa Daily Times*.

91. "Dream Slayer Talks in Cell."

admitted to hitting his "uncle, and some old woman […] Then two other men and two other women." His family had been present, but they had been the aggressors, according to Licata: "My father held me on the wall, and my mother helped him cut my arms off. They put wooden arms on, but look! […] my arms are all right now. I was scared. My arms were gone. I had a pain in my stomach.[92] Licata also said he had brandished "a funny axe," not a real one, though when he "picked it up and wrung it out, real blood came out! Not paint, not red ink… my stomach hurt." He was clearly unwell, suffering from hallucinations, delusions and maybe even a manic episode.[93]

In the years following the murders, Anslinger crafted a version of the story that he presented as *prima facie* evidence that marijuana produced insanity, criminality, and murderous violence in young users. Yet, as several scholars have since confirmed, marijuana was not mentioned in any of Licata's psychiatric reports nor was it deemed to have contributed to the killings.[94] Records from the Florida State Mental Hospital show that upon being committed, Licata was diagnosed with 'Dementia Praecox with homicidal tendencies,' a condition that modern physicians might diagnose as paranoid schizophrenia. The reports also confirm allegations in the press that Ybor police had filed a lunacy petition a year before the killings but retracted it at his parents' request. They thought they could better care for him at home. The psychiatrist also noted that Licata's insanity was likely inherited: his parents were first cousins; a

92. "Dream Slayer Talks in Cell."
93. "Dream Slayer Talks in Cell." Some of Licata's statements, like "I'm the strongest man in the world … My arms—see, they're not made of wood. They're the strongest arms in the world," suggest that he may have been experiencing some form of mania.
94. Larry Sloman, *Reefer Madness: The History of Marijuana in America* (St. Martin's Press: New York, NY, 1979; 1998), 60-62; Ernest Abel, *Marihuana: The First Twelve Thousand Years,* 210

grand-uncle and two cousins on his father's side resided in insane asylums; his younger brother Philip, one of the victims, had also been diagnosed as suffering from dementia praecox.[95]

Anslinger may have had access to these reports though a more precise cause for Licata's crimes was of no concern to him. To the Narcotics Commissioner, Licata was a sign of things to come, proof of the gruesome future that awaited curious American youth, and a prototype for the degenerated, Orientalised citizenry that would populate the United States should the spread of marijuana continue. In his "Marihuana – Assassin of Youth" article four years later, this is how Anslinger described the Licata case:

> An entire family was murdered by a youthful addict in Florida. When officers arrived at the home, they found the youth staggering about in a human slaughterhouse. With an ax he had killed his father, mother, two brothers, and a sister. He seemed to be in a daze. ... He had no recollection of having committed the multiple crime. The officers knew him ordinarily as a sane, rather quiet young man; now he was pitifully crazed. They sought the reason. The boy said he had been in the habit of smoking something which youthful friends called "muggles," a childish name for marihuana.[96]

Besides spicing up the story with salacious phrases like "staggering about in a human slaughterhouse," Anslinger contradicted the original press reports, erasing Licata's mental health background to portray marijuana as the catalyst for his psychotic break. The original reports made clear that, far from a "sane" and "quiet," neighbour, police and the Licata family had known for at least a year that Victor was unstable.

Anslinger's sensationalism drew community organisations into the fight against the assassin of youth. In 1938, the New York Women's Clubs Federation teamed up with the New York Parent-Teacher Congress to publicly petition national educational organizations for

95. Abel, *Marihuana,* 210.
96. Anslinger and Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth,' in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America,* 435; emphasis added.

assistance in "informing young people of the degeneration, mental and moral, as well as physical, following its use and giving evidence of its definite influence in juvenile delinquency."[97] Write-ups in newspapers around the country warned that the marijuana targeted "almost exclusively the higher nerve centers," causing smokers to "run wild and committ [*sic*] murder."[98] Similar efforts were being made at both the local and national levels by community organisations including church groups, book clubs, and boy scouts. The WCTU was fully on board with Anslinger's crusade, as it had been with Hobson's. But Anslinger did not limit his efforts to the supposedly fact-based forms of media like newspapers and magazines; he also capitalised on the possibilities presented by new media technologies, especially film. Movies, especially with the advent of 'talking pictures,' allowed for propaganda to be disseminated through unofficial channels and to reach a far wider audience.

*Pot*paganda Films

> For centuries the world has been aware of the narcotic menace.
>
> We have complacently watched Asiatic countries attempt to rid themselves of DRUGS CURSE [sic], and attributed their failure to lack of education.
>
> We consider ourselves enlightened, and think that never could we succumb to such a fate.
>
> But—did you know that—the use of Marihuana is steadily increasing among the youth of this country?
>
> Did you know that—the youthful criminal is our greatest problem today?
>
> And that—Marihuana gives the user false courage, and destroys conscience, thereby making crime alluring, smart?
>
> That is the price we are paying for our lack of interest in the narcotic situation. […]
>
> MARIHUANA, Hashish of the Orient, is commonly distributed as a doped cigarette. Its most terrifying effect is that it fires the user to extreme cruelty and license.[99]
>
> – *Marihuana: Weed with Roots in Hell!* (1936)

97. "Marihuana," *Blue Springs Bee* (April 14, 1938), https://www.newspapers.com/image/669561655; "Marihuana," *Weekly Wymorean* (April 14, 1938), https://www.newspapers.com/image/767969913/.
98. "Marihuana," *Blue Springs Bee*; "Marihuana," *Weekly Wymorean*.
99. Hildegarde Stadie (Esper), *Marihuana*, directed by Dwain Esper (Los Angeles, CA: Roadshow Attractions, 1936), digitised by k-otic.com, posted online at the Internet Archive (January 1, 2008), 1:00 - 2:15. https://archive.org/details/Marihuana-the_Devils_Weed

