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# Making *It* in Hollywood: Clara Bow, Fandom, and Consumer Culture

by Marsha Orgeron

*Abstract: Fan magazines had a dramatic impact on actress Clara Bow's career and on female fandom more generally. This article examines Bow's 1927 star vehicle It as a parable for fan culture, particularly for the ways that fan magazines constructed their female readers and Hollywood films addressed their female spectators.*

The word play in the title of this article hints at several aspects of consumer culture that converged around Hollywood and its products during the decade of the 1920s. "Making it" is a colloquial term of achievement, in this case by Clara Bow, whose fleeting but magnificent Hollywood success was facilitated by the popular medium of the fan magazine. The title also refers to *It* (Clarence Badger, 1927),<sup>1</sup> a film that will forever be associated with the career and public persona of its star, Clara Bow. Finally, the title resonates in the realm of the sexual, an appropriate signification for an actress who became simultaneously a dynamic and a troubling symbol of the New Woman of the 1920s.

What follows situates Bow's star identity in the context of widespread concerns in the 1920s about Hollywood's influence on a fantastical kind of female sexuality represented in many of the magazines and films of the day, thereby demonstrating the interrelatedness of movie and other consumer cultures. Clara Bow is just one of many stars of the decade whose extraordinary—and often highly editorialized—life became a market commodity, sold by both the movie and fan magazines that purported to disclose every aspect of stars' lives. Robert Sklar explains that by the end of the 1920s, "movie players could speak to the public about their divorces and love affairs with at least some of the frankness they used among themselves."<sup>2</sup> This tacit and reciprocal encouragement of publicity stood in direct contrast to the late-nineteenth-century belief that curiosity about the personal affairs of others—even public figures—was crude and improper. But by the 1920s, curiosity had been institutionalized and in effect normalized, at least in relation to the movie industry, whose studios and fan magazines fed the public information (however fabricated) about stars' lives. But this legitimization of gossip came at a substantial price: those celebrities who participated in the publicity machine often found themselves possessed of a permanently public life, so much so that—as with Clara Bow—maintaining truly private lives became untenable.

Fan magazines, as what follows shall demonstrate, serve as crucial repositories of information about celebrity making and unmaking in the 1920s. Fan magazines

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are also an important resource for understanding 1920s notions of female consumption—of images, of products, and of films. In addition to examining the role fan magazines played in the mythologizing of Hollywood and its stars, this article uses *It* to situate Bow in the context of Hollywood's influence on women's commercial culture. Bow is a particularly suitable subject for anyone concerned with women's roles in the silent-film era not only because *It* documents the production of women's cultural identities but also because Bow's reputation hinged so greatly on the fictional identity of her on-screen roles in general, and on this role in particular. Bow's association with this film was so complete that a decade after making *It*, well into the sound period and after the peak of Bow's fame, the actress opened a restaurant on North Vine Street in Hollywood—the *It* Café—yet another (ultimately unsuccessful) site for the consumption of Bow's "It" girl leftovers.

### The Cycle of the Fan Magazine: Seeing versus Being

Women are less markedly affected by acting than are men. Women are always acting more or less, anyways, whether they are professionals or not.

Dr. Louis E. Bisch, *Photoplay*, January 1928<sup>3</sup>

Clara Bow's rise and fall in Tinseltown were meteoric. She inauspiciously arrived in Hollywood in 1923. By the late 1920s, she was receiving more fan mail than any other star. By 1931, however, *Movie Classic* magazine had published an article about her entitled "Can She Ever Come Back?"<sup>4</sup> Bow made fourteen films in 1925, eight in 1926, six in 1927, four in 1928, three in 1929, four in 1930, and only four between 1931 and 1933, when she made her final appearance in Frank Lloyd's *Hoopla*, retiring permanently at the age of twenty-eight. She received forty-five thousand fan letters a week at the peak of her career in 1929, a period during which henna sales tripled as a result of adoring fans who wanted their hair to be the wild red color of Clara Bow's.<sup>5</sup> Such "colorful" knowledge could have been gained only through fan magazine articles and pictures, since Bow's films were, of course, in black and white.<sup>6</sup>

Perusing early fan magazines, one frequently encounters readers' questions about the color of stars' hair and eyes. Wanting to know what the stars "really" looked like, fans were pushing for a visual realism that the cinema could not yet provide; the fan magazines were more than willing to offer this information in their pages, creating a discourse that shaped fans' perceptions of stars and made their personal lives appear accessible and real, however otherworldly and fantastic.<sup>7</sup> Details about her hair color, favorite perfume, and so on also served to make Bow an imitable commodity, as is evident in the increase in henna sales in the late 1920s. Not only were the details of the star's life made public, they "belonged" to the public and were made readily available—purchasable is perhaps a more accurate way to put it—through the medium of the fan magazine.

Bow's turbulent tenure in Hollywood certainly demonstrates the reciprocal nature of stardom and fan magazine culture during the 1920s. Her particular story begins with the Brewster Publications contest that appeared in the January 1921

issue of *Motion Picture* magazine. “The Fame and Fortune Contest of 1921” used a catchy slogan—“HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF!”—to solicit photographs from aspiring starlets.<sup>8</sup> The history referred to in the announcement is the highly successful (according to the magazine) contest of the previous year. The slogan suggests the fan magazine’s interest in tapping into the creative fantasy lives of its readers. In particular, the contest attests to the (at least symbolic, if not realistic) opportunities the behaviors of fandom opened up for the fan magazine reader.

Fans have historically been defined, as Joli Jenson points out, “as a *response* to the star system” and thereby as passive, “brought into (enthralled) existence by the modern celebrity system, via the mass media.”<sup>9</sup> The contest, however, endowed its participants with a sense of active involvement, although it did so in a deliberately misleading fashion: “The Golden Key of Opportunity Is in Your Hands—Turn the Key in the Doorway of Success and thru the portal of the Fame and Fortune Contest you may enter the kingdom of the screen.” The language of the contest promised fans a chance—however remote—to transform themselves into the images they gazed at in the pages of the magazine and, more important, on the so-called silver screen; the language was of the cinema-age fairy tale, and the reader was the imagined princess.

The “Fame and Fortune Contest” also unites issues of spectatorship, consumerism, and celebrity. The very desire to move beyond the passive position of “seeing” to the active position of “being” reveals much about the psychological import of celebrity in American culture, particularly as it relates to an understanding of female participation in that culture. Miriam Hansen has approached “the questions of spectatorship from the perspective of the public sphere,” asserting that “the cinema became a powerful vehicle for reproducing spectators as consumers, an apparatus for binding desire and subjectivity in consumerist forms of social identity.”<sup>10</sup> The *Motion Picture* contest revises—but does not negate—such a conceptualization by “binding desire and subjectivity” beyond the strictly consumerist discourse embodied and endorsed by the fan magazines. By enabling individuals to ponder their own personal transformation, if only on the level of fantasy, the contest reproduces spectators not only as consumers but as *actors*, giving them the opportunity to recreate themselves by literally sending their images into the public domain. In other words, this contest—and others like it—enabled fans to experiment with ideas of personal revision, of moving beyond the more passive role of spectator by “turn[ing] the key in the doorway of success.”

