Gender and American Film

How Men and Women Have Been Represented in the Hollywood Films

映画の中の女と男──アメリカ映画のジェンダー表象──

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by

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本書は Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (Blackwell, 2004) から Part IV: の Gender and American Film を中級英語読解用教科書 (邦題,『映画の中の女と男─アメリカ映画のジェンダー表象』) として編注したものである.

　原著は, 従来からよくあるアメリカ映画のジャンル別の解説書ではなく, 現代社会の課題である人種・階級・ジェンダー・セクシュアリティーを切り口にアメリカ映画の歴史に理論的に迫った実に新鮮で刺激的な映画学の教科書である. 著者の Harry M. Benshoff は現在 North Texas 大学のラジオ・テレビ・映画講座の助教授であり, もう一人の著者の Sean Griffin は現在 Southern Methodist 大学の映画・テレビ講座の助教授である.

　アメリカは民主主義と機会均等と男女平等が最も進んだ国であると漠然と思われている. 確かに公民権運動や女性解放運動により人種差別や男女差別の是正が他国より進んだ面もある. こうした問題は制度改革によりかなりの解決をみたとはいえ, イデオロギーや人々の心情・意識に深く根ざした問題であるが故に常に存在しつづけている. 本書で取り上げているジェンダーとは, 男はこうあるべきもの, 女はこうあるべきものといった「社会的に規定された男女の役割」のことであるが, これが社会通念となって人々の意識を強く縛るので, これを変えるには人々の意識改革が必要になる点に問題解決の難しさがある. 映画は社会と人々のありようを物語と映像によって描き出すものだが, 本書はアメリカにおけるジェンダーの問題がアメリカ映画ではどのように扱われてきたかを歴史的にたどったものであり, 非常に興味深い論説となっている.

　「序章:ジェンダーとは何か?」は, アメリカ映画は性差をいかに表象してきたかという本書のテーマを論じる上での前提を明らかにする. つまり, ジェンダーと映画という, 共に文化的・社会的構築物であるものを定義づけ, その二つが, ハリウッド映画のジェンダー表象という特定領域においていかなる関係を切り結んできたかを述べる. 男性 (性) を女性 (性) の上位に置くのは家父長制の基本理念であり, ハリウッド映画も常に男 (役) を女 (役) より重視し, 前者にヒーロー, 後者に受身の役割を割り当ててきた. 男優や女優が役柄を演じることと, われわれが性役割を演じることは呼応している. だからこそ映画は百年以上もの間, 何が美しく, セクシーであるか, 男女はいかに振舞うべきかを決定してきたのだといえる. 本章はジェンダーと

セックスの違いといった基本的用語を説明し，ジェンダーの二項対立はわれわれの社会・言語・メディアに深く浸透し内面化されているため，性差別は人種や階級への差別と比べ見えにくく，超克が困難であることを論じる．

「第1章：『女らしさ』―アメリカ映画の中の女性」は，映画の世紀である20世紀を三つの時代に分け，それぞれの社会状況と，ハリウッド映画とその女性像の変遷を論じる．

映画創成期から1920年代までのアメリカ映画の女性像は，おおむねヴィクトリア朝の女性観をなぞったもので，貞淑なヴァージン型か性的に自由な娼婦型の二つに分類される．前者の代表的女優はリリアン・ギッシュやメアリ・ピックフォードで，後者にはセダ・バラやクララ・ボウがいる．この時期の社会的動きとして，産業革命による女性の労働市場参入，第一波フェミニズムによる女性の権利獲得が挙げられる．新しい娯楽を求め映画館へ通う自由な女性の増大は「白人奴隷」（白人女性の強制売春）の不安を生み，セダ・バラという「ヴァンプ」女優を構築した．ボウは「フラッパー」の典型としてもてはやされたが，大恐慌とともに28歳の若さで銀幕から消える．

いわゆる古典的ハリウッド映画の様式は30年代に完成した．グレタ・ガルボ，メイ・ウェスト，マリーネ・デートリッヒ，ベティ・デイヴィス，キャサリン・ヘップバーンら20世紀を代表する女優の多くはこの時代に活躍している．彼女たちの中には，映画制作に際して意見を主張したり，脚本を執筆したりする者もおり，演じる役柄も主体性と性的自由を持つ女性であることが多かった．が，34年の「プロダクション・コード」実施と共にハリウッドは保守化する．そもそもハリウッド映画は西部劇にしろ，恐怖映画にしろ，男性中心だったわけだが，その中にあって「女性映画」と呼びうるものにメロドラマがあった．作品のメッセージとしては家父長制的女性観をなぞるものだが，近年フェミニズム映画批評の観点から潜在的批評性・転覆性を探る読み直しも進んでいる．