Movies are a critical tool for introducing and maintaining hegemonic norms, ideas, and values, distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable behaviour, and enforcing boundaries of group membership. Drawing on theories of social identity, attribution, framing, and disposition, Bryan Denham has shown how popular films since 1970 have "identified and reified internal and external enemies in the US war on drugs," especially by "dramatizing the corruptive influence of racialized 'others.'"[100] Not only has the film industry contributed to recurrent moral panics over drug use, but, by employing "dramatic narratives and powerful imagery" of "folk devils," or people who behave in ways deemed threatening to the social order, films have also helped public officials wage a continuous and ever-expanding war on drugs and drug users.[101] These histrionic images and narratives about drugs, users, and traffickers contributed "to fear-based politics and to drug policies based less on empirical evidence than on dramatic anecdotes."[102] Denham's attention to films produced after 1970, though insightful, overlooks the fact that this relationship between popular media and the objectives of American political and social elites is nearly as old as cinema itself. Indeed, one of the earliest motion pictures ever was the 1894 Thomas Edison production *Chinese Opium Den*. Denham's argument that popular media productions like films have acted as an apparatus of the state, propagating official definitions of deviance by transmitting hegemonic "conceptions of acceptable and unacceptable conduct," is as applicable to the 1930s as it is to the 1970s or 1980s. By marking the activities of certain sections of the population as dangerous, disruptive, or subversive, the film industry has been complicit in preserving the social and political power of historically dominant classes.[103]

100. Denham, "Amplifications of Deviance," 485.
101. Denham, 498.
102. Denham, 498
103. Denham, 486.

In the early 1930s, Hollywood was well on its way to becoming one of the most powerful and influential industries in American culture. "Talking pictures," or "talkies," became commercially viable for production companies in the late 1920s, and by the 1930s the format was poised to replace silent films altogether. Talkies might have exacerbated the anxieties about the negative influence of film on young people, but these concerns were only carried over from the criticisms previously directed toward silent films. Cinema drew public indignation due to the perceived 'immorality' depicted on (and off)-screen. The Hollywood film industry, hoping to appeal to a broad and dignified audience and to stave off government intervention, opted in 1930 to establish a code of self-censorship, the Motion Picture Production Code (MPPC). The MPPC had little influence over the independent film industry, however. Exploitation filmmakers, as the name suggests, continued to exploit their "unique access" to a range of themes and topics that most of Hollywood would not touch.[104] Exploitation films were geared toward "the young or unsophisticated theater patron who [found] the films' lurid qualities to be attractive."[105] Other defining features of the genre, according to film historian Eric Schaefer, included low production value (reflecting low budgets) and independent distribution, which meant that they were usually screened in "theatres of dubious character."[106] The exploitation genre embraced taboo subjects like sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, gangs, and teen rebellion. Historian of education and childhood Joshua Garrison has followed the trajectory of these themes in exploitation cinema back to psychological studies published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and above all to G. Stanley Hall's theory of recapitulation, which identified deviance

104. Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 142.
105. Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 142.
106. Garrison.

and other "'aberrations' as either regressions to, or arrested development within, a state of savagery."[107]

Although recapitulatory theories of childhood development had begun to lose favour among mainstream researchers by the 1920s, the child-savage analogy, with all the nineteenth-century theoretical baggage of Lombrosian "atavisms" and Morelian degeneration, remained a fixture of popular cultural discourse. Garrison illustrates how Hall's recapitulatory theories, particularly his "dark fantasies" about adolescent regression to savagery, were "brought to life" in the exploitation cinema of the 1930s.[108] These films "highlighted adult concerns about teenage behavior … in hyperbolic and outlandish ways," which helped make them a staple of American cinema by the early 1930s.[109] Nowhere is the appeal and significance of the Old Man of the Mountain legend for anti-marijuana propaganda clearer than in the exploitation film genre. The cases in Anslinger's 'gore file' would never have made it past the MPPC, but the uncensored nature of exploitation films made it the perfect medium to show marijuana's destruction with the same kind of sensationalism and graphic detail employed in printed propaganda materials like Anslinger's 'Assassin of Youth' article. Most of these films featured well-adjusted, educated, middle-class White teenagers—the epitome of "good heredity and careful home training," as Hobson put it—being tricked or seduced into lives of crime, sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse and trafficking, and other forms of "social disease."[110] Recapitulatory thinkers like Hall provided the blueprint for exploitation filmmakers: the belief that "within all youth, no

107. Garrison, 135.
108. Garrison, 143.
109. Garrison, 135. "Adolescent regression to savagery was the subtext of many of the [exploitation] films" of the 1930s.
110. Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 143.

matter how 'right' they seemed, lay those atavistic tendencies that could strike in violent and unpredictable form at a moment's notice."[111]

Hollywood films also played their part in propagating cultural tropes about drugs as foreign, parasitic, and subversive, albeit avoiding specific references to any drug in particular. One of the most common tropes of early Hollywood was the swarthy and scheming (and often undead) foreign-accented villain, typically played by Bela Lugosi, who used foreign drugs, supernatural powers (i.e., witchcraft or voodoo), or magic potions to overpower respectable, 'normal' White Americans and carry out their evil plans. Lugosi's depiction of Count Dracula (1931) mirrored Richmond Hobson's profile of the heroin addict: both drained the lifeblood from victims and turned them into the "living dead," bent on spreading their affliction to others. In *White Zombie* (1932), Lugosi played a mysterious plantation owner in Haiti who used voodoo to turn his Haitian labourers into zombies so that they could work continuously, without breaks, forever.[112] Less ambiguously, a scene in *Night of Terror* (1933) shows the villain (also played by Lugosi) in a detective's custody, asking if he could smoke. "I don't care if you burn," the detective retorts. Lugosi's character offers one to the officer. As the officer lights up, he sniffs the air. "Hey, what kind of a cigarette *is* that?" he asks. "It is an *oriental* cigarette," replies Lugosi. The detective's head starts to wobble and within seconds he falls unconscious. Lugosi, grinning, strolls right out of the room.[113] The idea of adolescent regression to savagery, however, provided the subtext for many exploitation films in the 1930s. It should come as no surprise,