Bow thus stood as a symbol for the many who remained on the other side of the portal, a symbol of both the promise and the pretense of the necessarily exclusive star system. She is a reminder of the cinema’s ability to *transform* the spectator, here quite literally. By the 1920s there was a general understanding that spectators could be influenced by both on-screen images and by the discourse contained within the pages of the fan magazine.<sup>11</sup> The female *film spectator* was thus interpolated in these pages, for, as Richard de Cordova points out, “we call stars movie stars no doubt because of the primary importance we attach to their appearance in films (we do not call them magazine stars).”<sup>12</sup>

The female fan magazine reader was an obvious extension of the female film spectator; the former desired and pursued information to supplement the limited extratextual information provided by the films themselves. Hansen claims that there is a discernible lineage of female spectatorship that “can be traced through concrete historical manifestation in which women not only experienced the misfit of the female spectator in relation to patriarchal positions of subjectivity but also developed imaginative strategies in response to it.”<sup>13</sup>

Such imaginative strategies, I would like to suggest, are offered in the pages of the fan magazines, as in the case of *Motion Picture*’s “Fame and Fortune” contests. Viewed in this fashion, Clara Bow’s participation in the contest was an active (if prepackaged) mode of response to cinematic images, one that had radical consequences for her position as both spectator and consumer. When she became a star herself, Bow dramatically shifted from the consumerist mode suggested by Hansen to become an object (and agent) of consumption.

Fan magazine contests enabled and encouraged women to reevaluate themselves in response to the star system and to articulate their fantasies in tangible ways through their participation. Fan letters, which materialized when fans sought stars’ studio addresses from magazine editors, also make material fans’ desire to emerge from anonymity, to create a concrete existence for themselves in relation to the star system. In providing an outlet or means for such fantasies, the fan magazines were, of course, in no way subversive; rather, they were part of the mechanism of fandom that developed out of a spectatorial demand for information, created in part by the industry itself. But while fan magazines were thus imbued with Hollywood’s market-driven ideology, they still offered a practical way for women to become actively involved with movie culture and, in the process, to negotiate their own identities beyond the limited realm of their day-to-day experiences.<sup>14</sup> As Gaylyn Studlar points out, “This preparation in narrative left women free to contemplate other elements of the text: the stars.”<sup>15</sup>

While I agree with Studlar’s premise, it is necessary to add that female spectators who were actively engaged with fan magazine culture turned their contemplation not only to the stars on-screen but to themselves as well. The very existence and nature of fan magazines necessitated that their readers consider themselves connected to the greater celebrity discourse, for so much of the content of these magazines revolved around creating personal desires in their readers—for things, for styles, and for self-assessment. Thus, when Studlar concludes that “fan magazine discourse of the 1920s did not encourage a total investment in an illusion but appears largely predicated on the assumption that women could participate in an engagement in the cinema that might include, for lack of a better term, a ‘fetishistic’ pleasure,”<sup>16</sup> it follows logically that this pleasure was and is consumerist in nature.

The fetish Studlar invokes has everything to do with the interplay between individual lack and ideal objects of desire that are created by the perfect images of stardom.<sup>17</sup> This fetishistic pleasure, in other words, could not exist were there not an immense—but not *too* immense—disparity and desire between spectator/reader and star/text. The fan magazines were advertisements, and their pitch was

attainability: if you buy this, you can be like star X. Bow made such aspirations look particularly possible because she failed to create the distance between herself and her fans that other stars worked rigorously to achieve. She was in many ways the star system's best advertisement precisely because she perpetuated the illusion of possibility for fans.

The fan magazines of the 1920s, costing anywhere from five to twenty-five cents and with circulations of almost half a million each, created an alternative discourse to that found in the firmly upper-middle-class, family-oriented periodicals, such as the immensely popular *Ladies Home Journal*.<sup>18</sup> Movie stars became the leisure time diversions of working girls and the stuff of their fantasies. The subject matter of Bow's films usually reflected the social status of these fans—working girls with sufficient wages but even bigger dreams. These “New Women,” as they were called, existed in a curious era of stasis and change; they challenged gendered social divisions with their behavior, alerting the world to their “newness” through bold visual statements in the form of shorter haircuts and skirt lengths. Although its origins reside in the late nineteenth century, the term “New Woman” was, over the course of the twentieth century, applied to virtually every generation of women who appeared to rebel against accepted standards for gendered behavior.<sup>19</sup> The cause of so much spilled ink in the popular press during the 1920s, New Women (who were, of course, not as homogeneous as the term implies, although they were often spoken of in this collective fashion) were asking to be looked at and to look in ways that defied expectations while creating new ones.

As just one example of the gender changes that occurred throughout the decade, in 1921, the same Elinor Glyn who a few years later would create the “It” label that defined the era and its wild child, Clara Bow, wrote an article for *Cosmopolitan* entitled “What's the Matter with *You* American Women?” This interrogational early-twenties piece is replete with anxiety over women's liberated and promiscuous behavior, which Glyn perceived as threatening the character of American women across the board: “Has the American girl no innate modesty—no subconscious self-respect, no reserve, no dignity? I know what I think of them.” According to Glyn, American women needed to attend to their “chastity, mental and physical,” to reject the “age of the body” in order to nurture their neglected spirits.<sup>20</sup> By the late 1920s, Glyn was singing another tune in the pages of the same magazine, celebrating women (and men) who had “It” (even though Glyn repeatedly and unconvincingly denied that “It” was equivalent to sex appeal) and could use “It” to get what and who they wanted.

The disparity between Glyn's two pieces, published less than a decade apart, is symbolic of the tremendous changes witnessed during the 1920s, both in women's roles and the culture's evaluation of their new attitudes, appearance, and actions. As Kevin Starr notes in his discussion of 1920s Hollywood, “Hollywood emerged in the American consciousness as the major source of imagery and energy for the sexual revolution.”<sup>21</sup> Bow became a symbol of all the behavioral possibilities opened up by women's postsuffrage liberation, for this was an era dominated by prosperity and gaiety, particularly in the cinema's depiction of the contemporary world.

Movies helped create the nation's mood, luring postwar audiences into theaters with films that embodied and begat excitement, fun, and the spirit of rampant consumerism.