第二次世界大戦は，ジェンダーが生物学的に決定されるものでなく，いかに社会的に構築されるものであるかを明らかにした．男たちが戦場に駆り出されるや女たちの労働力が要請され，それまでの家庭的役割に代わって働く強い女性像を連邦政府が宣伝し始め，ハリウッドもこれに加担したのだ．そして戦争が終わり，男たちが帰国すると，女たちは解雇され，戦前と同様のジェンダー役割が与えられた．男に死をもたらす「運命の女」を描くフィルム・ノワールが40年代に盛んだったのは，こうした社会背景がもたらした両性間の緊張関係と無縁ではない．40〜50年代に発表された「キンゼイ・レポート」は，アメリカ人の性行動が古典的ハリウッド映画の描くそれと大きく異なっていることを明らかにし，「プロダクション・コード」の規制も弱まった．次にハリウッドが売り出したのは，マリリン・モンローに代表される，

「ブロンド爆弾」と呼ばれる「オツムの弱い」セクシー娘たちであり, ドリス・デイらの演じる「郊外の主婦」だった. 一方, 50〜60年代にはテネシー・ウィリアムズ, ウィリアム・インジの戯曲が多く映画化され, 社会のジェンダー規範と自らの欲求の板ばさみになる女性の苦悩を描いた. 60年代になるともはやジェンダーを巡る社会の矛盾を隠蔽することは不可能であり, 新たな議論が沸騰することになるが, ハリウッドはどう対応したのだろうか.

「第2章:『男らしさ』—アメリカ映画の中の男性」では「男らしさ」がどのように表現されてきたかを, 社会・文化的背景に照らしつつ1950年代までの映画の歴史に沿って概観している. ジェンダーを論じる場合, ともすると女性が社会の中でさまざまな差別待遇を受けているという視点のみに傾きがちである. 男性優位思想に支配された社会にあっては, そこで不利益を被らざるを得ない女性の側に論点が集まるのも当然といえよう. だが, ジェンダーを女性特有の問題として論じるだけでは明らかに不十分である. 「男らしさ／女らしさ」という表現に集約されるジェンダーの概念は個々の文化ごとに社会的・歴史的に構築されるものであるから, ジェンダー研究の射程には, 当然のことながら, 「女らしさ」のみならず「男らしさ」も含まれるのである. 男性中心社会が前提とする「男性＝普遍, 女性＝特殊」という構図を脱構築して, 男らしさと女らしさとを相対化する試みが求められるゆえんである. この観点から本章では, 大衆娯楽としての映画がどのようにして「男らしさ」を形作り表現してきたかが, 具体的な作品や俳優に即して論じられている. 男性優位の考え方そのものはアメリカ映画の歴史を通じて常に保たれてきたが, 映画の中に描かれる理想的な「男らしさ」の中身は時代に応じて絶えず変容してきているというのが本章の主眼である. この変容に大きく関わっているのが, 資本主義経済の台頭, 経済恐慌, 第2次世界大戦を始めとする20世紀の歴史的事件であり, また, 初期のサイレントからトーキーへの映画内部の変化やさまざまな映画ジャンルの発展などである.

「第3章:1960年代以降のアメリカ映画の中のジェンダー」は1960〜70年代の第2波フェミニズム運動から現在までのアメリカ映画における「女らしさ／男らしさ」の描き方を社会的風潮・時代の流れと関連させて論じたものである. この年代は公民権運動の時代でもあり, それと連動しながらフェミニズム運動も盛り上がり, ベティ・フリーダンにより「全米女性機構」が設立されるのであるが, ハリウッド映画はどうかといえば, 1960年代はこうしたフェミニズム運動にほとんどわれ関せずといった態度を取った. むしろ『メリー・ポピンズ』や『ハロー・ドーリー!』のようなミュージカル映画で自立した女性が描かれるが, 彼女たちは半世紀以上も前のフェミニズム運動の第一波の頃の女性に設定されている. しかし1960年代の終わりから70年代を通して「女性映画」が再び何本か登場し, 女性の仕事と家庭の問題を真摯に

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Contents

Gender and American Film

How Men and Women Have Been Represented in the Hollywood Films

映画の中の女と男——アメリカ映画のジェンダー表徴——

Introduction

What is Gender?