111. Garrison.
112. Garnett Weston and William B. Seabrook, *White Zombie*, dir. Victor Halperin (Culver City, CA: Victor & Edward Halperin Productions, 1932). Available on Amazon Prime Video: https://www.primevideo.com/detail/White-Zombie/0FWNYJWS3I1IBSNY4GRCPZ4BKF
113. Beatrice Van, William Jacobs, and Willard Mack, *Night of Terror*, dir. Benjamin Stoloff (United States: Bryan Foy Productions, 1933), 54:45-56:05. Posted online at the Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/NightOfTerror.

then, that the three marijuana films of the 'reefer madness' era came from this part of the film industry. In these films, the Assassin legend was reinterpreted for 1930s American audiences to emphasise marijuana's Orientalness, its un-civilising effects, and the calamity facing America's youth. They honour the Orientalist tradition of identifying a 'them' and defining them as 'not us'—that is to say, constructing and asserting an identity by defining it in opposition to the Others' lifestyle, behaviours, traditions, beliefs, and other characteristics. The youths in these films are full of potential before succumbing to the temptation of seeking pleasure for its own sake, a slippery slope that leads to despair, degradation, and even death.

The 1936 exploitation film *Marihuana* (sometimes subtitled *Weed with Roots in Hell!*) was written and produced by drug exploitation film pioneers and husband-and-wife team Dwain and Hildegarde Esper. Director Dwain and screenwriter Hildegarde exploited the drug theme more than anyone else during the 1930s, producing at least three films over the decade that dealt with drug use, S*inister Harvest, Narcotic* (both 1933) and *Marihuana* (1936). *Sinister Harvest* was a short film usually screened before or after another Esper film. Hildegarde Esper claimed that the documentary footage in *Sinister Harvest*, which showed the allegedly "debilitating effects of hashish on Egyptian men and women as well as the methods employed in smuggling the drug" had been provided to them by Harry Anslinger.[114] *Marihuana* is interesting for a few reasons. It was the first film to take marijuana as its main subject since the 1924 silent western *Notch Number One.* Hildegarde's admission that Anslinger contributed information and source material for *Sinister Harvest* also says a lot about what sources might have been used in the

114. Eric Schaefer, *"Bold! Shocking! Daring! True!" A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 231.

making of *Marihuana.* The film's opening crawl ends by acknowledging that the story was "drawn from an actual case history on file in the police records of one of our large cities."[115]

The Espers' films upheld "an ethic of hard work" and warned of "the dangers of being seduced by the fast life."[116] Gee Wu, an opium-smoking Chinese character in *Narcotic* (1933), embodied the screenwriters' assumption that drug use was a normal part of life for Orientals and the 'criminal classes'—people of inferior stock, in the parlance of the time. Gee Wu remarks that for the Chinese, smoking opium was just a normal distraction, but that people from the West "are overwhelmed with progress and speed which might make any diversion become a vice."[117] In other words, modernity and progress, the very processes that proved White societies were more advanced and by which Western powers justified their domination over the world's colonised, also threatened to be their undoing. The dose makes the poison, as they say. A recurrent theme in the history of drugs, the idea communicated through Gee Wu also used drugs to promote notions of immutable biological Otherness, a historically Western mode of representing Self and Other, and to reify the notion that Western races were not only more advanced but also nobler, and thus had more to lose.

Marihuana follows the story of Burma Roberts (Harley Wood). Loving, chaste, and family-oriented, Burma was the good girl *par excellence*.[118] Her personality at the beginning of the film reflected the ideal qualities that ostensibly determined a young girl's social worth in the early twentieth century—self-restraint, chastity, and compliance. Neither Burma's academic and

115. *Marihuana* (1936), 1:45.
116. Schaefer, *Bold! Shocking! Daring! True!*, 233.
117. A.J. Karnopp and Hildegarde Stadie, *Narcotic*, dirs. Dwain Esper and Vival Sodar't (Los Angeles, CA: Roadshow Attractions, 1933), 4:50. Posted online at the Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/Narcotic_201902.
118. Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 144.

athletic achievements nor her career ambitions seem to have been as important to establish her as a virtuous American girl than her moral, mental, and sexual purity. Burma's promising life takes a tragic turn when she starts smoking marijuana, confirming fears repeated by anti-pot crusaders that "[m]arihuana is sometimes used as a means to White slavery."[119] Burma and her friends make plans for a weenie roast that Saturday, but that is when they meet the film's drug-peddling antagonist, a shady character named Tony and his thick-accented crony. The shifty pair convinces the gang to hang out at Tony's beach house instead. At the beach house, Tony and his accomplice introduce Burma and the gang to reefer cigarettes. Getting high changes Burma. At the beach party, surrounded by weed and booze, Burma loses all prior restraint and has sex. Before long, she discovers that she is pregnant. The drug-peddling antagonist, a vaguely foreign man named Tony, uses Burma's pregnancy to persuade Dick that the only way he would be able to provide for the baby was to work for him. Dick agrees and is almost immediately killed in a shootout with police. Tony then convinces Burma to give her baby up for adoption. Afterward, the clearly traumatized protagonist sticks with Tony and starts a life as a drug trafficker, going by 'Blondie.' In an early depiction of the 'gateway' theory of drug use, Burma goes from marijuana smoker to full-blown heroin addict. Before long, Tony and Burma hatch a plot to kidnap her sister's baby and hold it for a $50,000 ransom. The plan goes awry, and Tony's gang, Burma included, are caught by police. Distraught and without recourse, Burma takes an overdose of heroin and dies "in the arms of her handcuffed accomplices."[120] Recalling the themes of recruitment, manipulation, and depravity in the anti-marijuana crusade, particularly in the Orientalist legend of the Old Man of the Mountain and his assassins, the film's message is unambiguous. Using a female lead allowed for the incorporation of older American anti-drug

119. Rowell and Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana*, 56.
120. Garrison, "The Teenaged Savage," 144.

themes, most notably the late-nineteenth century accusations that Chinese immigrants enticed young White women into their opium dens and got them addicted, condemning them to lives of prostitution and degradation. The story also drew on traditional racist fears of White slavery, most frequently involved the enslavement and defilement of White girls by non-White men.