The relationship between spectatorship and consumption was also clearly not limited to movie audiences but had logical consequences for the fan magazine reader. Kathryn Fuller demonstrates how *Photoplay* editor James Quirk used the movies to create "a breed of 'perfect consumers' who were almost completely dependent on motion pictures to generate their needs and desires. Quirk predicted that the persuasiveness of the motion picture medium, coupled with the added weight of product endorsements by movie stars, would fuel an explosive growth of consumer culture led by movie fans."<sup>22</sup> Following Quirk's logic, spectatorship and consumerism converged in the figure of the female fan. Fuller aptly claims that such assumptions reflect both Quirk's and the other fan magazine editors' "growing awareness of women's purchasing power."<sup>23</sup> With increasing numbers of women entering the job market and becoming wage earners, women were being taken seriously as economic forces, particularly, it seems, by the movie industry.<sup>24</sup>

Considering the actual content of the fan magazines, this argument becomes much more complicated. While their premise was to disseminate information about stars, their content reflects the gender politics of the era quite vividly. The tumultuous postsuffrage Jazz Age was not lacking in debates over women's social position. However, the 1920s New Woman was notably different from her late-nineteenth-century counterpart in two important ways: her class and her sexuality. The 1920s New Woman, at least as she was configured by the popular press, was largely working class, like the shop girl that Bow plays in her definitive *It* role; furthermore, the New Woman's sexual behavior was much more visible, less unspeakable, and therefore more subject to debate. Women's lives were becoming increasingly more public, made so not only by employment and wages but also through such "acceptable" leisure activities as moviegoing.

Even the movie industry's standard, *Photoplay*, participated in the debate over women's rapidly changing roles in the family and society in its monthly column "Girls' Problems." But it was through countless stories of stars' lives, fashions, makeup, hair, love, and homes that fan magazines created a litany of identificatory modes for their readers. The ideological implications of these magazines and their content are unusually clear: readers not only wanted to know about the stars; they wanted to be (like) the stars as well. If such thinking sounds familiar, it is because it is the same logic on which theories of spectatorial identification have been built. Despite their obvious differences, the strategies of spectatorial consumption and identification employed by the fan magazines and the movies are remarkably similar. It should therefore come as no surprise that when Clara Bow fought her way through that doorway of "Fame and Fortune," she became one of the many stars imitated by her countless fans. As Budd Schulberg puts it in his memoir, "Clara Bow became not just a top box-office star but a national institution: The It Girl. Millions of followers wore their hair like Clara's and pouted like Clara, and danced and smoked and laughed and necked like Clara."<sup>25</sup>

Schulberg articulates the behavioral influence that was part of the nature of female spectatorship as it was constructed through fan discourse. Bow, who came to stand for this sexualized “type” of New Woman behaving outside the conventional bounds of womanhood, paved the way for many of her adoring imitators by becoming a model for identification and mimicry. According to Dr. Bisch’s problematic assertion in the epigraph to this section, women are always acting, always performing. Such notions of female behavior are suspect, of course, yet fan culture did everything to foster such mimicry. While the sexuality of Bow’s characters, as we shall see in the analysis of *It* that follows, can in many ways be considered liberating inasmuch as they often (but not always) defied the conservative strictures that still held sway over the vast majority of American women, in her real-life affairs and scandals, Bow lacked the moral certitude of her cinematic counterparts. As Bow’s name popped into and out of the scandal sheets, Paramount offered her a series of cookie-cutter roles that fed the public’s perception of Bow as a real-life accumulation of her on-screen roles. This was particularly true of the film whose title still remains inextricably linked to Bow’s persona: *It*.

### **What Is *It*?: Locating the Gaze of the New Woman**

Entertainment was conceived up in the Garden of Eden. Eve gave the first show the day she slipped into a fig leaf. Adam, the audience, enjoyed himself so much, that he decided to go into show business. From then on, shows were made by men for men.

Beth Brown, *Moving Picture World*<sup>26</sup>

Clara Bow’s film *It* can be understood as a parable about fan culture, particularly the ways that fan magazines constructed female readers and Hollywood films positioned female spectators. *It* is replete with the interplay between plenitude and lack, with the elemental bases of spectatorial identification, and with the processes of personal reevaluation that were central to the machinations of female fandom in the 1920s. Like fan culture, which encouraged women to imagine and, on occasion, to act out, certain fantasies about their identities in relation to star culture, *It* enacts a fantastic narrative of female sexual aggression and class transcendence.

*It* was a cinematic response to the resignification of this previously innocuous pronoun by Elinor Glyn, whose fictional story—itsself a kind of treatise on “It”—sparked extensive discussion of what “It” was and who had “It.”<sup>27</sup> Glyn was given a cameo role in *It* and became part of the propaganda machine for the film, whose catchy title and general concept derived from Glyn’s story. As Lori Landay has pointed out in reference to Glyn’s marketing of the idea of “It,” the cultural phenomenon she started demonstrates the commodification of ideas and feminine public personas in the emerging mass consumer culture of the 1920s.<sup>28</sup> The film aptly demonstrates such intersections of female identity and mass culture by exemplifying both formally and contextually the status of the New Woman, primarily through the device of the gaze.

Contrary to Beth Brown’s edenic metaphor for Hollywood,<sup>29</sup> *It* is a film that invites the gaze of its female spectator, largely to identify with the film’s heroine





Figure 1. The opening shot of *It* invokes the film's consumer-driven narrative by referencing both the store where Betty Lou (Clara Bow) works as a salesgirl and the man, Cyrus Waltham (Antonio Moreno), whom she will eventually acquire. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

and with her decidedly sexualized and empowered modes of seeing and being. The film celebrates its female star's rebellion against traditional modes of passivity and complicates her relationship to the process of objectification. In other words, *It* seems every bit as much made for the male gaze as for its often neglected female counterpart.

*It* depicts the career of Betty Lou (Clara Bow) and her romantic pursuit of Cyrus Waltham (Antonio Moreno), new owner of the department store where Betty Lou works as a salesgirl. While the plot is hardly remarkable, the mechanics of the narrative set it apart from the often-tired formal and narrative structure of the class-crossed romance.<sup>30</sup> The establishing shot dollies out to reveal a sign, on top of a massive brick building, that reads "Waltham's, World's Largest Store," signaling from the outset that the film will be concerned primarily with the workings of consumer culture. The camera pans down to a view of the bustling street and tracks in toward the store's entrance to show many people coming in and out; here, the film already suggests, is modern American life manifest in the hustle and bustle of consumerism. In the second sequence, we enter the store and see the active life within; shot from a high angle, the masses of customers and workers moving about have the appearance of so many contented ants at a picnic.