We make an examination of how American film represents (and has represented) sexual difference—how it depicts what it means to be a man or a woman. As it is a fundamental ideological tenet of **patriarchy** that men and masculinity are privileged over women and femininity, it should come as no surprise that Hollywood film has always 5 privileged men and male roles over women and female roles. Partly this is due to the perseverance of **classical Hollywood narrative form**, which has always worked to privilege men as the active and powerful heroes of Hollywood film, while relegating women to the role of **love interest** waiting to be rescued. The other formal axes of film, 10 including cinematography, editing, and sound design, and especially visual design (costume, makeup, hair, and lighting), construct images of how women and men are supposed to be. Indeed, most of the elements employed by Hollywood films to demarcate sex roles are also broad cultural ones, as men and women in our society routinely 15 make themselves up and select costumes for daily life, much as actors and actresses do for the parts they play. Thus, for over 100 years, movies have frequently defined what is beautiful, what is sexy, what is manly; and how men and women should "properly" react in any given situation. 20

As with other social groups examined in this book, there have been tremendous gains since the early twentieth century for the idea of equality between men and women. Historically, however, there has

been a great deal of discrimination based upon sex roles in America, both within the Hollywood industry and in culture-at-large. A division of labor between the sexes was a cultural "norm" of American business life until very recently: women rarely had a chance to ad-
5 vance beyond supporting secretarial jobs, as powerful men promoted other men into more advanced positions. Today, some American women would probably say they feel they have equal rights and privileges. Thanks to the activism of previous generations, women today can go to college and enter most careers if they choose to do so.
10 There are women executives in Hollywood and most other industries, female politicians, and seemingly no limits on what women can hope to achieve. Yet an actual survey of the country in terms of sex roles still shows great disparities between women's percentage of the population (approximately 51 percent) and their representation in
15 Hollywood film and in other social institutions. According to some recent surveys, there are still twice as many men on Hollywood screens as there are women. A quick look into the boardrooms and legislative bodies of the United States reveals that women comprise nowhere near half their memberships. Why are women still frequently
20 underrepresented in both the workplace and popular culture?

Part of the answer to that complex question lies in the nature of **hegemonic patriarchy** itself. While women gained the right to vote (in 1920) and have more and more opportunities in all aspects of society, there is still a strong cultural expectation that women should
25 prefer a domestic life—that women should want to stay at home and raise children. In reality, many women in today's economy choose to work outside the home while others need to do so to support themselves and/or their families. Today's women are thus often expected to have careers *and* to be fulltime homemakers, a dual demand that
30 has rarely been placed on men (although more and more single-par-

ent men of our era are finding themselves in that situation). Also, because sex roles and the social expectations that go along with them are such an intimate part of our everyday lives, discrimination based on sex may be subtler and harder to "see" than discrimination based on race or class. Such bias is often called sexism, the belief that one 5 sex is inherently superior to the other. Sexism is pervasive in our society, and usually is expressed as the patriarchal assumption that men are more capable or "better" human beings than are women. Sexism, like racism, may also work in reverse—there are some women who feel that being a woman is essentially better than being a man. 10

Still, those beliefs are usually formed in response to historical and ongoing discrimination against women and do little to challenge patriarchal assumptions and institutions. To understand these concepts more clearly, we need to introduce the difference between the terms **sex** and **gender**. The word **sex** can refer to sexual acts (as in "having 15 sex"), but it is also used to describe the biological or chromosomal makeup of human beings. Science tells us that people of the male sex are male because they have an XY chromosome. People of the female sex carry an XX chromosome. (Indeed, every human embryo starts out as female until the Y chromosome "turns on" and helps shape 20 some fetuses into males.) The word **gender**, on the other hand, refers to the social, historical, and cultural roles that we think of as being associated with either the male or female sex. While sex may be defined by the terms "male" or "female," gender is best defined by the terms **masculinity** and **femininity**—how the male and female sexes 25 are characterized culturally. **Femininity** (as defined by patriarchy) is usually associated with being small, quiet, passive, emotional, nurturing, non-aggressive, dependent, and weak. **Masculinity** (as defined by patriarchy) is usually associated with being large, loud, and active, with non-emotional aggression and strong leadership abilities. 30

Sex	Gender
Male	Masculinity
Female	Femininity

The first column lists two sex identities, based on biological factors. The second column lists two gender identities, based on social factors.