Assassin of Youth (1937) brought Anslinger's "Marihuana—Assassin of Youth" article to life. The legend of the assassins and the youth-savage analogy provided the symbolism and message, while cases from Anslinger's 'gore file' were illustrated in vivid and shocking detail. After the tragic death of her grandmother at the hands of a marijuana-crazed driver, Joan Barry (Luana Walters) is named the sole beneficiary of her fortune—on the stipulation that she fulfill a morals clause in the will. If Joan behaves immorally before she turns eighteen, she loses all rights to the inheritance. Her covetous cousin Linda and her boyfriend Jack have other plans for the money, however. Linda and Jack devise a plan to get their hands on the fortune by framing Joan; first, by getting her high on marijuana, and then setting her up to get caught in several compromising and scandalous situations. In one memorable scene, Linda sets the plan in motion while at a weenie bake (a surprisingly popular activity among teens in the 1930s) with Joan and some friends. When Joan and a boy move away from the campfire for some alone time, Linda starts handing out something to several of the friends. One of them asks what it is. "Marijuana weed cigarettes, ain't you ever smoked 'em?" replies Jack, promising that it held a "real kick, something different."[121] All the friends around the fire get one except one of the girls. Linda tells the girl to bring more money if she wanted marijuana, but offers "something stronger," which the girl accepts without a second thought. While Joan tells the boy that she could not see him on Sunday because she was "going to church with Mother," the rest of the gang started getting high.

121. *Assassin of Youth,* 7:59.

They call out to Joan, asking for her to put something "peppy" on the radio. Quintessential Arabian music starts to play—the kind one would expect to hear in an adaptation of *Aladdin,* for example.[122] As the drugs kick in, the teens start to 'play Eastern.' The weenie bake devolves into a lewd orgy, a twisted Orientalist impression of despotism and female subjugation in the East. As the stereotypical Arabian music blares, one of the boys wraps a cloth around his head and announces: "I feel just like a sultan!" "And I feel like your favourite slave!" replies the girl who had taken the stronger stuff. "Alright, slave—dance!" proclaims the 'sultan.' The girl jumps up and starts gyrating provocatively, mimicking a belly dance. Another boy starts playing carnival barker, announcing "…here you are, right this way, ladies and gentlemen, and see Fatima!"[123] Exactly like Anslinger and his fellow crusaders had warned, marijuana, the "hashish of the Orient," has turned boys into depraved slaveholders and girls into sex slaves. All watch the sultan's slave dance.

The belief that adolescents walked the line between civilised and savage is palpable in this scene, as is the significance of the Orientalist mythos linking 'hashish' and 'assassin' to anti-marijuana discourse. Young people were precariously perched in this transitional stage of development, and marijuana, like a sacrament for the wicked, hijacked this developmental process. Based on the available cannabis research, almost entirely produced by colonial officials' scrutiny of colonised minds and bodies, Anslinger had warned of the drug's "almost overpowering" effects "upon the immature brain."[124] These teenagers were full of potential to mature into upstanding, modern, productive citizens, but all was lost when they took that first puff. Their politeness, self-respect, and self-control faded as they regressed into the archetypical

122. *Assassin of Youth,* 9:05.
123. *Assassin of Youth,* 9:06-9:32.
124. Anslinger and Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth,' in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America,* 437.

image of Oriental despotism and decadence. Media reports that hashish had "for centuries been the curse of the Orient" were juxtaposed with concerns about the 'killer drug's' effects on young people's mental and moral development for a reason.[125] Factoring the Orientalist lore and fears of White degeneration into the conventional racial formula, [race] + [drug] = [racial devolution], makes it clear that these themes were employed to suggest that marijuana mutated young White Americans into savages. As the United States strove to become the dominant Western power, much of Asia remained under Western colonial domination. The Orientalisation of America's youth by marijuana use, in this context, foreshadowed a future in which the United States was dominated by a foreign power, the exact opposite of the nation's presumed destiny.

The film introduces a new character, rookie journalist Arthur Brighton. Art is assigned to cover a gang of dope peddlers (which included Joan's cousin Linda) who had been debauching the small town and its youths, so he decides to pose as a soda jerk at the local haunt. Before he was sent out on this assignment, a scene shows the cub reporter being briefed by his editor-in-chief. The boss is tired of printing stories about "obscene parties" and small-town drama. He demands that Art uncover the "underlying cause" of these incidents. "Find out if marijuana is playing a part in the lives of these young people," he orders.[126] The editor proceeds to show Arthur a short one-reeler entitled "The Marijuana Menace," to "impress [him] as to the seriousness of the situation." Art watches as words begin to scroll across the screen:

> In 1090 AD, a diabolical, fanatical, cruel and murderous group living in Syria and Persia committed secret murders in blind obedience to the will of their masters. The heinousness of these crimes aroused all of Europe and Asia. It was there a custom that whenever a sheikh required the services of an assassin, a distinctive class known as 'fidais' were intoxicated with hashish, known to us as marijuana. The weed, now as well as then, is rightly accused of exciting the basest and most

125. Basil Manly, "War on Hashish Smoking is Carried to Congress in Effort to Save Children," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Dec. 20, 1928). https://www.newspapers.com/image/686567594.
126. *Assassin of Youth,* 16:20.