As established in the opening sequence, consumption serves as the paradigm for the entire film and particularly for Betty Lou's desire. However, consumer-oriented

desire is hardly limited to the character of Betty Lou, for so much of spectatorship has to do with the logic of consumption, as has been discussed in the first section of this article. This thematic is ideologically in line with what Hansen has deemed the relationship between the cinema and spectator culture: "Film spectatorship epitomized a tendency that strategies of advertising and consumer culture had been pursuing for decades: the stimulation of new needs and new desires through visual fascination. Besides turning visual fascination itself into a commodity, the cinema generated a metadiscourse of consumption . . . a phantasmagoric environment in which boundaries between 'looking' and 'having' were blurred."<sup>31</sup>

Waltham's department store, in which the narrative in *It* is located, formalizes the spectatorial constructs of the film, for it is a place (just like a movie theater) where one is expected to look, to desire, and to experience pleasure through fantasies of acquisition. This "phantasmagoric environment" is aptly demonstrated when we get our first glimpse of Betty Lou. Situated among rather undifferentiated individuals, she holds a piece of lingerie in front of her clothed body to show an older, respectable-looking couple what they might expect from their purchase. Thus, couched in the decency of the on-looking couple, whose "decorousness" justifies exposing the lingerie (or at least adds a comic element to the image's otherwise overtly sexual suggestiveness), the film allows its spectator momentarily to enjoy looking at the wide-eyed Betty Lou with no more than a hint of the lingerie's sexual implications. As the man and woman smile and nod, the division Hansen notes between "looking" and "having" is blurred. Since both the department store consumer and the cinema spectator are expected to desire what they see, the scene appropriately figures consumption as both an economic exchange and a mode of ideologically sanctioned visual pleasure.

This flirtatious looking is fleeting, however, for another salesgirl interrupts to tell Betty Lou that Cyrus Waltham is the "new boss." From this moment, the film reverses the gaze so prevalent in dominant Hollywood cinema away from a male appraisal (singular or collective) of the attractive onscreen woman. Here the male character, Waltham, is situated on the passive, receiving end of the sexualized gaze. To invoke the metaphor that opened this section, Betty Lou removes her modern-day fig leaf but in so doing enables sustained scopophilic leering at her Adam. The preceding lingerie scene thus serves as a brief reminder of Betty Lou's to-be-looked-at-ness, to borrow a well-known phrase from Laura Mulvey, because Betty Lou is hardly the visual object in this *mise-en-scène*.<sup>32</sup> I would like to suggest that the scenes that follow enact an inversion that indicates the changing nature of the New Woman and of the institutionalization of female fandom.

The scene proceeds as a series of shot/reverse shots, atypical in that the camera's eye recognizes only half the gaze relays—the woman's (or women's) half. The sequence transpires as follows: Betty Lou gets wide-eyed and stares directly at Waltham, the object of her visibly increasing desire. In the *mise-en-scène* of the department store, a business with the sole purpose of creating and then satisfying personal desires, Betty Lou is the ideal customer: she sees, she wants, and, in the end, she gets. But not without first undergoing some struggle, for in the reverse shot of Waltham, he is oblivious to Betty Lou's gaze. Furthermore, Betty Lou's



Figure 2. *It* is preoccupied with the processes of looking and acquiring. Our first glimpse of Betty Lou encourages voyeuristic pleasure with a somewhat comic edge. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

desires diverge from the material objects of consumption—the things that purport to complete the lacking subject/consumer—to Waltham himself, a man who in many ways represents the sum total of consumerism, the star, if you will, of the commodity system.

The next reverse shot shows Betty Lou still agog, with nine more female clerks behind her in similar stages of ogling. Betty Lou is up front with her chin on her hand, enjoying the act of looking to an unusual degree and for an unusually sustained duration for a female character—hers is an unabashed voyeurism; one might even suggest it is a proud display of her visual pleasure. In yet another reverse shot of Waltham, he remains oblivious to the fact that he is the focus of this spectacle. A medium shot of Betty Lou follows with the intertitle “Sweet Santa Claus, give me *him*!” This scene articulates many issues concerning 1920s women’s behavior in a concise series of shots that empower Betty Lou with an active, *consuming* look while relegating Waltham to the status of the unknowing and sexualized spectacle.

This visual empowerment of Betty Lou can be understood as an inversion of the politics of looking in the cinema, which has relied on the spectacle of women and the privileging of the male gaze. Ironically, the press kit for *It* misrepresents the film on this level by showing a photo of Betty Lou surrounded by a group of staring men.<sup>33</sup> The advertisement is a lie of sorts, since this configuration appears in the film in quite the opposite fashion--there, Betty Lou and the other shop girls are shown staring rapaciously at Cyrus Waltham.



Figure 3. Betty Lou and the other salesgirls in *It* take a moment to unabashedly enjoy looking at their new boss, Cyrus Waltham, thereby reversing the traditional economy of gazes. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

The press kit perpetuates the idea of women as the object of the gaze and suggests that whatever reversals might take place in the film, entrenched standards of representation remain unchanged. Removed from its cinematic context, the image of a group of men staring at Clara Bow seems perfectly natural in the context of her career. In fact, the press kit image says more about Clara Bow as a star than about Betty Lou as a character, for Bow's career was utterly reliant on marketing her sexualized, visual appeal. While Betty Lou as a character initiates this scopic inversion only to reverse it by fighting her way into Waltham's visual register, Clara Bow the actress seemed hard-pressed to exist outside the intense visual scrutiny of the public and the studios. This is, no doubt, why Bow later in her life removed herself to the Nevada desert, where she could gain the kind of anonymity that would have impeded the spectacular nature of Betty Lou's romantic conquest.

But *It* presents more than just a reversal of the status quo, a transposition of the traditional male role with that of the traditional female. On the one hand, the scene of Betty Lou and the other shop girls staring at Waltham is hardly that radical, for the film's premise still revolves around a classed inequity that is linked to Betty Lou's "type" (the independent working *girl*) as well as to Waltham's (the rich capitalist *man*), the end result being, predictably, marriage and a reconciliation of this divide. There is also a tacit understanding that while Betty Lou appears to be

a relatively carefree working girl, she would rather be an otherwise-occupied wife of a rich businessman. She is, in other words, a working girl only because she has to be.<sup>34</sup> She sells lingerie but ultimately sells herself, even if this transaction is seemingly enacted on her terms. On the other hand, the scene does suggest something important about the nature of the 1920s woman precisely because Betty Lou is able to look, desire, and pursue without being punished or condemned. In fact, by film's end she is substantially rewarded—materially, emotionally, and morally—for her aggressive behavior.