For a great part of the twentieth century, most people (including medical professionals) confused sex and gender, assuming that all social differences between men and women were the result of biological hardwiring. Patriarchal discourse still tries to claim that being of the male sex automatically means being of masculine gender, and that being of the female sex automatically means being of feminine gender. By equating being female with being feminine (dependent and weak), patriarchal culture is able to discourage women from gaining power of their own. When people believe that gender roles are biologically determined and not **socially constructed**, they are less likely to challenge the status quo, and thus patriarchal interests remain uncontested. While most scholars today believe that there is a biological basis for some differences between the sexes, they also acknowledge that most of the lived, everyday differences between men and women are due to culturally constructed gender roles. In other words, a person's sex is formed by genetics, while a person's gender is *learned*.

Developmental studies with children have shown that by the age of 6 or so, most human beings have developed an inner sense of themselves as either male or female. This is termed our **gender identity**. We get ideas about what it means to be a boy or a girl from **ideological** institutions such as the family, the schools, other children, and the media. This happens both consciously and unconsciously, and it may begin in the first minutes of life if we are wrapped in either a pink or a blue blanket. From that moment on, girls are expected to like pink, be quiet, and prefer to play with dolls. Boys are taught that

"real" boys choose blue colors, engage in rough-and-tumble activities, and play with toy trucks. Of course, not all girls like to play with Barbies and not all boys like to play with Tonkas. Children who do not conform to expected gender roles may be teased by classmates and shunned by families. Men who are physically weak or emotional 5 have been the butt of jokes, while strong women have often been demonized for being unfeminine. In this way, patriarchal culture ensures the continuation of traditional gender roles, and of the sexist hierarchy inherent in them. A good illustration of this hierarchy can be found by comparing sensitive boys and tough girls. While both 10 groups pose problems for patriarchal ideology, a sensitive boy will usually be teased and harassed much more than a girl who likes sports. A girl being masculine is a "step up" in the gender hierarchy, whereas a boy being sensitive is a "step down" to the level of the feminine, and must therefore be more harshly condemned. 15

Such shaping continues beyond childhood. Popular culture continually reinforces differences between men and women. Same-sex or **homosocial groups** like sports teams, fraternities and sororities, and even some classrooms, work to divide human beings into two camps on the basis of sex and gender expectations. Frequently such 20 groups are overtly based on the assumption that male groups are better than female ones. Some people even go so far as to suggest there is a war between men and women: the common phrase "Battle of the Sexes" is indicative of that idea. The popular self-help craze of the 1990s, summed up in the title of the book *Men are From Mars, Women* 25 *are From Venus*, even suggested that men and women were best understood as alien species from separate planets. Partly this binary opposition between our ideas of masculinity and femininity is necessary because socially and psychologically we tend to define one against the other. 30

Just as we might define whiteness as not being black, or Asian, or Native American, we define masculinity as that which is *not* feminine. If being masculine is thought to be tough, then being feminine is thought to be tender. If masculinity is active, then femininity must
5 be defined as passive. These binary oppositions that we use to define traditional gender can sometimes be **internalized** and lock us into very narrow roles that may not be good for us. For example, men who are afraid to admit their emotional feelings may silently suffer from depression because they feel they cannot talk about it. Women
10 who want a career may accept being housewives because they feel that is what is expected of them.

Thus, gender is a concept deeply ingrained into our everyday lives and culture. It functions, like most ideologies, in both conscious and unconscious ways. Even the very words we use to communicate carry
15 subtle gender biases. Some languages (such as French or Spanish) have "gendered" nouns, a situation that suggests a large network of meaning about what is masculine and/or feminine for a given culture. In English, we have separate pronouns for male and female (his, her) and a whole slew of words such as mail*man*, milk*man*, *man*hole,
20 and *man*kind that obviously carry a sexist bias. Other aspects of gendered language are more subtle. Referring to men as "men" and women as "girls" (or "honey," or "baby," etc.) is another way that language itself can convey ideas about appropriate gender behaviors and the respect afforded to each.

