

Document Citation

Title	Virgins, vamps, and flappers: the American silent movie heroine -- excerpt
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Source	<i>Eden Press Women's Publications</i>
Date	1978
Type	book excerpt
Language	English
Pagination	75-78
No. of Pages	3
Subjects	Garbo, Greta (1905-1990), Sweden
Film Subjects	Flesh and the devil, Brown, Clarence, 1926

The portrayal of the vamp in more sophisticated, less caricatured, if not less symbolic terms is achieved in *Sunrise* (1927) and *Flesh and the Devil* (1927), both based on works by Hermann Sudermann. In *Sunrise*, the famous Murnau film, the vamp (Margaret Livingston) as the Woman from the City arrives in the country amidst a crowd of vacationers.²³ The audience first views her as she prepares to go out in the evening and entice a lover from hearth and home. She has dark bobbed hair, walks about the room in seductive lingerie, and smokes a cigarette. The visual image is sufficient to convey the immoral character of the woman. The camera tracks her movement as she walks to a nearby farmhouse and calls out to her lover. Inside, the man's wife, a blond and childlike woman (Janet Gaynor), is preparing dinner. The siren, always destructive of family life, thus intrudes upon the ritual of the evening meal. Unable to resist her call, the man (George O'Brien) goes out to the meadow to rendezvous with her. The somber lighting over a darkened landscape with full moon intimates a foreboding atmosphere. The temptress suggests that the man sell his farm and come to the city. When he inquires about his wife, she hints, "Couldn't she get drowned?" Enraged, the man attempts to strangle her but this violent outburst shades into sexual lust as the woman makes passionate advances. The lovers fall to the ground.²⁴ The posture of the couple, with the temptress cradling the man's head, suggests the woman's dominant role. Upon his return home, the man agonizes about the contemplated deed until the clutching figure of the seductress appears in a double exposure shot to dominate him. After this conflict, he rises and proposes to his unsuspecting wife that they take an excursion in their rowboat.

Although the introductory titles of *Sunrise* claim that the story is of "no place and every place," whether in the "city's turmoil" or under the "open sky on the farm," the temptress as the Woman from the City stereotypically contrasts with the farmer's wife, who is a child-woman. The siren and the wife as counterparts are personifications of good and evil. The wife eventually forgives her husband and reconciles with him inside a church after they symbolically witness a wedding ceremony and reaffirm their own vows. The characterization of the temptress as a woman who uses her sexuality to overpower her lover is related to Theda Bara's Vampire, but the Woman from the City appears truly evil in that she is not a caricature. Unlike the tragic end of *A Fool There Was*, the faith and goodness of the wife prevail as a new day begins and the temptress returns to the city alone.²⁵

With the arrival of Greta Garbo on the Hollywood screen, the vamp metamorphosed from a caricature into a truly desirable and believable woman. The Swedish actress made a vivid impression on both viewers and critics in her first two American films, *The Torrent* and *The Temptress* (1926), melodramas devoid of interest but for her appearance. The reviewers enthusiastically described her as "quite unlike anybody else," "highly individualist," "unusual," an actress with "a manner of her own," and having "a peculiar type of beauty which sets her apart from others."²⁶ Garbo herself recognized that she was different: "'They don't have a type like me out here,' she wrote home in 1926,...."²⁷ The uniqueness of Garbo as a screen personality was immediately perceived though not always definable. Critics then and now have attempted to comprehend her enigmatic appeal. According to Alexander Walker:

...the first impact Garbo made on Hollywood was a vividly physical one. When she was seen moving on the screen, her nature altered dramatically. Then her awkward proportions shifted into sensuous adjustment to each other, and gave the Americans a kind of animal movement they had never before seen in their own pictures. This was especially remarked on then--and still would be now--in the love scenes she played, where the almost male intensity of her attack was played off strongly against the feminine spirituality of her looks.²⁸