Ultimately, the gift that Betty Lou receives is Waltham, but Santa has little to do with this acquisition. Rather, it is Betty Lou's ability to perform that enables her to capture Waltham's previously absent gaze and to consolidate her active, aggressive modes of seeing and being with a retained, albeit revised, sense of femininity. As spectators, we join Betty Lou as she experiences the various impediments to her pursuit of her wealthy man. In particular, Betty Lou's dilemma is how to redirect Waltham's heretofore absent gaze. Much as Bow repositioned herself from spectator to spectacle, from consumer to consumed, through the fan magazine contest, Betty Lou turns the tables on Waltham's gaze in order to enact a strikingly similar negation of obscurity. By participating in the fan magazine contest, Bow rejected the idea of being an anonymous fan much as Betty Lou rejects being an anonymous employee. *It* therefore replicates the paradigm of plenitude and lack that constitutes not only the foundation of stardom but also the motivating premise of the fan magazine contest. To put this another way, the narratives Hollywood tells and retells reinforce divisions organized around the binary of presence/absence that maintains audience desire, and the nature of that desire transfers from fiction to star to material object.

In the case of *It*, we are presented with precisely this scenario of lack and completion. As empowering as Betty Lou's active looking may appear to be, to realize her goal, she needs to complete what has been absent by attracting Waltham's gaze; she must get him to actively complete the companion shot to the earlier relay of gazes in which he is an unknowing and unseeing object; and she must reposition herself as an object in order to gain *her* object. So when Waltham wanders by Betty Lou's lingerie counter with his back to her and then leans on a piece of fabric, Betty Lou gets an ingenious look on her face and pulls the fabric in an attempt to attract his gaze. Her desire is to direct Waltham, but she fails here (as she does in successive attempts) as he nonchalantly proceeds.

It takes Waltham's bumbling and foppish pal Monty (William Austin)—who is on a mission to find an "It Girl" in the store after reading the Glyn piece in *Cosmopolitan*—to notice Betty Lou, in whom he immediately recognizes that mysterious quality that has gone unnoticed by the oblivious Waltham. Monty's own "desires," feeble as they are, are dictated by the *Cosmopolitan* article—he is told about this "It" and goes to find it. Thus, the film suggests that the press has power over desire, mirroring the rationale behind the fan magazine and its consumer-oriented discourse.

While Monty looks at Betty Lou with an ineffectual, easy-to-dismiss, even effeminate longing, Betty Lou continues to gaze salaciously at Waltham. Such sustained looking, coupled with her heavy breathing, makes Betty Lou into a caricature



Figure 4. After reading Elinor Glyn's piece on "It" in *Cosmopolitan*, Cyrus Waltham's associate Monty (William Austin) detects "It" in Betty Lou. This is one of several moments in *It* that suggests the degree to which print culture mediates desire. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

of the New Woman: desiring to near animalistic proportions. While restraint is partly lost in silent film because of the need for a compensatory acting style, extreme gestures, and the exteriorization of desire, Betty Lou's hyperbolic desire is isolated and unique, leading us to wonder about her particular lack of decorum and passivity, attributes that have historically been associated with proper women's behavior, particularly in the public sphere.

*It* presents a world in which it is not only possible but acceptable to behave in this unabashed fashion. As Landay points out, "*It* participated in the construction of a public femininity that depended on women's active satisfaction of their desires, an ideal that encouraged women to participate in the public sphere as consumers as well as commodities."<sup>35</sup> In the character of Betty Lou, *It* presents an ideal of spectatorship made literal: like the department store consumer, she sees, she wants, and she gets. But while this last component of possession remains safely in the realm of fantasy for the film spectator, whose pleasure is based on the constant deferment of desire, Betty Lou acts out the spectator's fantasies by becoming aggressive, plotting, and sexually predatory without apology. Herein lies the basis for the satisfaction provided by the fan magazine contests: they alleviated that chronic postponement of fan adoration by allowing spectators/readers to do *something*; so too did the star-endorsed products that fans were encouraged to purchase in order to live like the stars did. Bow's characters were appealing for

precisely the same reason: they enabled audiences to experience a kind of sexual liberation and moral reward that was simply not available in such a neat, coherent fashion outside the realm of fiction. While changes had certainly taken place in women's behavior during the 1920s, only in Hollywood could notions of the New Womanhood be taken to such a sanctioned extreme.

Betty Lou's "newness" is precisely what makes her so attractive to Monty and, eventually, to Waltham. Female desire—be it sexual or economic in nature—is legitimized through Betty Lou's persona of the unabashed modern woman. In her behavior, Betty Lou, as a model for the female spectator, constitutes the triumph of feminine independence over the constraints of class and culture; but this is, of course, only a fictional transcendence. Her role validates the fantasies of spectatorship and fandom discussed earlier in this article, and although the film reflects some of the culture's permissiveness in terms of new modes of women's behavior, *It* is far from a documentary reflection of some new American sexual liberation. Rather, the film—like the fan magazine contest that propelled Clara Bow to fame—provided an opportunity for women to fantasize about engaging in rule-shattering behavior, to identify with a fantastical sexual identity that was simply impossible (and possibly even undesirable) for the vast majority of women.

Nonetheless, Betty Lou's uniqueness, particularly her willingness to ignore convention, is unquestionably appealing in the context of the film. The film proceeds as an examination of all those things that make Betty Lou different, and as a result desirable, as the spectator is increasingly aligned with her ambitious pursuit of Waltham. Her foil, Adela Van Norman (Jacqueline Gadsdon), is everything Betty Lou is not: rich, well dressed, well mannered, reserved, and perfectly predictable. But Betty Lou's presence reveals that Adela is no more than an outmoded type. Betty Lou, who has to improvise her evening wear, who cannot read a menu in French, and who would prefer going to Coney Island over the Ritz, is appealing precisely because she defies Waltham's expectations of bourgeois womanhood.

While it takes some work to capture Waltham's gaze, Betty Lou controls the remaining action of the film in virtually every scene: when Monty offers her a ride home, she pushes him onto her crowded double-decker bus (much to his surprise and consternation); when Monty asks if she would like to have dinner, she agrees on the condition that he take her to the place where Waltham is planning to dine; when her roommate, an unwed mother, is unable to work because she is sick, Betty Lou cheerfully takes care of her; and when the same roommate is faced with losing her baby to nosy reformist neighbors, Betty Lou charges in and claims the baby as her own despite the stigma attached to single motherhood. Her character's dynamism makes her the visual and moral center of every scene she inhabits. Her attractiveness—as an object of both desire and identification—is apparent and undeniable.