> criminal tendencies in the minds of its addicts. In one of our prisons, a survey recently made show that out of 450 persons, 125 were addicts of marijuana, ranging from 18 to 31 years of age. Furthermore, the records of a certain district attorney, taken over the period of the last several years, reveal that in his district, 17 out of 37 of the murderers, 13 out of 145 forgers, 15 out of 125 cases of assault and battery were addicts of marijuana. But I'm afraid that my words will not impress you; so, allow me to give you a few scenes that I know will have a lasting impression.[127]

Once again, descriptions of marijuana's effect on crime rates in the US were preceded by the drug's 'murderous' Oriental history, cementing the notion that the United States was being invaded by the drug that fuelled Oriental barbarism. The next frame is filled by the contorted body of a young woman lying face down on the sidewalk. Two male voices can be heard, one witness and another who is presumably a judge. "I saw her standing on the 8th story ledge," says the witness. "She jumped. It's a plain case of suicide, your Honor." "Suicide to most everyone, but to me it's murder by marijuana!" the judge's booming voice replies. Although Anslinger's name is nowhere to be found in the film credits, his fingerprints are all over it. Take this excerpt from the opening of Anslinger's article "Marihuana—Assassin of Youth," no doubt based on a story in his 'gore file':

> The sprawled body of a young girl lay crushed on the sidewalk the other day after a plunge from the fifth story of a Chicago apartment house. Everyone called it suicide, but actually it was murder. The killer was a narcotic known to America as marijuana, and to history as hashish. It is a narcotic used in the form of cigarettes, comparatively new to the United States and as a coiled rattlesnake … That youth has been selected by the peddlers of this poison as an especially fertile field makes it a problem of serious concern to every man and woman in America.[128]

Anslinger's involvement, or at least his influence, is unmistakeable. In the next scene, two policemen interrogate a frenzied young man. "You murdered five people, including your uncle.

127. *Assassin of Youth*, 17:20 – 18:53.
128. Anslinger and Cooper, "Marijuana—Assassin of Youth," in Musto, ed., *Drugs in America,* 433.

The weapon was found on ya. Why did you do it?" The disheveled young man replies that he had had a terrible dream: "People were … trying to hack off my arms."

> They were sneakin' around – tryna' kill me! I recognized one of them. He's my uncle. I had to kill 'em! Before they killed me! I had to kill 'em! Don't you understand, I had to kill 'em![129]

By this point, the young man is yelling, a look of hysteria on his face. "They'd kill me unless I killed them! Can't you understand?!"[130] Arthur Brighton was obviously watching a dramatization of Anslinger's favourite marijuana murderer, Victor Licata.

Another important detail in this scene is found in the film's foreword. According to the opening crawl, the one-reeler presented "facts on the Marijuana Menace compiled from articles published in some of our best magazines, newspapers, and from lectures delivered by the eminent Dr. A.E. Fossier and other noted crusaders against this dreaded weed."[131] As described above, Fossier was a key source for anti-marijuana reformers like Stanley, Anslinger, and the Rowells. This leaves little doubt as to the affiliations of the film's producers and highlights the discourses in which they were invested. At the very minimum, it shows that they understood the sensational appeal of drug-crazed youth and the appeal of such imagery with theatre audiences.

It is no coincidence that these films were released while American officials and moral reformers were at the height of their unrelenting campaign against marijuana. The marijuana exploitation films of the 1930s were all produced with the support of Harry Anslinger himself, since they conveyed the "right message" about drugs to viewers.[132] The idea that marijuana users

129. *Assassin of Youth*, 19:45-20:00.
130. *Assassin of Youth,* 18:57 – 20:00.
131. *Assassin of Youth*, 16:52.
132. Susan Boyd, "*Reefer Madness* and Beyond," in *Popular Culture, Crime, and Social Control*, 3-24, edited by Mathieu Deflem (UK: Emerald, 2010), 9.

became unpredictably violent, that they "lose all restraints, all inhibitions [and] become bestial demoniacs, filled with the mad lust to kill," was a key component of anti-marijuana propaganda.[133] These marijuana films adopted this rhetoric wholesale. After detailing the specific problems with drug abuse endemic to the 'Asiatic' countries, *Marihuana*'s opening credits informed viewers that marijuana "fires the user to extreme cruelty and licence" and that young people were its chief victims.[134] Movies like *Reefer Madness, Assassin of Youth,* and *Marihuana* brought these myths to life, and did so while claiming to be 'accurate,' 'factual' depictions of life under the bondage of marijuana. The film industry was still new, and a large portion of the public still had trouble discerning fiction from fact. In a review of *Assassin of Youth*, the *Harrisburg Telegraph* told readers that the film depicted the "horrors" of marijuana "more realistically" than the newspaper's own "persistent" coverage.[135] "The dread 'reefer parties,' which are in no small way the scourge of youth, the 'reefer' peddlers and the way they prey upon youth, and the innocent victims, may all be seen and studied." That the acting was "second class" was less important than the film's message, which was "put over in such a way that it should put every American mother and father on their toes. It should make them willing to help fight 'drugs.'"[136] Wichita Police Captain LeRoy Bowery, cited as a "nationally recognized authority" on marijuana, "urge[d] parents to send their children" to see *Assassin of Youth*.[137] A review in the Idaho Falls *Post-Register* offers an enlightening view of the way audiences interpreted the film's fusion of the Assassins legend with the degeneration of American youth: "Showing just what happens when youthful high school students become ensnared by the habit

133. Quoted in Sloman, *Reefer Madness* (1979), 48.
134. *Marihuana*, 2:00-3:00.
135. Sara Morrow, "Film Depicts Evils of 'Weed'," *Harrisburg Telegraph* (Jul. 22, 1939). https://www.newspapers.com/image/42746472.
136. Morrow, "Film Depicts Evils of 'Weed'."
137. "Marihuana Smoking Evils Told in Film," *Post-Register* (Jun. 1, 1939), https://www.newspapers.com/image/90489175.

of smoking marihuana 'reefers'—cigarets made from a Mexican weed—'Assassin of Youth' explains that marihuana centuries ago referred to hashish smoked in Syria and Persia by a distinct group of killers."[138] These movies brought adults' worst fears to life, clearly identified the threatening behaviour and its perpetrators and victims, and legitimised the danger by pointing to the drug's ancient, Oriental, murderous history.