Greta Garbo became a star with the release of her third M-G-M picture, *Flesh and the Devil* (1927).²⁹ The film featured both Garbo and Lars Hanson, handsome Swedish matinee idol, while John Gilbert received top billing. The combination of Garbo and Gilbert as lovers proved box-office, but the film really belonged to Garbo. *Flesh and the Devil* was a great commercial success. In New York, it ran for an unprecedented four weeks at the Capitol Theater where receipts jumped from \$49,312 to \$71,466 in the first week and shattered all previous theater records. The film was subsequently released at Loew's State Theater and continued to play to capacity crowds. The news had spread about the city that the picture had a "full-measure dose of sex appeal."³⁰ And critics gave it enthusiastic reviews.

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About *Flesh and the Devil*, one reviewer noted, "it's a title which has 'box office' written all over it."³¹ Halfway through the plot, a pastor clarifies its meaning when he lectures Leo Von Harden (John Gilbert) that the devil creates a woman beautiful enough to tempt the flesh if he cannot reach man through the spirit. The woman in this case has the curious name, Felicitas. The plot of *Flesh and the Devil* consists of a series of overlapping triangular relationships. Leo von Harden, a cadet in the Austrian army, returns home on furlough and is strongly attracted to a beautiful woman who alights from the same train. At the fashionable Stoltenhof ball, he seeks out the mysterious lady who proves not indifferent to his attentions. The unexpected return of the woman's husband, whose existence was unknown to Leo, disrupts their passionate love affair. A duel follows. The camera cuts to a shot of Felicitas trying on a black hat and veil in front of a mirror.

Since dueling is forbidden, a military court metes out punishment by advising Leo to enlist in the African service for five years. Upon his return, he is shocked to discover that his closest friend, Ulrich von Eltz (Lars Hanson), who still believes the duel was fought over cards, has married Felicitas. The triangular plot begins to repeat itself. Felicitas is determined to win back Leo's affection, takes the initiative in seducing him, and overcomes his scruples. She even convinces him that they should run away together but experiences a change of heart when Ulrich returns from a trip with an expensive bracelet. While toying with the bracelet, Felicitas becomes doubtful and then decides that she cannot abandon her luxuries. When Leo arrives, she tries to persuade him that it would be foolish to give up her position and wealth if they can continue as lovers. Ulrich discovers them together, and Felicitas accuses Leo of having forced his attentions upon her. Rather than disillusion his friend about his wife, Leo accepts a challenge to a duel. On the morning of the duel, Ulrich's sister Hertha appeals to Felicitas. Although unmoved at first, Felicitas becomes tormented and rushes across a frozen landscape towards the site of the duel, but the ice breaks beneath her weight and she drowns in the freezing water. At that very moment, Ulrich and Leo decide that they cannot shoot each other and freed from Felicitas' bewitching spell, reconcile as blood brothers.³²

As Felicitas in *Flesh and the Devil*, Garbo proves irresistible to her lovers in the best vamp tradition, but her disturbing sexual allure could

hardly be ascribed to supernatural powers. The pastor's sermonizing that a beautiful woman is an instrument of the devil and responsible for sins of the flesh becomes ludicrous in a film obsessed with extra-marital sex. During their passionate love affairs, Leo and Felicitas betray her first husband and then Ulrich. If Leo had been in a position to marry Felicitas when she was unattached, the film would have come to an abrupt and early conclusion. And it might not have been such a box-office success. Furthermore, Felicitas may simply be viewed as an agent through whom Leo and Ulrich act out their repressed homoerotic attraction for each other.

As a vamp, Garbo displays continental sophistication and is not the dark, exotic, caricatured female with sinful past who repels as much as she fascinates. Felicitas is completely desirable but she does not come with strings unattached. She is in fact so desirable that she can manipulate men for her own purposes. She lacks a studied ruthlessness, however, has a certain impulsiveness about her, and this proves her undoing. In yielding to Hertha's emotional plea to stop the duel, Felicitas dies in performing the single good deed she attempts in the film. The siren perishes but the moral of the story is peculiar: in order to survive, a vamp must be cruel and indifferent at all times. The surrender to sentiment is as fatal for her as it is for her unfortunate lovers.