25 In yet another example, ships and cars are often spoken of as female, despite the fact that they are inanimate objects. Is this because they can be possessed by men and add to a man's prestige, the way some older men use younger women as "trophy" dates or wives? Perhaps you have heard the slogan "real men don't eat quiche." As a
30 tiny, singular bit of popular culture, the saying works to define gen-

der in powerful ways. It tells us that in the late twentieth century, quiche was considered a feminine food (perhaps because of its French connotations, or its constituent elements of milk and eggs), and that in order to be thought of as masculine, "real" men had better avoid it. (A big steak, on the other hand, is meal for a "real" man.) Gender 5 roles and expectations permeate our culture, language, and media in ways both subtle and obvious.

Chapter One

Femininity: Women in American Film

Images of Women in Early Cinema

The images of women in early American cinema were mostly drawn from the gender roles and representational codes of the Victorian era (so named for England's Queen Victoria, who ruled from 1837 to 1901). The "good" or socially approved Victorian middle-class woman
5 was a paragon of virtue. As a young woman, she was childlike, and frequently associated with innocence, purity, and the need to be protected. She was often "put on a pedestal" and worshipped by the men in her life, namely her father and her brothers. When she got to be a certain age, she would be married off to a suitable young man; in
10 many cases, this marriage would be an arranged one between families and not necessarily take into consideration the feelings of either husband or wife. This young woman would then become a wife and mother—her devotion and loyalty would be transferred from her father to her husband.
15 The middle-class Victorian woman's life was tightly controlled by these men. It was expected that she would not work outside the home, and indeed in middle-to-upper-class homes she was expected to have servants who would do the housework for her. Her most important task was to produce and raise children, yet a virtuous Victorian
20 woman's **sexuality** would never be displayed in provocative clothing or words. She would be assumed to be a virgin when she married,

and it was taboo even to suggest that she might have sexual interests or desires. Sex for procreation was her duty, not her pleasure. Her lord and master was her husband, and she had little chance of removing herself from that situation should it turn violent or abusive.

If one examines female roles in the earliest American films, one can see that "good" women are—like their Victorian models—usually virginal daughters who, if they work at all, do "women's work" such as sewing and cooking. They are rarely active participants in the

Mary Pickford, affectionately known by her fans as Little Mary, often embodied concepts of Victorian femininity in early Hollywood movies.
Unidentified publicity photo, authors' personal collection

narrative, except as victims or prizes. They sit and wait patiently for their husbands to return home to them. Frequently, they are associated with childlike behavior and small animals such as birds and squirrels, an editing trope that seems to suggest that women are naturally cute and defenseless. They need fathers and husbands to protect them from the sexual advances of other men. (If a man does manage to seduce a good woman, she often chooses her own death over such a disgrace.)

Actresses such as **Lillian Gish** and **Mary Pickford** frequently embodied this type of Victorian heroine. Lillian Gish's fluttery mannerisms and batting eyelashes suggested she was a delicate flower, constantly in danger and needing the protection of a good man. Similarly, Mary Pickford's screen persona was of a small child-woman. Although many of Mary Pickford's girl-women were scrappy fighters,

Hollywood set designers would construct oversize props and chairs for her to sit in to reinforce the idea she was childlike and innocent.

Victorian culture and early cinema also promulgated images of "bad" women, usually defined as such because they were (unlike 5 "good" women) explicitly sexualized. Hundreds of plays, magazine stories, and early films routinely presented "loose" or "fallen" women (who had perhaps had a child out of wedlock) as immoral and tragic. Within these narratives, such women were thrown into the street and ostracized from society. These texts taught severe **ideological** les- 10 sons to young women of the era: to be sexual outside of marriage most often led to ruin. In judging women according to their sexual propriety (or its lack), Victorian culture and early film simplistically divided women into two groups.

This cultural construct defining women on the basis of their sexu- 15 ality has been dubbed the **virgin-whore complex**, and it still exists to various extents in today's contemporary culture. Many men feel that "good" girls should be virginal and that men should not marry a woman too free with her sexuality. Yet American men have also clearly desired the freely sexualized woman and taken advantage of her situ- 20 ation for both sexual pleasure and capitalist profit. The virgin-whore dichotomy of the Victorian era is represented in many early American films and continues to linger within the representational codes of classical and even contemporary Hollywood cinema.