But what is it in Waltham that Betty Lou desires? Her lust for him is seemingly instantaneous, but it is mediated by both her visual assessment of his image and her knowledge of what he is: rich, the owner of the largest department store in the world. While the film stops well short of making Betty Lou a gold digger, Waltham seems to have little that is devastatingly attractive except for his wealth

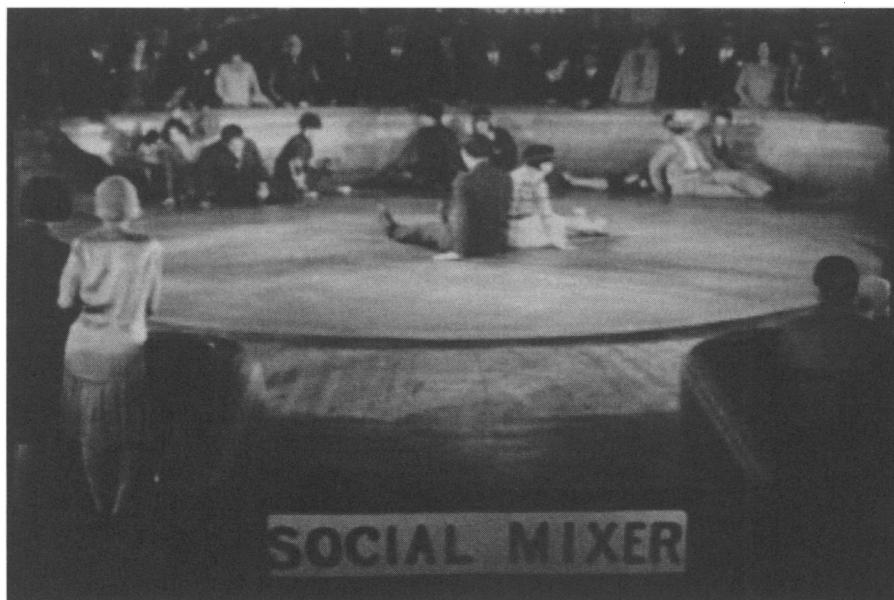


Figure 5. The prim and proper Adela Van Norman (Jacqueline Gadsdon) in *It* cannot compete with Betty Lou's playful physicality, as evident when Betty Lou and Waltham frolic on the appropriately named Social Mixer at Coney Island. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

and status. In fact, Betty Lou proves her moral correctness when she refuses Waltham's offer to maintain her as a mistress.

The classed nature of Betty Lou's desire is addressed both while she prepares for her evening out with Monty and when they arrive at their destination, the Ritz. As Betty Lou cuts away at one of her dresses to make it into evening wear, her eyes land on a newspaper advertisement for Waltham's. Betty Lou appears dreamy-eyed, but it is not clear precisely what is behind this love-dazed expression, which we witnessed earlier when she first set eyes on Waltham. Not only does Betty Lou see the name Waltham, which signifies both the man and the "largest store in the world," but the advertisement is also headlined by an announcement of "New Dresses at \$11" and the "Latest Fashions from Paris." Keeping in mind that Betty Lou is in the process of having to make her own poor imitation of the "latest fashions" with scissors and pins, it seems plausible that her desire is again double: it is at once for Waltham and also for what he represents in consumer culture. Further, Bow's desire for Waltham and his gaze is integral to her longing to be recognized by and within consumer culture, for as a working girl it seems that only a man like Waltham (interchangeable as his name is with the department store) can legitimate her consuming desires. Thus, the advertisement is simultaneously a reminder of what she currently cannot have (store-bought dresses, the latest Paris fashions) and of what she might be able to get (Waltham); the one, of course, follows from the acquisition of the other.





Figure 6. While Betty Lou makes a homemade dress for her night out at the Ritz in *It*, she spies an advertisement that reminds her of both the material things she lacks and the man who embodies those things. Paramount Pictures, 1927.

That class and desire are united in Betty Lou's lack is further evidenced when she and Monty arrive at the Ritz. The *mâitre d'* sizes up Betty Lou—as do we, aligned as we are here with the camera's perusal of her—and detects the flaws that belie her class. As she is led to a “quiet table,” Betty Lou scours the restaurant, looking for Waltham; her gaze is searching, predatory. When she spots him, she does a double take as we inhabit her point of view, and the shot rapidly dollies in to a close-up on his face. Her frantic desire is evident again in the dolly; ideologically, we are aligned with Betty Lou and her quest—both visual and literal—for Waltham. When Betty Lou drags Monty to a more centrally located table, again controlling the action of the scene in her attempt to direct Waltham's gaze, she finally gets what she has been working for when the two make eye contact. Of course, once Betty Lou has attracted Waltham's gaze, the rest is quick to follow.

To a certain degree their ensuing romance is predicated on Waltham's fetishization of Betty Lou's class, or, perhaps more precisely, on the way her class allows her to behave outside certain class-bound gender conventions. Betty Lou demonstrates a physicality that is absent in the affluent Adela, manifest most obviously in Betty Lou's frenetic onscreen movement. When she and Waltham go to Coney Island for their first date, at her suggestion, they dine on hot dogs and relish in the physical delights offered at the park. At the end of their date, however, when Betty Lou returns Waltham's kiss with a slap, the intertitle reads, “So you're one of those Minute Men—the minute you know a girl you think you can

kiss her!”<sup>36</sup> In contrast to several other Bow films from the same year, such as Victor Fleming’s *Hula* and Dorothy Arzner’s *Get Your Man*, “necking” is not part of the otherwise playful behavior of the New Woman in *It*. This is somewhat surprising, if only because, until this point, Betty Lou’s interest in Waltham has been blatantly sexual.

Betty Lou’s slap is an interesting nod to “the real world,” to the complexity of her otherwise liberated behavior. Within the context of the narrative, her behavior is easily explicable, for hers is both a defensive and a performative reaction, defensive because she has nothing to fall back on and performative because she is, to a certain degree, acting out what she suspects she *should* do in response to Waltham’s physical advances. It would be too facile to argue that Betty Lou’s behavior in this scene is intended to serve simply as a morally correct guide for women’s dating behavior, laid out by either the conservative Glyn or one of the film’s heads of production. Rather, Betty Lou’s behavior is an acknowledgment of the tensions between public and private, liberation and conservatism, that characterized the 1920s and its tumultuous gender politics.