These films reflected the growing tension between the traditional emphasis on productivity—the 'Protestant work ethic'— and the tidal wave of modern consumerism. In the films, the teens' obligations to family, work, education, and romantic partners are compromised when they begin to privilege their own desires over the needs and interests of society at large. Noted sociologist Howard S. Becker argued that one of the traditional American values threatened by legal drug use was a disapproval of pleasure-seeking for its own sake. Often attributed to the early influence of Puritan morality on American culture, this inclination may also stem from the strong cultural emphasis on pragmatism and utilitarianism. Euphoric experiences are acceptable if they are the "by-product or reward of actions we consider proper in their own right, such as hard work or religious fervor."[139] Without this culturally approved sacrifice, people are condemned as seekers of "illicit pleasure." Fear of this burgeoning youth subculture which seemed to favour instant gratification over hard work was palpable in the films, as it was in the other anti-marijuana propaganda outlets. Apprehension over what a future of leisure and consumption would do to the United States pervaded American culture during this period, and the future was even bleaker if young people were all becoming wayward and shiftless. Invoking colonial tropes about the Orient as a land of illusion, subjugation, and

138. "Marihuana Smoking Evils Told in Film."
139. Becker, *Outsiders*, 136.

decadence was an effective way of conveying these fears and galvanising the public to support prohibitive laws.

Conclusion

In the disillusionment and uncertainty of the interwar and Depression years, many Americans wanted assurance as to what direction their country was headed—what hope, if any, remained for the future of the United States? Mental, moral, and physical development of young people was linked to the evolutionary survival of the race and came to be seen as essential to the propagation of White hegemony at home and US hegemony abroad. Beginning with Richmond P. Hobson's anti-narcotic evangelism in the 1920s, assumptions about drug use—that it was foreign and invasive, that it created armies of Mr. Hydes out of communities of Dr. Jekylls—dovetailed with other major public concerns about the spread of vice, crime, and other 'social diseases.' The popularity of eugenic thought in the 1920s and 1930s was largely fuelled by these same concerns. Over the first three decades of the twentieth century, drugs, addicts, and traffickers were redefined as threats to the progress of races and nations, and above all, to American hegemony, self-determination, and the fulfilment of its providential mission. Young people became a major target of reformers during the interwar years, as many observed the social, cultural, political, and demographic changes occurring in the United States and abroad over the first few decades of the twentieth century with great apprehension. In the 1930s, concerns about the United States' economic stability, about challenges to the racial status quo of American society, and about the nation's ideological, racial, and geopolitical ascendancy found their expression in the purportedly disastrous consequences of youth marijuana use. "To have a home, beautiful daughters, and stalwart sons is the hope of every normal human being," wrote

the Rowells. “Narcotics strike at the foundation of these hopes and ideals.”[140] Protecting and advancing American ideals, identity and interests would not be possible if the nation’s youth were to take up the drug habits of so-called “savages.”

140. Rowell and Rowell, *On the Trail of Marihuana*, 79.

Conclusion

It has become a truism among drug historians that power over national and cultural identity, ideology, and behaviour have been central objectives of the modern drug war. When he declared a war on drugs in 1972, Richard Nixon described drug abuse as "America's public enemy number one." "In order to fight and defeat this enemy," he continued, "it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive."[1] Ronald Reagan was no less dramatic when he declared in 1986 that "Drug abuse is a repudiation of everything America is. The destructiveness and human wreckage mock our heritage."[2] Neither president seemed willing to admit that drug use and dependence are indeed as indigenous to the United States as anywhere else. Instead, their words establish drug users and addicts as un-American, even anti-American. Drug users were (and to many, still are) seen as cancerous, eating away at an otherwise morally, racially, politically, and culturally exceptional civilisation. Indeed, as former Nixon aide and "Watergate co-conspirator" John Erlichmann told *Harper's* reporter Dan Baum in a 1994 interview,

> The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.[3]

1. Richard M. Nixon, "Remarks About an Intensified Program for Drug Abuse Prevention and Control," *The American Presidency Project* 17 (1971. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-about-intensified-program-for-drug-abuse-prevention-and-control
2. Ronald Reagan, "Campaign Against Drug Abuse," *PBS.org: The American Experience* (September 14, 1986). https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/reagan-drug-campaign/
3. Dan Baum, "Legalize it All," *Harper's Magazine* 24 (2016). https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/. (Accessed September 10, 2020).

Despite what appears to be a paradigm shift in public and legislative attitudes toward drug use in recent years, it would be unwise to see this as proof that this earlier way of thinking is going extinct. When he announced his presidential bid in 2015, Donald Trump infamously declared that Mexican immigrants were of inferior quality. "They're not sending you," he said. "They're sending people that have lots of problems ... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."[4] During a Senate drug hearing in 2016, Trump's pick for Attorney General, Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions, told the presiding committee that "Good people don't smoke marijuana." The power to dictate what is right or wrong, normal or deviant, 'us' or 'them,' has allowed a status quo to be established that protects the interests and dominance of a particular version of White, Protestant, capitalist Americanness by suppressing and silencing other identities and invalidating their aspirations. By defining the illegitimate, non-medical use of any drug, in any amount, as abuse or addiction, approaches to the drug problem in the United States have remained strictly prohibitive and punitive. By essentializing the sale or consumption of drugs as unequivocally anti-American, casual drug users, people with use disorders, and historically disenfranchised communities have been cast as foreign, threatening, and subversive, fundamentally unable or unwilling to make the 'right' choice and stop using. The ongoing drug war's disproportionate persecution of racialized communities is a vestige of the White supremacist assumptions that informed its origins. The twentieth century drug war cannot be fully understood outside of this context. As Matthew Pembleton writes, "[d]rugs turned poverty, downward mobility, enslavement, and subversion into virulent contagions."[5] Attitudes toward

4. Washington Post Staff, "Full Text: Donald Trump Announces a Presidential Bid," *Washington Post* (Jun. 16, 2015). https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/

5. Matthew R. Pembleton, *Containing Addiction: The Federal Bureau of Narcotics and the Origins of America's Global Drug War*, 10.