The Industrial Revolution was also having profound effects on 25 women both in real life and on movie screens. As more and more of the nation's population resided in and around big cities, many younger, unmarried women entered the workforce. With electrified machines now doing much of the physical labor, women were increasingly considered capable of performing certain jobs. Women found employ- 30 ment not only as secretaries and store clerks, but also as factory work-

ers. With these new jobs, they ostensibly earned their own income. Often, however, this money was handed over to the head of the household (that is, the father) to help support the entire family.

Yet many young women did have more and more discretionary income to go to amusement parks, restaurants, and the movies—some- 5 times even without a male escort! Many people were bothered by this small surge in women's independence, fearing that it would upset the "natural" balance of female dependence on men. Even more shocking were the people of this era who called for equal rights for women, advancing the cause of **feminism**. One of these activists, 10 Rebecca West, wrote as early as 1913, "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat." Mainstream American society worked to demonize this **first wave** of feminism in many ways, branding some of 15 these pioneering women criminal radicals or madwomen. Some were deported from the country, while others were imprisoned in institutions or silenced in other ways.

The era's moral reformers castigated not only feminist activists but also the less radical working girls who were having fun on their 20 own in the big city. A number of people argued that these women were destroying the foundations of civilization by abandoning traditional gendered behaviors in order to pursue new pleasures. They also warned that these women were placing themselves in physical danger from pimps, kidnappers, and drug pushers—criminals who 25 supposedly thrived in such disreputable places as amusement parks and movie houses.

The early **nickelodeons** and movie theaters, were considered disreputable and unsavory—and thus not a place in which any respectable woman might be found. As if to reinforce those ideas, a number 30

of early feature-length films such as *Traffic in Souls* (1913) and *Inside the White Slave Traffic* (1914) warned female moviegoers that their newfound urban independence could easily lead to kidnapping and forced prostitution. The fact that this possible situation was dubbed

5 **white slavery** by the popular culture of the era underscores certain racial and capitalist ideologies: white women (being the "best" type of woman) were allegedly more desirable and thus more valuable as commodities or as victims. Furthermore, the image of a white woman being enslaved to a non-white man (which is what this rhetoric im-

10 plied) was especially inflammatory, projecting generic male desire onto a non-white (and therefore more bestial) racial group.

White slave films were not the only racially inflected cinematic image used to negotiate women's "proper place" during the 1910s. For example, the stereotype of the **vamp** was also very common. The

15 vamp was a dark and exotic woman who used her potent sexuality to control white men, often leading them to their doom. ("Good" girls were more likely to be represented as blonde and blue-eyed.) Vamp was short for vampire, a monster that drains the life blood out of his or her victims. Thus the vamp—a sexually active woman often of

20 another **race, ethnicity**, or **nationality**—was figured as a predatory monster who drained men of their money and morals.

In *Birth of a Nation* (1915), the mulatto character Lydia is figured as evil not only because of her mixed racial status, but because she is intelligent and conniving and can wield sexual power over men. Early

25 Hollywood's most famous vamp was **Theda Bara**, a dark-haired actress born in Ohio under the name Theodosia Goodman. Studio executives allegedly devised her movie name by reversing and scrambling the letters in the phrase "Arab Death," and she was promoted as a dark, exotic, and alluring beauty from another culture. As such,

30 Theda Bara represented white patriarchal America projecting its sexual

fantasies and desires upon a non-white or foreign figure, a trope that we have already seen at work in representations of African American, Asian, and Hispanic women.

In 1920, the fight to gain equal rights for women scored a major success when their Constitutional right to vote, granted in 1918, finally came into force. Among the other successes of first wave feminism was yet another new type of woman—a young, urban, career-oriented woman who quickly became a cultural stereotype known as the **flapper**. The flapper rejected

Theda Bara, whose studio-given name was allegedly devised by mixing up the letters in the phrase "Arab Death," was early Hollywood's most famous vamp. Unidentified publicity photo, authors' personal collection

Victorian notions of what a woman was, and developed her own style. She wore shorter bobbed hair, with strands of pearls over plain, shorter dresses that deaccentuated her curves; she smoked and danced in public; and she even had sex outside of wedlock.