My assertion that the slap is a somewhat performative reaction—one that denies what Betty Lou clearly seeks—is supported in a later scene. Immediately after the slap, Betty Lou sits in her apartment rubbing her lips, enjoying the memory of the kiss in private. However, it is only outside Waltham’s presence that she can safely experience the pleasure of their interaction. To have embraced Waltham’s advances would have compromised the pursuit of her goal, for Betty Lou wants nothing less than marriage, of course, and therefore is trying to conform to how she suspects a marriageable girl might behave. As Landay puts it, “It is clear that she is not insulted by but pleased by his advance, but it is also clear that her sexual favor is not easily purchased and that she will hold out for marriage.”<sup>37</sup>

Although Betty Lou’s originality is largely what makes her able to “win” Waltham, she is not above imitating women she perceives to be her cultural superiors. During the scene at the Ritz, she notices that her rival, Adela, has pinned her corsage on her chest, not near her waist as Betty Lou has done; Betty Lou adjusts her corsage accordingly. Sarah Berry points out a related instance of “class performativity” in her discussion of Joan Crawford in *The Bride Wore Red* (Dorothy Arzner, 1937).<sup>38</sup> This recalls the earlier scene in which Betty Lou sees the advertisement for Waltham’s, if only because it reminds us that Betty Lou has the odds stacked against her because she cannot afford the *trappings* of the rampant consumerist. Nor can she afford to let Waltham suspect that she will give in to his physical advances. When he ignores her after he mistakenly presumes she has an out-of-wedlock baby, Betty Lou thinks he is mad that she slapped him and apologizes: “I’m sorry—but a girl *has* to do that. You know how those things are!” Betty Lou clearly articulates that her reactions are based not on what she wants but on what she must do to survive in the modern world. Sexual freedom is revealed to be little more than an outward performance; the rules of propriety and morality appear to have changed little, even if the attire and behavior seem to suggest otherwise.

Betty Lou’s behavior is consistent with Bow’s own life, testament as it is to the ultimately conservative public allowance for New Womanish behavior. While the

film offers Betty Lou the traditional and safely respectable culmination of marriage, Clara Bow's real-life affairs lacked such tidy, recuperative closure. When Monty reads the issue of *Cosmopolitan* in which the Glyn piece appears, the camera lingers on a section of text in order to define the subject of the film: "The possessor of 'IT' must be absolutely unself-conscious, and must have that magnetic 'sex appeal' which is irresistible." Herein lies the falsity of Glyn's concept in the context of the 1920s and of *It*, for there is nothing about Betty Lou's "It-ness" that is unself-conscious. Rather, it is precisely the sexual nature of the New Woman's "It" that necessitates an increasing awareness of the dangers of the "magnetic 'sex appeal'" that Glyn claims is "It"; for examples, we need only turn to Clara Bow's career-long lack of self-consciousness, which resulted in repeated scandals. Betty Lou's apparent need to always consider how she is being perceived by Waltham—how she is being *seen*—has everything to do with the "It" of the film's title and with her character's ability, literally, as it turns out, to climb out of her class.

This same magnetic appeal that Betty Lou slaps away when Waltham tries to kiss her is also what Waltham thinks she has succumbed to when he falsely assumes she is an unwed mother. Although the circumstances under which Betty Lou's roommate became pregnant are not part of the film's narrative, Molly is certainly a cautionary figure, representing the potential casualties of the New Woman's sexual liberation. Betty Lou escapes this fate, but only by *self-consciously* keeping within the traditional parameters of premarital interactions.

The New Woman of the 1920s—with her bobbed hair, flamboyant attire, and working-girl sensibilities—was still very much beholden to the sexual strictures of the dominant culture. As Paula Fass points out, the twenties were "a turning point, a critical juncture between the strict double standard of the age of Victoria and the permissive sexuality of the age of Freud."<sup>39</sup> Betty Lou acts out this doubleness by appearing to be both the wild, rapacious New Woman and the morally correct and conservative young lady of the past—she is, like Bow herself, at once a walking contradiction and evidence of the paradoxical nature of women's sexual roles in the 1920s.

It is worth returning here to the already-noted fragile boundary between public and private that is as much a part of the politics of *It* as it was of the life of the movie star. The fan magazines exploited female audiences' desire for the ingredients of movie stardom by redirecting and extending the spectatorial, consumerist gaze to their own commercial products. Ultimately, the most telling sign of "It" in *It* is a similar manipulation of the gaze—by both Betty Lou and the female spectator. Although Alexander Walker contends that "'It' boomed with the financial independence of the young female wage-earner who wanted to acquire not social status, but sexual attractiveness to match her spending power,"<sup>40</sup> Betty Lou, in fact, controls the gaze through a knowledge of her sexual attractiveness, which enables her to eventually gain social status. It is not an either/or proposition since consumption and social status remain inextricably linked in the film's narrative. In the cases of both Betty Lou and Clara Bow, the New Woman saw and sought new paradigms for negotiating the modern world. But the paradigms themselves—of marriage and of fan culture—were already set for them.

Fan magazines, department stores, and films such as *It* all exist with the goal of creating personal desire in their readers/customers/spectators. Both Betty Lou and Clara Bow occupied such atmospheres of consumption, one of the commodity and the other of the commodified image. The fan magazines extended the fantasy world of the cinema, providing pages full of stars with extraordinary lives for ordinary women to ponder; these magazines were themselves a kind of department store catalog selling images of the stars. Clara Bow, the star commodity, existed in this fashion. Even in 1926, a fan magazine author could aptly assert that Bow “represented an investment,” concluding with the impersonal-but-true Hollywood bottom line that “an investment must be profitable.”<sup>41</sup> In fact, Paramount ultimately labeled Bow’s films by the seasons: “Fall Bow,” “Spring Bow,” and so on—designations that further reinforced her status as a commodity not at all unlike those offered in the commercial realm of the department store or in the many advertisements littering the pages of fan magazines.

## Notes

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1. Josef von Sternberg shot several unidentified scenes in the film when Badger became ill; however, von Sternberg is not credited as a codirector. Paramount produced and distributed the film.
2. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Social History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1993), 81.
3. Dr. Louis E. Bisch, “What Does Acting Do to the Actor?” *Photoplay*, January 1928, 68.
4. T. Gallant, “Can She Ever Come Back?” *Movie Classic*, September 1931, 20+.
5. The volume of fan mail Bow received—“more than double any star’s in movie history”—is cited in David Stenn’s biography of the actress, *Clara Bow Runnin’ Wild* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 159; an advertisement in the June 27, 1928, *Variety* also notes that the Los Angeles postmaster reported that Bow set fan mail records. The henna statistic is from Adela Rogers St. Johns’s memoir, *Love, Laughter, and Tears: My Hollywood Story* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 233.
6. The exception was Bow’s 1928 film, *Red Hair* (Clarence Badger), one of the many “lost” Bow films. According to Stenn, in *Clara Bow Runnin’ Wild*, a two-strip Technicolor process was used for the sole reason of enabling audiences to see the color of the star’s hair (128). Virtually every article on Bow discusses her hair color in detail. One contemporary fan magazine begins by commenting on “her shock of dashing red hair”; a second begins with “Clara Bow’s hair is red and so are her fingernails”; and still another claims parenthetically that “(You’ve never seen such hair. It’s red. Just red red).” From Alma Whitaker, “How They Manage Their Homes,” *Photoplay*, September 1929, 64+; Michael Woodward, “That Awful ‘IT,’” *Photoplay*, July 1939, 39+; and Lois Shirley, “Empty Hearted,” *Photoplay*, October 1929, 29+. It is worth noting that

