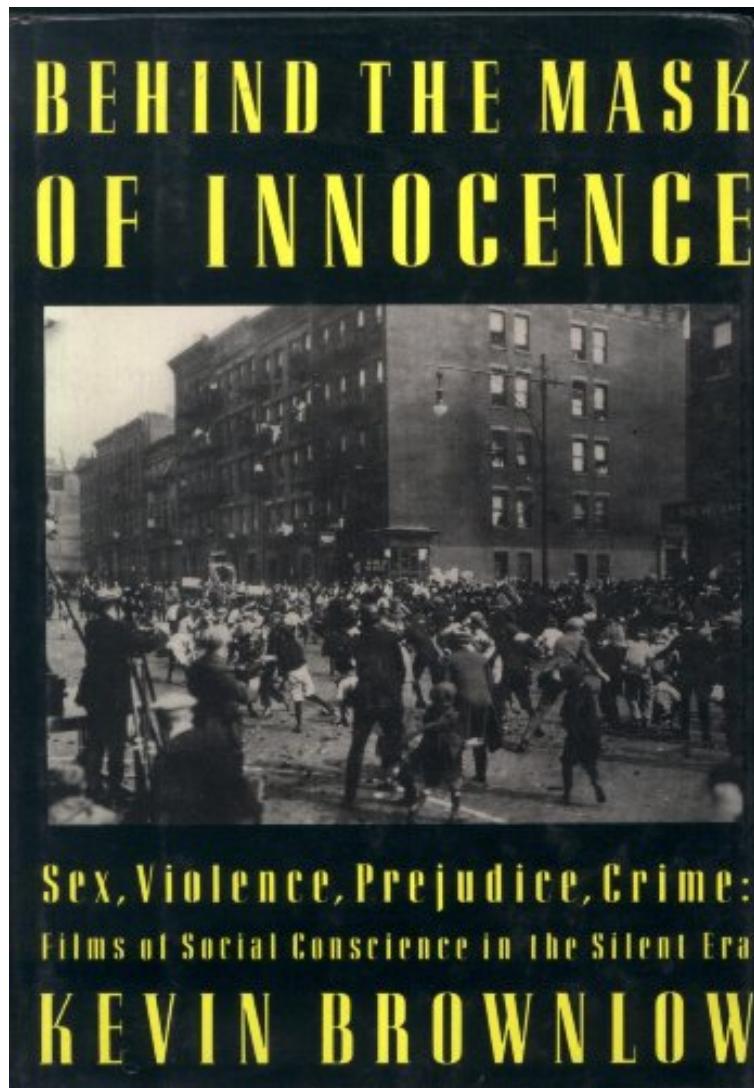


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## Behind The Mask Of Innocence

*Kevin Brownlow*  
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**Kevin Brownlow : Behind The Mask Of Innocence** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Behind The Mask Of Innocence:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Lost Picture ShowsBy Acute ObserverKevin Brownlow is a film historian who wrote other books. This tells about the silent films produced in the early 20th century that dealt with the problems of the times. These were: crime, poverty, drugs, alcohol, racial and ethnic prejudices, epidemics, sexual mores, police and government corruption, prison conditions, immigration, and labor struggles. Then the Hays Office began the national censorship of Hollywood films. Many believe that early 20th century American life was serene but the truth was far different as recorded by the silent films and uncensored history. This book attempts to set the record straight from the films of that era (p.xv). That is like reconstructing current society from the films shown on

TV and in the theatres. [Does that work for you?] The 600 pages have a wealth of detail on films few have ever seen. Then as now, films were "ripped from the headlines" to meet the interest of their customers. Films appealed to workers who were often illiterate. Their realistic stories brought condemnation from the wealthy but neither prevented or caused revolution. Movies with a message of education weren't popular but entertainment was. [Still true today?] Progressives sought to control the working class (p.xviii). Can "science and technology" solve the political problems of society? The political repression of the 1920s ended social films (p.xix). Prohibition was part of that (p.xxi). Brownlow wrote about these films because hardly anything has been written about the silent social films (p.xxv). This is a richly detailed book that covers a range of topics usually avoided in academic histories. It will educate you about life in the early 20th century as shown on screen. Chapter 1 discusses "Censorship": the National Board of Review, State and Municipal Censorship, Will Hays. Films could erode the lower classes' faith in authority (p.4). Censors were composed of wives of the wealthy (p.5). Were there attacks on free speech (p.10)? The US Supreme Court ruled in 1915 that the First Amendment did not apply! This was overturned in 1952, and shows the arbitrary judgment of the Court. Chicago the city with the strictest censorship had the highest crime rate. Firearms were forbidden on the screen (p.12). Chicago banned the 1932 film "Scarface". Will Hays banned "too provocative" scripts and anything political (p.17). The rules were not water-tight (p.20). But it influenced American films (p.23). Chapter 2 discusses "Matters of Sex" in 67 pages. Many surviving films have been heavily censored (p.26). These topics are more heavily censored today (Social Disease, White Slave films). Chapter 3 warned about drug addiction. Chapter 4 is on "Prohibition". Movie theatres competed with saloons for entertainment (p.123). Chapter 5 is about "Crime" (70 pages). Chapter 6 tells about "Political Corruption", Chapter 7 about "Women's Suffrage". Chapter 8 is on "Prisons". Chapter 9 is on "Poverty". Aren't these topics censored today? Chapter 10 tells about "The Foreigners", the longest chapter with 120 pages. Chapter 11 deals with "Industry" on its 82 pages. The topics are "Child Labor", "Socialism and Populism", "The Red Scare", and "Capital versus Labor". These topics are still censored. There are 44 pages of 'Notes' and over 4 pages of a 'Selected Bibliography'. This book has the details of history book with the topics of scandal and controversy. Brownlow made two mistakes on page 463. The right to keep and bear arms is part of English Common Law and not a "tragedy". Big Bill Haywood was not convicted of the murder of Governor Steunenberg. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Another must-have book from Kevin Brownlow! By A Customer This is a fabulous book, covering some of the more risqué elements of the silent film era, as well as covering political issues. Loved Mr. Brownlow's coverage of HYPOCRITES (1915), a Lois Weber film which exists but is unfortunately as yet inaccessible on video. Can't wait for his Mary Pickford coffee table book to come out, hopefully in the next few months! 3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. MR. BROWNLOW DOES IT AGAIN By lisa a andrzejewski Another awesome achievement by Kevin Brownlow. A fascinating and informative document for everyone who cherishes the silent film era.