While this initially seems a radical overthrow of the Victorian image of women, the flapper represents a **hegemonic negotiation** that allows new ideas to come into play but reaffirms concepts basic to keeping patriarchal capitalism in place. For example, a flapper's independence was chiefly defined by her freedom to buy things in order to reconfigure her personal style, and not by any kind of radical political critique: in most novels and films in which she appeared, the flapper was still out to find a husband. (Contemporary capitalism still works in similar ways, taking advantage of feminist sentiment by advertising that women can become liberated by purchasing certain

Clara Bow embodied the image of the 1920s flapper, a young woman who was much more sexually liberated than her Victorian predecessors.

Unidentified publicity photo, authors' personal collection

products such as Virginia Slims cigarettes or Nike sports equipment.) The flapper and the new openness about sexuality that she represented were depicted in many films of the era.

Sex comedies such as Cecil B. DeMille's *Male and Female* (1919) and *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919) and Erich von Stroheim's *Foolish Wives* (1922) often implied that this new sexual morality would only lead to tragedy and death, but the flapper was an instant hit in films because of her vivacious and sexy attitude. Probably the most famous film flapper of the era was **Clara Bow**. In the film *It* (1927), based on a popular book of the same name, she cemented her image as the high-spirited, free-wheeling flapper and even became known as "The IT Girl." ("IT" was a euphemism for the flapper's magnetic energy and sexually free spirit.)

However, Clara Bow's career was short-lived. As nasty rumors about her private life began to tarnish her public image, she suffered a series of mental and physical breakdowns. Acknowledging how the Hollywood studio system could actually destroy the lives of those it created and valorized, Bow once remarked that "being a sex symbol is a heavy load to carry, especially when one is tired, hurt, and bewildered." As with many Hollywood stars before and after her, the demands of playing a bigger-than-life construction of ideal femininity became a difficult chore for Clara Bow. Those demands and expectations, combined with the public's ever-more conservative leanings during the years of the **Great Depression**, eventually forced "The IT Girl" off the screen at the age of 28.
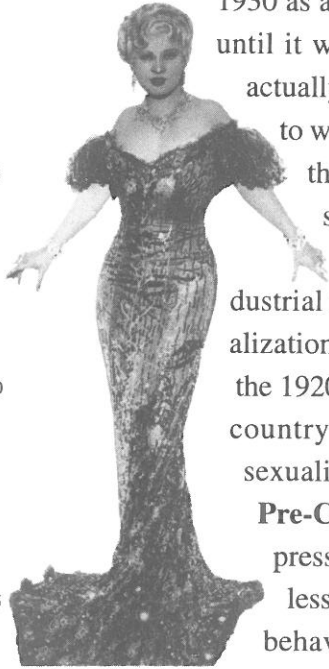
Images of Women in 1930s Classical Hollywood

Recall that during the first few years of the Great Depression, Hollywood's form and style codified into what is now known as the **classical Hollywood style**. Some of the most famous female movie stars of the twentieth century are associated with this era: Greta Garbo, Mae West, Barbara Stanwyck, Marlene Dietrich, Bette Davis, Joan 5 Crawford, and Katharine Hepburn, just to name a few. Most of these women were considered glamorous beauty queens, which meant that both onscreen and in real life they dressed in designer gowns, wore impeccable hair and makeup, and could be seen frequenting the best and most beautiful homes and nightclubs in America. Because of 10 their popularity with the public, some of these stars were able to maintain a degree of control over their own projects. Katharine Hepburn often battled studio bosses over roles that she felt were demeaning, and Greta Garbo had input in choosing her leading men and cinematographers. Mae West was known for writing all of her 15 own dialog (she had been a playwright and vaudeville star before coming to Hollywood).

Like many of the characters these and other actresses played in the early 1930s, West's onscreen persona was gutsy and sexy: she was best known for her racy double entendre jokes that suggested she 20 was a sexual free-spirit who was untethered to any one man, be it father or husband. Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo also appeared as strong female characters who frequently challenged the patriarchal status quo. In *Morocco* (1930) for example, Dietrich wears a tuxedo and seduces both men and women. In *Queen Christina* (1933), 25 Garbo's character professes that she would rather "die a bachelor" than marry, and she ends the film alone.