- on the application for the contest that Bow entered and eventually won, only two choices were given for hair color: "blonde or brunette." *Motion Picture*, January 1921, 122.
7. A good example of this shaping is evident in one of Dorothy Blum's scrapbooks at the Library of Congress Motion Picture Sound Division. In this fan's meticulously constructed two-volume homage to Joan Crawford—filled with autographed pictures, 8x10 stills, and articles from fan magazines—is a list of Crawford's "stats": height, weight, hair color, etc. At one point Blum typed in that Crawford had brown eyes, but later she crossed this out and amended it by hand to "blue," information Blum likely gathered from a fan magazine.
  8. "The Fame and Fortune Contest of 1921," *Motion Picture*, January 1921, 122.
  9. Joli Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization," in Lisa Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 10.
  10. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 7, 86.
  11. Such assumptions would ultimately lead to a spate of pseudo-scientific examinations of the effects of films on spectators, such as the twelve-part Payne Fund studies. Books such as Herbert Blumer's *Movies and Conduct* (New York: Macmillan, 1933) focused on the moral consequences of cinema for modern society, and their existence attests to the perception (and the anxiety) that cinema had a transformative effect on spectators.
  12. Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 11.
  13. Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 125.
  14. While there is much evidence to support the claim that fan magazines were written for and read by women, it is worth noting that nods were occasionally made toward a male readership. According to "A Dream Come True," the June 1922 *Motion Picture* magazine article that announced that Bow had won the 1921 Fame and Fortune Contest, there were male participants: "We are sorry to say that the judges could not find a single male with the requisite qualifications for a winner" (94). Considering their long list of female prize winners, that there were male contestants and, implicitly, male readers is somewhat suspect.
  15. Gaylyn Studlar, "The Perils of Pleasure? Fan Magazine Discourse as Women's Commodified Culture in the 1920s," in Richard Abel, ed., *Silent Film* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 292. *Motion Picture* magazine blatantly used this logic in an advertisement for itself in its March 1926 issue: "When you buy your movie ticket you'll be getting more for your money if you have read the newest issue of MOTION PICTURE MAGAZINE. . . . It increases your enjoyment of the movies by telling you the things you want to know about the players and directors most prominent at the moment" (90).
  16. Studlar, "The Perils of Pleasure?" 293.
  17. The ruthless perfection demanded of stars was nicely demonstrated in the July 8–October 5, 1999, "Fame after Photography" exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Curators included "before" and "after" studio photographs of stars, revealing the degree to which the imperfections in their faces and bodies were eradicated through careful touch-ups and postphotographic manipulation.
  18. The circulation statistic is from Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 170.
  19. Richard Ohmann suggests that Sarah Grand first used the term in an 1894 issue of the *North American Review*. Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at*

- the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996). As Ohmann puts it, "A woman was unsettlingly 'new' if she disrupted old understandings of the feminine" (270). This was as much the case at the turn of the century, the subject of Ohmann's study, as it was during the 1920s.
20. Elinor Glyn, "What's the Matter with You American Women?" *Cosmopolitan*, November 1921, 26, 25–26.
  21. Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 323.
  22. Kathryn Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1996), 151.
  23. *Ibid.*, 160.
  24. While such historical generalizations are always too reductive, Mary Ryan suggests that "the rate of female employment skyrocketed in the teens and increased at only a moderate rate, if at all, between 1920 and 1930 when over ten million women were at work outside the home" (508). Ryan, "The Projection of a New Womanhood: The Movie Moderns in the 1920s," in Jean E. Friedman and William G. Shade, eds., *Our American Sisters: Women in American Life and Thought* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1982), 500–18. Stanley Coben's study substantiates the essence of Ryan's claim: "Females barely held on to most of their earlier gains in the professions and in education during the 1920s; and in some cases, lost ground." Coben, *Rebellion against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 98.
  25. Budd Schulberg, *Moving Pictures: Memories of a Hollywood Prince* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981), 170.
  26. Beth Brown, "Making Movies for Women," *Moving Picture World*, March 26, 1927, 34.
  27. Elinor Glyn's "It" was serialized in *Cosmopolitan*, February and March 1927. The story begins with a definition worth repeating here: "'IT' is that quality possessed by some few persons which draws all others with its magnetic life force. With it you win all men if you are a woman—and all women if you are a man" (44).
  28. Space does not permit an extensive analysis of Glyn's influence in Hollywood, or of her cameo in the film *It*. Interested readers are encouraged to see Lori Landay's study of the female trickster for an informative discussion of Glyn's celebrity and its role in the making and marketing of *It*. In *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), Landay writes that "Glyn first used the term ['It'] in a 1915 novel and then bandied it about in popular magazines like *Photoplay* in order to strengthen her celebrity status as arbiter of sexiness and romance" (76). My thanks to the anonymous reader at *Cinema Journal* who recommended Landay's discussion of Glyn to me.
  29. Brown, "Making Movies for Women," 34.
  30. As Elaine Tyler May points out in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), "the plots of the most popular films in the 1920s centered on the romance between two young moderns leading to marriage, or on stagnant marriages that were revitalized through recreation, sensuality, and excitement" (42). While many of these films may have appeared to advocate a new wildness of behavior, particularly for women, for the most part these films were ideologically conservative.
  31. Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 85.
  32. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 14–28.

33. Press Kit, Library of Congress Motion Picture Sound Division, Box E5.
34. Ryan has noticed a similar trend across films of the 1920s, arguing that “once the essential features of woman’s work had been established, the thrust of the heroine’s dream was obvious—escape.” Ryan, “The Projection of a New Womanhood,” 510.
35. Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women*, 76.
36. It is worth noting that this is an invocation of the World War I propaganda campaign enacted by the minutemen, if only because it reminds us of the temporal roots of the New Woman’s economic and spiritual liberation.
37. Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women*, 82.
38. Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 34.
39. Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 260.
40. Alexander Walker, “Elinor Glyn and Clara Bow,” in Richard Dyer MacCann, ed., *The Stars Appear* (New Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 201.
41. Alice Tildesley, “She Wants to Succeed,” *Motion Picture Classic*, June 1926, 90.