cannabis use in particular, notes geographer Chris Duvall, have "reflected stereotypes of human–plant interaction [that] have divided societies into groups representing concepts of patriotism, race, social class, mental attributes, spirituality and criminality."[6]

This thesis has explored the intersections of race, identity, and power in the origins of the war on drugs. It should not be viewed as an indictment of all of White America, nor should it be taken as an argument that White people are the originators and sole propagators of racism and bigotry, drug-related or otherwise. Much of the anti-drug discourse of the early war on drugs was drawn from European colonial literature, to be sure, but perhaps equally dependent upon claims about drugs and degeneracy made by colonial subjects and other non-White peoples themselves. As Campos shows, Mexico's most influential export to the United States was not marijuana-smoking migrants (most were not), but rather the claims that marijuana produced insanity, violence, and crime and its associations with underclasses and 'savages.'[7] These ideas led to Mexico's own national prohibition of cannabis in 1920, seventeen years *before* the Marihuana Tax Act in the US. Furthermore, like the US, the construction of marijuana as a drug of vagabonds, indigenous peoples, criminals, soldiers, and prisoners made prohibition of the drug imperative for nationalists seeking to raise the country's status to the level of the European powers. The etymological link between 'assassin' and 'hashish' may also have been based on slanderous reports given to visiting Europeans from political and religious rivals of the Nizari Isma'ili sect.[8] Similar claims have been made about long-held antagonism and distrust toward cannabis users in Egypt and the Indian subcontinent.[9] In each of these places, cannabis (and

6. Duvall, *Cannabis*, 148
7. Campos, *Home Grown*
8. Bernard Lewis
9. See Liat Kozma, "Cannabis Prohibition in Egypt, 1880-1939: From Local Ban to League of Nations Diplomacy," Middle Eastern Studies 47, no. 3, 443-460 and James H. Mills, *Madness, Cannabis, and Colonialism* (2000).

other drugs) were used to identify an undesirable group and to assert identity, dominance, and superiority over them. The anti-drug discourse that developed in the United States over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has simply not been put in this longer transnational context.

The fixation on youth is also what sets this era of anti-drug campaigns, between 1898 and 1940, apart from previous ones. Like nothing before, the early twentieth century anti-drug campaigns investigated in this study seized upon the rhetorical power of 'protecting the youth,' which has since become an indispensable strategy in American political culture. This tactic was expertly parodied in *The Simpsons* character Helen Lovejoy, the pearl-clutching pastor's wife. Whenever panic, outrage, or crisis seizes the residents of Springfield, Lovejoy can be heard plaintively screaming "Won't *someone* think of the *children*!" The cultural success of the parody has rendered use of the phrase "think of the children" in public discourse an almost mockable offense. *Toronto Star* contributor Edward Keenan called the phrase "Lovejoy's Law," writing that use of the cliché indicates an attempt to distract from a hidden agenda or unsustainable argument.[10] Irish journalist Carol Hunt similarly called it the "Helen Lovejoy defence" and the "Helen Lovejoy syndrome."[11] According to feminist scholar Debra Ferreday, media use of the

10. Edward Keenan, "'Won't Somebody Please Think of the Children!': The Simpsons has Taught Us Not to Trust Anyone Who Stoops to use the Corruptibility of Children to Advance a Political Argument," *Toronto Star,* Apr 26, 2014. https://lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fwont-somebody-please-think-children%2Fdocview%2F1519058371%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D10246. "…the good of the kids is raised as a desperate attempt to distract from a more pressing concern: the interests of consumers, the perception of intolerance, an attempt to weaken civil liberties or the simple act of scratching an influential businessman's back. Sadly, the ploy often manages to at least derail the conversation - so we wind up debating who is or is not sufficiently concerned about the welfare of the young. You could call it Lovejoy's Law: If, during an argument, someone begs you to "please think of the children," they're probably either lying, trying to screw you over or hoping to distract you from the worthlessness of their position. Because when we really care about the children, we don't let people use them to manipulate us into accepting their politics. Instead, we engage in real debate."

11. Carol Hunt, "Don't Use Our Children as Shields to Protect Status Quo; The Helen Lovejoy Argument Against Gay Adoption is Simply Discrimination in a 'Caring' Guise, Writes Carol Hunt." *Sunday Independent* (Ireland), Jan. 5, 2014. https://global-factiva-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/redir/default.aspx?P=sa&an=FSII000020140105ea150004b&cat=a&ep=ASE

phrase spikes during periods of moral panic.[12] In debate, it is considered a logical fallacy, often used to dodge reasoned debate by appealing to audiences' emotions.[13] By arguing 'for the children,' one automatically sets up opposing arguments as being 'against the children,' a position that is nearly impossible to defend.[14] "Think of the children" also aptly characterizes the campaign to ban marijuana in the 1930s (as well as in most drug panics since, in some form or another).

Particularly since the early twentieth century, young people have often been made to bear the burdens of entire nations, their formative years coloured by adult hopes and fears about the future. Drugs, on the other hand, have over the same period been constructed as burdens themselves, their presence signalling the risk of regressing to some savage past. Youth are the future; drugs are the past. As I have argued in this thesis, it is evident that the parallel formation of child developmental psychology, colonial development policies, and the science of race development in early twentieth-century American thought has had a profound, yet sorely unappreciated influence on the attitudes of these early anti-drug crusaders and the policies enacted to combat drugs and addiction in the United States that persists to this day. The infantilisation of Filipino colonial subjects and the issue of having to protect and 'civilise' a population of drug-using 'primitives' encouraged officials and academics to link drug use to racial development and degeneration from the turn of the century. Once removed from the colonial context and turned inward, these ideas contributed to the cultural construction of drug users inside the United States: on the one hand, the foreign, invasive, infectious, degenerate

12. Debra Ferreday, "Reading Disorders: Online Suicide and the Death of Hope," *Journal for Cultural Research* 14, no. 4 (2010), 411.
13. John Meany and Kate Shuster, *Art, Argument, and Advocacy: Mastering Parliamentary Debate* (New York: International Debate Education Association, 2002), 65.
14. Andrew Scahill, "The Sieve or the Scalpel: The Family Movie Act of 2004, Infantile Citizenship, and the Rhetoric of Censorship." *Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities* 30, no. 2 (2011), 69–81. ISSN 0277-9897