From Kevin Brownlow, cinema historian and discoverer of lost films, here is the first full-scale exploration of a vital and now almost forgotten chapter of American moviemaking: the response of early producers of the decades before World War I. All the issues that torment America today were rampant in the silent-film era: crime, poverty, alcohol, drugs, racial and ethnic prejudice, epidemics, and the controversies over birth control, abortion, and the death penalty. And there were others that persist today but were then even more explosive: sexual mores, government and police corruption, prison conditions, immigration, and strife between capital and labor. Although many early moviemakers ignored harsh realities, choosing to depict a society shielded by a "mask of innocence"; others went behind that facade, fighting the ever-present censors and producing films that made even the most sheltered moviegoer aware of deep rents in the country's social fabric. Some films were exploitative, some serious, but together they add up to a revelation of the dark side of American life; a revelation startling to us today because it was later, in the era of the Hays Office, so thoroughly ignored, indeed denied, by Hollywood. Broken Blossoms, The Crowd, Humoresque, Regeneration: these films that have survived and become classics are, in these pages, studied in their historical context. And although a tragic number of other films have vanished, nearly all are reclaimed from oblivion by Mr. Brownlow's brilliant feat of restoration and descriptive "reconstruction." Here, never again to be forgotten, are The Fall of the Romanoffs, The Racket, Those Who Dance, and dozens of others. With this remarkable book, Kevin Brownlow completes the panoramic trilogy that began with The Paradersquo;s Gone By... and continued with The War, the West, and the Wilderness. Like its predecessors, Behind the Mask of Innocence is an essential work of silent-film history, certain to become a standard reference; but it is more...; at once a surprising portrait of a time not unlike our own and a powerful demonstration of the way in which a popular art form can reveal a society to itself.

From Publishers Weekly The silent movies most known by film-goers paint a charming picture of a relaxed, innocent bygone America. Yet documentary filmmaker Brownlow has unearthed hundreds of forgotten silents that realistically delved into social and political issues: police corruption, white slave rackets, racial tensions, slum conditions, strikes, divorce, venereal disease. Many of these silents took a progressive standpoint softened by melodramatic devices; there

were also racist films, Red Scare films, prejudiced caricatures of immigrant groups. By the 1920s, conservatism set in, censorship was widespread, the "star system" was in full swing and the socially conscious silents vanished. Brownlow's spellbinding canvas is peopled with the likes of D. W. Griffith, Margaret Sanger, Henry Ford, Upton Sinclair, temperance firebrand Carry Nation. Packed with 250 photographs, this volume caps a trilogy begun with *The Parade's Gone By* and *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Brownlow is the preeminent historian of the silent film era, and this volume completes his trilogy, which includes *The Parade's Gone By* (Univ. of California, 1976) and *The War, the West, and the Wilderness* (LJ 11/15/78). The title refers to the popular conception that silent films were strictly escapist entertainment, when in fact hundreds dealt with the social issues of their day. Brownlow organizes his study by subject--Matters of Sex, Prohibition, Crime, Women's Suffrage, and, the best chapter, Foreigners, which deals with the images of immigrant groups. This work's value cannot be underestimated, especially because the author has tracked down descriptions of scores of "lost" films and interviewed dozens of participants who have since died. A handsome volume, essential for informed laypersons.- Thomas Wiener, formerly with "American Film," Washington, D.C. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Brownlow . . . has devoted the last twenty years to brushing away some rapidly accumulating cobwebs. . . . His book . . . enlightens; it shakes preconceptions; it adds fascinating colors to a fabric assumed to be more or less monochrome." -- Stanley Kauffmann, *The New Republic*"Brownlow's . . . excitement at how much these lost films tell us about how cities looked and how people dressed is utterly contagious." -- Carrie Rickey, *Philadelphia Inquirer*"Recreates a major aspect of mass culture during the first third of the century -- precisely when mass culture was being transformed by innovations in technology." (Michael Kammen, *New York Times Book*