Also recall that Hollywood had adopted its **Production Code** in

1930 as an attempt to quell calls for censorship but, until it was enforced in 1934, Hollywood movies actually got a bit racier as failing companies tried to woo Depression-era audiences back into their theaters. The appearance of strong, forward, sexualized heroines in the early 1930s was thus the result of those economic and industrial factors, as well as of the increasing liberalization of sex roles that had occurred throughout the 1920s. However, there were other people in the country who objected to the sort of forthright sexuality that was the hallmark of many of these **Pre-Code films**. They argued that the Great Depression had been brought about by wild, godless licentiousness, including the "scandalous" behavior of independent women and flappers. Demands for federal censorship of the movies by activist groups such as the Catholic **Legion of Decency** eventually forced the industry to self-censor itself via the **Seal of Approval** provision (put into effect in 1934).

Mae West was one of Pre-Code Hollywood's most notorious leading ladies; she wrote most of her provocative dialog herself.
Unidentified publicity photo, authors' personal collection

Suddenly, many of the strong female roles that actresses such as Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich had specialized in were curtailed. While most actresses were able to shift into roles thought by the censors to be more appropriate, others suffered badly. Mae West, whose career depended on her racy sexual innuendo, was hobbled by the new Hollywood censors. Her film work after the Production Code was put into effect was sparse and tepid compared to her Pre-Code work. Adding insult to injury, during the same period of time the

conservative newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst used his newspapers to carry on a "smear campaign" against many of these same actresses. Hearst's newspapers dubbed them "box office poison" and suggested to filmgoers and filmmakers alike that their careers were (or should be) finished. 5

This is not to say simplistically that Pre-Code films had great roles for women and those after 1934 did not. The differences are perhaps rather minor from a twenty-first-century perspective. Hollywood films had always tended to be about men, and to punish sexually active "bad" women while rewarding "good" women with romance and 10 marriage. Most Hollywood genre films of the 1930s, both Pre- and Post-Code, were still centered on men and tended to simplify female characters into basic types drawn from the virgin-whore dichotomy. The gangster film, for example, focused on guys with guns (on both sides of the law), with women figured either as the gangster's moll 15 (the sexualized whore figure) or as the G-man's wife (the virgin-mother).

The Western also dealt predominantly with male adventure, and women's roles usually were reduced to either the saloon girl (itself a Hollywood euphemism for prostitute) or the good daughter of a 20 rancher (or perhaps a virginal schoolteacher). In the horror film or action-adventure film, women were primarily helpless victims waiting to be carried off by monsters or marauding madmen, so that they might be saved by patriarchal heroes. The musical and the romantic comedy initially seem to offer more equity to men and women, as 25 these genres focused on heterosexual courtship, thus giving men and women fairly equal screen time.

Yet, even within that format, the gender codes of the day regarding clothing, makeup, courtship, and marriage all work to reinforce traditional gender roles. In Western patriarchal culture, it is the man 30

who asks the woman to dance, pays for dinner, and proposes marriage. Women do not have the option of reversing those gender roles in most 1930s Hollywood films. Also, the musical genre frequently features scantily clad chorus girls, allegedly as a visual treat for men
5 in the audience.

The one Hollywood genre devoted to women and allegedly to women's issues was comprised of melodramas known as **woman's films**. These films are also sometimes referred to as "soap operas," "weepies," "tearjerkers," and/or "chick flicks." The films in this genre
10 were made (written, directed, produced) largely by men, creating stories that they thought would attract a female audience. (One should also note the lack of a matching "man's film" genre—because most of the rest of Hollywood cinema *is* "man's film.")

Consequently, the woman's film usually presents conventional,
15 patriarchal ideas about what it supposedly means to be a woman. Centered on the lead female character's romantic and/or domestic trials and tribulations, woman's films present the family and home environment as the proper sphere for women. *The Old Maid* (1939) provides a good indication of this in its opening moments. The film
20 begins with a newspaper headline announcing the beginning of the Civil War and then scans down to a corner of the front page where wedding announcements are listed. It then dissolves to the female leads blithely preparing for the nuptials in their own little world. Also, as terms like "tearjerker" indicate, these films appeal directly to view-
25 ers' emotions, on the assumption that women are more emotional than men. Thus, while the woman's film genre presents a special niche where female characters were front and center, patriarchal notions of gender were continually reinforced.

The types of stories that proliferated in the genre attempted to teach
30 women lessons about their proper function under patriarchy. Women