Irving Thalberg stated in an interview with Louella Parsons that Garbo had been reluctant to play the part of Felicitas because she did not like the character.³³ Although Garbo played the vamp in her first three American films, this was a reversal of the roles she had portrayed in Europe. In *The Saga of Gosta Berling* (1924) and *Joyless Street* (1925), she retained her virtue to the end though married to a silly fop in the first film and threatened with starvation in the second. The heroines in these films are interesting characterizations, but when Garbo played the role of a virtuous wife in her last M-G-M silent, *The Kiss* (1929), she lacked the fascination she exerted as a vamp. The virtuous heroine was an American screen type which proved incongruous with her sophisticated allure.

In discussing the vamp roles which Garbo played on the silent screen, Arnheim wrote about her unique characterization:

*It seems very strange that this woman has been used as a vamp, the destructive, immoral, dangerous principle. It was strongly felt that a real human being was the natural antithesis to everything that was considered right and seemly and pleasing in American film stories. And so Greta Garbo was selected to upset the comfortable marriages of gentle dark-eyed girls, to drive hard-working men to fight duels, and at the end of the film to go to hell....*³⁴

A critic for the *New York Evening Journal* who reviewed *Flesh and the Devil* observed, "She's not a movie vamp in the stereotyped sense of the word...."³⁵ Parker Tyler later wrote in a similar vein, "She carried on the disqualified Vamp tradition with a subtlety, distinction and horse-power that do stack fantastically if you stop to tote them up."³⁶

Although there is an affinity between Theda Bara's Vampire and Greta Garbo as temptress, the bad woman ceased to be depicted in the blackest colors in the intervening decade between *A Fool There Was* and *Flesh and the Devil*. Filmmakers showed an increasing sophistication in portraying her psychological motivation as a woman though the effect was to replace a crude stereotype with another more worldly. Sex continued to be illicit but lost its sinister aspect and became more pleasurable in the person of Greta Garbo. The sensual woman still posed a dangerous temptation for man, however, and she had to be anesthetized to prevent the repeated collapse of male ethics, if not supremacy. The temptress herself had to be saved from damnation. The bad woman divorced from her supernatural powers ceased to act as evil incarnate and became subject to redemption through love.

Chapter IV

REELS OF REDEMPTION: THE SENTIMENTAL HEROINE AND THE FALLEN WOMAN

The Victorian archetypes of virgin and vampire continued to exert popular appeal as silent screen heroines during the twenties, a decade symbolized by the flapper as the "new woman." Although the vampire became subject to redemption as the fallen woman, the sentimental heroine did not undergo any significant mutation but with character and role intact, became a stock figure in costume dramas or contemporary scenes. True, the popularity of such Victorian heroines as Lillian Gish and Mary Pickford began to wane in the mid-twenties but a rising new star, Janet Gaynor, won the first Oscar in 1927. Gaynor possessed neither Pickford's spunkiness nor the ethereal quality which characterized Gish, but like the Griffith proteges, she appealed to the audience as a child-woman.

The child-woman was the ideal feminine type projected by the Victorian ideology of the spheres of the sexes. According to this doctrine, the woman was restricted to the private or domestic sphere while man dealt with the cash nexus in the public sphere. If woman was condemned to ignorance in a state of perpetual childhood, she nevertheless had a significant maternal function to discharge by virtue of her superior moral nature. The home, in contrast to the masculine arena of the market place, became the repository of virtue and woman its guardian. Thus, if woman was confined to the sanctity of the home, she was protected from the evils of the outside world. Man operated on a double standard and suffered from moral schizophrenia. Woman became the projection of his guilt as well as the source of his redemp-