'drug fiend'; and on the other, the Victor Licatas, the vulnerable-yet-vicious teen savages. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was frequently claimed that drug use was partly responsible for the retarded racial and sociopolitical development of peoples in Asia and Africa and, thus, their need to be dominated and 'civilised' by White races.[15] Drug users inside the US were correspondingly presented as threats not only to the social order, but to the racial-evolutionary progress that the nation represented. America's progeny became a site for waging war against racial and national degeneration. Victory depended on successfully cultivating the 'higher,' stronger, more sophisticated traits and on identifying and eliminating regressive ones. Seen from this perspective, the familiar arguments for stricter drug laws and harsher sentencing in the name of protecting the children (like Nancy Reagan's youth- and parent-focused 'Just Say No' campaign in the 1980s, to take one well-known example) takes on a whole new meaning.

There were likely other contributing factors to the obsession with youth degeneration. Some scholars have noted that Commissioner Anslinger's devotion to fighting the drug scourge could be rooted in his own childhood experience, a claim he himself made in his 1961 book *The Murderers*. While visiting a neighbour's farmhouse in 1904, twelve-year-old Harry heard a woman's loud screams coming from upstairs. "I had never heard such cries of pain before," he recalled. The woman's husband came rushing down the stairs and instructed Harry to take their horse and cart and hurry into town. "I was supposed to pick up a package at the drug store and bring it back for the woman."

> I recall driving those horses, lashing at them, convinced that the woman would die if I did not get back in time. When I returned with the package—it was morphine—the man hurried upstairs to give the woman the dosage. In a little

15. Drug use was also associated with 'inferior' classes of Whites; it was variously claimed to be the cause and the result of hereditary defects.

> while her screams stopped and a hush came over the house. I never forgot those screams. Nor did I forget that the morphine she required was sold to a twelve-year-old boy, no questions asked.[16]

Anslinger remembered this moment as one that changed him forever. It convinced him that there were people who may seem normal and put together on the surface, but if allowed near drugs could suddenly become "emotional, hysterical, degenerate, mentally deficient and vicious."[17] It is worth noting that, at least in his retelling of events, Anslinger ignored the possibility that the woman may have been genuinely suffering from an illness and that she needed the morphine to manage her pain.[18] Assuming that the events Anslinger described really happened, how exactly did the memory serve him later in life? Or, as literary scholar Alexandra Chasin asks, "was this truly a formative experience … forging Harry as a warrior against the ravages of improperly distributed drugs, or did Harry retrieve this memory later in light of his having turned out … to become a high-ranking soldier in an army engaged in infinite battles against Others at home and abroad, against the Otherness itself that seems to fill the being of the self, which is nonetheless understood as a War on Drugs?"[19] Even if Anslinger truly *was* affected by this incident and it *did* contribute to his later youth-focused approach to anti-drug propaganda, that does not explain his contemporaries' obsession with the same. Hobson's concerns about youth drug use, based on his writings and speeches, were rooted in White supremacist and imperialist ideologies, a deep-seated mistrust of Asians, and faith in the sciences of race development and eugenics. These individuals were important pioneers in what became a global drug war, but their efforts were responses to the cultural contexts and prevailing ideas of the early twentieth century. This was a

16. Alexandra Chasin, *Assassin of Youth: A Kaleidoscopic History of Harry J. Anslinger's War on Drugs* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 54.
17. Larry Sloman, *Reefer Madness*, 258.
18. Special thanks to Barbara Lorenzkowski for pointing this out to me.
19. Chasin, *Assassin of Youth*, 55.

time when American culture sought a release valve for the mounting disquiet over the unprecedented pace of change confronting it both at home and abroad. Alcohol was one powerful outlet; drugs were another. Over the years, various intoxicants—from opium and its derivatives to alcohol to cocaine to cannabis and beyond—have provided a tangible *thing* to wage war against and, with their destruction, ensure a return to normalcy and relief from these anxieties. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the drug-using Other manifested in such varied forms as the idle, decadent, or cunning Oriental; the aggressive Black man; the drunken Irishman and Native American; and the unruly Mexican alien. Each of these stereotypes and their use in public discourse can be seen as attempts to assert a particular interpretation of American identity and values in the face of some perceived threat. As American values and self-representations have shifted or been reinterpreted over time, images of the social deviant and national/racial Other have been updated to reflect these changes.

In the last couple of years, several US states, as well as Canada, where I live, legalised marijuana for recreational use for the first time in almost a century. This would have been a huge deal, and in fact it was, until the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Disillusioned factions in Europe and North America used the virus' purported origins in China as an opportunity to violently unload their frustrations on random people of Asian descent. Outrage from the Asian community and wider public inspired the Stop Asian Hate movement out of the US, which has raised awareness about the heightened discrimination and violence directed at Asians immigrants and people of Asian descent. Drugs may have lost some of their culturally resonant associations with the racialized Other, but the tendency to assert American power and identity in opposition to the fundamentally, immutably different Asian Other persists. By pointing to all the 'bad' practices that supposedly keep Asians in a barbaric past, blaming them

for spreading contagion around the world, Americans and other Westerners continue to position themselves as civilised and modern. To understand the cultural origins of the modern war on drugs, this thesis has circled back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and discovered that Orientalist and anti-Asian stereotypes were not only fundamental in the construction and racialization of 'drugs' as an 'enemy' against which the United States would protect humankind, but also, consequently, integral to the formation of a modern American identity and state. By uncovering the tangled ways in which drug use was used to demonise Asians, Asians were used to demonise drug use, and both were demonised to assert idealistic and hegemonic visions of White American identity, I hope to inspire others to continue exploring the complex roles that anti-drug and xenophobic discourses have played in the negotiation of identity, culture, and policy in the United States.

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